

SPORE Project, Final Conference.

RIGA, 16-17 September 2013.

Welcome and Formal Opening:

Dear Representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Head of State Probation Service, dear colleagues,

I like to start by thanking the State Probation Service of Latvia, as the lead partner of the SPORE project, for inviting me, on behalf the European Organisation for Probation, CEP, to attend this Final Conference, here, in the always welcoming city of Riga.

Unfortunately, and due previous agenda commitments, I might depart just after the coffee break of this morning's session, which means that I will not have the opportunity to learn and to talk with you as much as I wish: my apologies for these circumstances. But I am sure you are familiar with our liaison officer, Koen Goei, and he will be at your disposal in the next couple of days to discuss any matter related with our organisation that may be of your interest.

In developing its vision and mission, CEP fixed three main goals:

Improving the level of professionalism among its members in the field of Probation,

Uniting the sector across Europe, and

Enhancing the role of Probation in the Corrections field

When taking part in an international projects, especially in an EU funded ones, CEP is committed to cover these three goals.

For this reason, we assess carefully in which ones CEP takes part as partner.

Fortunately, CEP receives a number of petitions to participate, but we only decide to go further if we are convinced of the contribution of the project to the positive development of probation practice in Europe, of the content, the consistency of the approach of the project and of the capacity of the lead partner to deliver.

With this in mind, the assessment of the offer to take part in the SPORE project was, since the very beginning and without a shadow of a doubt, a Yes.

The content of the SPORE project quite relevant at this moment to many probation services in Europe, mainly for two reasons: first, in itself, working with offenders is a very demanding job, secondly, because we are facing the effects of the economic crisis, which has a large impact, in terms of cuts, and in the work conditions of many probation teams ("do more with less" is a very popular phrase nowadays); secondly, because recent evidence shows the importance of looking into "who", instead of being concentrated only on "what", when designing successful interventions with offenders in the community

The approach of the project is consistent: after defining what the subject of the work is, the theoretical approach relies on a validated model (I am sure Bas and Jo will explain later in depth what the concept “Critical Profession” is and what the main content of “The Stress Shield Model” is, fortunately not in the context of the Marvel Comic Universe) and, the most important thing, the aim of the project is to apply this model locally, while taking into consideration the different adaptations needed in each particular case.

Finally, there are a lot of reasons to believe that project will deliver: the State Probation Service of Latvia is doing a great job of establishing a modern system in its jurisdiction (by the way, congratulations for the Tenth anniversary that you are going to celebrate the next 3<sup>rd</sup> of October!); IGA, the Bulgarian partner, has been involved in several international projects demonstrating its efficiency; having on board the probation staff working in the VIRU prison in Estonia is a guarantee of a well informed adaptation of the model into a very complex environment; and, of course, the addition of the AVANS University of Applied Sciences of the Netherlands and the University of York of the UK are invaluable to the project.

It is time to look to the outcomes of the project and to assess these in relation to the goals of the project that Sanita will explain in detail later on.

CEP is very interested in the results. So, in this sense, be sure that we’ll do our best to disseminate and promote your findings.

But let me underline that as an organisation that has the opportunity to talk directly with managers of Probation systems around Europe, we’ll be particularly interested in the third aim of the project: “Provide MS probation administration with information about supportive activities and possibilities to sustain and develop staff resilience in EU”.

I would not like to finish my intervention without reminding you that in less than one month CEP has, in London, one of its most important appointments: our 11th General Assembly. We are looking forward to welcome our friends from the State Probation Service of Latvia again on 8<sup>th</sup> October.

As many of you may know, moreover, during the next two days after the GA, the First World Congress on Probation will take place, also in London.

Dear colleagues, please feel personally invited to join us there.

For sure, it will be a unique opportunity to meet people around the globe that work in the same field and to learn from each other.

It will be an occasion, also, for sharing the same passion: probation.

Thank you very much.

Marc Cerón  
CEP President.