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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON CRIME PROBLEMS
(CDPC)

**WORKING DOCUMENT ON FOLLOW-UP TO THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE
16th CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF PRISON ADMINISTRATION WITH THE
PARTICIPATION OF DIRECTORS OF PROBATION SERVICES: PLATFORM FOR
EXCHANGING GOOD PRACTICES BETWEEN MEMBER STATES**

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I. A desire expressed at the CDAP

1. At the 16th Conference of Directors of Prison Administration (CDAP) with the participation of Directors of Probation Services (Strasbourg, 13-14 October 2011), the participants discussed whether a platform for exchanging good practices between member states hosted and run by the Council of Europe should be set up. The idea met with widespread approval. The final conclusions of the conference accordingly underlined “that prison and probation services in Europe wish to share among themselves contemporary good practices and urged in this respect the Council of Europe to serve as a platform for offering regular access to and updates of such information”.
2. Analysis of the questionnaire sent to the participants of the 16th CDAP further confirms the idea. One question concerned the proposal for the Council of Europe to establish a collaborative site with a database of good practices developed in the member states. All of the respondents supported the idea, with 22 respondents considering it very useful and six considering it useful, while none replied in the negative. One person expressed the wish for the site to be extended to probation.
3. To determine the feasibility of such a site, we asked the participants whether they thought that their services were ready to send information on their good practices (in English or French) to the Council of Europe regularly for publication on the site. 25 persons believed that their services would enter into an initiative of this kind, as against four who did not think so. One person, for instance, pointed out that his service did not have sufficient staff for such co-operation.
4. Analysis of the replies to the question on the areas in which the services could propose good practices shows that the initiative has great appeal for the participants at the 16th Conference of Directors of Prison Administration and Probation Services. We recorded 27 different suggested areas concerning both the prison field and the probation field.
5. The good practices relate to the following areas:
 - Probation: methodology and ethics of outsourced social work, probation plans and their scientific evaluation and co-operation with external associations;
 - Prison: application of the EPR and development of a penal law, prison overcrowding, staff training, development of individualised programmes of treatment, application of Rule 50 of the EPR, use of the Internet during detention, management of psychiatric and psychological disorders, treatment of juveniles, women, persons given long sentences, foreign nationals and sexual offenders and preparation for release.
6. It can therefore be seen that professionals at national level already have many good practices to share in very different areas.
7. Moreover, the platform could also encourage member states to organise visits between professionals in connection with exchanges concerning a particular good practice, as the questionnaire sent to the CDAP participants showed that there was a desire for exchanges and meetings between national professionals.

II. Past experience of exchanges: Prison Information Bulletin

8. The platform would also be a means of carrying forward the work done from 1983 to 2002 by the PC-CP and the Council of Europe Secretariat through the publication of the *Prison Information Bulletin/Penological Information Bulletin*.

9. The *Prison Information Bulletin* was first published in June 1983. Its purpose was to offer a regular co-ordinated service to facilitate the exchange of information between prison services on new experience and know-how in prison matters. It was “launched to provide an information link between European prison services and with the Council of Europe. It will thus provide a regular forum for the dissemination of selected material on prison affairs to mutual advantage.”¹
10. In order to be of practical benefit at all levels in European prison services, the bulletin presented changes in legislation and new measures introduced in the member states. This took the form of brief descriptions or articles spanning several pages which also evaluated the measures concerned. Readers were therefore able to find out about best practices in prison matters.

III. A platform for exchanging good practices between member states

11. To meet this demand from member states, the Council of Europe Secretariat could establish a platform which would be hosted on the PC-CP site and would group good practices together in the form of fact sheets. With the aid of an online questionnaire, member states would submit all the information necessary for describing the relevant measures. They would also indicate a resource person or department as a contact for states seeking to copy the practice. The good practices could come from both the prison and the probation field.
12. The platform would boost the implementation of the Council of Europe’s various recommendations and, in particular, the European Prison Rules by drawing on the resources already available in the member states. It would therefore serve as a straightforward and effective co-operation tool, which would increase member states’ experience, know-how and capabilities.
13. During the conference, one expert mentioned the risk of practices being disseminated which were not compatible with the principles defended by the Council of Europe but were regarded favourably by individual member states. To limit the risk, the fact sheets should go through the Council of Europe Secretariat and only projects which have been completed and evaluated in the member states should be accepted.

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Envisaged Establishment and Operation

1. Launch of the platform:
 - All members of the CDPC, PC-CP and the participants at the 16th CDAP will receive an email containing information on the launch of the platform and a call for the submission of good practices.
2. Means of identifying good practices:
 - To launch the platform, countries which have introduced innovative measures will be contacted directly by the Secretariat;
 - The replies to the questionnaire regarding the implementation of the most recent Council of Europe standards include details of some practical good practices (eg “cultural mediators” in Catalonia);

¹ Kenneth J Neale (Chair of the Committee for Co-operation in Prison Affairs), “Introducing the Prison Information Bulletin”, *Prison Information Bulletin*, No. 1, June 1983, p. 3-4, p. 3.

- The Secretariat will send out reminders of the platform's existence every six months requesting the submission of good practices;
- The Secretariat may also exchange views with CPT members to see whether they have come across any interesting measures during their visits.

3. Access:

- To ensure broad dissemination of the good practices, anyone who registers with the Secretariat may access the platform;
- Users registered on the platform will receive alerts when new fact sheets are published.

4. Fact sheets:

- Fact sheets are to be completed directly on the platform site by the relevant services in the member states, using an online questionnaire;
- Fact sheets are checked by the Secretariat and then posted on the platform;
- Fact sheets will be published in English and French.