

Training seminar

“Training of professionals of the criminal justice system in restorative justice” in the framework of the Project “Probationet: A flexible, multidisciplinary, and transnational VET model for the PROBATION services and practitioners”

Athens, 22/11/2023

Press release

In 22 November 2023, the training seminar “Education of professionals of the criminal justice system in restorative justice” took place in the amphitheater “Sakis Karagiorgas II” of Panteion University. The seminar was organized by Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences via the Laboratory of Urban Criminology in cooperation with “EPANODOS” and is the second seminar which is implemented 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 institution of restorative justice. 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 Piraeus and other cities, judges, lawyers, policemen, prison staff, criminologists-sociologists 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, Mr. Charalampos Oikonomou, Professor at the Department of Sociology of Panteion University and Vice-Rector for Research and Lifelong Learning** as well as **Mr. Sotiris Efstratiadis, Head of the Directorate of Juvenile Probation Service and the Probation Service for Adult Offenders of Athens.**

In the framework of her welcome speech, **Professor Christina Zarafonitou** made a brief reference to the objective and the actions of the Probationet Project, noting that the Project's main focus is the education and training of the professionals of the criminal justice system and primarily those who deal with probation. Mrs. Zarafonitou also stressed that the custody and supervision of juvenile and adult offenders falls within the scope of alternative sanctions, being one of the most modern trends in the field of Penology and Correctional Science. Consequently, the education and training of the professionals of the criminal justice system on issues regarding the application of alternative sanctions is a prerequisite for the more effective treatment of offenders with the ultimate aim to prevent recidivism and facilitate their social reintegration. On this basis, the Probationet Project aims to develop an innovative model of education and training for professionals involved in probation, in order to enhance their scientific knowledge and training regarding the implementation of the institution as well as to develop and strengthen necessary skills and competences to perform their work more effectively.

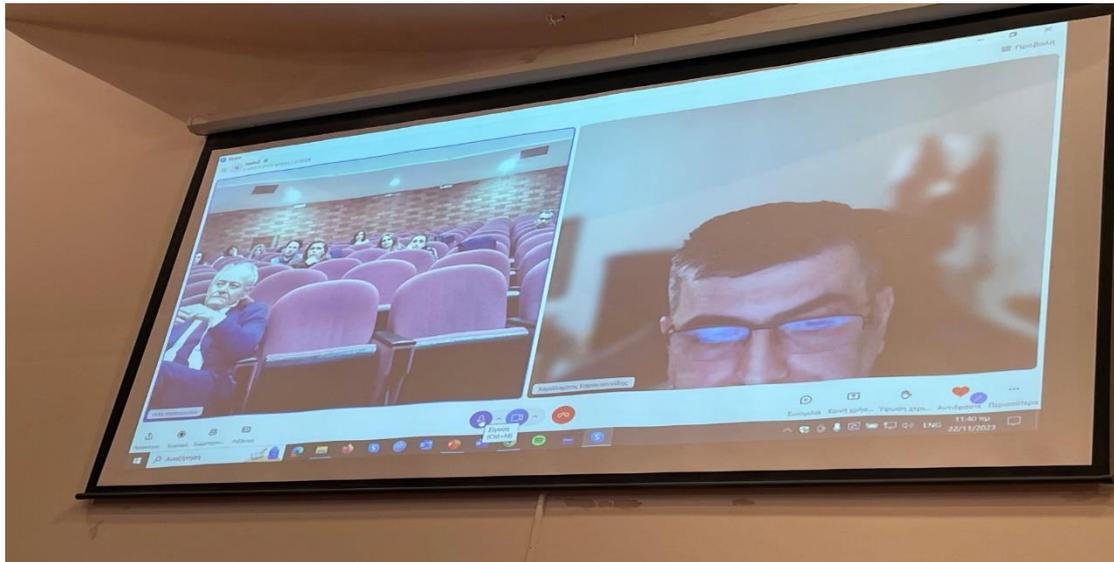


Mr. Charalambos Economou then took the floor and said that events such as this one highlight the importance and the role of European Union-funded programmes in the internationalisation of Panteion and the strengthening of its extroversion by participating in international consortia. At the same time, they highlight the contribution of Panteion's Laboratories and in this particular case the contribution of the Laboratory of Urban Criminology to the promotion of evidence-based knowledge and emphasize the active participation of the Section of Criminology of the Department of Sociology in the fruitful scientific dialogue that develops in relation to the social issues that modern risk societies are called upon to address. Finally, Mr. Economou referred to the contribution of such a scientific event in strengthening vocational education and training programmes and the acquisition of new skills, i.e. investment in human capital which is the cornerstone for promoting innovation and strengthening sustainable development.

Subsequently, **Mr. Efstratiadis** took the floor. In his statement Mr. Efstratiadis stressed the need for the probation officers' continuous training, the use of reliable evaluation tools in cooperation with universities or corresponding services abroad, as well as for the supervision of the probation officers, as it is a necessary condition for the effective case management in the long term. Finally, he pointed out the importance of modern infrastructure and support to the Probation Services.

