



# Best Practices in Training in Managing Difficult Inmates

EPTA Special Interest Group



Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann  
Irish Prison Service



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## Best Practices in Training in Managing Difficult Inmates

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## The Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)

The NHC is a non-governmental organisation which seeks to promote an international and societal rule of law under which human rights can be fully realised. The NHC sets out to reinforce and support the activities of international and national governmental and non-governmental organisations in conflict prevention, human rights protection, the upholding of the rule of law, and the promotion of democracy across the OSCE area.

On behalf of EPTA, the NHC coordinates the EU-funded project 'Tackling Gaps in Cross-Border Cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies' in cooperation with the EPTA Steering Committee. The intention of the project is to create a sustainable, professional and active EPTA network, which is capable of tackling gaps in cross-border cooperation by stimulating participation and exchanges within the wider network. The project got started in 2018 and will be finalised in 2021.

NHC will also coordinate an EU-funded follow-up project, starting in 2021. This project will continue to strengthen the network, contribute to its sustainability and allow for more in-depth sharing of information on the current challenges in the penitentiary field.

For more information, please visit [www.nhc.nl](http://www.nhc.nl)



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# Introduction

A disparity exists between the different countries in terms of their knowledge, approaches and opinions regarding the management of difficult inmates in prison settings and the proper training for those who work with this target group. Therefore, a need for clearer direction and guidelines in this regard was identified, and a panel of European experts (special interest group or SIG) was established within the European Union-funded project 'Tackling gaps in cross-border cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies'. This document is intended to outline national best practices employed by various European jurisdictions in training staff involved in managing difficult inmates in specialised units.

For the purpose of this document, the following terms will be used interchangeably:

- Inmates/prisoners – people detained in custody in a prison or jail;
- Prison officers/correctional officers – (uniformed) officials responsible for managing people committed to prison awaiting trial or serving a sentence in secure custody.

## Target audience

The main target audience of this paper are prison training academies which are involved in training prison/correctional officers who work with difficult inmates.

## Definition

Difficult inmates are a particular cohort of people who present serious problems for prison management, prison staff, other prisoners and themselves, through (repeated) violent behaviour. The focus is on those prisoners who display such high levels of violence that they must be removed from general population, and placed in a more secure location and with higher staffing levels in an effort to address their violent and disruptive behaviour.



# Overview of national best practices

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## Training Centre for the Prison Staff, Croatia

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Due to its relatively small prison population, there are no training programmes in Croatia specifically designed to work with difficult prisoners. However, several existing training programmes are addressing certain aspects of this topic and can be employed in training prison officers managing difficult inmates.

### Communication and Aggression Reduction

#### About the training

The 'Communication and Aggression Reduction' training programme is one of three basic groups of activities being carried out within the project: (2008) MATRA bilateral pre-accession technical assistance programmes on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, EVD implemented MATRA pre-accession project programmes (FLEX and MPAP).

From 2008 to 2010, all prison officers in Croatia completed the training Communication and Aggression Reduction. The success of the programme was monitored by analysing five types of situations relevant to the overall security level in penitentiaries, prisons, and educational institutions:

- 1) The physical conflict between prisoners;
- 2) Attack on prison officers by prisoners;
- 3) Self-mutilation;
- 4) Use of restraints, and;
- 5) Suicides (prisoners).

Due to the positive results of the training, the programme was incorporated into the basic training for the prison officers so that everyone who starts working in a prison has the additional skills that the training offers.

#### Training content

- Basics of communication – verbal and non-verbal, direct and indirect, communication disorders;
- Conversation skills: listening, asking questions, summarising, providing feedback;
- Conflicts: latent/manifest, conflict backgrounds, institutional sensitivity to conflict, styles in conflict;
- Reduction of aggression: types of aggression, natural reactions to aggressive behaviour, professional reaction to aggression.

#### Training methodology

##### Duration:

Three days (24 hours) as a part of the four-month basic training.

##### Frequency:

Once or twice a year (depending on the number of newly-recruited prison officers).

##### Target audience:

Prison officers in basic training.

##### Number of participants:

Work in small groups to ensure the best possible implementation of the training - approximately 10 trainee prison officers.

##### Type:

Training consists of theoretical and practical modules.

