



# Managing Difficult Inmates Training Handbook

EPTA Special Interest Group



Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann  
Irish Prison Service



MINISTÈRE  
DE LA JUSTICE  
*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*

Énap  
École nationale  
d'administration  
pénitentiaire



[www.epta.info](http://www.epta.info)

## Managing Difficult Inmates Training Handbook

This report was authored by Hugues Belliard (with the support of Cédric Le Bossé, Ecole Nationale d'Administration Pénitentiaire), Constantin Cazac (National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), Irish Prison Service), Clare Kambamettu (NVRU and Portlaoise Prison, Iris Prison Service), and Iva Prskalo (Training Center, Prison System and Probation Directorate Croatia).

The authors developed the report as part of the EPTA Special Interest Group (SIG) on Training on Managing Difficult Inmates. The report was reviewed by EPTA Steering Committee members Kirsten Hawlitschek (EuroPris), Ana-Maria Sandu (National Correctional Officers Training School Târgu Ocna, Romania) and Lianne Veldt (Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC)). The overall process was facilitated by the NHC.

Publication and compilation of this document were made possible with the financial support of the European Union's Justice Programme (2014-2020), as part of the project 'Tackling Gaps in Cross-Border Cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies', which was coordinated by the NHC. The contents of the report are the responsibility of the SIG members and represent their views only. The European Commission accepts no responsibility for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Enquiries should be sent to [secretariat@epta.info](mailto:secretariat@epta.info).

First published in 2021.

Graphic design by Stephan Csikós.  
[www.stephancsikos.nl](http://www.stephancsikos.nl)

Translation by Livewords.

## The European Penitentiary Training Academy (EPTA) Network

The EPTA Network was founded in 2010 by heads of the European Penitentiary Staff Training Academies to create a structure that supports the sharing of training methodologies and content across Europe.

EPTA aims to develop cooperation that enhances the initial and continuous training of correctional staff and helps boost awareness of the correctional staff's work in prison and probation settings.

For more information, please visit [www.epta.info](http://www.epta.info).

### EPTA Secretariat

The European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris) manages the EPTA Secretariat and can be reached via the following postal and visiting addresses. Email: [secretariat@epta.info](mailto:secretariat@epta.info)

### Postal address

#### EuroPris

P.O. Box 13635  
2501 EP The Hague  
The Netherlands

### Visiting address

Bezuidenhoutseweg 20  
2594 AV The Hague  
The Netherlands

## 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)



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Selection of Participants</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Training Content</b>	<b>9</b>
Training topics	9
Introduction (to the unit/system/service)	9
Understanding Violence	9
Effective Communication	9
Security training	9
Managing Crisis and Conflict	10
Risk Assessment and Risk Management	10
Working with difficult personalities	10
Staff support policies	10
Model of curriculum by skill unit	11
SU1: Understanding the institutional framework and procedures of the unit	11
SU2: Managing aggressive or violent behaviour	12
SU3: Experiential training/reflective thinking	13
<b>Evaluation</b>	<b>15</b>
Ex-post (satisfaction assessment/feedback – trainees)	15
Educational: assessment of participants' skills	15
Theoretical tests	15
Practical tests for operational components (techniques)	15
Observations and feedback from trainers (course coordinators) on each trainee	15
Impact (evaluation in the workplace): measuring skill development	15
Pass-rate/success-rate	15
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>18</b>



# Introduction

As part of the EPTA project's work, a group of experts (special interest group – SIG) was set up in October 2019 to develop a handbook for training prison staff who manage difficult (violent) prisoners. The expert group compared and assessed the standards and practices of each SIG member country, and based on these and international and European literature and best practices, the experts agreed a set of minimum standards for the efficient management of these prisoners. This will provide a framework for continuous improvement and research to increase the quality of service for the management of this prisoner cohort, and increase staff confidence, competence and professional development. It is also an essential prerequisite for the development of staff training programmes.

**Difficult (violent) inmates/prisoners** 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 in an effort to address their violent and disruptive behaviour, prison authorities resort to their removal from the general population and placement in more secure locations with appropriate staffing levels. As is the case in other documents developed by this expert group, the terms difficult inmates/prisoners will be used interchangeably with violent prisoners throughout the document.

In order to manage this particular prisoner cohort effectively, specially-selected prison officers require comprehensive and tailored training programmes. These will provide staff with the tools that will enable them to manage everyday challenges.

