
Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the European Rules on community sanctions and measures

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 22 March 2017
at the 1282nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering the importance of establishing common principles regarding integrated penal policies among the member States of the Council of Europe in order to strengthen international co-operation in this field;

Noting the considerable development which has occurred in member States in the use of sanctions and measures whose enforcement takes place in the community;

Considering that these sanctions and measures constitute important ways of combating crime, of reducing the harm that it causes and of enhancing justice, and that they avoid the negative effects of remand in custody and of imprisonment;

Considering the importance attached to the development of international norms for the creation, imposition and implementation of these sanctions and measures;

Aware that with the passage of time, new possibilities for a more effective use of community sanctions and measures emerge and that imprisonment must therefore be used only as a measure of last resort;

Recognising furthermore that important developments and changing practice in the area of sanctions and measures enforced in the community and the issues identified by member States, call for regular updating of the provisions contained in the European Rules on community sanctions and measures;

Emphasising that the recourse to, and the implementation of these sanctions and measures shall always be guided by respect for fundamental legal safeguards as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), and by the principles laid down in the European Rules on community sanctions and measures;

Recognising the relevance to the present recommendation of the following Committee of Ministers' Recommendations: Rec(92)17 concerning consistency in sentencing, Rec(97)12 on staff concerned with the implementation of sanctions and measures, Rec(99)19 concerning mediation in penal matters, Rec(99)22 concerning prison overcrowding and prison population inflation, Rec(2003)22 concerning conditional release (parole), CM/Rec(2010)1 on the Council of Europe Probation Rules and CM/Rec(2014)4 on electronic monitoring;

Bearing in mind the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules);

Replaces by the text of the present recommendation:

- Recommendation Rec(2000)22 on improving the implementation of the European Rules on community sanctions and measures; and

- Recommendation Rec(92)16 on the European rules on community sanctions and measures

Recommends to the governments of member States to:

- be guided when reviewing their policy, legislation, and practice in relation to the creation, imposition and implementation of community sanctions and measures, by the standards and principles set out in the appendix to this recommendation;
- ensure that this recommendation and its accompanying commentary are translated into their national language(s) and disseminated as widely as possible and more specifically among judicial authorities, probation and social services, prison administrations, as well as the media and the general public.

Appendix

Scope and purpose

The present rules are intended to:

- a. establish a set of standards to help national legislators, deciding and implementing authorities and practitioners to provide a just and effective use of community sanctions and measures. This application must take into account the need to protect society and to maintain legal order and at the same time support social rehabilitation, while also enabling offenders to make reparation for the harm they have caused;
- b. provide member States with guidance on the introduction and use of community sanctions and measures to take full advantage of their benefits and to protect the fundamental rights of all concerned. Similarly, it is important to guard against any kind of abuse such as might, for example, result from their use to the detriment of particular social groups. Full consideration therefore needs to be given to the social advantages and disadvantages of, as well as the potential risks resulting from, or likely to result from, such sanctions and measures. Community sanctions and measures should only be applied where they are appropriate;
- c. propose clear rules of conduct to staff responsible for the implementation of community sanctions and measures and to all those in the community who are involved in this field in order to ensure that this implementation is in conformity with any conditions and obligations imposed, thereby conferring legitimacy upon the sanctions or measures. Implementation must not be thought of in a rigid or formalistic way, but should be undertaken with constant regard for individualisation, so that community sanctions and measures correspond with the offence and with the characteristics of the suspect or offender. Furthermore, the fact that reference can be made to a set of rules which have been established internationally should facilitate an exchange of experience, in particular concerning working methods.

These Rules apply to persons who are subject to community sanctions and measures. Convicted offenders may have community sanctions or measures imposed on them. The term 'suspects' refers to persons who have not been convicted, but who may have measures imposed on them by judicial authority or other authority as laid down by law. However, sanctions and measures which are specifically concerned with juveniles are covered by the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)11 on the European Rules for juvenile offenders subject to sanctions or measures.

