



## **Multilateral Meeting**

***The social reintegration of prisoners to reduce re-offending  
after release – co-operation with probation and other support agencies***

***Strasbourg, 17-18 October 2019***

### **Concept Paper**

Reducing re-offending to make the society safer is among the main challenges faced by the Council of Europe member States. Standards, monitoring and technical assistance are therefore provided to their relevant institutions to develop necessary policies to support the social reintegration of prisoners to live a crime-free life after release.

Enforcement of custodial sentences and the treatment of prisoners necessitate taking account of the requirements of safety, security and discipline while also ensuring prison conditions which do not infringe human dignity and which offer meaningful occupational activities and treatment programmes to inmates, thus preparing them for their reintegration into society.

The meeting will highlight that whether or not probation agencies and the prison service form part of a single organisation, they shall work in close co-operation in order to contribute to a successful transition from life in prison to life in the community.

More specifically the meeting will focus on the following Council of Europe standards:

- all detention shall be managed so as to facilitate the reintegration into free society of persons who have been deprived of their liberty;
- while in custody, guidance and support shall be provided to offenders in order to prepare their release, including early release, and resettlement;
- to enable prisoners overcome the particular problem of moving from lengthy incarceration to a law-abiding life in the community, their release shall be prepared well in advance, taking particular account of the need for specific pre-release and post-release plans which address relevant risks and needs, close collaboration between the prison administration and post-release supervising authorities, social and medical services and a gradual return to life in free society through conditional release under supervision combined with effective social support;

- to ensure a comprehensive approach based on professional standards in dealing with radicalisation and violent extremism leading to terrorist acts, prison and probation services shall co-operate with each other as well as with other law enforcement agencies; prison and probation services shall also co-operate with other public and private agencies and wider civil society in order to provide aftercare and to contribute to the resettlement and reintegration of offenders; given the interrelationship between prisons and probation, where possible particular attention should be given towards developing joint training opportunities between probation and prison staff;
- probation agencies shall be afforded all necessary access to prisoners to allow them to assist with preparations for their release and the planning of their resettlement in order to ensure continuity of care by building on any constructive work that has taken place during detention;
- prison services shall ensure that prisoners can participate in appropriate pre-release programmes and are encouraged to take part in educational and training courses that prepare them for life in the community;
- where probation agencies are responsible for supervising offenders after release they shall work in co-operation with the prison authorities, the offenders, their family and the community in order to prepare their release and reintegration into society;
- supervision following early release shall aim to meet the offenders' resettlement needs such as employment, housing, education and to ensure compliance with the release conditions in order to reduce the risks of re-offending and of causing serious harm;
- prison staff should receive training on the key elements of sentence planning and how to actively support the implementation of sentences; working with prisoners to reduce re-offending and to promote desistance and social integration, thus contributing to public safety, is a key element of staff work.

These standards are reflected in a number of Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, mainly Rec (2006)2 on the European Prison Rules, Rec.(2003)23 on the management by prison administrations of life sentence and other long-term prisoners, Rec(2003)22 concerning conditional release (parole), CM/Rec(2010)1 on the Council of Europe Probation Rules, the Guidelines for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism and the Guidelines regarding recruitment, selection, education, training and professional development of prison and probation staff.

The above-mentioned Recommendations and standards are available on the website of the Criminal Law Cooperation Unit of the Council of Europe:

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/criminal-law-coop>

The meeting will bring together senior officials and professionals from all Council of Europe member states to share their different experiences and good practices regarding policies and working methods for enhancing the social reintegration of prisoners and to identify, through peer-to-peer discussion, ways of introducing new approaches in their systems in line with the Council of Europe standards.

The meeting is expected to facilitate a better understanding and implementation in practice of higher standards for reducing prisoners' re-offending and it is hoped that the exchange of good practices among practitioners will encourage a more positive, professional and efficient approach in the prison services.