Best international practice indicates that the most effective way to manage difficult inmates is by adopting a holistic approach involving multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) consisting of prison staff and management, professionals in the areas of psychology, mental health, healthcare, education and chaplaincy, etc.

Based on the agreed minimum standards, this handbook is aimed at assisting prison training academies in the development, improvement and implementation of staff training programmes designed to facilitate the acquisition of skills necessary to effectively manage violent

prisoners. These programmes should also enable staff to adapt their professional attitudes and practices to the profiles of violent prisoners to prevent or reduce tensions and, if necessary, take charge of the situation when violent acts occur.

The handbook recommends that training programmes are informed by it and the guidelines set out in the minimum standards document, taking into account the regulatory framework, ethics, knowledge of violence (causes, manifestations, types, consequences, etc.), evaluation and prevention of violence, conflict management and care for violent prisoners, as well as modules on psycho-crime, effective communication, and working as part of multidisciplinary teams. Prison officers selected to work with difficult inmates should also receive training in control and restraint and intervention techniques, and in the concept of dynamic security, which occupies a central place in units housing prisoners presenting a significant risk of violence.

It is advised that training modules developed specifically for personnel working in these units be revised regularly and adapted to reflect the experience acquired by staff. This handbook will provide suggestions, tips and recommendations on how to set up training programmes for staff managing difficult inmates and what topics could be covered in these programmes. However, due to the vast differences between jurisdictions and penitentiary systems across Europe, it is acknowledged that the recommendations may in some cases need to be adopted, adapted or discarded.

# Selection of Participants

It is recognised that staff who work with difficult inmates are specialists in this field and often carry out roles and duties in addition to those typical of 'regular' prison staff. Specialist knowledge and skills training should be provided to staff (as is discussed throughout this handbook) but paramount to the success of this work and specialised units, are the attributes and skills of individual staff and how they come together as a team. This section outlines recommendations regarding staff selection to work with this particular prisoner population.

## Previous experience

- Selected staff should have completed their basic training as a prison officer;
- Of particular value is evidence that officers have completed additional training demonstrating their motivation to work with difficult inmates.

## General profile and motivation

- Staff should be motivated to work with this population mainly because of a genuine wish to help offenders change their behaviour rather than financial, geographical, or other incentives;
- Staff should possess values and professional work ethics that support the mission of the organisation;
- Staff who demonstrate high levels of inter-personal conflict and poor emotional regulation skills (e.g., overt displays of hostility, aggression, tearfulness or frustration) in their day-to-day work should be given additional consideration before being selected to work with these types of prisoners.

## Skills and competences

- Staff should demonstrate the ability to work as part of a team;
- Staff should possess highly developed interpersonal and conflict resolution skills;
- Staff should have good written and verbal communication skills;
- Staff should demonstrate good emotional intelligence (EQ) skills;
- Staff should be physically fit in order to carry out control and restraint duties if required.

A multi-disciplinary team should be involved in selecting training participants (e.g., Human Resources, operational staff, psychologists). Where available to the organisation, psychometrics (psychological measurement tools) should be used to objectively assess the presence of the above attributes as well as the individual characteristics necessary for the selected officers to work well with difficult inmates. Examples of psychometrics that could be used include:

- NEO-Personality Inventory (NEO-PI);
- Coping Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ);
- Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test (SREIT);
- Team Player Inventory;
- Brief Resilience Scale.

# Methodology

Two stages of training are recommended to equip staff with the skills required to work with difficult inmates:

- An initial training course lasting at least 14 days is recommended;
- It is also recommended that each staff member complete five days of continuous training per year. During these training days, the focus should be on topics and skills identified through feedback and supervision as being helpful to individual officers' or a team's professional development.

During the initial training period, modules should cover a broad range of multi-disciplinary subjects (as mentioned later in this handbook). Each module should be designed and facilitated by specialist trainers, who have obtained the appropriate accreditation (national or institutional). Examples of professionals that may be involved include penitentiary/correctional experts, specialised psychological, social and/or behavioural experts in criminology (disciplines vary from country to country) and intervention and security experts.

Various training methods should be employed and workshops should be designed to be as interactive as possible. Suggestions for various training methods include self-learning, face-to-face teaching, the use of video clips and simulations, role plays, interviews with prisoners describing various issues, etc.

