

VIII Conference

European Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA)

4 - 6 November 2015

The VIII Conference of the European Penitentiary Training Academies (EPTA), organised by Higher Institute for Penitentiary Studies (ISSP), was attended by delegates of Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Catalonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, and Switzerland. The conference closed one year of the EPTA Italian presidency. The 2016 presidency has been voted by the EPTA assembly during the VIII Conference and was decided to be held by Poland.

During its presidency, the Higher Institute for Penitentiary Studies has promoted training activities and exchanges among the EPTA country members and has started partnership agreements with EuroPris, in the aftermath of the EPTA consultation results. It has also been in contact with the Czech Republic and Turkey for their future involvement in the network.

The topic of the 2015 EPTA Conference has been *The training needs in the evolution of new penal patterns*. The trans-national debate has been of use in detecting the topic, which appears to us as the most consistent and in step with the prison context and societal transformations: it will also support joint discussions between advanced prison models and less change-oriented patterns; or else moving towards the implementation of new training curricula targeting the individual, the person and its relationship and the safeguard of human rights.



Wednesday, 4 November

The first conference day has been introduced by the director of the Higher Institute for Penitentiary Studies, Mr. Massimo De Pascalis. He focused on the mutual purposes of the countries, which are part of the EPTA such as, research, critical sense, awareness and close attention and care for the individual.

Since 2003, the Network has played a primary role in the creation of a European common vision for the social mission of the penitentiary system, to increase the sharing of best practices in the enforcement of sentences.

In 2014, Italy had the opportunity to test and implement probation for adults. At the very beginning of this new experience, it is of utmost importance to share information on European probation services to develop common penal patterns involving the EPTA network countries. And from them, to provide prison and probation staff with targeted training common curricula.

It is furthermore important to pay attention to some topics, which have recently emerged, such as the radicalization process in prison and probation settings, and to extend the boundaries of the European penitentiary staff training on a global scale.



This is what it is thought to be feasible by the head of the Italian prison department, Santi Consolo. He has also encouraged the use of technologies inside the prison facilities and in March Italy has issued a national provision on the access to the internet for prisoners (under the supervision of front line workers), showing an increased sense of openness. In Europe, Norway and Spain represent some examples of innovation both for their advanced facilities and for their inspiring organizational patterns.



The Head of the Belgian Prison Service, Hans Meurisse, showcased the Belgian experience of an ITC platform to enter the prison library network. Communication is one of the basic element for a better cooperation within the EPTA network, as it is the use of e-learning in as a training methodology, for inmates and for prison/probation staff.

EPTA aims at finding mutual skills that include the knowledge, the values and the best practices, said the head of the CEP, Marc Ceron. He also stressed the importance of prison/probation services commitment in terms of job guidance and vocational resettlement for detainees.

According to Mauro Palma, former PC-president, custodial sentences must be considered as an additional tool compared to other alternative sentencing pathways. Currently, alternative measures are for few privileged ones, and undoubtedly, prison is the result of existing social policies adopted by EU countries. In the past, remuneration did not contemplate the need for the individual's social resettlement. Nowadays, the purpose and necessity of penalty is to prevent society from greater damages, safeguarding the community through the resettlement of convicts in a context of social relations.



Furthermore, the relationship between prisoners and the penitentiary staff is to be reinvented. The system too shall undergo some changes: it shall be based upon the individual-in-custody's responsibility, and go beyond the passive and "infantilising" policy, which has characterized it so far. The responsibility model can be the only one capable of fully preparing the inmate to go through the gate.

The social aspect of sentence has also been underscored by Jean-Louis KOOPMANSCH, from the Belgian prison service. Talking about radicalisation issues in the Belgian prisons, he maintains that a change

of perspective is needed to counter the phenomenon in P&P settings. Radicalisation in P&P environments shall be prevented and prison/probation officers are in need to undergo a strong training focusing on risk assessment to prevent radicalisation processes within the inmate community. According to the speaker, the real issue is grounded in the social aspect of the phenomenon, which can be only countered through cooperation of Police Forces in the C.O.P.s (Community Oriented Policy). This is the orientation given by the Belgian model: for instance, by considering mentoring activities involving inmates in sports together with the suburban communities. The possibility of living in a "standardised" context improves the decision-making process and the overall awareness in relation to radicalisation.



