

**7th European Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA) Conference
Barcelona, 2014**

Workshop

Basic training on the prevention of conflict

"FINAL RESULT"

Workshop: "Basic Training on Conflict Prevention"

The purpose of this workshop was to establish a training programme on conflict prevention in the prison environment that could be adopted by the various training academies and count towards EPTA accreditation.

The participants were divided into two workgroups on the basis of language (French and English). The English-language group consisted of: Armenia, Bavaria, Belgium, Catalonia, Croatia, Georgia, Norway, Poland, Romania and Sweden, with apologies for non-attendance from the Austrian representative. The French-language group members were: Andorra, Belgium, Catalonia, France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland.

The two groups were very different in their dynamic, but this summary details the key points they each discussed.

General issues:

The work in the two groups revealed the differences between the penitentiary systems in each area, but it also offered an opportunity for participants to share information concerning their various models and highlighted the fact that, despite the differences in their prison systems, common aspects could be identified and agreed on when defining a training activity of this nature.

Nevertheless, it proved difficult to arrive at a final programme suitable for every area, regardless of their differences, in this single, brief session.

1. English-language group

The discussion considered the various issues related to the definition of the activity:

1.1 The main characteristics of the training programme:

- In order to employ common terminology among the various EPTA regions, the group considered whether the target group of 'security staff' was sufficiently inclusive and decided that 'prison staff' is a more appropriate term. The north-European countries train staff in dealing with inmates from the perspective of both security and rehabilitation and they regarded the term 'security staff' as inappropriate.
- The group also initially questioned whether the time allocated to the training (20 hours) was sufficient, given that comparable models of this kind of training last longer.

1.2 The concept of 'prevention of conflict':

- The group examined the concept of 'conflict' and considered the nature of the types of conflict to be encompassed in the training.
- They debated whether the training should include institutional methods for preventing conflict and came to the view that institutional approaches are clearly directly related to and impact on professionals' work. Nevertheless, the decision was made to focus on what prison staff could do to prevent conflict.
- The debate had, therefore, to be recentred around the concept of 'prevention', an aspect that was key to designing the training activity and which brought to light the differences between the penitentiary models employed in the various areas of the EPTA represented in the workshop.

- The group came to the view that it was appropriate to focus on communicational elements, which in turn made it necessary to redefine the objectives.

Agreements:

- 'Prevention of conflict' refers to what prison staff can do in their daily contact with inmates, to prevent conflicts: communication, motivation for participation in activities, structured ways of observing the inmates, etc. This is a broad concept, so the workshop should be focused on communication as a tool for preventing conflicts.
- Therefore, for the purposes of this training course, it does not refer to the institutional ways of preventing conflict that the institution has established (for example: location of violent inmates, activities and work for prisoners, passive security tools, etc.).
- It also excludes any action that should be carried out when conflict already exists.

1.3 The learning goals of the training:

The group's reflections on the concepts concerned (prevention and conflict) resulted in the objectives of the training being revised. It was decided that the course should focus on communicational aspects and that it should include those communicational elements which, in day-to-day contact with inmates, contribute to preventing conflict.

- The group regarded it as appropriate to include the concept of 'empathy' and 'non-verbal communication'.

- The participants reflected on the concept of the 'proper role' and decided it was more appropriate to speak of the "balance between security and care within the framework of the UN's minimum rules concerning the treatment of people deprived of their freedom".

- It was regarded as relevant to include aspects concerning adaptation to each inmate's profile.

The main goals of the training were defined as follows:

(A) To interact with inmates communicatively, assertively, with empathy and using elements of non-verbal communication; to provide them with appropriate, concise and clear information and to engage in active listening; to balance security and care (maintaining a professional distance) in the framework of the standard minimum rules; and to adapt communication to the inmate's profile (age, sex, gender, ethnicity, mental health, etc.).

1.4 The content and methodology to attain this goal:

These decisions meant that the number of training hours had to be revised and the number of people on the course had to be defined, since these aspects would directly affect the choice of teaching methods to be employed.

