



The European Organisation
for Probation

Prevention meets Probation
*CEP Workshop at
the 13th Deutcher Präventionsdtag*

Report

Leipzig, Germany
June 2008



Probation meets Prevention

Report from CEP-workshop in Leipzig June 1-3-2008

CEP's workshop was arranged in connection with the big crime-prevention fair which was held in Leipzig (Deutscher Präventionsdtag)

Leo Tigges, Secretary General of CEP began by setting the picture; he used Prof. Rob Canton's definition of prevention: *Policy and practice to prevent (or, more plausibly, reduce) crime by a range of strategies that recognize the limits of the contribution that can be made by the formal agencies of criminal justice.* Prof. Canton repeated the the useful framework distinguishing three kinds of prevention

- *Primary* prevention – through various forms of environmental design or manipulation
- *Secondary* prevention – identifying and working with those considered most likely to offend ('at risk of offending"); and
- *Tertiary* prevention – working with known offenders to reduce the incidence of their offending.

He then introduced another distinction:

- *Victim* oriented prevention – empowering potential victims by alerting them to the ways in which people might try to take advantage of them; how can their vulnerability be decreased and their self-assuredness be heightened? How can they pay sufficient attention to their own ability to reduce the likelihood of the crimes?
- *Situational* prevention – how can the particular circumstances in which crimes take place be influenced and how might the environment as such be manipulated to prevent offenders from committing the crimes? How can the chances of the offender's apprehension be increased? In situational prevention the focus is often on increased restraint (barriers, locks) and surveillance (more police on the streets, more closed circuit television, or cameras or more citizens on watch, like projects such as Neighbourhood Watch).
- *Offender* oriented prevention: how can known offenders be prevented from committing a new offence? What kind of interventions can be undertaken to target the risk of recidivism and the criminogenic needs of the offenders? How can offenders be stimulated to stop committing crimes, by enhancing their motivation, by helping them to experience new positive events and by building up new and positive ties and meaningful relationships?

It is obvious that the Probation Service's domain is tertiary prevention or offender orientated prevention. But can Probation Services make contributions at the other



levels of prevention? What information have probation practitioners that might be deployed for an improvement of primary and secondary prevention? This is one of the questions that could be expected to be dealt with during this seminar. Others include community based networking. Both prevention and probation are active in this field. What kind of activities do they both undertake and how can these be mutually strengthened. The other question is about the transition from prison to freedom; in Germany they call this "Übergangsmanagement, transition management. We in probation know that a lot may go wrong in the process of transition. It is not always seamless.

- The insight into which problems the offender is going to face in the transition from custody to freedom is not always clear
- Timely actions are lacking during the offender's stay in prison to solve some of the practical issues (for instance accommodation, benefits/income, identity papers)
- A real involvement of Municipal partners such as those responsible for Housing, Health Providers, and The Local Education Authority is absent
- There is room for improving the working relationship and distribution of responsibilities between the probation agencies and the local authorities
- The relationship between the probation agency and the police can be strengthened in order to alert each other to changes in the life style of the offender, which might indicate recurring problems and increased risk.



Probation meets Prevention

After Leo Tigges' introduction, Professor Hans-Jürgen Kerner spoke about three different aspects of Prevention.

His first point dealt with how effective probation work is in its preventive work. He believes that in order to change someone, the probation service-client relationship (bonding) is necessary. Many young people in particular have a massive mistrust of society's ability to help them and the probation officer can be an important model of an adult who cares about them. Only when you have created an emotional bond with a young person can you expect him/her to try out any of the suggested changes put forward by the probation service. It takes time to build this relationship and in many countries there is insufficient time because of too many cases, poor computer support and poor administrative support. There are no home visits and the paperwork takes up more and more of the treatment time available.

Despite the disadvantages, Kerner maintains that probation in Germany, for example, enjoys considerable confidence from the courts. Previously, anyone who offended after probation was almost always given a custodial sentence. Now it is more and more common to sentence to probation one more time after positive progress in previous probation. Kerner also believes that if we look at statistics and follow-up, it's not enough to review progress after five years, as we do with adults. Young people



need to be followed-up after three years as their lives change so fast. Kerner argues that the signs of successful probation are longer times between reoffending and less serious crimes.