Definitions

For the purposes of this recommendation:

The expression "***community sanctions and measures***" means sanctions and measures which maintain suspects or offenders in the community and involve some restrictions on their liberty through the imposition of conditions and/or obligations. The term designates any sanction imposed by a judicial or administrative authority, and any measure taken before or instead of a decision on a sanction, as well as ways of enforcing a sentence of imprisonment outside a prison establishment.

The expression “**deciding authorities**” means a judicial, administrative or other authority empowered by law to impose or revoke a community sanction or measure or to modify its conditions and obligations.

The expression “**implementing authorities**” means the body or bodies empowered to decide on, and with responsibility for, the practical implementation of a community sanction or measure. In many countries, the implementing authority is the probation service.

Chapter I: Basic principles

1. Community sanctions and measures can provide just and effective supervision, guidance and assistance to suspects or offenders without resorting to deprivation of liberty. They can enhance the prospects of social inclusion on which desistance from crime usually depends.
2. National law shall provide for a sufficient range of suitably varied community sanctions and measures and these shall be made available to be used in practice.
3. The nature and the duration of community sanctions and measures shall both be in proportion to the seriousness of the offence for which persons have been sentenced or of which they have been accused and shall take into account their individual circumstances.
4. Community sanctions and measures shall be implemented in a manner that upholds human rights and enables and encourages suspects and offenders to meet their responsibilities as members of the community. No community sanction or measure shall be created or imposed if it is contrary to international standards concerning human rights and fundamental freedoms.
5. A community sanction or measure shall never involve medical or psychological treatment which is not in conformity with internationally adopted ethical standards.
6. There shall be no discrimination in the imposition and implementation of community sanctions and measures on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, economic, social or other status or physical or mental condition. Account shall be taken of the diversity and of the distinct individual needs of suspects and offenders.
7. Community sanctions and measures shall be made available to foreign national suspects and offenders and implemented fairly and in accordance with the principles of these Rules, with due regard to relevant differences in their circumstances.
8. The nature, content and methods of implementation of community sanctions and measures shall respect the principles of dignity and the privacy of suspects and offenders, their families and others.
9. Whenever community sanctions and measures involve contact with victims, their rights shall be respected in accordance with internationally accepted ethical standards in this area.
10. In appropriate cases, and having due regard to the rights and needs of victims of crime, offenders should be enabled and encouraged to make reparation for their offences to the victims or to the community.
11. Community sanctions and measures shall be implemented in a way that does not aggravate their afflictive nature. Rights shall not be restricted in the implementation of any community sanction or measure to a greater extent than necessarily follows from the decision imposing it.
12. No provisions shall be made in law for the automatic conversion to imprisonment of a community sanction or measure in the case of failure to follow any condition or obligation attached to such a sanction or measure. This does not preclude the option of sending back to prison those offenders who have failed to meet their obligations under the terms of conditional release from imprisonment.

13. National law shall provide for the regular inspection and independent monitoring of the work of the implementing authorities. Inspection and monitoring shall be carried out by qualified and experienced persons.

Chapter II: Legal framework

Legislation

14. The use, as well as the types, duration and modalities of implementation of community sanctions and measures shall be regulated by law.

15. The conditions and obligations attached to the community sanctions and measures shall be defined by clear and explicit provisions, as shall be the consequences of non-compliance with these conditions and obligations.

16. The authorities responsible for deciding on the imposition, modification and revocation of community sanctions and measures shall be laid down in law, as will their powers and responsibilities.

17. The authorities responsible for the implementation of community sanctions and measures shall be laid down in law, as will their duties and responsibilities. The powers of these authorities to decide on methods of implementation, to delegate their implementing duties to third parties if necessary, or to enter into agreements concerning implementation, shall also be laid down in law.

18. National law shall allow for reducing recourse to sentences involving deprivation of liberty by providing for non-custodial sanctions or measures as the appropriate response for certain offences.

19. Any formal, including legal, obstacles that prevent the use of community sanctions and measures with serious and repeat offenders or in relation to certain types of offence or any other statutory limitations should be reviewed and removed so far as appropriate.

