

**Your Excellency, President of the Regional Government of  
Madeira, Mr. Miguel Filipe Albuquerque,**

**Your Excellency, Representative of the Republic for the  
Autonomous Region of Madeira, High Court Judge Advisor  
Ireneu Cabral Barreto,**

**Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador Christian Meuwly,**

**The Secretary of the PC-PC Group, Ms. Iliana Taneva**

**General Director of Reintegration and Prison Services, Mr.  
Rómulo Mateus**

**Representatives of the European Penitentiary Administrations**

**Distinguished speakers,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**1. It is a great pleasure to me to close the twenty-sixth Conference of Directors of Prisons and Probation Services of the Council of Europe.**

**Once again, this has demonstrated to be an event of great relevance and awareness for all participants, for the scientific and academic community as well as for policy makers.**

**Two days of intense work provided everyone extremely useful tools for reflection.**

**The topics covered on the agenda, along with the quality of the speakers, were extremely pertinent and vastly updated for all the enforcing penalties and judicial measures systems' in Europe.**

**The significance, the pragmatism and the dynamics of the discussion around the various topics are the factors on which the quality of this meeting was based, which definitely establishes our capacity to understand the circumstances and, consequently, to take the most appropriate decisions.**

**2. I will begin to speak about the subject “COVID-19”, the impacts of the pandemic and the measures adopted by the different Member States to face it.**

**It was very clear at this conference that every effort was made to protect the health and safeguard of life of the inmate population under the protection of the State, in addition to the professionals who ensure the daily life of the institutions, their families and the remaining members of the community.**

**In Portugal, we are proud to state that, at this moment, there are only 9 positive cases registered of Covid-19 in the Prison System: 3 inmates, 3 young inmates of the Educational Centres and 3 staff members.**

**Since the beginning of the pandemic situation, 1.916 cases have been recovered, 586 of whom were staff members, 1.308 inmates and 20 young inmates in Educational Centres.**

**A special remark should be made to the fact that in the prison and educational system no deaths have been registered as a result of Covid-19 and that all disease outbreak situations were immediately solved by the services' own health resources.**

**Regarding the vaccination process, and in accordance with the guidelines of the National Health Authorities, the procedures started with the health professionals working in the different units of the General Directorate of the Prisons which, as it is also the case of the involving society, constitute a priority group.**

**In accordance with the guidelines established for COVID-19 Vaccination Plan in general, the vaccination in Prisons, in particular, covers all its workers (currently reaching a rate of 87.4%) and, of course, people destitute of their liberty, with special attention to those who are more vulnerable, having already reached a percentage of 91.4% of the vaccinated inmate population.**

**These outcomes are due to the strategies determined by the State institutions and the great effort and professionalism of all those involved. We are extremely pleased to register these facts.**

**3. Through the presentation of the results of the questionnaire about "Mental Health", we have been able to observe that the challenges associated to people with mental illnesses are complex and have different dimensions.**

**The medical-psychiatric follow-up of these people is a priority for the penalty execution systems, since the Rule of Law and the Democratic States have the duty to provide people deprived of their liberty a dignified treatment. This treatment is equivalent to the one given to citizens not deprived of their liberty, thus also guaranteeing the State obligations of respect and equality in the field of Human Rights.**

**In Portugal, efforts have been made that are worth of note and our legal system has enshrined important principles and guarantees, which are expressed in the Portuguese Prison Rules (“Código da Execução das Penas e Medidas Privativas da Liberdade”).**

**Moreover, significant developments have been made in a more recent legislation regarding the criminal law applicable to those who can not be held criminally liable.**

**Taking into account the special relevance of this matter, a Working Group was appointed – by a joint order of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Health - with the aim of monitoring the execution of the legislation and ensuring the articulation of the two Ministries, with a view to the fastest and most efficient overcoming of the problems that daily practice reveals.**

**This Working Group has already produced several documents, which are in the approval phase, namely technical intervention models and guidelines, which will contribute to increase the quality and impartiality of the treatment and rehabilitation process of citizens in compliance with security measures, as well as improve the operating model of the mental health units dedicated to the execution of security measures.**

