



EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISON AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

EUROPRIS INTERVIEW

EuroPris talks with

Joerg Jesse, Director General of Prison and Probation Administration of Mecklenburg - Western Pomerania



EuroPris: Could you tell us about your career path?

I am a Psychologist by profession. I started as such in an open young offender facility and later worked about 20 years in closed young offender and adult prisons, started in “classic” psychological work and switched smoothly into more administrative oriented functions. This took me from head of sentence planning department to head of custody, deputy governor and later as prison governor in Hannover prison Lower Saxony with about 1000 inmates. Since 15 years I work as a Director General responsible for the prison and probation system in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania. I am also member and vice chair in the Council of Europe PC-CP working group.

Why have you chosen to work in the prison and correctional field?

It seemed to me as a challenging field of work, more than the standard psychological career choice I knew at that time. I expected the possibility to do what I still like: Transforming ideas and concepts into action (and that’s what I got).

How many Prison establishments do you oversee?

5

How many prisoners are in prison at the moment in Mecklenburg Western-Pomerania?

1100

How many staff do you manage?

About 1000 including the probation service (responsible for 4000 probationers)

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

A successful finished 3 year vocational training and working experience before application, at least an intelligence level higher than average, high ethical standards and a high commitment to German Constitution and Law, a positive view of human beings and of course a successfully finished assessment and two years training to become a prison officer.

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

It's as good as my opinion of men in the European correctional field.

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

Hostage taking of staff members, attacked or killed staff members (which fortunately didn't happen so far).

What do you consider to be the biggest achievements for your service in 2017? What challenges you had to overcome?

To plan and organize the closing of a second prison within a few years in our State with a lot of resistance at all levels (quite similar to the situation when you plan to build a new prison).

What are the challenges for your service for the coming year?

The closing of a prison and to distribute its staff to prisons they do not want to work in. A closer cooperation with municipalities and districts which are not interested in reintegrating their own citizens. To organise better conditions for children of prisoners and their families. Introducing restorative justice schemes in prison and probation services.

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

Improving the quality of staff at all levels. Better and intensive cooperation with outside services, districts and municipalities to enhance the reintegration of released prisoners.

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

Close contact to colleagues from other countries. Learning from their experience and their best practices.

Do your prisons engage with NGO's / Charities?

Yes, regarding vocational training, special treatment and training groups and reintegration into the labour market assistance.

What part of this job do you personally find most satisfying?

The day to day pleasure to work with highly committed and resilient governors and prison and probation staff in a challenging working field.

Most challenging?

Dealing with politics and media and their ideas regarding our work.

What do you like and not like about working in the correctional field?

I like the never ending long distance run to create change and progress in a step by step procedure. I don't like the public and media perspective of our important work.

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

Sorry, I have no idea (yet).