

**Training seminar “*Training of professionals of the criminal justice system in counselling and probation case management*” in the framework of the Project “*Probationet: A flexible, multidisciplinary, and transnational VET model for the PROBATION services and practitioners*”**

In 12 & 13 July 2023, the training seminar “*Education of professionals of the criminal justice system in counselling and probation case management*” took place in the amphitheater “Lambros Margaritis” of the Ministry of Justice. The seminar was organized by Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences via the Laboratory of Urban Criminology in cooperation with “EPANODOS” in the framework of the European project “*Probationet: A flexible, multidisciplinary, and transnational VET model for the PROBATION services and practitioners*” (Agreement Number: 2021-1-EL01-KA220-VET-000033290) under the scientific responsibility of Professor Christina Zarafonitou. Dr. Eleni Kontopoulou was the coordinator of the seminar.

The objective of the seminar was the vocational education and training of the professionals of the criminal justice regarding the implementation of probation. The participants of the seminar were probation officers involved in probation case management of juvenile and adult offenders from the competent services of Athens and other cities, judges, policemen, representatives of local authorities involved in the implementation of community service as well as volunteers in bodies/agencies for social reintegration.



The seminar started with greetings from the scientific responsible of the Probationet project, **Professor Christina Zarafonitou, Head of the Laboratory of Urban Criminology of Panteion University** and **Mr. Sotiris Efstratiadis, Head of the Directorate of Juvenile Probation Service and the Probation Service for Adult Offenders of Athens.**

In her statement, **Professor Christina Zarafonitou** pointed out the importance of the continuous and systematic training of the professionals of the criminal justice system in order for their work to be enhanced, supported and to be more effective. As Mrs. Zarafonitou underlined, the importance of continuous training is even greater when it concerns services such as the Juvenile Probation Service and the Probation Service for Adult Offenders (Social Assistance Officers), whose work is related to the implementation of alternative penal sanctions, mediation procedures and support for vulnerable people, such as minors. In this context, their role requires - in addition to specific knowledge - special skills in terms of behaviour and increased compliance with ethics, while the need to deal with and manage crises is not rare. Professor Zarafonitou concluded by stating that one of the basic prerequisites for the successful implementation of the work of the professionals of the criminal justice system is their positive attitude towards penalties and measures they are required to implement.

Then, **Mr. Sotiris Efstratiadis** took the floor and stressed the need for the establishment of a reliable scientific tool for the assessment of juvenile and adult beneficiaries, as well as the need for training regarding their mobilization in case of substance abuse or psychological problems or in case of comorbidity, and finally, the need for training in the handling of beneficiaries with issues of antisocial behaviour (e.g. aggression or involvement in sex crimes).

Thereafter, high level scientific presentations on topics such as the implementation of the institution of probation and relevant good practices in Greece and other European countries, the phenomenon of recidivism, the relevant risk factors and factors related to desistance from crime, risk and needs assessment tools for offenders, counselling with offenders, the difficulties of the therapeutic relationship with people with chronic trauma, who have been exposed to violent environments, and the psychological resilience of the therapist as well as group counselling were made. Apart from the presentations, a very interesting experiential workshop on group psychoeducation on anger management for juvenile offenders was held.

More specifically, **Mrs. Efi Ntrouva, Sociologist and PhD Candidate of Panteion University**, presented the Probationet project, its objectives and goals and its expected results. Then, **Mrs. Chara Galanou, Juvenile Probation Officer of Athens, Lawyer-Criminologist and Accredited**

**Civil & Commercial Law Mediator by the Ministry of Justice**, analysed the legal framework of probation regarding juvenile offenders, the principles governing their extra-institutional treatment and the priorities necessary for the implementation of such treatment, while **Mrs. Theodora Adamaki, Social Assistance Officer of Athens, Sociologist and PhD Candidate of University of Peloponnese**, presented the legal and organizational framework of the Probation Service for Adult Offenders focusing on the implementation of community service as an alternative sentence served in the community.

