

COMBINED MANAGEMENT OF PRISONS AND COMMUNITY SANCTIONS OFFICES SINCE 2010

Case: Vanaja Prison – Häme Community Sanctions Office

A combined unit that consists of Vanaja Open Prison, which has two separate prisons (for women and men) and Häme Community Sanctions Office, which has two branch offices (in Hämeenlinna and Lahti).

The prisons have 113 prisoner places in total and about 30 prisoners are in probationary liberty under supervision daily. The community sanctions offices have about 200 community sanction clients (65 community service clients, 85 conditionally released prisoners ordered to supervision, 45 conditionally sentenced young offenders, and 2 monitoring sentence clients).

The prisons have about 38 staff members and the community sanctions offices 13. In addition, the combined unit has a supervision patrol, which consists of three officials. All told, there are approximately 55 staff members.

It all started in 2010: The prison staff thought that they had lost a director that was always present and the staff in the community sanctions offices doubted the director's competence due to a long career in prison. The director had to give up her regular office and fit a big part of the office into a backpack.

But then: At first, there was just a shared director. The whole management system had to be rebuilt and combined. The working methods of the management group were reformed. The scale of the director's work changed from small things to bigger issues. It is important that the director enhances and maintains unity in every possible way. The quality of presence became important. The director has to be able to use the different methods and styles of management side by side. The duties of all superiors expanded and their participation in the policy-making of the unit increased. The changes were in line with the management style applied in the Criminal Sanctions Agency, i.e. coaching management.

All units are more agile and client-oriented than before the fusion. Combined management supports the development of the sentences served in freedom, especially probationary liberty under supervision. The staff find themselves more competent when they also know "the other side". More and more staff members are able to add variety to their job by means of job rotation or substituting for other people etc. All staff members are more involved in the planning of the work. The clients get better counselling and guidance regarding the whole penal process.

An administrative change led to a change in the operating culture

What does successful combined management require in my opinion?

At the beginning, we had to find the things we could do together. Job rotation, visits and substituting for other people beyond the division of the units is important. The management has to have knowledge of both sides. The commitment of all superiors to the combined management is necessary. Joint training and recreational events are needed.

Most likely, this will not end here. The next level of union > fusion is already coming. Common job titles and new unit names would support the development. In future, the goal is to distribute work even more fluently based on the competence and workload instead of the division of the units.