20. Rights to benefits in any existing social security system or any other civic right shall not be limited by the imposition or implementation of a community sanction or measure (apart from restrictions forming part of the sentence).

Imposition of community sanctions and measures

21. The duration of a community sanction or measure shall be fixed by the authority empowered to make the decision as prescribed by law.

22. The nature and the duration of a community sanction or measure shall be in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the harm done to victims, and shall take into account any risks assessed as well as the individual's needs and circumstances.

23. Ordinarily, a community sanction or measure shall be imposed with a fixed duration. Where, exceptionally, the law provides that the duration of the community sanction or measure may be extended, there shall be regular review by the deciding authority to assess if such exceptional circumstances still apply and, if not, to terminate the community sanction or measure.

24. Advice to the court or the public prosecutor concerning the preparation, imposition or implementation of a community sanction or measure shall only be provided by staff of an organisation provided for by law.

25. Suspects and offenders shall have the right to appeal to a judicial authority against a decision subjecting them to a community sanction or measure.

26. Deciding and implementing authorities should create channels of communication between them, which facilitate regular discussion of the practical aspects of imposing and implementing community sanctions and measures.

Chapter III: Community sanctions and measures: implementation and methods

General

27. The imposition and implementation of community sanctions and measures shall seek to develop the individual's sense of responsibility to the community. Community sanctions and measures should therefore be made as meaningful as possible to suspects and offenders and shall seek to contribute to their personal and social development. Methods of supervision shall serve these aims.

28. The implementing authority shall ensure that information about the rights and obligations of those subject to community sanctions and measures is made available to them, and shall provide assistance to secure those rights and to enable them to meet these obligations. Staff of the implementing authority and participating organisations and individuals drawn from the community shall be made aware of their duties in these respects.

29. The implementation of community sanctions or measures shall seek to secure the co-operation of suspects and offenders and to enable them to see the community sanction or measure as a just and reasonable reaction to the offence committed. They shall therefore have the right to make oral or written representations prior to any decision concerning the implementation of a community sanction or measure and should participate, as far as possible, in such decision making.

30. Decisions about the implementation of a community sanction or measure shall be explained clearly to the suspects or offenders in a language they understand. Instructions given to them by the implementing authority shall be practical and precise.

31. The implementation of community sanctions and measures shall be based on the development of working relationships between the suspect or the offender, the supervisor and any participating organisations or individuals drawn from the community, focused on reducing re-offending and on social reintegration.

32. Implementation methods shall be individually adapted to the particular circumstances of each case and the authorities and the staff responsible for implementation shall therefore enjoy a sufficient degree of discretion to enable this.

33. Where an individual is found to be in need of particular personal, social or material assistance in relation to the implementation, fair and proper provision shall be made to enable them to meet their obligations.

34. Controlling activities shall only be undertaken to the extent that they are necessary for the proper implementation of the sanction or measure imposed. They shall be in proportion to the offence committed or alleged, shall take into consideration the individual circumstances of the suspect or the offender, including risk and needs factors and the rights and interests of the victim. Such activities shall be limited by the aims of the sanction or measure imposed.

35. Implementing authorities shall use working methods which are evidence-based and consistent with established professional standards.

36. The direct costs of implementation of a community sanction or measure should not normally be borne by the suspect or the offender.

Supervision and community service

37. Community sanctions and measures shall always work to support desistance from crime even where they involve high levels of surveillance or control.

38. Programmes and interventions for rehabilitation shall be based on a variety of methods. The allocation of suspects or offenders to specific programmes and interventions shall be guided by explicit criteria.

39. Tasks assigned to offenders doing community service shall be socially useful and meaningful and make use of and/or enhance the offender's skills as much as possible.
40. Community service shall not be undertaken for the purpose of making profit for the implementing authorities, for their staff, or for commercial profit.
41. Working and occupational conditions of offenders carrying out community service shall be in accordance with all current health and safety regulations. Offenders shall be insured against accident, injury and public liability arising as a result of implementation.