Thereafter, a presentation of the Probationet Project followed as well as presentations on the institutional, legal and theoretical framework of restorative justice, on penal negotiation and penal reconciliation, as well as on the implementation of the institution of restorative justice in the case of sex offenders, domestic violence offenders and juvenile offenders. In this context, particular emphasis was placed on the principles that should govern the implementation of the institution of restorative justice, on the skills and abilities that the probation officer should have when exercising their mediation role as well as on the individual stages of the process of mediation during the implementation of the institution. At the same time, special thematics were the role of the victim and their rights during the criminal justice process as well as the relationship between the offender and the victim in the case of domestic

violence, highlighting the difficulties of implementing the institution of restorative justice in such cases.



More specifically, **Mrs. Eleni Kontopoulou, Doctor of Criminology of Panteion University** presented the Probationet Project, its objectives and actions as well as its expected results. Subsequently, **Mr. Charalambos Karagiannidis, Doctor of Law of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**, presented the theoretical framework regarding the implementation of the institution of restorative justice and the principles that should govern the institution in the light of a dynamic system of justice in which practice guides theory and not vice versa. Subsequently, **Mr. Savvas Orfanos, Attorney at Law of Athens, Doctor of Criminal Procedure and member of the Union of Greek Criminal Lawyers**, spoke about restorative justice and its individual procedural aspects in the field of combating the dangerousness of sex offenders, while **Mr. Giorgos Pantelidis, President of the Piraeus District Court, Judge and former Investigator for juvenile offenders of Piraeus**, analysed the reconciliation in the case of juvenile offenders and penal mediation in the case of domestic violence as institutions of restorative justice.



Following this, **Mrs. Aphroditi Mallouchou, Juvenile Probation Officer - Social Worker, Doctor of Criminal Policy and Accredited Mediator of the Ministry of Justice** took the floor and presented the practical application of mediation between the juvenile offender and the victim as a measure to prevent juvenile delinquency and recidivism, emphasizing on the skills of the probation officer who exercises a mediating role. In this context, Mrs. Mallouchou presented a particularly interesting case study in order to highlight the way the reconciliation procedure is applied in practice, the mediating role of the Probation officer in the procedure and the beneficial impact of reconciliation on the offender-victim relationship.



Subsequently, two presentations were made on the role of the victim in the administration of criminal justice and the offender-victim relationship in cases of domestic violence. In particular, **Mrs. Efrosini Spanea, Doctor of Clinical Psychology and Counsellor for Women Victims of Gender Violence**, made a presentation on the relationship between the offender and the victim in crimes that fall within the context of domestic violence, emphasizing the issue of ambivalence, frustration and false expectations of these victims.



The seminar was concluded with the presentation of **Mrs. Vasiliki Vlachou, Assistant Professor of Panteion University**, who focused on the current developments, the legislative initiatives and challenges regarding the victim in the field of criminal justice.



During the seminar, a fruitful scientific dialogue was developed between the participants regarding all topics of the presentations. From the presentations of the speakers and the discussion that developed, the positive attitude of the professionals of the criminal justice system towards the implementation of the institution of restorative justice was confirmed and the need for their training was expressed. In fact, the need for special education and training not only for probation officers but also for judges, prosecutors and lawyers was stressed. The positive impact of the implementation of the institution in the field of juvenile offenders was also highlighted as well as the mediating role of the Juvenile Probation Officer and the role of the Juvenile Judge in the process of reconciliation between the offender and the victim. In this context, special education and training in the issues of penal treatment of juvenile offenders, including the implementation of restorative justice, was highlighted as a qualification and criterion for judges and prosecutors, who should be required to work in this field for at least two consecutive terms of office.

In addition, questions and concerns regarding the application of the institution of restorative justice to crimes of a particular nature such as sex crimes and domestic violence were also discussed due to the particular offender-victim relationship in such cases, as it was reflected in the very interesting presentation of Mrs. Spanea. Also, in the context of the implementation of the institution of restorative justice and in the light of a rational criminal policy, the role of both the offender and the victim was highlighted, as well as the respect and protection of the rights and procedural guarantees provided for both parties involved. Finally, particular emphasis was placed on the need to evaluate the implementation of the institution, the need to extend the implementation of the institution to the prison environment and the creation of a relevant common body.

The seminar was successful, the presentations were very interesting, and the participation of the trainees was essential in the development of scientific dialogue. The seminar offered once again the opportunity to exchange valuable scientific knowledge, views and experience

between trainers and trainees, while the educational online platform already created within the Probationet project is available for the participating trainees to enrich their scientific knowledge on the issues of probation and restorative justice in the context of asynchronous education. The platform was developed with the ultimate aim of facilitating cooperation between criminal justice professionals in the partner countries of the project in order to exploit the knowledge, experience and good practices developed in each partner country for a more effective implementation of the institution of probation and thus to improve the work of professionals.