##### Evaluation:

Evaluation questionnaires are distributed to participants immediately after the training. Scores are indicated on the five-point scale (including some open questions). This training is only one part of the basic training and it is assessed throughout based on the feedback of the trainer. Trainees are videotaped as they perform practical exercises of the content they are learning and, on that basis, they are given feedback. This training is added to basic training, and it is not assessed in the same way as the rest of basic training.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prison officers are continuously assessed throughout the basic training and the final evaluation is divided into two parts, theoretical and practical. Mentors monitor and evaluate the participants during the practical part of the basic course.)

## How to deal with critical incidents

### Duration of the project:

18 months (7 March 2016 – 9 September 2017)

'How to deal with critical incidents' is one of the six training programmes for prison staff created by the project 'Support to the prison system of the Republic of Croatia – CRO PRISYS'.<sup>2</sup> Screening of the existing training programmes for juvenile psychosocial treatment staff was performed and a corresponding report with recommendations for improvement, prepared in line with the best EU practice, was published. The recommendations were harmonised with the specific needs and objective possibilities in terms of measures to be implemented in the Croatian juvenile psychosocial treatment system.

### Partners:

- German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation (IRZ), Federal Republic of Germany;
- Ministry of Home Affairs – General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions (SGIP), Kingdom of Spain;
- International and Ibero-American Foundation of Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP), Kingdom of Spain;
- Ministry of Justice, Republic of Croatia.

The overall objective of the project was to improve the professional skills of the Croatian Prison System and to support the implementation of the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms regarding prison systems. The relevant national legislation is the Law on the Enforcement of the Prison Sentence (Zakon o izvršavanju kazne zatvora, 1999).

### About the training

The programme was based on conflict and critical incidents prevention, as well as self-care of prison officers. The main focus of this education was on how to prevent conflicts or incidents using communication skills and how to properly deal with stress after a conflict or incident has occurred.

The work with juvenile offenders is based on the assumption that juveniles are not as stable in their behavioural patterns as adults and that they can still be influenced more by psychosocial treatments.

Prison staff (including both the security and the treatment staff) offer juvenile inmates a model for non-violent communication, continuous work on relationships and reliable agreements.

During the very intensive work with juvenile offenders, conflicts might develop and escalate because juveniles' self-control mechanisms are not yet fully developed and they do not manage their behaviour as most adults do. They are often more impulsive, unregulated, and dependent on external influences. Conflicts are important and also offer a chance to reflect on the relationship between the treatment staff and the prisoner.

However, there is also the risk that conflicts will escalate and place prison staff in critical situations in which they feel uncomfortable or maybe even afraid. These could involve an attack by a juvenile offender or an attack between two prisoners, for example. These situations could be critical incidents and could require crisis intervention in order for the prison staff to protect themselves and to manage the critical situation professionally. Some advice on how to prevent unnecessary conflicts is also provided in this training programme.

A suicide or attempted suicide of a juvenile offender is also a critical incident that has to be handled by professionals. Juveniles will often show signs in advance if they are at risk of attempting suicide. These signs should be recognised by the treatment staff, who should take steps to prevent suicides or attempted suicides.

### Training content

First module (2 days)

- Juvenile specifics;
- Self-awareness;
- Stress;
- Stress structures;
- Challenges of working in the prison system and probation (conflicts, incidents, critical incidents);
- Psychosomatics;
- Psychological aspects of juvenile suicide risk;
- Teamwork in incidental situations;
- Responsibility = challenge + obligation;
- Psychological crisis team as a form of support for prison and probation officers (raising awareness).

<sup>2</sup> This training programme was not specifically designed for prison officers who work with violent prisoners. However, some modules may be used for that purpose.

Second module (2 days)

- Obstacles in working with juveniles in the prison and probation system;
- Feedback as a strategy in conflict/incident prevention;
- Conflicts and incidents as a part of working with juveniles;
- View from the second angle (psychosocial treatment/security/probation);
- Examples of good practice;
- Working on mental health as part of your responsibility;
- Teamwork as a basis of prevention.

### **Training methodology**

#### **Duration:**

First training module: two days (16 hours);  
Second training module: two days (16 hours).

#### **Frequency:**

Once a year.

#### **Target group:**

The training is intended for all psychosocial treatment staff and prison and probation officers who work with juvenile offenders.

