



General Information

- Number of inhabitants: 4.46 million at April 2009.¹
- Prison population rate per 100,000 inhabitants: 85.
- Link to Probation Service:
 - www.probation.ie
- Links to websites:
 - www.justice.ie (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform);
 - www.courts.ie (Court Service of Ireland);
 - www.irishprisons.ie (Irish Prison Service).
- Member of the CEP in: 1981.

Characteristics of the Probation Service

- In Ireland there is one national agency for probation; the Probation Service. It is a non-private organization, fully funded by the state and operating under the authority of the Minister for Justice, Equality & Law Reform.
- The normal age of criminal responsibility is twelve (but is ten for some very serious offences). Therefore in law the Service may be required to deal with offenders aged ten and upwards, but very few are referred under fourteen years of age. For young offenders (persons under eighteen years of age), a specific division of the Probation Service (the Young Persons Probation) has been created.
- Mutual co-operation with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland, has resulted in for instance joint management meetings and agreed protocols on co-ordination of services.
- The Probation Service (Head Office and the regional offices) is structured along three Directorates: Corporate Services/Human Resources, Operations, and Research, Training & Development. The Probation Service is headed by a Director; the Directorates are headed by Deputy Directors.
- No volunteers work directly with offenders, but many individuals based in the wider community freely serve and give generously of their time, without remuneration, on Management Committees of Service funded projects providing programmes for offenders.

¹ Central Statistics Office Ireland (2009). Available online at: www.cso.ie.

Tasks

An important task of the Probation Service is the preparation of pre-sanction reports, requested by courts on persons guilty of criminal offences. These reports assist courts in determining a suitable sanction. Furthermore, the Service is in charge of the enforcement of community sanctions (probation orders and probation type supervision, community service, suspended sentences, supervision of conditionally released prisoners). When offenders are placed on a probation order by a court, they give an undertaking to the court that they will be of good behaviour, avoid further crime and observe all the conditions for a specified period (usually 12 months). If necessary, extra conditions can be imposed, such as: attendance at clinics for treatment of substance abuse, participation in a training course and residence in a facility.

Number of staff (average numbers in 2007)

- Probation Officers	260
- Probation Managers, all grades	74
- Admin. support staff, all grades:	87
- Community Service Supervisors:	78
Total:	499

- Daily average number of offenders dealt with: between 35 and 60 caseloads for officers on generic community based teams.

New developments

- Specific priorities for the Probation Service are set in the agreed programme for Government, 2007-2012, such as:
 - to expand the mechanism for monitoring sex offenders after release from custody, and the supervision of persons who are the subject of Sex Offender orders;
 - to develop the Community Service Order regime by requiring offenders to provide real services to the community they have damaged, and giving victims and communities a greater say in what work offenders do for community service.
- The Service will contribute to any strengthening of structures for the prevention of domestic violence, the formulation of victim policy and the expansion of the drug court programme.

Probation during the different stages of the criminal procedure

	Pre-Trial Phase	Trial and Enforce ment Phase	Post Release Phase
Preparing pre-sanction report		x	
Supervising etc. sanction of		x	

probation			
Supervising etc. conditional sentence		x	
Supervising etc. special measures drug addicts		x	
Supervising etc. community service		x	
Supervising training or learning projects		x	x
Interventions with young offenders		x	x
Supervising etc. suspended sentence			x
Assistance/support of offenders in prison/detention			x
Preparing pre-release reports, prisoners			x
Supervising conditional release/parole			x
Supervising post custody, sex offenders			x
Preparing victim impact reports		x	

This summary is based on the country chapter in the book *Probation in Europe*, the most comprehensive survey of probation systems and services in Europe today. If you wish to order it, please click [here](#).