Case records, data protection and confidentiality

42. Individual case records shall be created by the implementing authority. They shall be kept up to date so that, *inter alia*, any necessary report can be prepared about the extent of the individual's compliance with the conditions or obligations of the sanction or measure.
43. Information in individual case records shall only encompass matters relevant to the sanction or measure imposed and its implementation. Such information shall be as reliable and objective as possible.
44. The supervisor shall ordinarily inform suspects or offenders of the content of the case record and of any reports made and explain the content to them.
45. The suspect or the offender, or a person acting on their behalf, shall have access to their individual case record to the extent that it does not infringe the right to privacy of others.
46. The suspect or the offender shall have the right to contest the content of the case record. The substance of any unresolved disagreement shall be written into the case record.
47. Information in any individual case record shall only be disclosed to those with a legal right to receive it. Any information disclosed shall be limited to what is relevant for the legitimate purposes of the authority requesting information.
48. At the end of the community sanction or measure, case records in the hands of the implementing authority shall be destroyed or kept in archives in accordance with national data protection legislation.
49. The kind and amount of information about individuals given to agencies which provide community service work placements or personal and social assistance of any kind shall be defined by, and be restricted to, the purpose of the particular action under consideration. In particular, it shall normally exclude information about the offence.

Chapter IV: Community participation

50. As reintegration into the community is an important aim of community sanctions and measures, implementing authorities shall work actively in partnership with other public or private organisations and local communities to meet the needs of suspects or offenders, promote their social inclusion and to enhance community safety.
51. The community, including private individuals and private and public organisations and services, shall be encouraged to participate in the implementation of community sanctions and measures. Attempts shall be made to assist suspects and offenders in developing meaningful ties in the community, in broadening their opportunities for contact and support and to encourage the community to make a positive contribution to their social reintegration.
52. Community participation shall never be undertaken for the financial profit of individuals or organisations.
53. Participating organisations and individuals drawn from the community shall undertake supervision only in a capacity laid down in law or defined by the authorities responsible for the imposition or implementation of community sanctions or measures. In such circumstances, the deciding or implementing authorities shall preserve their overall responsibility for the proper carrying out of the community sanction or measure and shall do all they can to ensure the probity, safety and integrity of all participants.

54. Participating organisations and individuals drawn from the community shall be bound by the demands of confidentiality and by respect for the rights of suspects and offenders.

55. Where the implementing authority engages directly with an organisation or individual to provide services for suspects or offenders subject to a community sanction or measure, an agreement should be drawn up which specifies, in particular, the nature of their duties and the way they are to be carried out.

Chapter V: Consent, co-operation and enforcement

56. A community sanction or measure shall only be imposed when the appropriate conditions or obligations have been decided upon and it is known that the suspect or the offender is likely to co-operate and comply with them.

57. Where the suspect's or the offender's consent is required, it shall be informed and explicit.

58. Such consent shall never have the consequence of depriving suspects or offenders of any of their fundamental rights.

59. The consent of a suspect shall be obtained before the imposition of any community measure to be applied before trial or instead of a decision on a sanction unless otherwise provided by law.

60. Any conditions or obligations specified in a community sanction or measure shall be determined taking into account the individuals' needs and circumstances, and their risks of reoffending (and in particular of causing serious harm).

61. In addition to formal documentation, suspects and offenders shall be clearly informed about the nature and purpose of the sanction or measure and the conditions or obligations that must be respected before the start of the implementation in a language they understand and, if necessary, in writing.

Chapter VI: Non-compliance and revocation

62. At the start of the implementation of a community sanction or measure, suspects and offenders shall be informed about the content of the sanction or measure and what is expected of them, of the consequences of non-compliance with the conditions and obligations stated in the decision and of the circumstances in which they may be brought back before the deciding authority in respect of non-compliance or inadequate compliance.

63. The implementing authority shall clearly define the procedures to be followed in the event of the suspect's or the offender's non-compliance or inadequate compliance with the requirements.

