

Opening address by Mr Hugh CHETWYND
Head of Department, Deprivation of liberty
Executive Secretary, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture
and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)
Council of Europe
30th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE OF DIRECTORS OF
PRISON AND PROBATION SERVICES (CDPPS)
“Can we move away from the overuse of penal sanctions?”
Krakow, Poland, 24-25 September 2025

- **Welcome** dignitaries, Directors General, colleagues and partners, guests.

- **Thank the Minister of Justice of Poland, the Undersecretary of State and the Director General of the Polish Prison Service** for hosting this conference and for its excellent organisation.

- **Introduce yourself and recall role** as Executive Secretary of CPT and Head of newly restructured Department on Deprivation of liberty, which now oversees CDPPS. Inform participants of the administrative transfer of the PC-CP to this department, while confirming that intergovernmental oversight remains with the Council of Europe Committee on Crime Problems (Introduce new Secretary to Conference and to PC-CP and mention that the CDPC Secretary is also present).

-o0o-

- Reaffirm the **paramount importance of this annual event**, as it brings together the Directors General of the prison and probation services of the 46 Council of Europe member States, as well as high-profile and experienced

European researchers, practitioners and NGOs. **Encourage attendees to make full use of this conference** to engage actively, network, share knowledge and collaborate.

- Express happiness that the 30th edition of the Conference is taking place here in Krakow. **Poland** is a beautiful country with a rich history, and participants will have the opportunity to learn more about the Polish penitentiary system in the upcoming keynote speech and during tomorrow's prison visit in Nowy Wiśnicz.

-o0o-

- Note that with the **Ukrainian border only a couple hundred kilometres away**, we are reminded of the brutal Russian war of aggression against the neighbour.

- Reiterate the Council of Europe's **unwavering support to Ukraine**.

- Take this opportunity to **welcome Mr Oleksandr NIKONISHYN**, Deputy Head of the Department of Execution of Criminal Sanctions (Ukraine) who will participate as a panelist in the workshop on crisis management.

- Inform that 10 days ago, the **Ad hoc Committee on the Establishment of an international Claims Commission for Ukraine (CAHEC)**, set up to finalise the work on a Convention to establish the Claims Commission held its inaugural meeting. The Claims Commission will continue the work of the Register of Damage for Ukraine which has **so far received claims from more than 55,000 people**.

-o0o-

- Present the **Council of Europe's work on deprivation of liberty and probation** stands on three pillars:
 - **we develop standards**, principles and guidelines for our member States in the field of execution of custodial and non-custodial penal sanctions and measures based on the three values of the Organisation: human rights, rule of law and democracy;
 - **Council for Penological Co-operation (PC-CP)**, the CoE's intergovernmental Committee on the execution of custodial and non-custodial penal sanctions and measures, working under the Council of Europe Committee on Crime Problems, is currently **updating our standards related to education in prison** and on **foreign national offenders** in prison and under probation. We expect to support your work with guidance, in the form of Recommendations in these fields, once the specialised PC-CP's work is completed, endorsed by the Committee on Crime Problems, and ultimately adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the 46 MS of the Council of Europe. In early 2026, we will start reviewing our **Probation Rules**.
 - **monitoring of the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, notably in prisons, is as you well know carried out by** the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT);
 - So far this year, the **CPT** has carried out 10 ad hoc visits, 5 periodic visits, and has published 13 visit reports. Draw attention to new standard on informal hierarchies in prison.
 - and **we support national authorities** in the integration of our standards into the legislation and practice, by developing and implementing cooperation projects together on areas of prison and probation reform.

➤ We are currently running **16 projects**, with an overall budget of 17 million € across 11 countries.

- Inform that on the occasion of the Conference, we are publishing together with the University of Lausanne the **latest edition of the Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics regarding probation (SPACE II)** today. These annual publications always enjoy extensive media coverage and are not only well known on the European continent but also garner massive attention worldwide. Invite administrations to further draw attention to this useful tool, and to make use of this rich source of data to inform potential reforms or practices. Professor Marcelo Aebi is unfortunately unable to join this year, but participants will have the opportunity to hear from Mr Edoardo Cocco in one of the workshops and to discuss the findings with him.

-oOo-

- Recall the conference's topical theme this year **“Can we move away from the overuse of penal sanctions?”**, in line with the **Council of Europe's role in improving human rights and the rule of law in the criminal justice area**, including by promoting more humane and socially effective penal sanctions and alternatives thereto.

- Recall the **consequences of penal excess** – prison overcrowding and subsequent and poor conditions of detention, strained resources, high recidivism rate.

- Offer to reflect on ways to **reform penal policies and adopt alternative approaches and solutions** such as restorative justice and rehabilitating programs aiming to support reintegration rather than just punish.

- Note that the **agenda for the next two days** is as usual quite full and diverse: we will hear about net-widening of prison and probation in the **plenary session** before breaking into **workshops** dedicated to *the use of data and risk assessment tools to reform penal policies; the promotion of positive health and trauma informed care; children with imprisoned parents; and finally the strategic approach by prison and probation services to crisis management.*

- Take this opportunity to **thank the distinguished moderators and speakers** for their dedication and for what will undoubtedly be outstanding contributions.

-o0o-

- Finally, **thank the audience** not only for being here today, but also for the work they do, day in and day out, to ensure that the rights of those who are deprived of liberty are upheld, that they are treated fairly and with dignity. Acknowledge that is no small feat in the current context, that the CoE is aware of the challenges they face, and that it stands ready to support them in those efforts.

- Wish everyone a productive event.