Kerner's second point is about the role of probation and responsibility for the children of offenders. Research has shown that these children run a higher risk of ending up on the downward slope to criminality. In the USA, there is a successful programme (Blueprint), where preventative work is undertaken with offenders who have children in helping them to become better parents. The reality that many children live in is the world of single mothers with poor economy, poor social networks and a lack of male role models. Those who have themselves witnessed violence in the family have a greater tendency to use violence themselves as adults.

Kerner continues with his third point in which he argues that the probation service should co-operate more with the police in order to prevent crime at an early stage. The probation service should also be involved in local crime prevention committees. Probation plays an important role when it comes to presenting successful cases when there is lobbying, for example, against a reception or treatment centre in an area. By stressing that the best way of rehabilitating offenders is to allow clients back into the community, it can reduce opposition to a project.

Prevention in Probation in Europe

Professor Anton von Kalmthout was ill, but he asked Leo Tigges to present the results on prevention in his new book "Probation and Probation Services in Europe" (31 countries are included). Kalmthout shows that probation usually works directly with offenders, i.e. the 3rd form of prevention, but also participates in public prevention programmes such as local crime prevention councils and other national or local forms of cooperation. In Portugal, for example, there is a national plan for the area of drugs. Switzerland is working on violence in close relationships and attacks on children. In England and Wales there are Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and MAPPA, whilst Ireland has multi agency partnerships and a specific division dealing with young offenders. This work impacts on the siblings of young offenders. In emerging countries the promotion of alternative sanctions, probation measures and short sentences (instead of long sentences) is regarded as such as prevention.

Probation services often lack the resources to work with people other than their clients. Much preventive work is based on voluntary input or extra funding. So only few probation services are undertaking secondary and primary prevention activities undertaken. Leo's personal opinions are that the limited role in secondary and primary prevention is defensible. The greatest effort has to be made in improving the effectiveness of probation as such. This already requires a lot of energy and time. It will cost even more effort to act effectively in the prevention domain, which does not converge with the core activities and expertise of probation officers. Besides, there is not a lot of prevention knowledge that has proven to work effectively. Probation



services should strengthen their influence in society by spreading the message of less reoffending after probation than custodial sentences. At the same time, he warns of a "Safety-Utopia". It is impossible to guarantee complete safety in any country where people are released from prison after serving a sentence. It's a utopian dream to think that probation can guarantee that they won't reoffend. Perhaps there is confusion over the term probation. Ordinary citizens often believe that those sentenced to probation are monitored 24/7, whereas in reality probation officers meet a client for maybe one hour a week.

Prevention through civil participation

Prof. Dr. Christian Pfeiffers

One of the keynote speakers in the Prevention Congress was Prof. Pfeiffer. He had an exciting speech about the beneficial effects of involvement of citizens (bürgerschaftliches Engagement) in the promotion of prevention. With a lot of statistics he made clear that criminality in Germany during the years 1993-2007 has reduced. (This is not reflected in the feelings of the public.) Several factors play a role: the ageing of the population (the number of young men has decreased); the clear-up rate has gone up, as has the willingness to report to the police. Despite the decrease of crime in general, the amount of violent crime, especially committed by young men (not girls!) has risen. Here a target group for citizens involvement can be easily identified. Especially those young men do less well at school than the girls. A correlation can be found between the amount of time spent in watching (violent) television programmes and (violent) computer games on the one hand and bad school achievements on the other hand. This is even more apparent for young immigrants. Investing in youth helps: striking differences appear in the cities of Hanover and München as in the former city more possibilities exist for youngsters (with a foreign background) to be assisted during their school career, not only in the curriculum requirements but also in the sphere of meeting positive friends, participating in sports and cultural activities. That assistance is organised by voluntary organisations.

The Relevance of prevention to probation: indications from recent experiences

Anneke Menger, the University in Utrecht; Society and Justice Faculty.

Menger began her lecture by establishing that safety is a hot subject. People want complete freedom to live their lives, but at the same time maximum security from society. Menger wants to discuss whether preventive work is too soft and whether it can be shown to have any effects.