64. Minor transgressions which do not require the use of a procedure for revocation of the sanction or measure shall be promptly dealt with by discretionary means or, if necessary, by an administrative procedure. In such cases, the suspect or the offender must be given the opportunity to make comments. The procedure and outcome shall be written into the individual case record and explained promptly and clearly to the person concerned.

65. Any significant failure to comply with the conditions or obligations laid down in a community sanction or measure shall be promptly reported in writing to the deciding authority by the implementing authority.

66. Any written report on failure to comply with conditions or obligations shall give an objective and detailed account of the manner in which the failure occurred, and the circumstances in which it took place.

67. The decision to modify or revoke a community sanction or measure shall be taken by an authority defined by law. This deciding authority shall only give a ruling on the modification or the partial or total revocation after making a detailed examination of the facts reported by the implementing authority.

68. The decision to revoke a community sanction or measure shall not necessarily lead to a decision to impose imprisonment.

69. In deciding on the modification or partial or total revocation of a community sanction or measure, the deciding authority shall ensure that the suspect or the offender has had the opportunity to examine the relevant documents and to present their case regarding the alleged violation of any condition or obligation imposed. The suspect or the offender shall be entitled to legal assistance.

70. Where the revocation of a community sanction or measure is being considered, due account shall be taken of the manner in which and the extent to which any conditions and obligations laid down have been complied with. Where a breach of the sanction or the measure by an offender leads to a sentence of imprisonment, credit for any satisfactory compliance should be reflected in the length of the sentence.

71. Any condition or obligation laid down in a community sanction or measure may be modified by the deciding authority, having regard to changes in circumstances and/or to progress made by the suspect or the offender. An application to modify conditions or obligations may be made by the suspect or the offender or by the implementing authority, or otherwise as laid down in law.

72. In accordance with the law, the deciding authority shall be able to terminate a sanction or measure before it is due to end when it is established that the suspect or the offender has observed the conditions and obligations required and it appears no longer necessary to maintain them to achieve the purpose of the sanction or measure. The application to terminate a sanction or measure on these grounds may be made by the suspect or the offender or by the implementing authority.

Chapter VII: Organisation, staff and resources

General

73. The structure, status and resources of implementing agencies shall correspond to the volume and the complexity of the tasks and responsibilities they are entrusted with and shall reflect the importance of the services they provide.

74. Implementing authorities shall work in co-operation with other agencies of the justice system, with support agencies and with the wider civil society in order to carry out their tasks and duties effectively and fairly.

75. The work of authorities responsible for the implementation of community sanctions and measures shall be based on an explicit policy statement describing their function, purposes and basic values. The policy statement should be supplemented by written service plans and practical instructions and guidance.

76. Implementing authorities shall establish internal systems of scrutiny so that they can monitor their performance and that of their members of staff.

Staff

77. Implementing authorities should have staff of high professional quality, recruited, trained and employed in accordance with the principles laid down in the relevant Council of Europe texts related to staff concerned with the implementation of sanctions and measures.

78. Staff shall be accountable to the implementing authority. This authority shall determine the duties, rights and responsibilities of its staff and shall arrange for the management and supervision of such staff and assessment of the fairness, efficiency and effectiveness of their work.

79. There shall be arrangements for management to consult with staff as a body on general matters and, especially, on matters to do with their conditions of employment.

80. There shall be no discrimination in the recruitment, selection and promotion of staff on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political or other opinion, economic or social status.

81. Staff recruitment and selection should take into consideration specific needs of particular categories of persons and the diversity of the suspects or the offenders to be supervised.

82. The staff responsible for implementation shall be sufficiently numerous to carry out their duties effectively. They shall possess the personal qualities and professional qualifications necessary for their functions.

83. The staff responsible for implementation shall have adequate training to enable them to have a sound understanding of their particular field of activity, their practical duties and the ethical requirements of their work. Their training should encourage them to contribute to an enhancement of their work. Their professional competence shall be regularly developed through further training and performance reviews and appraisals.