#### **Number of participants:**

Approximately 15 participants (working in small groups to ensure the best possible implementation of the training).

#### **Type:**

The training consists of theoretical and practical components. A practical and active methodology is used, promoting group dynamics, discussions, role-playing, and analysis of real-life situations.

During the training, the analysis of real-life situations and cases representative of the daily practice of the participants are prioritised to maximize the generalisation of the learning to the actual work environment.

#### **Evaluation:**

Evaluation questionnaires for participants are distributed immediately after the training. Scores are given on a five-point scale (including some open questions).

### **Outcomes and lessons learned**

During the implementation of the methods learned, a weaker sense of team approach was observed due to the involvement of only psychosocial treatment officers in the training programme. Therefore, other prison and probation officers in training were also included

later to make sure all categories of staff (psychosocial treatment staff, prison officers, probation staff) can work together effectively.

The training was initially intended only for officers working with juveniles in the prison system. However, it later proved applicable to all prison officers.

### **Other training initiatives on managing difficult inmates**

#### **Psychological Crisis Intervention Team**

In the Croatian Prison and Probation system, whenever an incident arises, prison and probation officers can request help from the Psychological Crisis Intervention team to improve their well-being.

The Psychological Crisis Intervention Team assists prison and probation officers after highly stressful and potentially traumatic events. It also performs preventive activities and other activities that contribute to improving the mental readiness of employees in the performance of their work.

#### **Supervision**

In addition, every prison and probation officer has the possibility to receive support during the supervision. The supervision is conducted once a month to increase the quality of work with demanding inmates, strengthen the competencies of employees, and to support work. Supervisors are external associates as well as experts who work at the Ministry of Justice (in penitentiaries, probation, etc.).



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## College of Justice, the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences

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The Estonian Prison Service (EPS) is committed to:

- Re-socialising and guiding inmates towards law-abiding behaviour;
- Protecting the public law and order.

### About the high security unit

In 2008, when Estonia opened its second chamber-type (closed cell) modern prison, the EPS established also a special unit for violent and disruptive inmates. The unit's main goal is to re-socialise and ensure the supervision of high-risk inmates. The main difference compared with other EPS units is that in order to cater to the needs of high-risk inmates, work and educational programmes are carried out in the closed environment of the unit.

The high security unit is smaller than other open units and it can be divided up further for higher security. It is managed by a unit manager who oversees a team of case managers, psychologists, medical workers, prison officers, etc. All prison staff in the unit have considerable knowledge of the management of difficult inmates and are required to take a higher-level physical tests.

### Training content

Similar to other jurisdictions (including Ireland), all officers are trained at an advanced level in security and psychology. The goal is to prepare these officers to work with violent and often intelligent and/or highly manipulative inmates.

The basic requirement to work as a prison officer in that unit is completion of one year of study at the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences (EASS). The graduates of this curriculum are capable of working in positions at the professional level of class II prison officers (prison officer, escort officer). It is possible to obtain the professional level of a class I prison officer (senior prison officer, senior escort officer) while working in a prison. There is also a requirement that prior to working in the high security unit, officers must have gained experience working in other units, as well.

The EPS divides officers who work with inmates into two groups: case managers and prison officers.

Prison officers undertake special training in security and restraints as well as in teamwork. The focus is also on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) where a particular subject is taught in a foreign language with the participation of both specialty and language teachers. Also, all prison staff are trained as first responders in cases of emergencies.

For case managers, EASS has developed a specialised case manager training course, where students acquire specific knowledge and skills to help decrease recidivism by employing target group-based interventions (young and mentally-challenged inmates, foreign inmates, inmates connected with organised crime) whilst in prison. Studies of this curriculum can be undertaken by students who have a prison's referral, secondary education diploma, and three years of experience working in a prison and competence level of at least EQF four. On completion, graduates are capable of working as case managers with specific groups of inmates.

### Training methodology for prison officers

#### Duration:

The duration of the training programme for prison officers is one year and the training is worth 60 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). This provides participants with the special training required to work as a prison officer managing difficult inmates. They attend regular continuous development programmes.

#### Frequency:

Twice a year (starting in September and in February).

#### Number of participants:

EASS trains 65 prison officers each year, however only one or two will end up working in a high security unit.

