

# European treatment and transition management of high risk offenders project 2012 -2014

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## The JCN Newsletter

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## European treatment and transition management of high risk offenders project 2012 -2014 Justice Co-operation Network (JCN) Dublin workshop June 2013

For higher risk prisoners leaving custody there is a particularly high risk of their return to offending and harm to the community. Research shows that effective resettlement work can assist the prevention of further offending, the reduction of victimisation and enhance positive lifestyles in the community.

Estonia, Finland, Ireland and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Germany), with the University of Greifswald as advisers, are partners in an EU funded project to examine and develop best practice in the transition management and supervision of high risk offenders leaving custody as well as developing a body of knowledge and creating an EU network of expertise. Ireland, through the Department of Justice and Equality, is represented in the project by the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service.

The project began in November 2012 and will be concluded in October 2014. The work of the project will be completed in a series of workshops convened in the partner jurisdictions,

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published reports and a project conference in autumn 2014.

The first project workshop in Tallinn, Estonia in March this year focused on the clear definition of who are high risk offenders. It was agreed that, for this project, a high risk offender is a violent or sexual offender who presents a high probability to commit crimes which may cause very serious personal, physical or psychological harm.

The second project workshop was held at the Probation Service, Haymarket, Dublin 7 between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June 2013 and looked at current practice, issues and challenges in managing the transition of high risk offenders from custody to the community in each of the jurisdictions.

In addition to partners from Estonia, Finland, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and the University of Greifswald the attendance included delegates and experts from, the Probation Service, Irish Prison Service, An Garda Síochána, HSE, Homelessness Services and community organisations and interests. The workshop programme featured presentations on identifying high risk offenders, SORAM and interventions in custody as well as lively and valuable discussion groups and prison visits.

Thanks are due to the many Probation and Prison Service personnel who contributed to making the workshop a smoothly run, welcoming and very successful international event.

A report entitled “Transnational Comparative Analysis of Transition Management Strategies” has been completed as part of the report from the Dublin workshop at is available on the project website at <http://jcn.pixel-online.org> .

The JCN project, Justice Cooperation Network European treatment and transition management of high risk offenders, is funded by the European Commission in the framework of the Criminal Justice Programme.



Discussion groups in progress at the JCN Workshop in Dublin in June 2013



Presentations at the JCN Workshop in Dublin in June 2013



## European treatment and transition management of high risk offenders project: Dublin workshop conclusions

In the course of the workshop at the Probation Service in Haymarket, Dublin there were valuable presentations, informed and detailed discussions on the issues and challenges arising and a fruitful exchange of knowledge, expertise and approaches.

It was agreed in the course of a partner meeting prior the workshop that the definition of high risk for the purpose of the project should be revised to include reference to a violent and sexual offender to avoid any possible misunderstanding by readers and other interests. The revised definition now reads:

*“A high risk offender (a violent or sexual offender) is someone who presents a high probability to commit crimes which may cause very serious personal, physical or psychological harm.”*

Identifying who is high risk and how they are evaluated was a key topic of discussion throughout the workshop presentations and discussions. What is done with the information to address the issues in prison, in transition and on release was explored. The risk that an individual could be labelled as ‘high risk’ attracting increased security and related attention while neglecting interventions to reduce that risk was acknowledged and highlighted as a priority for action in the project.

The role of NGO/community based services working in prisons was identified as valuable in supporting the transition phase and continuing a supportive engagement in the community after release. It was highlighted as an area that could be promoted and development in the course of this project.

The importance of co-operation, engagement and co-ordination between the criminal justice agencies and mainstream social service providers in prison and in the community was highlighted as important in developing good and effective practice. It helped, in particular, in preparing the services and prisoners on release to continue engagement in a positive and less distrusting or hostile manner. It assisted ‘joined-up’ service provision and easier access by ex-prisoners.

The development of a relationship, open communication and a level of mutual trust between the services, supervisors, in particular, and the offender was highlighted as valuable in sustaining the transition, coping with unexpected and other difficulties that can arise and reducing the risk of relapse. This was viewed as an area where skills



Panel discussion at the Dublin workshop



Pictures from the Dublin Workshop plenary sessions and discussion groups



training practice could be shared between partners.

It was agreed that the project has made significant progress to date in establishing a common awareness of shared issues in the transition management of high risk offenders, identified existing practices, opportunities for learning and room for improvement.

It was acknowledged that there was considerable evidence of good practice, knowledge and expertise among the partners to proceed to the next workshop to identify best practice.

#### **Associated partners:**

In addition to the working partners the JCN project has a number of Associated Partners supporting the objectives and work of the project.

The Associated Partners are:

**The Directorate General Houses of Justice (Belgium)** <http://just.fgov.be>,

**German Federal Ministry of Justice (Germany)** <http://www.bmj.de>

**Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic**

<http://www.justice.gov.sk/Stranky/default.aspx>

**Prison Administration of Republic of Slovenia,**

**Ministry of Justice and Public Administration,**

<http://www.mpiu.gov.si>

**The European Organization for Probation (CEP)**

<http://www.cep-probation.org>





## Workstream 3

Workstream3 will focus on the identification of best practice in transition management for high risk prisoners leaving custody.

The Workstream 3 workshop will meet in Helsinki between 30<sup>th</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013. Titled, 'Best Practice in Transition Management', it will feature information exchange, presentations, and discussion among invited participants which will include project partners from each of the jurisdictions, local experts and experienced personnel and other relevant interests.

The work of Workstream 3 will conclude with the publication of a report entitled "Best Practice Strategies and Programmes for dealing with high risk offenders and for the desired continuity of treatment as well as for transition management" following the workshop.

## Keep up to date with the JCN Project

If you wish to keep in touch with developments about the actions, activities and progress of the JCN project please check the project website at <http://jcn.pixel-online.org/>.

You can also send an email to [barbarah.hansen@jm.mv-regierung.de](mailto:barbarah.hansen@jm.mv-regierung.de) or Gerry McNally at [gpmcnally@probation.ie](mailto:gpmcnally@probation.ie) to receive project newsletters and other relevant information.



If you wish to seek further information on the JCN project please check the project website at <http://jcn.pixel-online.org/> or contact Gerry McNally at [gpmcnally@probation.ie](mailto:gpmcnally@probation.ie) or by post at the Probation Service, Haymarket, Smithfield, Dublin 7.

The next edition of this newsletter will be published in January 2014.

