



Report

Interagency Cooperation Workshop

12-13 November 2019

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PROMOTING
PROFESSIONAL
PRISON
PRACTICE



EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISON AND CORRECTIONAL
SERVICES

EuroPris
PO Box 13635
2501 EP The Hague
Netherlands

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Workshop Report

Interagency Cooperation Workshop – CEP & EuroPris

12-13 November 2019

Centre for Legal Studies and Specialized Training, Barcelona

The Confederation of European Probation (CEP) and EuroPris together organised a workshop on the interagency cooperation between prisons, probation services and municipalities, when preparing offenders for their return to society. The following is a report of the proceedings.

Tuesday November 12th

Opening

Marc Cerón welcomed participants on behalf of the Centre for Legal Studies and Specialized Training (CEJFE), where the two-day meeting was hosted. Kirsten Hawlitschek (EuroPris) and Willem van der Brugge (CEP) also welcomed participants and gave an introduction into the background and activities of their organizations.

The first morning session was chaired by Willem van der Brugge (CEP).

Plenary

Dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University, UK) opened with a presentation in which she shared insights from research on building statutory, private sector and civil society partnerships in penal resettlement. Her powerpoint presentation can be accessed [here](#).

In the discussion, the question came up what works better to introduce a partnership: a pilot, a bottom-up or top-down approach. Mary Corcoran shared that in her view, several different kinds of partnerships can exist. The state can be very receptive but needs not always be the initiator. There is always a difficult balance between what belongs to the state and what belongs to civil society. The ultimate beneficiaries are the individuals returning into society, this needs to be kept in mind. Some forms of cooperation may focus on specific criminal justice aspects. Others may focus on community aspects. There is the question of subsidiarity: certain rules belong to the state, others may better be discharged outside of the criminal justice system. Personally, Mary Corcoran was of the opinion that the more criminal justice was limited, and the greater space was given to non-criminal justice organizations, the better, because when partnerships are organised around a criminal justice agenda, NGOs are forced into that agenda. Public health and social problems are then framed as criminal justice problems. The state, including municipalities, should support partners in managing their different agendas and ensure that one agenda does not marginalise others.

Panel on reintegration of violent extremist offenders

EFUS, PREPARE and Vilvoorde approach

Moritz Konradi, project manager at the European Forum for Urban Society (EFUS) and Nadia Belkus, project officer raising awareness of radicalization at the municipality Vilvoorde, Belgium,

presented on the prevention of reoffending and reintegration of violent extremist offenders. Their powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#).

Moritz Konradi explained what steps EFUS is taking to deal with the barriers identified by the working groups and committees of the network, such as the gap between the prison world and the outside and the fact that for many locally elected representatives, re-offending is not considered as lying within their competence.

Nadia Balkus explained how in Vilvoorde, the local authorities are using a multidisciplinary approach targeted at violent extremist offenders to bridge the gap between the prisons and the municipality. She also shared a dilemma with participants: if a prisoner does not apply for early release, neither probation nor the municipality has access and the prisoners are under no obligation to participate in any reintegration activities. This was one of the major concerns of the municipality. The topic was discussed with participants and several suggestions were made, such as a potential role for imams, but it was clear that there was no easy solution.

A question that was raised by participants was whether the municipality was interested in extending the multidisciplinary program beyond violent extremist offenders to the general prison population. Nadia Belkus explained that for now, it was only intended for radicalised individuals, although she hoped it could be extended to others who need extensive help for reintegration. Moritz Konradi added that they were at a point where they can share their experiences with reintegration of radicalised prisoners with other fields.

The second morning session was chaired by dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University)

Panel on cooperation on special groups of offenders

Anna Pedrola, coordinator of the Post Penitentiary Programme of the Institut de Treball Social i Serveis Socials (INTRESS) from Catalonia presented on the Post-Release Support Service, a program in which professionals offer support in the process of transiting back into the community, to people in an exceptionally vulnerable state, due to a lack of social network. Jānis Zārdiņš from the Latvian probation service presented on recent project in which a system was developed to work with sexual offenders, resulting in Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), between Police, Prison Service and Probation Service. Rachel Lillis, senior probation officer at the Irish Probation Service presented on the STRIVE project for the 20 most high-risk offenders in the Ballymun area, which involved a partnership between justice agencies and community organisations. She also shared a video about the Ballyrunners project. All powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#).

In the debate that followed the presentations, drug abuse and mental health issues came up as the most common problems of vulnerable groups. It was also noted that the general recidivism rate in Catalonia (30%) was very low compared to others.

In response to the presentation from Latvia, the point was raised that it was rare for most participants to start a new partnership from scratch, as was done in the MAPPA project. Janis Zardins stressed in this regard that the process had been bottom-up and was initiated by professionals. If it had been the other way around, it would not have worked.

In the rest of the debate, the importance of community involvement was stressed. It was also discussed how to communicate with a community to explain the concept of probation, as it is not

always as easily explained as a prison. In Ireland, local communities understand the concept, but in Latvia, it is virtually unknown. Participants also shared difficulties in convincing employers to offer jobs to clients, in particular in smaller jurisdictions.