Facilitators should be encouraged to provide feedback regarding trainees' engagement with the subject matter, presentations during workshops, contributions to management, etc. This enables the accurate and holistic assessment of an individual's skills throughout the training, and informs their suitability or unsuitability to work with difficult inmates.

Classes should be limited to a maximum of 20 participants to facilitate the interaction and assessment of trainees.

Training should be held in appropriate environment where minimal disruption or distraction will occur. Training staff onsite where they may be expected to respond to situations or emergencies should be avoided.

# Training Content

Training is crucial to any work environment, and is especially important for people who manage difficult inmates. To achieve a high level of service, the training curriculum must be informed by research, national and international best practice, and consist of a mixture of classroom and practical training. Training should be specifically designed to give prison staff the necessary operational and security knowledge, skills and abilities enabling them to work in a highly physically and personally demanding environment. It should also provide prison officers with the psychological skills that will help them understand violent behaviour, its roots and effects, and how to manage the risks posed by this prisoner cohort and reduce their violent behaviour in order to reintegrate them into the wider prison population.

## Training topics

The following topics should form part of the training curricula specifically designed to be taught to staff who work with difficult inmates:

### Introduction (to the unit/system/service)

- Culture & ethos;
- Overview of operating handbook(s);
- Policies and procedures;
- Staff wellbeing strategies.

### Understanding Violence

- Risk factors, protective factors and functions of violence;
- Recognising signs of aggression;
- Attachment theory;
- Trauma-informed care (impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences – ACEs).

### Effective Communication

- De-escalation techniques (preventing and managing violence);
- Non-verbal communication;
- Active listening;
- Empathy;
- Officer/prisoner relationships;
- Avoiding re-traumatisation.

### Security training

There are three distinct but inter-related elements of security in a prison setting.

They are:

- a) Relational security;
- b) Procedural security;
- c) Physical security.

The balance between these three elements often shifts, as a result of which plans have to be adapted to meet the needs of a particular prisoner cohort or situation. However, it is essential that staff who work with difficult inmates receive training in using all of the security elements in prisons. When managing difficult inmates, staff must ensure that an acceptable level of all three of these is maintained at all times, and one should never have to compensate too much for the absence or ineffectiveness of another.

#### Relational security

Relational security is the knowledge and understanding prison staff have of a difficult inmate and of their presentation, and the translation of that information into appropriate responses and care. Relational security can be:

- *Quantitative*: the staff-to-inmate ratio and amount of time spent in face-to-face contact;
- *Qualitative*: the balance between intrusiveness and openness; trust between inmates and professionals.

#### Procedural security

Training should include modules on how to apply policies and procedures and protective measures, as well as security and operational information in order to manage prisoners who pose a high risk of violence to staff and other prisoners and to orderly operations. Prison/unit managers will then be able to apply this knowledge to inform decisions



regarding the number of personnel required to manage prisoners and their access to visits and activities, internal movements and mixing, and escorts, as well as how best to respond to unexpected dynamic changes in the behaviour of a prisoner and risk the pose.

Security and operational procedures can cover many aspects of security-related work and good practice suggests that staff managing difficult inmates should receive training covering:

- 1) Searching (personal & cell/property); accounting for items presenting a risk;
- 2) Monitoring prisoners;
- 3) Assessment and classification of prisoners;
- 4) Monitoring prisoners' contact with the outside world (phone, mail, visits, etc.);
- 5) Communications and surveillance (radios, CCTV, BWC); and
- 6) Information gathering and security intelligence systems.

Procedural security is increasingly the subject of governmental directives and legislation, and judicial review at national or European level. It also includes policies and practices relating to quality and governance, including information management, legal obligations, audits, research and human resources. Prison staff must be trained in and knowledgeable about all of these topics.

#### *Physical security*

The training curriculum must include training modules in the use of physical aids for security such as locks, alarm systems, metal detectors and x-ray machines, radios, firearms (where applicable) and CCTV and body-worn cameras (BWC), etc., as well as in the use physical security instruments such as handcuffs and other restraint equipment.

#### **Managing Crisis and Conflict**

Staff working with difficult inmates must receive a higher level of training in the following topics:

- Human rights and the use of force;
- Conflict resolution and de-escalation techniques;
- First responder training (incidents, firefighting, etc.);
- Control and restraint techniques (using security aids and instruments, cuffing/un-cuffing, escorts, confronting armed/unarmed violent inmates, being part of intervention teams, etc.).