Menger divides "prevention" into different groups. She calls the first one

- "universal prevention" in which she argues that society should invest time and money in good schools, work for everyone, cheap housing etc. Menger argues that this is not the responsibility of the probation service; that they are probably effective in their work, but that this is difficult to prove.



- "selection prevention" is aimed at groups that are known to be high-risk, such as single mothers. Selecting a particular group can stigmatise and segregate. Results are often limited, but there's lots of good will. The best results come from pre-school input. In the USA, there is the project "Big brother, big sister" where young people mentor younger children in the risk zone. There is also the Nursery Child Partnership in which single mothers are supported for two years after the child's birth. This has resulted in a 75% reduction in attacks on children. This is not the work of the probation service either, but rather that of social services.
- "indicator high risk prevention" involves working with criminally active young people in projects like "scared straight" or "boot camps" despite the fact that recidivism is around 80%. The most effective treatment for these young people is family therapy in which the young people can contribute to their own life-goals. This too is not the responsibility of the probation service.
- "clinical prevention" is what we call probation when society-based multimodal programmes are used together with positive goals for work, motivation strategies and cooperation with networks of other involved/authorities and voluntary organisations.

Menger argues that there are few good and proven preventive activities. The conclusion that we can draw is that short-term, quick fixes seldom work in the long term. What gives results is continuity and long-term work towards set goals together with the client.

Scandinavian Experiences in Probation and Prevention

Erik Nadheim Director, the Crime Prevention Council in Norway.

Nadheim compared the Scandinavian countries and found certain differences. In 2006, Sweden had twice as many cases (120) of manslaughter and murder as Denmark (53) and almost 4 times as many as Norway (33) in the same year. But compared with Brazil with 55,000 manslaughter/murders Sweden is in a good position! The Nordic countries are also on a similar level with regard to custodial months served, but if we look at the average number of clients in custody compared with probation (2005), only Norway has fewer clients on probation than in custody, whilst Denmark and Sweden have around twice as many probation orders as custodial sentences. Whether this has anything to do with confidence in probation services' preventive work is hard to prove, but it could be one explanation.

In Norway the number of crimes is decreasing, but the number of custodial sentences is increasing. Of the probation service's resources, 45% is taken up by various probation orders, 27% is devoted to psychiatric reports and approximately 8% by drink-driving; the rest of the resources, 18%, are allocated to conditionally released clients. Norwegian probation officers can tailor the



individual social services themselves. In 2007, 66.5% consisted of unpaid work, then there was individual counselling (6.8%), programme participation (4.5%), treatment (1.6%) and mediation (0.2%). 86.1% of clients manage their probation without any problems and 3 years after sentencing 66% of them have managed without reoffending, whereas 60-70% reoffend after a custodial sentence. Figures are hard to compare however, since those who are sent to prison have committed more serious crimes.

Risk-oriented Probation - a contribution to crime prevention

Patrick Zobrist, Office of Corrections, Probation and Execution Services, Zurich

Zobrist's job is to work on preventing reoffending and protecting society. Here the focus is on the crime, the risk of injury/damage, the risk of reoffending and individual needs. They use a tool called CLIPS (Client assessment and intervention planning system).

The tool consists of five different parts. Part 1 is background factors, part 2 interview, part 3 the client's view of the risk factors, part 4 the client's explanation model for why he/she commits crime, part 5 is an intervention plan. This can include individual or group contacts with various persons. The start is always the formation of a working relationship and reflection on the crime. Later this can be expanded with desired short and long-term goals, help in seeing risk situations and avoiding them.

Zobrist talks about two different perspectives when it comes to intervention:

- The client can handle risk situations (can see them, avoid them or manage them)
- The client changes his/her risk-related problems (changes partner, social circumstances (e.g. home), maintains the achieved result)

The most important thing is not to be too general in crime-prevention work, but to tailor a prevention model for each client. In Switzerland, prevention work is the responsibility of the police, but the probation service can contribute with its knowledge. This does not currently happen. In Switzerland, an offender does not receive supervision after the first crime, which means that the penalty is seldom meaningful from a preventive perspective. It's more a general warning for bad behaviour. They have a strong tradition of a medical explanation model for crime and the result is often therapy of some kind. Judges seldom request a psychiatric report before a trial (because it makes the legal process longer) and prosecutors are not interested in this either.