Panel on German experiences

Martin Finckh, head of prison service in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, presented on the new cooperation agreement between prison regime, probation service and private organisations in Baden Württemberg, which targets all people about to be released in the Baden–Württemberg prison regime. Inga Marquardt, head of department for prison monitoring and sentence execution of the Prison Service Hamburg, Germany presented on the resocialisation law in Hamburg, where contrary to Baden-Württemberg, the choice was made to legislate rather than an agreement. Both powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#).

In the debate that followed, the differences between an agreement and a law were discussed. If rules are framed in legislation, one may lose flexibility. It was also discussed that in the German federal system, some states have chosen for a model based on an agreement, whereas others have legislated.

World café /discussion groups

Chairs: Dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University), Kirsten Hawlitschek (EuroPris) and Anna Esquerra Roqueta (CEP).

Participants were divided over three groups, focusing on specific issues:

- Key elements of interagency cooperation
- Interagency cooperation: for whom?
- Challenges of interagency cooperation

Feedback session

Anna Esquerra Roqueta (CEP), who had chaired the group on key elements on interagency cooperation reported that their discussion went around three distinct questions:

- What are the main objectives of interagency cooperation?

According to the group, important objectives of interagency cooperation should be: to prevent reoffending; to prevent overlap; to not keep asking same questions of offender; to have a more human system where the offender is seen as a human being; more efficiency; saving costs; long term stability; safer communities; to have shared work plans and shared objectives; to involve the client when writing plans; to work with transparency; to subordinate the self-interest of the organisation for the benefit of the client (the person).

- What do you need to create interagency cooperation?

The needs that were discussed in the group were: collaboration; hope; trust; funding, motivated professionals and motivated stakeholders, political will, shared responsibility (not only the criminal justice agency should be responsible).

- What agencies or services might cooperate with criminal justice agencies?

Some answers to this question were: employment or job agencies, linked to municipalities or the national government; health agencies; family agencies; housing agencies; and organizations focusing on education and training.

Kirsten Hawlitschek (EuroPris), who had chaired the group on challenges in interagency cooperation reflected upon the discussions in that group. The following challenges had been discussed:

- Listening to the client rather than only talking about the client, this is very important and often forgotten;
- Politics are becoming more punitive, and this leads to stigmatization. We need to challenge this and show there are different ways;
- Drugs: this was discussed as a problem that starts outside of the justice system. If people come into prison because of drugs, it means that other systems have failed. Those same agencies that failed in the first place, often get a role in reintegration;
- Short sentences are a challenge because there is not enough time to do pre-release work;
- Scale can be a problem. For example, in London there are too many agencies and there is not enough time to start a conversation with the right person. On the other hand, in smaller communities there is no choice in who to work with, which can also be challenging;
- Legislation should not become too static, as it can become an excuse for bad decision making. There needs to be flexibility;
- The GDPR does not always help, and may make it difficult to exchange information about a client;
- Costs are an issue, and the public needs to be educated about long term financial benefits of cooperation. Successful cooperation is ultimately cheaper;
- Cooperation needs to be implemented consistently throughout a country;
- Some clients are not interested in cooperation. Some are only interested in control, and we have to accept that interagency cooperation will not change this;
- Trust between agencies that have to cooperate is important. Compromises need to be made and we have to be realistic about what can be achieved.

Dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University), who had chaired the group on 'interagency cooperation, for whom?' reported that the following topics had been discussed in her group:

- Should interagency cooperation be available only for high risk offenders, or for all? The general consensus was that it should be available to all. We may fail to intervene or fail to notice that certain groups need help if we make assumptions;
- Fatherhood units in prisons, working with young people, and working on education were seen as strong examples of cooperation that benefits the client as well as society;
- The municipality was considered the most important level for cooperation. At the same time, it was seen as complex to work across different municipalities;
- Small isolated communities versus large rural communities pose different issues. Access to support was difficult on both ends of the spectrum;
- Prison authorities can be weary of work done in prisons, especially work done by NGOs;
- Certain groups can be left out of interagency work, they are at risk of being forgotten; in particular 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants and women clients;
- We should be working much harder to divert from prison altogether;
- How do you justify your services? There was a clear need to convince politics and public of the social benefit;
- Case load overload, some case workers had 50+ cases of sex offenders, radicalised offenders, and gang members, which was way too much;
- Interagency cooperation should be the general principle, but specialists should be appreciated as well.

Wednesday November 13th

The session was chaired by dr Mary Corcoran (Keele University).

Plenary Panel – Netherlands

A joint presentation was given by prison service, probation and the municipality of Zwolle. Presenters were Arie Uyterlinde (probation service), Marja Witteveen and Monique Dijkstra (custodial institutions agency), and Janneke Bredewolt, Margriet te Velde and Tamara Dol (municipality of Zwolle). They presented on the new administrative agreement on reintegration that was signed by their agencies, which aims for a successful reintegration of detainees, and within which parties work together from the start of detention. A video of the “starting together” project was shared. The powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#).

