



EPTA Annual Conference 2020 Report

28-29 September 2020

Online



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About

The European Penitentiary Training Network (EPTA) was founded in 2010 by heads of European Penitentiary Staff Training Academies to provide for a structure that supports sharing of training methodologies and contents across Europe. EPTA aims at developing a cooperation that enhances initial and continuous training of correctional staff and at contributing to boost awareness of the correctional staff's work in prison and probation settings.

Introduction

Members of the EPTA Network meet annually at the EPTA Annual Conference to exchange the latest developments in the sector. This year, the Annual Conference was held online on 28-29 September 2020 during two half-day sessions, organised by the EPTA presidency, the Slovak General Directorate of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard.



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Day 1

The Annual Conference was organized in an online environment. Before the official start of the event, organizers checked and confirmed inevitable technical arrangements including a few ad-hoc announced participants.

Opening

At the very beginning of the conference, Mrs. Petra Tankovičová from the Corps of Prison and Court Guard in Slovakia, welcomed all participants and introduced herself and Mr. Peter Neuhybel as moderators of the conference. After introducing the agenda of the first day and key organizational measures, Mrs. Tankovičová handed the word over to Mrs. Jozef Valuch, president of the EPTA network.

Mr. Jozef Valuch welcomed the EPTA members and expressed hopefulness, even though participants are not meeting in person, they will still be able to enjoy the conference. For creating a picture about the Corps of Prison and Court Guard as the institution holding the EPTA presidency, organizers presented a short video showing its prisons and facilities around Slovakia. After the video, Mr. Valuch officially opened the conference.

EPTA Website

The conference continued with its first presentation prepared by Mrs. Julia Ilyina from EPTA secretariat, who introduced the EPTA website and its functionalities. The EPTA website was launched at the beginning of this year as one of the outputs of the project. Julia explained that the website will not only serve as the communication channel among members, but should become a main platform for sharing know-how, experience and source of valuable information for professionals from the EPTA network. Julia introduced the EPTA web environment, its structure, overview and layout. The main focus of the presentation was given on sections with resources including best practices, knowledge, training modules and materials that can enhance penitentiary training. She continued to explain the principles of the Knowledge Management System (KMS) and the experience of using it in the first months of operation. At the end of the presentation, Julia invited EPTA members to sign in and capitalize on using the EPTA website.

European Judicial Training

The Annual EPTA conference hosted a guest from the European Judicial Training at European Commission. Ms. Emmanuelle Cretin-Magand, Policy coordinator, kindly shared her experience with evolution of support for penitentiary training institutions within the EC resulting in the project "Tackling Gaps in Cross-Border Cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies". Ms. Emmanuelle Cretin-Magand invited EPTA members to continue in cooperation between Penitentiary academies and even extended the cooperation with Judicial Training institutions when it is possible. She also appreciated sustainability of the current project that will be ensured by new project.

EU funded projects supporting EPTA network

Mrs. Emma Oosten from Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) opened her presentation by introducing NHC, its mission, activities and involvement in cooperation with Penitentiary Academies and EPTA network. She continued with a short summary of milestones of the current project highlighting key outputs. Mrs. Emma Oosten presented outputs from the midterm evaluation pointing out positive feedback from respondents, both on the level of project running and EPTA network functioning. The current project is scheduled up to June 2021 and the good news is that continuity will be achieved by the new project called "Innovating together: Connecting European Penitentiary Training Academies". The new project aims to support, develop and make the EPTA network sustainable by activities like annual meetings, specific training tools, development of innovative training methods and even cross-borders training staff exchanges between academies.



Outputs from Special Interest Groups (SIG)

Ms. Lisanne Veldt continued with a presentation of one of the key outputs from the current project "Tackling Gaps in Cross-Border Cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies" namely the European comparison and best practices, Minimum standards and Handbook (practical guidelines) on three topics:

- 1) Leadership/Management Training
- 2) Dynamic Security Training
- 3) Training on Managing Difficult Inmates

Ms. Lisanne Veldt introduced the process of approaching to and selecting Special Interest Group members and experts on mentioned topics. There were 14 SIG members representing 10 EPTA countries that were divided into three groups. During the development of materials, there were three meetings planned of each SIG group. Due to the COVID-19, there was an initial meeting in person and one taking place online. The final version of documents are expected in December 2020 and will be translated into 15 languages. The overall introduction of the Special Interest Group and its outcomes was continued by the presentation of the representative of each SIG.