#### Type:

The training consists of six modules covering:

- **Basic studies:** e.g., organisation ethics, structure and traditions;
- **Prison law:** e.g., understanding and applying prison law, associating prison law with everyday tasks;

- Communication and re-socialisation: e.g., human behaviour (biological, social and psychological factors), conflict communication, criminology theories, re-socialisation goals and measures;
- Security and surveillance: e.g., daily tasks of an officer, documentation, transportation of prisoners, first response;
- Self-defence and first aid: e.g., physical test, using different weapons, self-defence measures;
- Internship.

#### **Evaluation:**

Officers are continuously assessed throughout the training programme. The final evaluation is divided into two parts: theoretical and practical.

#### **Training methodology for case managers**

##### **Duration:**

Six months and 30 ECTS.

##### **Frequency:**

As needed (no more than once a year).

##### **Number of participants:**

12-15 officers.

##### **Type:**

The training consists of four modules covering:

- Young inmates with mental health problems: e.g., how to work with young inmates with mental health problems, risk assessment of special groups, cooperation with other specialists (psychologists and medical staff, for example);
- Foreign prisoners: e.g., difference between working with foreign prisoners, refugees and other prisoners;
- Inmates who have been involved in organised crime: e.g., special risk assessment for these inmates, communication with highly criminogenic inmates;
- Internship;
- Final exam.

##### **Evaluation:**

Officers are assessed at the end of the internship by evaluating tasks accomplished during their internship.

#### **Outcomes and lessons learned**

Overall, the quality of the training tends to improve when different teachers organise the training programmes together and when different topics are taught in a multidisciplinary manner (like CLIL). Furthermore, it is important to approach the teaching process in an open-minded manner so that the officers can be more independent.

Finding the right combination of experienced/suitable personnel, however, can be challenging and requires extra consideration.

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## The National Correctional Administration Academy (ENAP), France

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This chapter describes the training provided to prison officers who work in the units for violent inmates (nationally known as *Unités pour Détenus Violents* – UDV).

### About the UDV

Due to rising levels of violence in detention facilities, the programme for managing violent offenders was redesigned with two major objectives in mind:

- To develop a specific approach to managing violent inmates in order to meet the needs of post-crisis management and to avoid aggressive and violent incidents in detention;
- To take charge of violent incidents over a period of up to nine months in order to facilitate a return to normal detention without the risk of acts of violence being committed.

This programme covering violent individuals in detention is aimed at developing units for violent inmates (UDV) within each interregional directorate, in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Code de procédure pénale, 2020). Before being assigned to the UDV, inmates are reviewed by a multidisciplinary committee and a robust debate is held on the appropriateness of the individual's placement in the UDV (including an interview with the inmate to discuss the reasons for their placement, their rights and obligations, and the objectives of the placement). Individuals placed in the UDV are those who have committed acts of violence after disciplinary sanctions or whose history of offences whilst in detention or current behaviour indicates that there is an impending risk of an act of violence being committed.

The UDV considers applications for placements of adult men assigned to remand prisons, detention centres and security prisons. Whilst in the UDV, each prisoner is assigned their own individual cell, which is equipped with special apparatus such as handcuffing trapdoors. Prisoners are accompanied on all movements by several officers assigned to the UDV.

On arrival in the UDV, the detainee is placed under observation for two weeks. Each multi-disciplinary staff member, including prison governors and rehabilitation and probation officers) has an evaluation grid specific to his/her area of intervention. Each grid was designed by the prison administration headquarters with multi-disciplinary contributions from anthropological and psychological perspectives in addition to input from a deputy director in the National Assessment Centre. These grids are tools which help determine an inmate's risk of violence and appropriate management strategies.

Following the two-week observational period, the inmate is reviewed by the Assessment and Management of Violent Inmates multi-disciplinary committee which is comprised of a staff member from each discipline employed in the UDV. The information derived from the grid described above is reviewed and a decision is made as to whether the prisoner should continue to be housed in the UDV for an additional three months. If the inmate remains in the UDV, an individualised care programme to help them reduce their violent behaviour is determined. Following this period, each inmate is reviewed on a monthly basis. It should be noted that in accordance with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Sanchez v. France*, 2005 (*Ramirez Sanchez v. France*, 2006) the duration of the placement in the UDV cannot exceed nine months.