It was discussed with participant to what extent reintegration was seen as a social task, which varied per country. It was also noted that in the Netherlands, there was a very high percentage of short sentences (up to three months), compared to other countries, and also a high rate of pre-trial detention. A notable problem that came up in the discussion about the Netherlands was working with foreign nationals who legally should be deported but who could not be returned to their country. For this group, there was no agency that could offer reintegration support.

Panel practical experiences

Esteve Serna, Associació pastoral penitenciària, Mallorca, Spain, presented on “Pis d’Acollida”: Experience for reintegration at inmates in situation of social exclusion. He narrated his experience from an NGO perspective on cooperating with the prison service and the public administration since 1995. In response to a question, he added that they continue to do the work because they have seen that change is possible and have encountered the hope and responsibility of clients. He also added that because of the different administrative divisions in Spain, his organization was not formally a member of CEP and EuroPris, which led to a sense of isolation, especially on an Island such as Mallorca. Meetings such as these were important for connecting to both people and developments in the rest of Europe. Duško Simić, Senior advisor, Probation Service, Croatia, presented on the challenges in protection of ex-offenders and community. A pilot project was started and will be underway until 2020, in which the prison system, probation service, social welfare, police and enforcement judges cooperate. The first results of the pilot project are very promising. Mariona Auradell, psychologist and coordinator of the SAH, program to promote non-violent relationships, Catalonia, presented on “Service of attention at men (SAH)”, a free service of the city council of Barcelona specifically addressed at all men who want to learn about non-violence. Sergi Salinas, social worker of Baluard Center for Monitoring Drug Addiction, and Laila Rauet - Probation officer, IRES, presented on “Giving voice to the actors”. He explained two intervention areas: reducing the damages associated with the use of drugs on the one hand and offering treatment to the people with the will to change their consumer habits towards abstinence. Noemi del Prado and Álvaro Armendariz– psychologist and psychiatrist of the Treatment Unit for Young offenders, Catalonia, presented on young offenders with mental health and addiction problems. There is a new interdepartmental follow-up community program, that focuses on improved health care for minors in probation programmes who have mental health and/or addiction problems and follows them for the first six months after release. An important lesson learned was that a minimum time of internment is required to establish a significant attachment

to carry out the program once the adolescent is in the community. All powerpoint presentations can be accessed [here](#).

In the rest of the debate, it was demonstrated that when we talk about multidisciplinary work, we see different worlds come together. For the psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers on the panel, their work was not really criminal justice work, it was more health and social work. They expressed that they see themselves as health workers first, who work within a criminal justice system. They try to understand the crime as one part of the history of problems in a client's life. Sometimes the crime is seen as one of the symptoms of the pathology of the problems that the patient has. On the other hand, the probation officers have to deal with the fact that the person has to fulfil a treatment obligation, even when sometimes the health professionals say that the person is healthy. The probation officers on the panel shared that they have learned from health colleagues that drug abuse is not a decision, but a health problem.

Closing

Dr. Mary Corcoran summarised the ideas and insights that she gathered over the course of the two days, not listed in any order of importance:

- Different countries are at different stages in the interagency journey. For example, Montenegro is very new, whereas the Dutch colleagues have a very advanced program;
- In the brave new world of interagency work, letting go of autonomy and institutional ownership can be exciting and nerve wracking;
- The location of work can have a huge impact, for example when working on an island, in a city or with a diaspora that is spread across Europe;
- The idea of community is not solid. Policy assumes it is fixed but this is not the case;
- Smaller is not always better. Sometimes it helps efficiency to work in smaller organizations, but one may not have the same access to resources;
- The complexity of negotiating between different institutions and administrative boundaries is difficult enough for case workers, and extremely difficult for individuals within the system. A single point of contact, one case manager, case worker or mediator, seems to work best;
- It is important that clients have a voice and that their experiences are at the forefront. They are agents. There seems to be consensus about that;
- Involving the community sounds like a great principle, but it is not always the best route. Giving information is important, but delicate conversations need to be had;
- Some communities, such as some people living in Vilvoorde and near Dublin, have very little reason to trust authorities. There is a long history of exclusion and poor relations with authorities and the criminal justice system. It is admirable that some of the colleagues here continue to work within that environment;
- There were some elephants in the room: exclusion and socio-economic status. If you are not a national of a state, you are excluded. And almost all of us need to do more with less. Public services are under stress all over Europe. This continues to be a large structural problem;
- How do you translate a good practice to another setting? This remains a big question;
- Aftercare remains a problem. Policy makers are still forgetting a life course progression. What happens before and after prison is probably more important than what happens during prison;
- How do you tell your stories of success? What is a good outcome? Less offending, or also a better health, and better family relations? Looking only at recidivism is a much too limited perspective.
- There was much solidarity at the meeting. It was refreshing for all to meet colleagues from other countries who are struggling with similar issues, and to share inspirations and successes.

Anna Esquerrà Roqueta, on behalf of EuroPris, CEP and CEJFE thanked all speakers and participants, for sharing their experiences and knowledge, and in particular dr Mary Corcoran, for the insightful way of moderating the event.



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EuroPris P.O. Box 13635
2501 The Hague, Netherlands