Therefore, the new trends in sentencing are to guarantee opener detention regimes, which reduce relapse, asserted Marta FERRER PUIG, from CEJFE, the Penitentiary Training Academy of Catalonia. It has been surveyed a visible reduction in violent events, which has been also enhanced through an increase in the rehabilitative and resettlement offers.



Dave Clarke, director of the Irish Prison Service College, stressed the importance of wellbeing and mental health of prison officers. In Ireland, there is a widespread concern about violence against penitentiary staff. Work stress is a crucial factor, which



highly affects the effectiveness of professional interventions. We need to put a special focus on training in the safeguard of human rights and prisoners' dignity. As a rule, by helping them develop better communication skills. Yet, it has been launched a help line for the Irish penitentiary staff. It can be used for assistance and psychological counselling. In addition, it has been introduced a 5-days initial training to provide penitentiary officers with the most appropriate techniques to cope with physical and psychological stress.

In the afternoon, Silvio Lass, from the Straslund Penitentiary Institute, presented *The Examination*, a short film, which was shot during the practical final examination of a prison officer within his training course.

Thursday, 5 November

The conference second day opened with professor Marco Ruotolo, from the University of Roma3. He highlighted the need of safeguarding human rights in sentencing. Human rights in prison has also been the topic of Erich Hubmann's presentation, from the Austrian Penitentiary Academy. The deputy director presented the training course on human rights launched in his country. Since 2010, 15 trainers have been trained in human rights, and every year approximately 20 level2 5-days courses of are held, as well as 10 level1 2-days courses. In 2015, it was planned to train 19 trainers. More than half of the penitentiary officers have been trained in human rights in prison.



The prison governor of Rome Rebibbia NC presented the new sentencing pattern introduced in Italy in the management of medium security prisons, the so-called dynamic security. From a static custodial surveillance, with detainees secured for around 20 hours in cell rooms, to a dynamic, open custody for detainees. The number of rehabilitative activities in common spaces

have very much increased, as well as new, innovative operative methodologies, especially for custodial staff.

The day continued with the introduction of the refresher course for the Italian prison officers on the new organisational pattern. From the analysis of the training needs, through the administration of qualitative questionnaires, the Higher Institute delivered two training courses, one residential, the other on the national territory in prison premises. The basic methodology applied consisted of face-to-face classes, group debates, case studies and experiential approach. The course target was the prison managers, the penitentiary police staff, the rehabilitation and administrative staff. In 2013, around 90% of the managers were trained at the Italian academy, and in 2014, staff that involved in training accounted for 5,500 units (about 11% of whole staff).

Romania presented the *LBD-Learning By Doing* project, introduced by the coordinators Vasile Scutaru e Manuela Frangu, from the Penitentiary School in Tirgu Ocna. The project was presented within the Erasmus+ EU programme. It has a duration of 3 years. Romania is the project coordinator, while partners are the penitentiary academies of Italy, France, Turkey, Poland and the Republic of Moldova. The overall project aim is to improve the educational process of newly recruited custodial staff in prison academies, by sharing best practices and implementing new methods of learning and assessment practice.

The aim is to achieve an effective relationship between theoretical and practical training for best results and a better and quicker integration of graduates in the workplace.

The project website is the following: <https://www.lbderasmus.ro/>.



Friday, 6 November

The roundtable on *New processes of penal sentencing: the role of training* has been scheduled for the last day to share with the participants the difficulties Italy is



facing in training its prison staff, due to the economic restrictions imposed by the national budget. It also focused on the effort of providing its penitentiary staff with adequate skills and tools, in order to succeed in the pursuit of the institutional *mission* and the penitentiary service purposes, and in keeping the pace with the structural and organizational innovations.

Consequential to the new penal sentencing processes, the role of training became even more crucial in boosting the staff's self-confidence. Therefore, specialised and continuous training courses will have to be constantly increased and upgraded.



EPTA PRESIDENCY FOR 2016 WENT TO POLAND!



Our best wishes for a prosperous year!

EPTA-EUROPRIS

The VIII EPTA conference made it possible to discuss the adhesion proposal to *EuroPris*. During the final stages of the conference, the representatives from Catalonia, France and Italy, together with Prof. Mauro Palma, had a meeting with *EuroPris* (Mr Meurisse). They reported to *EuroPris* the results of the survey carried out in 2014-2015 among the EPTA member countries, and arranged the collaboration modalities between the two for year 2016. The results of the meeting, as well as a draft agreement, will be shared with the Penitentiary School of Poland, which is chairing EPTA in 2016.

