

CDPPS 2017 Closing Comments

by

Vivian Geiran, Président, PC-CP

Introduction:

I want to say a few closing words, on behalf of Mr. Jan Kleijssen, Director, Information Society and Action Against Crime Directorate, of the Council of Europe, and also on my own behalf, in my role as President of the Council for Penological Co-operation, the PC-CP. In doing this, I also want to highlight some issues emerging during the conference, and look briefly to the future.

Conference 2017:

The theme of this year's conference, as you know, has been: *Staff Recruitment, Training and Development*. From the time that theme was first proposed – last year – there was very strong support, across Member States, and their prison and probation organisations, for this theme. And the interest in, and relevance of this theme have been borne out by the quality of the presentations we have enjoyed, and the discussions – formal and informal – which have taken place over these past few days. I hope and believe that the learning from the various inputs at this conference, both in plenary sessions and in workshops, will endure long after we have all returned home.

Right from the opening and keynote speeches, we were challenged to consider the breadth, depth and overarching importance of all aspects of human resource management, and their relevance for the success or failure of the services we deliver, in prisons and in probation, everywhere. Human resource management, and related issues, can sometimes be referred to as the 'soft skills' of what we do. I would suggest in fact, and I believe this has been borne out over what we have heard these past few days, that leading and managing our people is often the toughest – the 'hardest' – element of what we do every day. The conference workshops have covered a wide range of issues, from recruitment, through

training and development, and all aspects of these, and their importance in prisons and probation. Contributions also covered a wide range of 'sub-headings,' including interagency initiatives, digital training and learning, implementation challenges, staff resilience and wellbeing, and evaluation and research, among others. We also heard of the irreplaceable need for the relational or relationship aspects of what we do; for example, the need to *listen* to our staff.

I noticed some trends emerging in what we heard and discussed: while there can be significant differences in the structural, legal, political or resourcing situations in different organisations and Member States, as numerous people have said to me this week, the similarities in our shared challenges unite us far more than differences dividing us; and those similarities provide great opportunities to learn from and co-operate with each other. I also observed that, despite even significant differences in relative levels of resources in different countries and organisations, a positive approach, and proactive and co-operative leadership, mean that whatever the challenges, change at individual and organisational level is possible. As the Norwegian Correctional Service tee shirts say: "If nothing changes, nothing changes." To put that in a positive frame, where *something* changes, *everything* can change. Yet again, the issue of how we present ourselves to, and communicate with wider society, was emphasised by a number of contributors. As always, conference participants clearly made great use of informal opportunities to share and exchange knowledge and experience.

If I have any regret, it would be that we had almost too much choice in terms of the range of workshops from which to choose. I know there were many workshop inputs that I would like to have attended, but just could not attend them all. I suppose though, that that is a good complaint! And one thing I would suggest we take away from the 22nd CDPPS is that our staff are our major resource, but much more than that: they are stakeholders, partners in our mission, and ambassadors in terms of how we communicate with our service users and the wider community. We need to ensure that our staff are as engaged as possible, as trained, developed and supported as possible, and it is our responsibility in the first instance to ensure that happens. It is also clear, as far as I am concerned, that we need to be proactive in relation to human resource management, to be successful. Put most simply,

prevention is better than cure. That is to say, effective human resource management does not just happen by itself. It has to be proactively driven, with energy and commitment and belief. As Jörg Jesse said in his keynote presentation, the quality of our staff is the key to the success of what we do. Jörg also expressed the hope that we at least launch a debate on staff recruitment, training and development. I believe this conference has contributed significantly to such a debate.

CDPPS 2018:

Moving from the present to the future: We look forward to the 23rd CDPPS, which will be held in 2018 in Estonia. I want to thank the Estonian authorities for their kind invitation to take on the baton of hosting this conference, next year. This year's conference theme was – staff recruitment, training and development. We have yet to finalise the theme for next year's conference, and would welcome (not this minute!) any suggestions you may have, for next year's conference theme, for consideration. If you have proposals on that subject, please do take the opportunity to let us know, ideally by emailing the PC-CP secretariat. The PC-CP working group will be meeting again on 20 to 22 September, and again on 6 to 8 November 2017. At these meetings, as well as subsequent meetings in 2018, we will be discussing and making plans for next year's conference.

We welcome feedback on this conference, and all aspects of our work. We also welcome suggestions for future conferences of Directors of Prison and Probation Services – either in terms of venues or themes – or other aspects of our work programme. In that regard, I urge you all to refer to the recently updated and relaunched PC-CP webpage, within the Council of Europe website, for up to date information on all aspects of our work, incorporating all our documents, including the papers from this conference.

Thanks:

Thank you *all* for attending this conference and for making it such a success. On your behalf, and all our behalf, I want to thank and express our appreciation to our hosts – Marianne Vollan and all her team in the Norwegian Correctional Service, especially the training university college here in Lillestrøm, and specifically all the excellent officers we have met all around this beautiful building. The quality of their planning, their hospitality,

and their attention to detail – to make this conference a success, and to ensure we all got the most benefit from our visit here – have all been phenomenal. We have been *talking* about the value of good, well trained staff. At this conference, we have experienced that quality first hand, embodied in the officers we have seen and with whom we have interacted, at every moment of this conference. Thank you, and be proud. You ensured we had a most enjoyable as well as productive time, all of which only further increases our learning and co-operation experience.

I want to thank all the presenters, chairpersons, and moderators of all the sessions, plenary and workshop, who gave of their time, experience and expertise, at this conference, for all our benefit.

As always, our translators have played a crucial role in proceedings and a big ‘thank you’ to all of you.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues on the PC-CP Working Group – specifically the other eight expert members, and of course the permanent Secretariat, represented here in Lillestrøm by Ilina Taneva and Sylvie Elter.

If I have omitted anyone, please forgive me. A big thanks again to you all and to everyone who has made the 22nd CDPPS a success. And I wish you all a safe onward journey home.

Thank you.

ENDS