The decree of 30 December 2019 (Ministre De La Justice, 2019b), amended the French Criminal Procedure Code and allowed for the establishment of UDV. This regulatory text confirms the detention regime applicable within these units; it defines the procedure for the placement and renewal of placement of detained persons, the emergency assignment procedure, the maximum duration of placement and deals with various provisions on the situation of detained persons.

### UDV staff

Staff members from various disciplines within the prison service can apply to work in the UDV. Uniformed staff are selected for this role by the head of the establishment and non-uniformed staff are selected by the prison director of integration and probation. All UDV staff (prison officers, team leaders, senior officers, prison governors, probation staff and psychologists) are required to attend a 14-day training

programme on managing violence in prison. The programme was created by the ENAP and the structure must be adhered to in order to ensure consistency across the service nationally. Due to the inherent difficulty of their role, the agents of the UDV are supported by prison service psychologists. The aim of this support is to facilitate officers in maintaining the objectivity and integrity necessary for their work.

A description of the training is provided below.

### Training content

#### SKILL UNIT 1: Mastering the Institutional Framework and UDV Procedures

- Doctrine of UDV and operating protocols;
- Role and duties of UDV team members;
- Understanding the phenomenon of violence;
- Preventing violence;
- The foundations and the central place of dynamic security;
- Observation and formalisation of the evaluation grid;
- The exchange and role of every professional in the multidisciplinary committee;
- The multidisciplinary processing programme;
- The probation references of operational practices in the collaborative approach and motivational interviewing.

#### SKILL UNIT 2: Responding to aggressive or violent behaviour

- Team cohesion;
- Stress management;
- The elements of communication and non-violent communication;
- Defence, intervention, control and handcuffing techniques;
- Positioning yourself in an intervention team;
- Intervening as a team when a cell is on fire.

#### SKILL UNIT 3: Consolidating the professional reference practices at the UDV

- Videos for autoscoping<sup>3</sup> and application of skill units 1 & 2;
- In situ testing-/detainee movements based on protocols and operating notes;
- Exercises which simulate complex professional situations or emergency situations as closely as possible/'in situ' simulations and analysis of professional practices;
- Autoscoping and exploration of the videos on movements and simulations/evaluation and

- update of protocols and operating notes;
- The briefing and debriefing protocol/personnel support;
- Restoring communication after the crisis;
- Mediation awareness;
- Training assessment/questionnaires from the training observatory/identifying needs to strengthen staff and team expertise.

### Training methodology

#### Target audience:

Prison officers who have successfully completed the initial training and are about to be assigned to a UDV.

#### Duration:

Self-training tutorials and a 14-day face-to-face training course.

#### Evaluation:

Questionnaires are to be filled in by trainees on the platform (at the beginning and the end of training).

#### Teaching modality:

- Combination of face-to-face and remote training (e-learning and e-training);
- Interventions by professionals and specialists;
- Classes for groups of up to 20 people;
- Action-based training which targets know-how, especially with regard to interpersonal skills. The training in the third week is therefore devoted to simulations and debriefings.

#### Supporting material for trainers:

Regulatory texts, international experiences, video support materials, summarised sheets, a professional practice analysis guide, specialised presentations on proven programmes.

### Outcomes and lessons learned

This training is intended primarily for staff who work in a UDV but should, as far as possible, be provided to other staff who work in detention facilities. The intention is for this training module to evolve over time based on the experiential feedback from staff who work in UDVs and that it will eventually be integrated into the wider training provided by ENAP to surveillance staff and management staff as well as integration and probation staff. These new UDVs may be subject to monitoring, in particular by the internal control section of the Correctional

<sup>3</sup> Autoscoping uses the video clip that was filmed during the training. It is an analysis in a classroom in order to verify if the gestures and behaviours have been properly understood. It allows the agent to perform their own analysis of their practice and helps the group evolve.

Administration Headquarters (DAP). In addition, a national steering committee was set up in 2019 to evaluate their activity; this is headed by the central services of the DAP alongside ENAP representatives and representatives from each staff discipline working in the UDVs. It meets every six months to assess this new system and to ensure the consistency of professional procedures and practices.