#### **Risk Assessment and Risk Management**

In order to assist in determining regime arrangements for difficult inmates, prison officers working with this particular prisoner cohort should receive training in risk assessment and risk management. Training modules should cover how to use security and operational information to assess the risk that an individual will commit acts of violence aimed at staff and other prisoners and that could disrupt orderly operations, and apply this knowledge to inform decisions regarding the number of personnel required to manage prisoners, their access to visits and activities, internal movements and mixing and escorts, as well as how best to respond to unexpected dynamic changes in the behaviour of a prisoner and the risk they pose.

#### **Working with difficult personalities**

- Managing professional boundaries;
- Boundary seesaw;
- Conditioning;
- Splitting;
- Transference/counter-transference.

#### **Staff support policies**

- Promoting individual and team resilience;
- Setting up a safe space; agreeing a shared understanding;
- Supporting staff;
- Boundaries.

It is recommended that the above topics be considered when developing training modules. Below is an example of a structured training programme which includes both practical and pedagogical objectives.

# Model of curriculum by skill unit

## SU1: Understanding the institutional framework and procedures of the unit

Considering the particularly complex professional environment that comes with the profile of violent prisoners, it is imperative that staff have a good knowledge of the institutional frame of reference. To achieve this, documentation such as the job description and instructions/reflection sheets, as well as the relevant texts (doctrine, internal regulations and training tutorial from each country) must be sent to the selected officers before the start of the training, in order to enable them to exchange opinions and ask/answer any questions they may have.

The initial phase of the training should favour exchanges between staff to promote team cohesion through a better knowledge of each person's role. The participation of partner institutions/services is recommended to facilitate fluidity in communication within the unit.

The staff's perceptions and understanding of violence should be explored. This is necessary as each participant may have a different understanding of what constitutes violence and an effort must be made to arrive at a common definition of this concept.

### *Training objectives*

- Being able to navigate one's professional environment by integrating the values of the public prison service and by placing one's professional conduct within a legal and ethical framework;
- Managing and supporting violent prisoners on a daily basis.

### *Pedagogical objectives*

- Defining their role and function as well as that of the entire team (the project, partnerships and team cohesion);
- Adopting ethical practices in compliance with operating protocols;
- Forming a multidisciplinary working group;
- Adopting a team spirit.

### *Training content*

- 1) Welcoming staff/trainees, doctrine of the unit and operating protocols and roles and functions of the unit team members (the project, partnerships and team cohesion);
- 2) Understanding and preventing violence (behavioural and predictive factors of violence);
- 3) Taking into account the trauma and personality disorders of the inmates;
  - Understanding individual risk profiles;
  - Understanding risk assessment (using individual information to understand when somebody is more at risk);
  - De-escalation techniques during verbal altercations.
- 4) The multidisciplinary care plan for violent prisoners (reception, evaluation and monitoring);
  - The observation and formalisation of the violence risk evaluation grid;
  - Exchange and the role of each professional in the multidisciplinary committee- /case studies and scenarios.
- 5) The foundations and the central place of dynamic security;
- 6) The prevention of critical situations and the conduct of interviews with violent prisoners.
  - Operational practices for the collaborative approach and motivational interviewing.

## SU2: Managing aggressive or violent behaviour

Each country's regulatory framework on the legal use of force should form the common thread of this skill unit, especially when using intervention techniques to manage a violent prisoner. This training period should enable trainees to get to know themselves better by identifying their different emotional states during practice scenarios. It should facilitate trainees to have the appropriate attitude and interact with their interlocutor in a way that calms them down and helps avoid an escalation to violence. Exercises and role-plays should be used to develop an awareness of the officers' own strengths and areas for improvement.

### *Training objectives*

- Being able to apply procedures concerning violent prisoners while adapting practices to manage inmates with behavioural disorders;
- Being able to apply self-defence, control and restraint, as well as handcuffing techniques while adhering to the framework of the legal use of force.

### *Pedagogical objectives*

- Identifying and adapting to behavioural disorders;
- Managing an aggressive person;
- Learning about non-violent communication techniques;
- Applying firefighting regulations and intervening in case of fire in an occupied cell;
- Adhering to the regulations on the use of force and complying with intervention procedures;
- Individual roles within an intervention team.