Zobrist argues that probation should publicise itself better by pointing out to the public that a risk-assessment of the client can make reoffending less frequent and society safer. In England and Wales, for example, they have begun to appoint communication officers in all probation areas in order to manage what is written in the media and communicate directly with stakeholders.



Community based networking in Probation and prevention

Suzanne Vella, Deputy Director and Gerry McNally Assistant Director, probation Dublin

Ireland, with a population of 3.4 million has among the lowest criminality percentages in the EU. The country is also unusual in that there are more people on probation (8,000) than in prison (3,400). There are 50 different probation offices and approximately 500 staff. The probation service works closely with communities and 40% of the money they receive from the state for their activities goes to various projects in the local community. For example, those sentenced to community service build a garden near a local school that the children can take care of. Grants are given to a range of funded projects offering a range of programmes including drug/alcohol programmes, housing and education. Ms Vella gave an example of probation work in the project "Tus Nua", where the probation service worked with a voluntary organisation to arrange supported housing and help to homeless women at high risk of reoffending. "Le Cheile" is a project to arrange a national network of mentors for young offenders so that they will have good role models. The project advertises for volunteers who work together with the probation service. Experience has shown that when volunteers and others involved from the community could talk about probation work through their own experience this was good PR for probation. Those who were mentors to offenders could reassure the public by showing that integration is the best way of reducing the risk of reoffending. As with sex offenders the case can be made that it is better they are supervised otherwise they would live among us anyway without any monitoring.

Community participation for violence prevention – selected experiences from Latin America and South Africa

Roland Ziss, Consultant at SUM, Wiesbaden

Ziss talked about his experiences in Colombia, El Salvador and South Africa. He considers that the key to success is co-operation from society in the process and not just police and the criminal justice system. One of the most important preconditions is doing something about the widespread poverty in some countries, which contributes to certain groups in society not wanting to "wait their turn" but instead starting to help themselves to the riches that some sections of society enjoy. The result is the formation of gangs, mafia-like organisations and corruption.

In **Colombia**, which is a violent country with the world's highest percentage of persons killed per year, the state contributes to a large part of the violence. Colombia has its own science of violence and its consequences, which is called "violontology". In the capital, Bogota, Ziss took part in helping improve the environment and thereby reducing criminality. Living conditions, for example, were improved and meeting places where crime is committed were rebuilt so that



ordinary people dared to go there. Security in schools was also been improved. Sixty thousand young people were also trained in conflict-resolution and mediation. Ziss talks about the concept KAP (knowledge, attitude and practice) in reducing family violence. Work is carried out, for example, with single mothers to support them in setting limits for children.

There was also an increased tendency to report crime to the police when the police took crime reports seriously and criminals were apprehended and sentenced. Ordinary people dared to go out again and reclaim the streets, which further reduced criminality like drug-pushing. One reason why the project has succeeded, Ziss believes, is that it is international. The authorities know that they are under scrutiny and therefore ensure that corruption is held in check so as not to destroy the country's reputation.

In **El Salvador**, violent street gangs called "maras" control the streets and squares. The key to success is to engage with the gang that "owns" a particular area of the town and to get them to agree to the idea of change. Otherwise they will oppose all suggestions just to show that they hold the power. Half of the population is under 25 and 50% of households consist of single mothers. The middle classes have been asked to help reduce crime by helping the less fortunate children to a better future by helping them with homework, and there are youth camps with good role models. The children receive more food and there are cleaning patrols that ensure that rubbish, which is simply thrown onto the street, is cleaned up so that the environment is more pleasant. The project has also included the building of a number of "community centres" where people can meet in a safe environment and children can have fun without witnessing violence. When the state invests money, this results in the private sector also wanting to be involved in improving the situation.