Then, **Dr. Eleni Kontopoulou**, analysed the framework of implementation of probation in the countries-partners of the Probationet Project (Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Bulgaria) and subsequently she made a presentation on recidivism, the relevant explanatory factors and desistance from crime as well as on the available recent research data in Greece. In the same direction, **Mrs. Martha Lempesi, Sociologist and PhD Candidate of Criminology, collaborator of the legal entity "EPANODOS"**, made a presentation on the role of incarceration in the phenomenon of recidivism as reflected in qualitative research data in Greece.

Three presentations were then made on risk and needs assessment tools for offenders. More specifically, **Mrs. Elli Anitsi, Psychologist and PhD Candidate of Criminology of Panteion University**, talked about the reintegrative model «Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model», while **Mrs. Evaggelia Delavekoura, Juvenile Probation Officer of Athens and Social Worker** and **Mrs. Theodora Adamaki** analysed the framework of the practical implementation of the needs assessment of juvenile and adult probationers respectively in Greece. The first day of the seminar was completed with a presentation by **Mrs. Elli Anitsi** on counselling with offenders and the relevant basic skills.

The second day of the training seminar started with a presentation by **Dr. Eleni Kontopoulou** about good practices in probation in the countries-partners of the Probationet Project. Then, **Dr. Afroditi Mallouchou, Juvenile Probation Officer of Piraeus, Social worker and Accredited Mediator by the Ministry of Justice**, presented the implementation of group psychoeducation in anger management for juvenile offenders as a good practice in both primary and tertiary prevention.

Subsequently, **Mrs. Evangelia Delavekoura** presented in detail the mobilization and empowerment activities for young offenders of the Juvenile Probation Service of Athens, and then an experiential workshop was held with the participation of all trainees and trainers, under the coordination of **Dr. Afroditi Mallouchou** in the field of group psychoeducation for anger management.



The last three presentations of the second day of the seminar concerned the provision of counselling support to offenders in order to facilitate their psychosocial reintegration, which was presented by **Mrs. Hara Vlastari-Dyovouniotou, Psychologist-Sociologist & PhD Candidate of Criminology of Panteion University**, the peculiarities and difficulties of the therapeutic relationship with people with chronic trauma due to prolonged exposure to violent environments and the issues of psychological resilience of the therapist, a presentation made by **Mrs. Efrosini Spanea, Dr. of Clinical Psychology**, and finally, the basic skills for group counselling and group management, which were presented in detail by **Mr. Stelios Nikopoulos, Psychologist, MPH, MSc c.- Psychotherapist**.

During the seminar, a fruitful scientific dialogue was developed between the participants regarding all the topics of the presentations. From the presentations of the speakers and the discussion that developed, the important role of probation officers in the implementation of probation and, by extension, in the prevention of recidivism and the process of social reintegration was highlighted. In this context, of primary importance is the relationship of trust developed between the probation officer and the probationer, the tools used for risk and needs assessment and the individualized intervention plan, which should involve the offender, their family environment, the victim, and the community itself. Furthermore, in relation to the role of the community, the need to strengthen synergies with the community and develop a solid network of institutional and social partners in order to facilitate the process of social reintegration was highlighted.

Finally, the need for an evaluation of the framework for the implementation of probation and the related practices as well as the need for a multi-level training of probation officers, who, although they are undoubtedly professionals of high scientific level, need the implementation of a common methodology for their work to be more effective.

The seminar was completed successfully, the presentations were very interesting and there was a great response from the participants, which was expressed through a meaningful discussion. In this context, the participants expressed their satisfaction and the compelling request for continuous training as well as their desire for cooperation with the scientific bodies that organized the seminar.

In conclusion, the seminar offered the opportunity to exchange a wealth of scientific knowledge, views and experience between trainers and trainees, while the available online training platform that has already been developed in the framework of the Probationet project will provide the opportunity for further cooperation between trainees and professionals of the criminal justice system from Europe to exchange knowledge, experience and practices in the field of probation.

