

Summary of the ICT Workshop Offender Management Systems – The Heart of the Digital Prison

3-4 April 2025

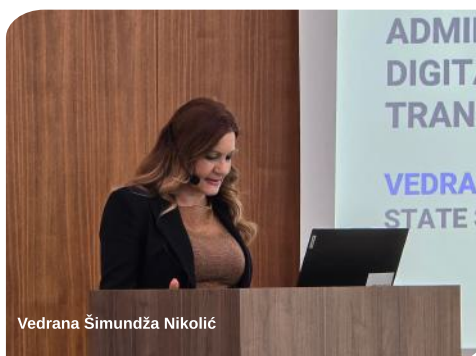
Introduction

EuroPris organised a workshop on Offender Management Systems – The Heart of the Digital Prison from 3–4 April in Split, Croatia. With over 50 participants from across Europe, experts from the EuroPris ICT in Prisons Expert Group discussed the evolving role of OMS in data-driven prison management, highlighting current practices, implementation challenges, and future expectations across European prison systems. This summary outlines the key discussions and highlights some of the many excellent presentations



Opening Remarks

The workshop opened with remarks from EuroPris Executive Director Gustav Tallving, followed by a welcome address from State Secretary Vedrana Šimundža Nikolić of the Croatian Ministry of Justice. Zvonimir Penić, Director General of the Croatian Prison Service, presented the national approach to prison digitalisation. The session concluded with an interview with the EuroPris ICT Expert Group, presenting their key output: the report *Evolution of Prison Digitalisation: Situation, Risks and Benefits*, which outlines current developments, risks, and opportunities in the digital transformation of European prison systems.



Digital Strategy and progress in Northern Ireland Prison Service by Dianne Phillips and Robert Burrows (Northern Ireland) *Pia Puolakka – Track chair*

- **Time Efficiency through Mobile Devices:** The introduction of mobile devices has led to substantial time savings, reducing administrative workload by approximately 6,000 hours. This was achieved by shortening each staff interview by one hour, with 100% uptake among staff.
- **Improved Data Quality:** In addition to saving time, mobile devices have contributed to enhanced accuracy and consistency in data collection.
- **Digital Booking Systems for Visits:** The implementation of an online booking system for prison visits has delivered similar efficiencies. Visitors can schedule appointments and verify their identity through a secure digital portal, significantly easing the administrative burden on prison staff.



Panel discussion: Offender Management Systems: The Heart of Digital Prisons (Part I) *Marjan Lukavečki – Track chair*

- Marloes van de Braak (Netherlands) shared insights as a panelist. Hubert Unger and Dr Stephan-Enzo Ungersböck (Austria) presented their experience transitioning from an old to a new Offender Management System, while Liis Toom (Estonia) contributed with perspectives on IT integration in correctional settings.
- Several approaches to developing an OMS were discussed, including:
 - Building a system from scratch
 - Transitioning from legacy systems
 - Purchasing ready-made solutions
- The most common approaches in practice are transitioning from older systems and developing new solutions in-house.
- Although many OMS platforms were originally launched before 2010, they continue to evolve and improve over time. A key challenge in transitioning from an old to a new OMS is managing legacy data, which often doesn't align with current operational needs or technical requirements.
- Another common issue is that legacy systems tend to become large and difficult to adapt, making them increasingly hard to manage—as illustrated in the Austrian example.
- Conversely, Estonia's case demonstrated the value of building a new OMS from scratch, highlighting how solid foundations can open new opportunities for innovation.
- However, not all attempts at development succeed. The Dutch experience showed us that, in some cases, it's better to acknowledge when a system isn't meeting expectations and to start over.



During the panel, the concept of an Offender Management System (OMS) was defined as:

"An Offender Management System (OMS) is a specialised software used by corrections agencies (prison and probation) to manage and track offenders through their entire journey in the criminal justice system."

Panel discussion: Offender Management Systems: The Heart of Digital Prisons (Part II) Jacques Hensen – *Track chair*



There is no one-size-fits-all solution: Whether to build a new Offender Management System from scratch or to migrate from an existing system depends on each country's specific context and needs. Every approach brings unexpected challenges: While difficulties are inevitable, success is achievable with a well-defined and strategic approach.

Donna Creaven (Ireland) participated as a panelist. Christy Doyle (Ireland) presented the modernisation of the Offender Management System for the Irish Prison Service. Marjan Lukavečki (Croatia) reflected on lessons learned and the road ahead in developing OMS in Croatia. Håkan Klarin (Sweden) shared future-oriented strategies, including the use of AI, modern architecture, and data-driven solutions to create a scalable and resilient prison system.

Diverse Perspectives on OMS:

- There is no universally agreed-upon definition of Offender Management Systems (OMS). Some view it as a holistic, unified system, while others see it as a collection of specific systems managing information about people in custody.
- A shared goal emerged during the discussion: working toward a clear definition and setting standards to unify understanding and practices.

Shared Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- Many prison services face similar challenges, such as maintaining outdated systems, integrating new technologies, and adapting to evolving needs.
- Learning from one another's experiences, including mistakes, was emphasised as crucial for progress. Countries like Croatia highlighted the advantages of starting systems from scratch, while Sweden discussed the complexities of managing multiple generations of systems.