Dynamic Security Training

Ole Stageberg, from University College of Norwegian Correctional Service (KRUS) started a presentation with introducing all members of the group and deliverables they were expecting to develop. The presentation continued with an overview of the first document (European Comparison & Best practices), with how the group approached to the development of the material, what kind of tools, expertise and knowledge are used in experts' countries and short characteristics of these tools/methods. Followed by the "Minimum standards" document, Mr. Ole Stageberg shared challenges the SIG members have had to consider when developing the material. The SIG members identified and agreed on 6 Minimum standards for the Dynamic Security training, stressing on that others could also be taken into consideration. The third document (Handbook) overviewed steps for building training curricula, importance of methodology and finally, introduced Mentorship as an approach ensuring the effective development of required skills among prison staff students.

Leadership & Management Training

Mr. John Flavin from the Irish Prison Service College provided an overview of the SIG and introduced their members and the status of their outputs. He continued with the insight into how the group approached the task of developing expected outputs, beginning with defying the target group and presenting work on each document individually. With the European comparison and best practice, John pointed out that the group suggested tagging it as "good practice" since the SIG members are aware of limitations they have had to cover such a broad topic in a few months. Nevertheless, comparison of Leadership and Management training in nine European countries has been executed. To make the comparison relevant, the group chose seven areas in creating the structure, which was used for the purpose. Concerning the second document defying minimum standards, these were divided into two levels. First, organizational level defying standards for induction, needs analyses, structure, competencies, quality of trainers, evaluation and interagency of training. The second aspect focuses on training content that should include standards in areas, among others, such as human rights, understanding the role of a public servant, professional ethics and values and staff development. Finally, the development of the third document (Handbook) is still in progress, though the group has a structure for the Handbook and its components have been presented.

Training on Managing Difficult Inmates

The final speaker among the SIG Groups was Ms. Clare Kambamettu from the Irish prison Service. Clare began her presentation with introducing six members of the group and appreciating the cooperation and creative atmosphere within the team.



Briefly summarizing the process, Ms. Clare Kambamettu highlighted the very early discussions the experts had on defining who are the difficult inmates and what are the biggest challenges when working with difficult inmates. Based on having these premises defined, the group approached to the first document (European comparison & Best practice) identifying what is common in each experts' country when dealing with difficult inmates. With the Minimum standards document, the experts compiled recommendations such as the UNODC guidelines, Council of Europe Code of Ethics, European Prison Rules, and UNODC Handbook on Management, etc. As far as Handbook is concerned, the SIG identified components that could be incorporated into training and also provides two examples of full training programs (Ireland, France) to create an idea on how the setup of such training could look like.

Day 2

The second day of the annual EPTA conference commenced with a brief introduction of the agenda for the day. The agenda included presentations from various countries regarding COVID-19 obstacles and changes in their respective training academies, updates in the EPTA statutory rules, innovative methods in prison staff trainings and remote education, and lastly, an introduction of the new EPTA members.

Training academies addressing COVID-19

The first training academies that addressed COVID-19 were from Slovakia, France, Academy of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine and Ireland. All four representatives of the training academies started their presentations with a brief explanation of the academy's structure and their regular training activities before COVID-19. Then, the presentations elaborated more on the challenges and changes in the prison staff training in each respective academy.

1. In the Slovakian Training Centre of Prison Service, all activities were suspended until June 2020 due to COVID-19. However, there was a need for alternative solution; thus, the Slovakian representatives opted for a combined training form. The combined form consists of individual theoretical and practical preparation in prison linked with video consultations. The theoretical preparation includes different topics sent to the students; then, the lecturers elaborate on these topics and provide video consultation. Additionally, the practical preparation includes methodological materials and videos provided by the lecturers with practical training under a direct supervision.

Since 1 June, the stricter anti-epidemiological measures triggered short-term educational activities in the form of specialized professional training carried out online full time. The advantages of the online training are that this type of training is the only form enabling the continuation of the prison staff training at time of social restrictions, and that Webex consultations enabled students to ask questions or consult problem topics.