### *Training content*

- 1) Non-violent communication – NVC (steps in the NVC process);
  - Establishing positive communication and promoting positive staff-prisoner relationships;
  - Understanding barriers to communication (how to transform difficult exchanges into constructive dialogue);
  - Improving ability to resolve conflicts by developing self-confidence;
  - Using empathy to limit negative and/or aggressive attitudes.
- 2) Stress management;
  - Understanding and analysing the process for better responsiveness;

- The recommendations on the behaviour to be taken in the face of crisis states and aggressive or violent behaviour;
  - Workshops and feedback on experiences;
  - Identifying the different emotional states and their effects on behaviours and relationships;
  - Learning to stay calm in difficult and violent situations;
  - The need for a debriefing after each incident (not only physical assaults or interventions).
- 3) Specific physical and intervention techniques to control and contain the violent inmate.
    - The intervention plan and safety protocols;
    - Job descriptions and instruction/reflection sheets;
    - Applying self-defence, control and restraint and handcuffing techniques;
    - Individual roles within an intervention team (interventions in cells and in other detention areas);
    - Intervening as a team in case of fire in an occupied cell.

### SU3: Experiential training/reflective thinking

This training module should promote the consolidation of learning in practice by implementing procedures on-site. This experience-informed feedback will allow procedures to be amended and developed. Supervision is decisive in supporting staff and developing their skills. Coaching can be set up for individual staff monitoring. Helping staff understand what is expected of them and having a common set of values are essential for efficient multidisciplinary inmate care. This training will also guide future actions for the continuous training of personnel.

#### *Training objectives*

- Being able to integrate and harmonise new professional practices adapted within the framework of the prevention of recidivism of violence in detention facilities;
  - Being able to test and evaluate the implementation of protocols and operating notes 'in situ';
  - Being able to set up post-crisis mediation to re-establish dialogue between inmates and staff;
  - Being able to evaluate the training received and identify future needs in order to develop future training programmes (in the year following the provision of this initial training).
- following the key steps/instructions of senior officers;
  - Knowing the different emotional states, knowing how to spot them and prevent post-traumatic effects;
  - Developing pro-social relationships and positive intervention skills (without putting oneself in danger);
  - Intervening according to your resources and skills by identifying your emotions and by not making commitments outside your area of responsibility;
  - Setting up a space for dialogue to prevent the repetition of the act of violence;
  - Identifying the timeframe adapted to the incident before establishing mediation and identifying the professional(s) or another contact person who will mediate;
  - Measuring the effectiveness of the training system, the gaps between the objectives set and the results obtained;
  - Ensuring the relevance and development of skills at staff level by appreciating the impact of the training system;
  - Using evaluation tools validated prior to training.

#### *Pedagogical objectives*

- Pooling and sharing the experiences of the simulation exercises done in the first two weeks of training;
- Analysing professional practices by evaluating the differences between observed and benchmark practices;
- Jointly discussing the methods to be used to carry out the activity differently, if necessary;
- Strengthening professional practices and operating procedures with regard to the first weeks of training;
- Performing a situational risk assessment in order to facilitate decision-making;
- Dealing with stressful situations and the repetition of daily conflicts;
- Analysing personal limits and individual potential;
- Taking into account the importance of teamwork, including at multidisciplinary level;
- Identifying the need and benefits of debriefing considering the different natures and modalities of debriefing (defusing, technical and psychological);
- Conducting a technical debriefing session

#### *Training content*

- 1) 'In situ' tests/individual and/or group movements of prisoners within the unit in accordance with set protocols and operating procedures;
  - Assessing and updating set protocols and operating procedures;
  - Use of filmed simulation exercises (replicating complex professional/'in situ' simulations as closely as possible and analysis of professional practices);
  - Study of videos made during the simulation training;
  - Reviewing the code of ethics and the legal and regulatory framework;
  - Operational practices toolkit (internal regulations, operating guides, job