Role of AI and Change Management:

- Opportunities to enhance OMS with artificial intelligence were discussed regarding data-driven strategies and scalability.
- Effective change management is key when introducing new systems or updating existing ones. Transitioning without disrupting operations and ensuring staff adaptation are essential for success.
- These insights underline the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and innovation in modernising offender management systems across countries.

The challenges of introducing advanced software solutions to the German prison system by Anne Klockmeier and Susanne Klumpp (Bremen and Hessen, Germany)

Marloes Van De Braak, Netherlands - Track Chair

- In Germany, each federal state has departments responsible, among other things, for the digitalisation of prisons. These dedicated departments help maintain a strong focus on digital initiatives and opportunities.
- Despite having different laws—making them comparable to 16 separate countries—the German states are able to operate using (almost) the same Offender Management System (OMS). This demonstrates the potential for broader harmonisation of OMS across Europe.
- The current OMS used in Germany is outdated but remains stable—and sometimes, an older-looking system is not necessarily a disadvantage. Like many other countries, Germany emphasised the need for knowledge exchange and sharing lessons learned from OMS renewal projects.



Artificial Intelligence and OMS – Future Visions by Pia Puolakka, *Donna Creaven* - Track chair

Opportunities and Challenges of AI in OMS:

- AI offers transformative possibilities for offender management systems, such as improved assessment, placement, and profiling of offenders. It can optimise processes, predict future risks, assist in decision-making, and enhance cost-effectiveness, security, and sustainability.
- However, the adoption of AI in OMS in Europe is slow due to limited resources, knowledge, and regulations, though examples like the 'RISE AI' pilot in Finland highlight both benefits and risks.

Foundations for Successful AI Integration:

- Proper implementation of AI requires strong organisational foundations, including upskilling staff in digital and AI literacy. Clear data governance, well-structured data systems, and readiness to embrace new technologies are essential for effective use.
- There was a call for collaboration and shared data resources, such as pooling aggregate data in a central hub, could enable statistical analysis and better inform policies and procedures.

Ethical Considerations and Recommendations:

- AI integration must align with ethical principles, as highlighted by the Council of Europe's 2024 recommendations. These include managing risks and ensuring AI supports key offender management processes without compromising rights or safety.
- Learning from global examples and research can help European prison services navigate the ethical and organisational aspects effectively.
- It is important to balance innovation with practicality while addressing limitations and risks.



Pia Puolakka

Panel discussion: Unlocking the Power of Data: Reporting, Business Intelligence, and Data-Driven Decision Making in OMS *Hakan Klarin, Sweden – Track chair*

- Berker Küçükçetin (Türkiye) contributed as a panelist. Antony Shally (Ireland) presented how the Irish Prison Service is using data, technology, and predictive analytics to enhance operational efficiency. Tiina Unuks (Estonia) introduced a monitoring tool developed by the Estonian Prison and Probation Service, while Dr. Stephan Enzo Ungersböck (Austria) discussed the role of business intelligence and reporting in supporting data-driven decisions within the Austrian prison system.
- Data analysis plays a pivotal role in enabling prison services to make informed decisions, thereby enhancing operational efficiency and aligning practices with institutional missions and values. By adopting data-driven approaches, prison services can not only improve their internal processes but also serve as exemplars for other public sector organisations, fostering innovation and delivering broader societal benefits.
- Successful implementation of data-driven decision-making in prison services hinges on several critical factors. These include strong leadership support, the consolidation of all relevant data into a centralised database (such as the Prisoners and Probationers Database – KIR), comprehensive documentation of processes, and the presence of data analysts who possess a deep understanding of operational workflows. Additionally, direct IT support, unrestricted access to necessary databases, a steadfast commitment to data quality, and stringent data protection measures are indispensable for ensuring the reliability and security of the decision-making process.



Implementation of Digital Skills and Tools in the Process of Digitalisation of Correctional Services: The Croatian Experience by Lucija Vejmelka and Vesna Zelić Ferenčić *Jacques Hensen, Luxembourg – Track chair*

- Lucija Vejmelka and Vesna Zelić Ferenčić presented Croatia's forward-thinking approach to the digitalisation of correctional services, highlighting academic collaboration, the integration of virtual reality, and the ethical considerations of using artificial intelligence in justice processes. Their presentation underscored how innovation, when guided by evidence and purpose, can transform both the treatment of offenders and the professional development of probation officers.
- Structured e-learning programmes have been introduced for probation officers, prison staff, and training centres.
- Academic partnerships support evidence-based innovation in the justice sector.
- Artificial intelligence is increasingly used to improve efficiency, accuracy, and fairness in legal processes.
- Ethical and practical concerns surrounding AI remain key challenges to address.
- Digital transformation is not solely technical—it requires rethinking people and processes.
- The Croatian approach demonstrates how innovation and cross-sector collaboration can drive effective reform.



Conclusion

The workshop provided valuable insights into the complexities and benefits of implementing Offender Management Systems (OMS) within correctional services. A consistent takeaway was that while OMS can bring significant benefits, it also presents notable challenges. For these systems to deliver real value, it is essential that staff are well-equipped with the knowledge and skills to use them effectively in everyday operations. The Croatian experience provided further insight into how digital tools and competencies are being integrated across correctional services.

The workshop closed with a site visit to Split Prison, offering participants a practical look at local practices.



Site visit to the Split Prison