Furthermore, the decree of 23 December 2019 grants authorisation on an experimental basis, and until 5 February 2022, for prison administration surveillance staff to make audio-visual recordings of their interventions using individually worn body cameras (Ministre De La Justice, 2019a). There are three rationales for doing this: the prevention of incidents and escapes; the recognition of offences and the prosecution of their perpetrators (through the collection of evidence); and staff training. Thus, the data can be used within the framework of the training of agents under the condition that anonymity is guaranteed. This data is a valuable additional resource which will provide ENAP with greater insight into the work of the UDVs and the ongoing training needs of staff so that these can be addressed accordingly.

More information on the training is available in English and French upon request.

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## The Irish Prison Service (IPS) College

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The Irish Prison Service (IPS) is committed to:

- Protecting staff and other persons from inmates who have a history of committing violent acts and who are considered to be at a high risk of causing serious injury to another person, and;
- Using evidenced-based practice to intervene in situations involving those inmates categorised as violent and disruptive in order to reduce their risk of committing violent acts in prison and after release from prison.

### About the NVRU

On 4 July 2016, the Irish Prison Service (IPS) established a national facility, the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), to better manage the small number of violent and disruptive prisoners in custody. Based in the Midlands Prison, and opened on 1 November 2018, the new unit and the training designed for its staff were developed based on international best practice and evidence-based guidelines.

Amongst the guidelines consulted were:

- Irish Prison Rules (Prison Rules, 2007);
- European Prison Rules (Committee of Ministers, 2006);
- NICE Guidance (NICE, 2017);
- Mandela Rules (United Nations, 2015);
- CoE guidelines on recruitment and staff training (Adams & Carr, 2019);
- UNODC, 2016, *Handbook on the Management of High-risk Prisoners*, United Nations Office, Vienna: Austria (Atabay & Bryans, 2016);
- Coyle, A., 2009, *A Human Rights Approach to Prison Management*, International Centre for Prison Studies, London: UK (Coyle, 2009);

The NVRU was designed specifically for this special purpose and is led and jointly managed by Operational and Clinical Leads, namely an assistant governor and senior psychologist. Operating in accordance with IPS policy, the unit will ensure that selection, security, and intervention strategies are in place to afford the prisoner with the opportunity to develop non-violent coping strategies.

The NVRU is a secure rehabilitative unit where prisoners will benefit from a purposeful regime and are supported to address their problematic



behaviour with a clear focus on progression and re-integration. The unit will consistently reinforce the idea that the prisoner must take full responsibility for their actions and also ensure that they are treated with dignity. Multi-disciplinary perspectives are prioritised in the NVRU environment and each inmate is managed in a responsive manner that is tailored to their unique presentation, risks and needs. To operate effectively, a great deal of communication, clarity between staff and governance are required.

Achieving a balance between clinical support and discipline is essential to the successful operation of the unit. The regime is based on a continuum of progression from initial operational containment towards outcomes enabling consideration of deselection from the unit. Each prisoner will be managed under a regime underpinned by an approach best described as a 'strategy of choices' which highlights to prisoners that they will be presented with options, they will learn to accept the consequences of their actions and be responsible for their choices.

An independent National Violence Reduction Unit Committee (NVRUC) was established to oversee the management of the NVRU and to ensure the overall aims and outcomes of the unit are achieved. The NVRUC is comprised of various stakeholders who meet monthly, and both Operational and Clinical co-leads provide feedback regarding the units' functioning.

### **Training content**

All officers selected to work in the NVRU benefit from advanced levels of operational, security and psychological training, thus enabling them to manage violent and disruptive prisoners in the safest and most secure manner possible. From an operational and security perspective, emphasis is placed upon modules that cover control and restraint, intervention techniques, dynamic security and prison craft (skills), admin and IT procedures, legislation and rule of law, human rights, etc.

From a psychological perspective, emphasis is placed upon training staff to provide trauma-informed custody. Specifically, there is a focus on the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in the development of violent and anti-social behaviour. Officers are trained to be cognisant of the way in which ACEs negatively affect both attachment and neural development,

which in turn can influence impulse control, social emotional and cognitive development, and coping and relational skills. The trauma-informed approach also emphasises the importance of staff wellbeing and aims to help officers understand the impact that working with traumatised individuals has on them.

### **Training methodology**

#### **Duration:**

NVRU staff training is divided into two separate modules:

- Two-week practical and class-based training in the IPS Training College;
- One-week experiential training covering the NVRU (shadowing NVRU staff and observing/learning established NVRU protocols and practices).