In **South Africa's townships** the murder rate is 50-150 per100,000/ each year. Break-ins are so common that they are not reported and violence in the family is natural. Apartheid created this behaviour and made a situation in which the ordinary coloured man was powerless in society and could not support his family, thereby losing his traditional male role. People don't trust the authorities and try to get what they want for themselves. In order to change this criminality, a sense of community has to grow in the area so that they take care of their own environment and do not injure each other. The project emptied areas of land that have become rubbish dumps and instead created a simple football pitch, sent coaches, bought boots and balls so that football can be played. The children learn loyalty, team spirit and to obey a team-leader. When people see that this works and that the area becomes calmer, there is a ripple effect. These investments are very inexpensive and have a big effect on youth crime.

Declaration



The participants resumed the importance of probation in a declaration. It was presented by Leo Tigges as follows:

“CEP and its members are enthusiastic about being able to participate at this congress on prevention. The reason is that probation promotes crime prevention as part of its core work. The main emphasis of probation however is on tertiary prevention. Next to the traditional distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary prevention we have also looked into the distinction between situation orientated, victim orientated and offender orientated prevention. The distinction which is quite often used in child protection work seems also to have a strong appeal to probation work. In this child protection framework we distinguish between general interventions, interventions on defined target groups indicated by high risk prevention and clinical prevention. We feel very much at home in clinical prevention or offender orientated prevention. Probation may have a part to play in the other prevention fields like in primary and secondary crime prevention but mostly this is a by-product, be it an important one. For example, successful work with domestic violence perpetrators may also have a beneficiary effect on younger family members, especially as we all know that violence in the family and domestic violence tend to lead to inter-generational crime and domestic violence. Of course the probation officers will not work with the children or with the family as a whole, but probation has a role to play in warning the child protection system, and the police, and to play its role in the containment of the unwanted behaviour of the offender. The supervision might offer a wonderful stick to use when the offender is not living up to his obligations under the supervision contract.

The ultimate goal of probation is the prevention of re-offending but total elimination of risk when offenders are being managed in the community is not possible. We have to be clear about that. Although the supervision might be intense, it is not 24 hours a day monitoring of the offender.

Success may be defined as the total prevention of re-offending, but in a lot of cases this is unrealistic in the short term. Success may also be defined as a reduction in the frequency of re-offending and a reduction in the harm caused. A longer period between crimes and less serious crimes also denote success. It is good to stress that crime reduction is not only a probation job. It is every one's responsibility – communities as well as the other statutory agencies working in criminal justice.

What is the special role probation officers have to play in crime prevention? Their contribution is their skill in assessing and managing the risk offenders pose. But communities must acknowledge that there is a risk in having offenders in their midst.



Much of probation work is focused on evidence-based practice – the What Works system of interventions. But this is only successful within a system of good quality supervision, carried out by professional workers. They know how to motivate offenders to change. This is a key factor in probation work. It is also important that probation intervenes at an early stage in the criminal justice process. Not only can the motivation work then start, but probation can also advise the public prosecutor on the best possible way of bringing about change, giving due attention to the risk the offender poses and the unrest or indignation that his crime may have caused.

Probation's relationship with the community is vital. The service needs community acceptance to carry out its work. Partnerships are key to this work; probation officers must have close contact with the social networks in the community. They can offer new social and other circles to offenders in which they might experience new meaningful ties and opportunities for work, accommodation and social welfare benefits. In this way probation likes to think of itself as a land of opportunity to offenders. Mentoring projects and lay supervisors also play an important part.

There is a constant need for scientific research into what constitutes good probation work and resources should not be wasted on programmes which have been proved ineffective.

We must not oversell what we can achieve but equally we must not undersell ourselves. It is important that we communicate our results to the public, to partners, to other agencies and to each other.

I hope I have given you a clear picture of what probation stands for and the possibilities. Working in the justice system and working with the community are essential and interlinked. We are great protagonists of prevention, and we are and feel part of the prevention approach. We would like to be active in the whole spectre of prevention. At the same time we would not like to dilute our effectiveness or to focus all our energy on the wide spectrum. Our strength is tertiary prevention in working with the offender, the justice system and the community. As probation people we have to become even stronger in this field to be effective and more successful in reintegrating the offender into the society and finally in reducing recidivism.”