84. Salaries and conditions of service shall be commensurate with the staff's skills and responsibilities. Staff shall be appointed on such a legal, financial and working-hours basis that professional and personal continuity of development is ensured, that the employees' awareness of official responsibility will be strengthened and that their status in relation to conditions of service matches that of other professional staff with comparable functions.

Use of volunteers

85. The implementing authority should consider the recruitment of individual volunteers to contribute to its work to enhance the involvement of the community in the implementation of sanctions and measures.

86. Volunteers can make an important contribution to the implementation of community sanctions and measures but should not undertake work which should be carried out by professional staff.

87. The implementing authorities shall define criteria and procedures according to which individual volunteers drawn from the community are selected, informed about their tasks, responsibilities, limits of competence, accountability and other issues. Suitable training shall be provided.

88. Volunteers shall be guided and supported by professional staff and enabled to perform duties appropriate to their skills and interest within the boundaries of their role.

89. Volunteers shall be insured against accident, injury and public liability when carrying out the duties assigned to them by the implementing authority. It is this authority's duty to make sure that they are adequately insured. They shall be reimbursed for necessary expenditures incurred in the course of their work.

Financial resources

90. Implementing authorities shall have adequate financial means provided from public funds. Third parties may make a financial or other contribution but implementing authorities shall never be financially dependent on them.

91. In cases where implementing authorities make use of third parties' financial contributions, there shall be rules defining the procedures to be followed, the persons invested with specific responsibilities in this matter and the means for auditing the use of funds.

Chapter VIII: Inspection, monitoring and complaints procedures

92. Implementing authorities shall be open to scrutiny and shall regularly submit general reports and feedback information regarding their work to the competent authorities. Implementing authorities shall also be subject to inspection and/or monitoring and shall co-operate fully with all such scrutiny. The findings of government inspections and of independent monitoring bodies shall be made public.

93. A fair, simple and impartial complaints procedure shall be available concerning a decision made by the implementing authority, or the failure to take such a decision or, in general, about the effect given to the sanction or measure.

94. The implementing authority in the first instance shall respond to and investigate complaints concerning the implementation of a sanction or measure. Complaints shall be examined and decided on without undue delay.

95. Those investigating the complaint shall obtain all necessary information to enable them to reach their decision. Careful consideration shall be given to the desirability of hearing the complainant in person, especially when such a wish has been expressed.

96. The decision of those investigating the complaint and the reasons for the decision shall be communicated in writing to the complainant, to the implementing authority and to the relevant members of staff.

97. A complainant may be advised or assisted by a person of their choice and if necessary shall receive legal assistance.

Chapter IX: Research, evaluation, work with media and the public

98. Research on community sanctions and measures shall be encouraged. They should be regularly evaluated. Programmes and interventions should be structured in accordance with knowledge derived from relevant research.

99. Criteria of effectiveness and performance should be laid down so as to make it possible to assess from various perspectives the benefits and disadvantages associated with programmes and interventions with the aim of maximising the quality of their results. Standards and performance indicators for the execution of programmes and interventions should be established.

100. New community sanctions and measures in accordance with internationally approved ethical standards may be introduced on a trial basis. Any pilot projects or experimentation undertaken should be carried out in accordance with the spirit of these Rules and be carefully monitored and evaluated.

101. Policy makers, legislators, judicial authorities and the general public should receive recurring information on the economic and social benefits accruing from a reduced recourse to imprisonment and on the advantages of community sanctions and measures. There should be a declared public relations policy.

102. Active efforts shall be made to make information available about the nature and content of community sanctions and measures, as well as the various ways in which they are implemented, so that the general public can understand them and perceive them as adequate and credible responses to criminal behaviour.

103. Judicial and other deciding authorities should be involved in the process of devising and revising policies on the use of community sanctions and measures, and should be informed about their results, with a view to ensuring widespread understanding of the strengths and limitations of community sanctions and measures.

104. Implementing authorities shall enable and encourage suspects and offenders to inform them of their experience of being supervised so that policies and practices can be improved. Where these authorities work with victims, their views shall also be sought.

Chapter X: Reviewing of the Rules

105. These Rules shall be reviewed regularly.