#### **Frequency:**

Annually or more often if further training is required due to changes in legislation, policies, procedures and practices; the NVRU training programme is provided in addition to the basic initial IPS officers' training and Continuous Professional Development training provided to all IPS staff

#### **Number of participants:**

It has been established that in order to ensure the quality of training, the maximum number of staff taking part must not exceed 12 officers per group.

#### **Type:**

The NVRU training is comprised of a blend of theoretical and practical modules covering:

- Security and Operations: e.g., Control and Restraint, Human Rights and Use of Force, Conflict Resolution, De-escalation Techniques, Incident First Responder, Information Management, Admin Procedures, I.R. (Incentivised Regimes, i.e. earned privileges) and Prisoner Management;
- Working with Challenging Behaviour: e.g., Understanding Violence and Aggression, Trauma-informed Custody, Mentalisation-based Interventions, Effective Communication, Motivational Interviewing, Understanding Personality Disorders, Understanding Psychopathy, Conditioning Behaviours, Staff Resilience and Self-care, Violence Risk Assessment and Management.

**Evaluation:**

Officers are continuously assessed throughout the training programme by Operational and Clinical Leads to determine their suitability to work on the unit. The determination of suitability criteria is currently under development.

**Supervision:**

Officers are provided with monthly one-on-one and weekly group-based psychological supervision.

**Outcomes and lessons learned**

In order to safely manage prisoners in a psychologically-informed environment, strict criteria need to be applied in the selection of staff. The key to the success of specialised units such as the NVRU is staffing these with suitable personnel as well as continuous monitoring/assessment of their suitability to work in such highly demanding environments. However, it can be challenging to find the right combination of experienced/suitable personnel and to embed psychologically-informed ways of working in a rigid environment, especially as groups are comprised of staff from different disciplines.

The course is intended to train a body of suitable staff at least once per year. Hopefully this training (or a brief version thereof) can be expanded to cover other specialised areas of the IPS.

## Conclusion

**This document outlines several national best practices employed by the participating European jurisdictions in the training of staff involved in managing difficult inmates. Whilst each country operates in accordance with its own laws, individual examples contained in this document demonstrate that in general, all jurisdictions participating in this project have a number international best practices and sets of rules and laws in common.**

During the creation of this document, it became clear to members of the special interest group that there were discrepancies between participating jurisdictions in terms of knowledge, approaches and opinions regarding the management of difficult inmates in prison settings. Furthermore, it became obvious that not all countries involved in this project have special programmes designed to manage this particular prisoner cohort. However, in some cases, training programmes developed for prison staff managing other categories of prisoners were identified as being potentially suitable for application (if required) in training prison staff managing difficult inmates.

From each individual submission, it is evident that the selection and training of prison staff, combined with the demands of working in often rigid environments such as closed prisons, present the biggest challenges in all participating jurisdictions.

The experiences shared in this document are intended to inform a set of minimum standards, which in turn will support the development of training packages for prison officers tasked with managing difficult inmates in European prisons.

## Abbreviations

<b>ACEs</b>	Adverse Childhood Experiences
<b>CLIL</b>	Content and Language Integrated Learning
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>CRO</b>	
<b>PRISYS</b>	Support to the Prison System of the Republic of Croatia
<b>DAP</b>	Correctional Administration Headquarters
<b>EASS</b>	Estonian Academy on Security Sciences
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>ENAP</b>	École National d'Administration Pénitentiaire (English: National Correctional Administration Academy)
<b>EPS</b>	Estonian Prison Service
<b>EPTA</b>	European Penitentiary Training Academy Network
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EuroPris</b>	European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services
<b>FIIAPP</b>	International and Ibero-American Foundation of Administration and Public Policies
<b>IPS</b>	Irish Prison Service
<b>IRZ</b>	German Foundation for International Legal Cooperation
<b>NHC</b>	Netherlands Helsinki Committee
<b>NICE</b>	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
<b>NVRU</b>	National Violence Reduction Unit
<b>NVRUC</b>	National Violence Reduction Unit Committee
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>SGIP</b>	General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions
<b>SIG</b>	Special interest group
<b>UDV</b>	Unités pour Détenus Violents (English: Units for Violent Inmates)
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

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