- The group also discussed whether the training should be subject to evaluation.

- The participants agreed that the application of the training in the workplace should be supervised by a tutor, especially if the course is part of staff's initial training.

In keeping with the group's redefinition of the first objective, participants discussed the most appropriate teaching methods to be employed (explanation of the theory, roleplaying, simulation of real situations with actors, case studies, videos, etc.).

2. French-language group

The group discussed the various aspects related to determining the training course:

2.1 The main characteristics of the training programme:

The group considered the possibility of tackling the content in initial and in continuing training by identifying and drawing a distinction between the knowledge that could be covered depending on trainees' experience.

The group questioned the number of hours: some members regarded them as excessive, whereas others believed them to be insufficient. In the end, the group raised the possibility of the number of hours being flexible and subject to possible alteration to suit the content and the resources of each training centre.

2.2 The concept of 'conflict prevention':

The group discussed those aspects that staff must take into account in order to anticipate potential conflict. The participants therefore considered concepts such as good observation, prior knowledge of inmates and their background, and the importance of self-understanding as an essential tool for shaping staff behaviour and responses to certain situations.

Agreements:

- 'Prevention of conflict' refers to everything that security staff can know and do in their daily contact with inmates in order to prevent conflict. It calls for work on self-understanding in order to anticipate certain staff responses to situations of conflict.
- It excludes institutional methods to prevent conflict (for example, isolating violent inmates, activities and work for prisoners, passive security tools, etc.).
- It also excludes any action to be taken once conflict has broken out.

2.3 The learning goals and content of the training:

Once the group had reviewed the proposed goals, concepts became to emerge such as *transparency, professional roles, change, legality* and *evaluation*, and these were incorporated into the proposed definitions. Some participants raised the fact that sharing certain information concerning inmates is difficult in their penitentiary models. The group also reflected on the concept of 'change' as a potential indicator of conflict. It was also regarded as appropriate to take into account the rules of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT).

The goals and content of the training were eventually formulated as follows:

- A. To interact communicatively with inmates assertively by giving them clear and concise information (transparency), ensuring active listening, maintaining one's role as a member of staff and the proper professional distance.
 - ✓ International rules and standards concerning conflict prevention
 - ✓ Behaving in an exemplary manner at all times
 - ✓ Gaining inmates' trust while maintaining a proper professional approach. Demonstrating one's usefulness and serving as someone inmates can look up to.
 - ✓ Assertiveness and empathy as effective communication techniques for preventing conflict
 - ✓ The correct use of non-verbal language
 - ✓ Recognising and controlling one's own emotions (self-understanding) in daily contact with inmates
 - ✓ Considering cultural diversity in places where inmates gather

B. To use structured means to observe inmates in order to identify and evaluate potential or developing conflicts.

- ✓ Identifying and observing signs of conflict in special situations:
 - Inmates with mental health problems
 - Inmates in special circumstances while serving their sentence (release on temporary licence, classification, etc.)
 - Substance consumption
 - Organised gangs and groups
 - Characteristics related to cultural diversity
- ✓ Regular observation of relations between inmates in their living spaces
- ✓ Daily observation of the environment:
- ✓ Changes in inmates' living regime
- ✓ Changes in the prison's organisational procedures

C. To use structured means of obtaining information from inmates in order to identify sources and information regarding a potential conflict.

- ✓ Analysis of information connected with violent inmates
- ✓ Co-ordination with other prison staff
- ✓ Analysis of information from other inmates, visits from relatives, moneylending (extortion), conjugal visits, etc.
- ✓ Consideration of inmates' history of conflict in other penitentiary centres

2.4 Methodology:

The group considered the most appropriate teaching methods for working on the content (explanation of the theory, roleplaying, the simulation of real situations, case studies, etc.), although participants concurred that a specific methodology for each aspect of the content could not be laid down since this was a decision that would be affected by the trainer's personal profile, the duration of the training and the goals of the training.

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