

Thank you Mr. general director. It is true that 10 years ago I didn't think that I would have the occasion to try to put into practice measures of substantial reform and support for the prison system, but this thing happens now. I hope that at the end of the mandate all the colleagues from the Ministry will consider that it has been a successful one and that we kept the good ideas started 10 years ago.

Mr. Philippe Boillat,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,

I would like to thank you for having accepted the invitation of the Council of Europe to participate in this conference. I am glad to see many participants, not only from the European states, but also from other continents. I take this opportunity to welcome all the guests and I thank the Council of Europe partners for the opportunity offered to Romania to host this event, which has a subject of high importance not only for us.

Today's challenges in the prison and probation administrations have acquired new dimensions. Thus, a constant challenge is the management in times of economic crisis, but also the problem of overcrowded prisons. We also constantly talk about the need of social reinsertion and diminishing the risk of reoffending, about the need to collaborate with society for the reinsertion of offenders. However, we talk in the current situation about new aspects, about new challenges, as preventing radicalisation in prisons and probation, radicalisation, which can generate serious phenomena of organized crime or terrorism, radicalisation that we all wish to eliminate as soon as possible.

Romania implemented an ample reform of the criminal executional system in the first half of the year 2014 and we think that the positive impact of these modifications start to see.

This reform implied major changes both in the prison system and in the probation one, and these changes reinforced the already existent tendencies concerning the aligning to European standards in the field.

Of course, we have our problems and challenges. The Romanian prison system faces major problems concerning detention conditions, considered not complying with the standards that Romania committed itself to implement, according to European and international requirements in the field.

The poor state of the infrastructure and the problem of overcrowding have a negative influence upon all the other aspects of detention and upon the general climate in detention, and obviously increase the challenges, to which the administration must face. This unsatisfactory reality, which is criticised also in mass media, is one of the causes for which Romania has been losing and still loses causes at the European Court for Human Rights. The losses mean funds taken from the budget to pay the fines.

Obviously that the situation in Romania is not singular at European level, this allowing us to try approaching this problem within the European Union states. Last year, during a visit in Italy, I proposed to the Italian counterpart to initiate a common process in trying to find European resources for the prison systems. To the undertaking initiated

by Romania and Italy joined 11 member states of the European Union. Thirteen states/justice systems from the European Union signed a common letter addressed to the first vice-president of the European Commission, Mr. Frans Timmermans, in trying to make the Commission sensitive to the need of finding European solutions for the prison systems, for their need of social reinsertion. I would like to appeal first to the member states to join this undertaking and to the other participants to sustain this demarche in any way they think it is proper. We are optimistic taking into account that Mr. Frans Timmermans has been recently to Bucharest and he promised the support of the Commission not only for Romania but for all the member states which confront with the overcrowding problem and with the need to have adequate programs of social reinsertion for facing this new challenge concerning firstly the radicalization in prisons.

As far as the probation service is concerned, upon entry into force of the New Criminal Code and the New Criminal Procedure Code, the probation service has completed a very important stage, the one of administrative reorganization by creating the National Directorate of Probation, as a distinct structure within the Ministry of Justice.

Certainly, the colleagues from the Probation Department still have big expectances in what concerns the support for infrastructure at the national level and probably this reunion is a good opportunity to make a public promise, namely that they will be supported.

The Romanian probation service has been an active member of the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) ever since 1999, as it was implied in implementing some international projects with external partners, and this brought them the statute of an expertise pole in the field of probation, in the region, and this way the experience also from other projects carried out by the Council of Europe in other states was put to good use.

This event can be a very good opportunity to continue our collaboration for identifying common solutions for the challenges that the probation and prison services face.

I would like to wish you success both professionally and personally and to consider at the end of this conference that it worth the visit to Bucharest from all points of view.

Thank you!