- descriptions and reflex/instruction sheets);
  - Principles of non-violent communication and communication in crisis situations – refresher training.
- 2) Defining supervision/staff support and well-being (understanding individual emotions during training, preparation in terms of skills and psychologically through supervision);
  - 3) Promoting individual and team resilience – working with individual officers and the entire team to build strength and resilience, enabling them to perform better, identifying issues that impair resilience and performance. (e.g., understanding team dynamics and how the specifics of working with difficult inmates impact team dynamics/conditioning behaviour, splitting up the team, etc.);
  - 4) The debriefing protocol and staff management;
    - Use of the institutional framework and procedure
    - Different stages of the debriefing
    - Individual roles
    - Arrangements for managing both staff and prisoners
    - Combining professional experiences to improve team communication
    - The link between technical and psychological debriefing
  - 5) Restoring communication after a crisis/ continuing to manage difficult inmates/ raising awareness of mediation after a crisis;
    - Analysis of situations experienced by staff;
    - The notion of responsibility during the detention period of the inmate;
    - Multidisciplinary care;
    - The synchronisation of officers' verbal and non-verbal communication;
    - Discussing the 'here and now' (regarding factual elements without being moralistic or making judgments);
    - Setting short-term/achievable goals for difficult inmates;
    - Engaging difficult inmates/reassurance in the face of anxiety;
    - Dialogue and cooperation with difficult prisoners;
    - Breathing techniques, controlling tone of voice and posture;
    - The principles of relational mediation;
    - Analysing conflict triggers and how to mitigate these;
- Conflict management skills (addressing the limits of tolerance and compassion);
  - Empathy and adversity (creating a space for communication with difficult inmates);
  - The context conducive to exchanges and structured mediation (the meaning of mediation must stimulate the thinking of the professionals concerned in a systematic way);
  - Drafting a mediation protocol.
- 6) Training review/identifying needs to strengthen the expertise of staff and the team.
    - Each training session will have to be evaluated;
    - Individual and collective interviews with officers who participated in training – to be conducted at the end of the initial three-week training programme in order to measure their degree of satisfaction;
    - Measuring the impact of training in practice (i.e., analysis of the evolution of professional behaviour, and individual objectives), the efficiency for individual officers as well as the evolution of team's performance indicators – after three to six months;
    - Inventory of new training needs/ refresher training programmes necessary to improve staff performance.

# Evaluation

During the implementation stages of the training programme, it is important to monitor, evaluate and check whether the planned goals of the training have been achieved.

The training should be evaluated throughout each phase of the training process (prior to, during and after training). It is also recommended that appropriate follow-up evaluations be facilitated three months to a year after the training has ended.

Various assessment methods can be employed: the first is from the perspective of the trainee, the second from that of the trainers (course coordinators), and the third from the perspective of mentors (coordinators in the workplace).

Assessment and evaluation of trainees should be conducted at several levels.

## **Ex-post (satisfaction assessment/feedback – trainees)**

The evaluation questionnaires which trainees complete after the training can consist of qualitative and quantitative questions (closed-ended questions and open-ended questions). The focus is on trainees' experience of what they have learned, on the applicability of knowledge, how satisfied they were with the tutors' approach, topics, etc. There is also an opportunity to provide feedback and ideas. This type of questionnaire allows trainees to express their views on the quality of the training. It is also used to encourage self-reflection.

## **Educational: assessment of participants' skills**

Each educational assessment should analyse both the theoretical and practical knowledge acquired. Observations and feedback from the course tutors and mentors (coordinators in the workplace) also form an important part of the assessment process.

## **Theoretical tests**

Theoretical tests should be administered before and after the training, in order to determine whether officers' answers and attitudes have changed since the start of the training process. Questions should be focused on the learning objectives.

## **Practical tests for operational components (techniques)**

These are designed to measure precisely defined skills that trainees learn during the course and the success rate using set norms.

## **Observations and feedback from trainers (course coordinators) on each trainee**

Trainers (course coordinators) should assess each trainee's progress during training. The progress is monitored based on a list of questions of areas where change/progress can be observed and described. The progress list consists of different questions (engagement, interaction, understanding of theoretical and practical exercises, etc.).

## **Impact (evaluation in the workplace): measuring skill development**

Various elements of the skills learned, changes during the performance of tasks and the progress in the application of what has been learned are measured.

## **Pass-rate/success-rate**

Following successful completion of the course, it is important to give trainees a certificate in recognition of this. Each jurisdiction (training institution) should have their own criteria to determine whether or not someone has passed the course.