2. During the lockdown in France, the National Correctional Administration Academy (ÉNAP) established training and business continuity plans. The training continuity plan consists of early leave of some trainees, creation of digital content, pedagogical follow-up and technical support. Additionally, the business continuity plan includes the implementation of the degraded mode for the service in-prison, administrative and legal consequences, and development of teleworking. The business plan was piloted by daily in-prison executive committee, weekly video conferences and regular contact with administrative and health authorities.

As of 11 May, the de-confinement was done by receiving trainees for a full training week of online theoretical training, implemented to limit the number of trainees on campus.

Currently the ÉNAP has three main objectives: reinforcing the technological performance of the online platform, training the trainers and providing equipment to the trainees.



3. Representative of Ukraine, Oleksii Togochnytsky, from the Academy of the State Penitentiary Service presented the undertaken activities during the pandemic, which are primary elements of distance learning. These elements include practice arranged trainings involving interactive complexes of academic disciplines; distance learning through different platforms such as Zoom and Skype; multiple videos illustrating techniques such as culture resistance and self-defense; the use of technical means such as supervision and control over convicts; and consultations with lecturers.

The advantages of the online training are the development of personal qualities, the IT development of educational courses, communication competence skills improvement. However, to the academy experienced some challenges such as low speed of internet and lack of electronic means for the students.

4. The Irish Prison Service was represented by John Flavin, who elaborated on the changes made in the prison staff training during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Irish strategy is divided on three main pillars: facilities, education and training. The changes in the facilities involve temperature-checking stations, as well as hand sanitizing stations, located in multiple areas, floor signs and reduced capacity in the canteen and other rooms. Then, the education of the staff consist mainly on COVID-19 education and social distance learning. However, the education in the higher institutions continues online, with the use of different platforms. Lastly, the Prison Service cancelled all non-essential training. The only training that has been maintained is the recruit prisoner-officer training.

Update on EPTA membership statutory rules

Cédric Le Bosse presented the proposed new EPTA statutory rules on behalf of the EPTA Steering Committee. The main changes include:

- » Reaffirms its commitment to the Conventions and Recommendations of the Council of Europe;
- » Encourages cooperation activities beyond the annual conference;
- » Clarifies the duties of the rotating presidents;
- » Commits to the 2016 agreement with EuroPris acting as permanent secretariat;
- » Sets the Steering Committee's organization (beyond the currently funded projects);
- » Facilitates the nomination of a president through a funding option for the conference;
- » Contributes to easier communication and collaboration for EPTA members;
- » Renews the application and certification process and documents.

A vote for the new statutory rules was established and the rules were approved by 22 members.

Innovative methods and approaches in prison staff training (Czech Republic)

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Czech Prison Service Academy established online blended courses, where students participate in video trainings. However, technology is essential and before COVID-19, there was a lack of technology for the staff members and the lecturers. The distribution of paper textbooks and manuals is not sufficient; thus, the Academy developed online study materials. In addition, the theoretical examinations are conducted via Skype and similar platforms, but the practical examinations have been cancelled.

The Czech Academy also applied facility measures similar to the Irish ones. There have been intensive cooperation between the prisons and the academy, multiple sanitary measures such as temperature-check stations and alcohol-based sanitizers, personal protective equipment for the staff members, and a decreased number of classes and students in the rooms.



The platform usage, remote education and organization of examinations carried out in a remote form (Poland)

The Higher School of Criminology and Penitentiary Science in Warsaw also presented the changes made during the COVID-19 pandemic. The school switched to online education as the other academies. However, it is utilizing only one online platform to carry out the education, which is Moodle. The contact between students and lecturers is mainly through Moodle chatroom and sometimes through other online platforms. Regarding the examinations, the HSCPSW opted for online examinations, where three dates are provided for the students to choose from.

New EPTA members

EPTA welcomes five new members: the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses in Turkey, the Educational Institute of the Custodial Institutions Agency of the Netherlands, Academy of the State Penitentiary Academy Ukraine, Bila Tserkva Penitentiary Staff Training Center Ukraine and the Institut de Formation Pénitentiaire from Luxemburg. Turkey stated that only some of the trainings are still active, while the focus is more on online education and video conferences. The Netherlands elaborated on the competences required of a staff member and the different areas of expertise. The education and training in Bila Tserkva is carried out remotely, while prioritizing activities such as development of probation service, participating in scientific conferences and others.

Note that in addition and as support of this report, recordings of the online conference and PowerPoint presentations are available on the [EPTA website](#).





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