



**MULTILATERAL MEETING**  
**ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PRISON HEALTH CARE**  
***Strasbourg, 12-13 October 2017***

**Concept Paper**

The Council of Europe is assisting its member states to ensure that prisoners are treated humanely and with respect for their fundamental rights which also entails the provision of preventive treatment and health care equivalent to those provided to the community. Standards, monitoring and technical assistance are provided to their institutions, particularly to prison administrations to ensure effective access of prisoners to health care and conditions that allow for their well-being.

In recent years, structural changes are being made to prison health care services in a number of member states. The degree of co-operation with the public health care services is therefore different from one country to another. In some countries, the responsibility for the management of the prison health care has been placed under the Ministry of Health, in some others under a separate department of the Ministry of Justice, while in a number of countries prison administrations remain exclusively responsible for the provision of prison health care.

Such a variety of approaches is also reflected in the replies to a questionnaire that the Council of Europe sent to relevant institutions in its member states through the members of the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC).

In this context, the Council of Europe highlights the necessity that in spite of different structural settings the health policy in prisons should be integrated into, and compatible with, national health policy.

The multilateral meeting will bring together representatives of prison administrations and other institutions in charge of prison health care from all member states to exchange experience and good practices and to identify best ways of ensuring equivalence of health care in prison with that in the community in a structure which better suits each individual country.

The discussion at the meeting will be along the following lines:

- Medical services in prison should be organised in close relation with the general health administration of the community or nation;

- A prison health care service should be able to provide medical, psychiatric and dental treatment and to implement programmes of hygiene and preventive medicine in conditions comparable to those enjoyed by the general public;
- A prison health care service should be able to provide out-patient consultations and emergency treatment in health establishments outside the prison;
- The role of the ministry responsible for health should be strengthened in the domain of quality assessment of hygiene, health care and organisation of health services in custody, in accordance with the national legislation;
- Whatever the formal position under which prison doctors carry on their activity, their clinical decisions should be governed only by medical criteria;
- In order to guarantee independence in health care matters it is important that the health care personnel in prison is aligned as closely as possible with the mainstream of health-care provision in the community at large.

Special references will be made to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Recommendations Rec(2006)2 on the European Prison Rules, R (98)7 concerning the ethical and organisational aspects of health care in prison, R(93)6 concerning prison and criminological aspects of the control of transmissible diseases including AIDS and related health problems in prison and to other relevant recommendations.

References will also be made to the standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) and its recommendations in country visit and general reports, particularly concerning equivalence of care and professional independence of prison doctors.

Furthermore, the discussion will be facilitated by an overview of the prison health care situation in the Council of Europe member states with reference to the information provided in the replies to the above-mentioned questionnaire.

The Council of Europe and CPT standards are available on the website of the Criminal Law Cooperation Unit of the Council of Europe:

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/criminal-law-coop> and on the CPT website: [www.cpt.coe.int](http://www.cpt.coe.int)

As with other multilateral meetings on penitentiary issues, organised in recent years, the meeting on organisation and management of prison health care is expected to be an important forum for exchange of experience and good practices on the implementation of Council of Europe standards through peer-to-peer discussion.

The meeting is also expected to facilitate the broader dissemination and subsequent use of the Council of Europe Publication "Prison Health Care and Medical Ethics – a Manual for health care workers and other prison staff with responsibility for prisoners' well-being".

Ultimately, it is hoped that the exchange of good practices will encourage a more positive, professional and efficient approach in the management of prison health care services.