## Conclusion

**This handbook was designed as a means of providing prison training academies with a framework for the development, improvement and provision of training programmes for prison officers who manage difficult inmates. This is a particular cohort of individuals posing serious challenges for prison management, prison staff, other prisoners and themselves, through repeated, violent behaviour, who are oftentimes managed separately from the rest of the prison population in smaller, specialised units. To effectively manage this particular prisoner cohort in such units, specially-selected prison officers require comprehensive and tailored training.**

As highlighted throughout this handbook and accompanying documents, a disparity exists between different European countries in terms of their knowledge, approaches and opinions regarding the management of difficult inmates. To address the need for clear direction and a coherent approach on this subject, a panel of European experts was established – a special interest group (SIG) within the EU-funded project 'Tackling gaps in cross-border cooperation for Penitentiary Training Academies'.

Prison officers who work with difficult inmates are specialists in this field and often perform roles and duties in addition to those of 'regular' prison staff. In order to aid prison training academies with specialised staff training, the group recommended that a curriculum informed by research and national and international best practice be developed and provided to prison officers who manage difficult inmates in order to equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities required to work in a highly-challenging environment.

Staff selection is of great importance and paramount to the success of these specialised units. Particular attention should be paid to the attributes and skills of individual officers and how they work together as a team.

It is vital that all officers selected to work with difficult inmates can benefit from advanced levels of operational, security and psychological training, thus enabling them to manage this particular prisoner cohort in a safe and secure manner. In order to achieve this, two training stages are recommended: an initial training

course with a duration of at minimum 14 days and a subsequent five-day refresher training that is given each year to maintain and enhance their skills and specialist knowledge.

To achieve a high level of proficiency, the group recommends that prison training academies develop and provide staff who work with difficult inmates with a number of programmes which include specific topics and skill units. From an operational and security perspective, the group advises that emphasis be placed upon training modules that cover control and restraint, de-escalation and intervention techniques, relational, procedural and dynamic security, admin and IT procedures, legislation and rule of law, human rights, etc. From a psychological perspective, emphasis should be placed upon training staff to provide trauma informed custody. Specifically, the group recommends training that focuses on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the development of violent and anti-social behaviour. Officers should be trained to be cognisant of the ways in which these experiences have a negative effect on both attachment and neural development, which in turn can influence impulse control and social, emotional and cognitive development, as well as coping and relational skills. In addition, modules on working with difficult personalities as well as managing aggressive or violent behaviour are recommended as part of specific skill units. The trauma-informed approach also emphasises the importance of staff wellbeing and aims to help officers understand the impact of working with traumatised individuals.

To ensure a high level of professionalism and proficiency, it is important that each training programme assesses both the theoretical as well as the practical knowledge of staff through a number of tests and feedback from both trainers and trainees.

Whilst these are the recommendations of this special interest group, the group is cognisant of the limitations imposed by each jurisdiction's own legislative and regulatory framework. Therefore, this handbook is intended to provide a roadmap for the development of training programmes for a specific category of prison officers. However, this should not be construed as a handbook of management and practice, nor does it represent the views of any particular prison training academy or national prison service.



# Abbreviations

<b>ACEs</b>	Adverse Childhood Experiences
<b>BWC</b>	Body-worn camera
<b>CSQ</b>	Coping Strategies Questionnaire
<b>EPTA</b>	European Penitentiary Training Academy Network
<b>EQ</b>	Emotional Quotient (Emotional Intelligence)
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EuroPris</b>	European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services
<b>NEO-PI</b>	NEO-Personality Inventory
<b>NHC</b>	Netherlands Helsinki Committee
<b>NVC</b>	Non-violent Communication
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>SREIT</b>	Self-report Emotional Intelligence Test
<b>SU</b>	Skill unit



#### **EPTA Secretariat**

The European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris) manages the EPTA Secretariat and can be reached via the following postal and visiting addresses.

Email: [secretariat@epta.info](mailto:secretariat@epta.info)

#### **Postal address**

##### **EuroPris**

P.O. Box 13635  
2501 EP The Hague  
The Netherlands

#### **Visiting address**

Bezuidenhoutseweg 20  
2594 AV The Hague  
The Netherlands



**Seirbhís Phríosúin  
na hÉireann**  
Irish Prison Service



  
**MINISTÈRE  
DE LA JUSTICE**  
*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*

  
**Énap**  
École nationale  
d'administration  
pénitentiaire



[www.epta.info](http://www.epta.info)