**4. Furthermore, concerning the level of knowledge and treatment of people convicted of sexual crimes, the recommendations and good practices presented, in terms of the treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders, are of utmost importance for all Member States, as only in this way can we combat this menace and prevent it from happen again..**

**This is an extremely complex issue, not only in terms of rehabilitation programmes, but also in terms of strategies for monitoring and mitigating the impact of the crime on the victims of these crimes, most of whom are lasting and devastating.**

**However, we can't fail to do everything we are able to.**

**We owe it to the victims and families affected by this calamity.**



**In Portugal, a remarkable effort has been improved in what concerns the treatment and rehabilitation of sexual offenders.**

**In the prison context, a Rehabilitation Programme with more than 10 years of experience is being applied, which has recently been adapted to the outside community context, where it will also be applied to all convicted people who, being released, are subject to the obligation - imposed by the Court - to attend this programme.**

**It is a cognitive and behavioural programme, inspired in the international model "RNR - Risk, Needs, Responsiveness", and in due proportion with the most recent international scientific and theoretical developments on the subject.**

**Like other crucial projects - such as the Programme for Domestic Violence Offenders and the Programme for the Rehabilitation of Pyromaniacs - this programme is decentralised throughout the national territory, based on 4 regional poles, which allows it to cover an increasing number of people convicted by these types of crimes.**

**As an example, scientific studies achieve important results in terms of impact, even identifying "clinically significant changes" in the cognitive structures of the users of these programmes, reducing the risk of re-offending.**

**5. Finally, the issue of "Artificial Intelligence", applied to the contexts of the enforcement of penalties and judicial measures, could not be more updated.**

**The chance to debate the advantages and opportunities of the use of artificial intelligence tools in the enforcement systems of penalties and judicial measures was of special interest to everyone, including the Portuguese Ministry of Justice, which has paid a lot of attention to these issues, with the aim of making the system more agile, efficient and close to the citizen, although we are well aware of the special demands of security, supervision and control that are required in this area.**

**There are several promising indicators of the impact of the use of these technologies, not only in terms of efficiency in the use of resources and cost reduction, but also in the reduction of critical incidents inside prisons.**

**There is an increasing number of publications dedicated to the subject, at the same time as there is a proliferation of pilot experiences and research projects producing very encouraging results.**

**We are, therefore, increasingly equipped with the necessary knowledge to, with the required security, take the political decisions that will allow us to follow the paths of an increasingly digital future.**

**In Portugal, the Prison Services (“DGRSP”) joined a project financed by a system of incentive and development of technological systems, involving a Portuguese University and other partners.**

**This Innovation and Development project aims to investigate and develop a technological solution to support the management of activities and information generated during the execution of a sentence or judicial measure, capitalising on this information, using Artificial Intelligence technologies.**

**In the decision-making process, the last word will always be the one of a human being, who analyses, validates and decides.**

**Nevertheless, the activity of decision-makers (administrative and judicial) and of advisory services will be made much easier.**

**Related to this matter, we will deepen the process of dematerialization of physical processes, contributing, also in this way, to a greater effectiveness and efficiency of the State's resources, both physical and human and, always in a logic of continuous improvement of the quality of work carried out in the process of rehabilitation and social reinsertion of the people that the Justice system has under its guidance.**

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**Much more could have been said, but we must finish.**

**On behalf of the Portuguese Minister of Justice, Mrs. Francisca Van Dunem, and on my own, we thank the Council of Europe the challenge to promote the co-organization of this important conference.**

**We extend our gratitude to all the speakers, the organization team and the translators for their quality, effort and dedication.**

**I would also like to express our entire honour to collaborate in future events of this or any other nature, which enrich us greatly and have such an impact on the development of safer, more balanced, fairer and more democratic societies; a commitment to which the Portuguese Government is deeply committed.**

**Thank you all for your attention.**

**And I wish you a safe journey back home.**