

# WWP EN

Annual  
Conference  
2020

*Final report*



Prison, Probation &  
Perpetrator Programmes –  
Collaboration for Change



WWP // EUROPEAN NETWORK

## Introduction

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The WWP EN Annual Conference “**Prison, Probation and Perpetrator Programmes – Collaboration for Change**” took place online from 2-3 September. In response to the pandemic, WWP EN decided to shift the conference to an online format. This meant that the conference was different in various respects, one of them being a much greater accessibility for more of WWP EN’s members and for practitioners all over the world, leading to over 300 registrations for the conference.

In line with its 2020 annual theme, the conference focused on discussing challenges and good practice in strengthening the collaboration between prison and probation services and community-based organisations in relation to work with perpetrators. The participation of professionals from the prison and probation sector in the panel discussions and within the framework of keynote speeches ensured that the perspective of statutory services was well-reflected in the discussions.

The criminal justice sector plays an important role in the response to domestic violence. Many domestic violence perpetrators enter perpetrator programmes through referrals by the criminal justice system. Whether perpetrator programmes are offered by prison and probation services themselves or community-based organisations through referrals, they face similar challenges.

The conference therefore aimed to support WWP EN members and other interested professionals by showing examples of how cooperation can be successfully initiated, designed and maintained in order for interventions to be effective and for victims to be safe(r).

Dr. Nathan Eisenstadt, Senior Research Associate from the University of Bristol in the UK led through the two-day programme. Participants were offered a mix of keynote speeches, panel discussions, Question and Answer sessions, and a variety of workshops provided by WWP EN members and external professionals.

## DAY 1

### Words of Welcome and Opening Words

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Dean Ajdukovic, Chair of the WWP EN Board, formally welcomed participants to this first WWP EN Annual Conference online. He outlined the relevance of addressing cooperation between the statutory and non-statutory sector in relation to perpetrator interventions. WWP EN very much appreciated the contributions by representatives from the Confederation of European Probation (CEP) to the conference, with CEP President Gerry McNally providing the opening words, Jana Spero, Vice-President of CEP and Assistant Minister for the prison and probation system at the



Ministry of Justice in Croatia giving one of the keynote speeches, and members of CEP sharing their expertise in the panel discussions.

In his opening words, CEP President Gerry McNally emphasized the importance of collaboration between the community-based sector and statutory agencies in the criminal justice system to help

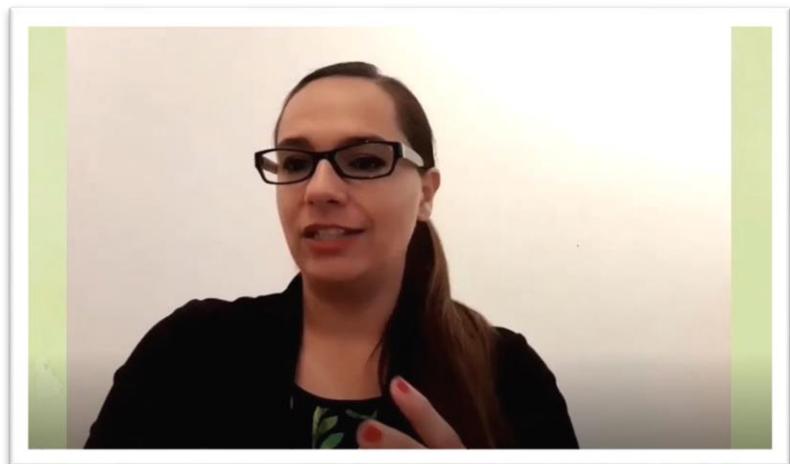


address domestic violence effectively. He pointed out CEP's expert group on domestic violence and its ethos of sharing knowledge and expertise across European countries. With the shared interests and shared objectives between CEP and WWP EN, the conference was an excellent example of how statutory agencies and the community-based sector can learn and work together to achieve the best outcomes.

## Keynote Speech 1: Work with offenders of gender-based violence in the Croatian criminal justice system

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Jana Spero, CEP Vice-President and Assistant Minister for the prison and probation system at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia provided the online audience with an insight into the Croatian criminal justice system and how it addresses domestic violence. She outlined two perpetrator programmes using a cognitive-behavioural approach – one offered to offenders of gender-based



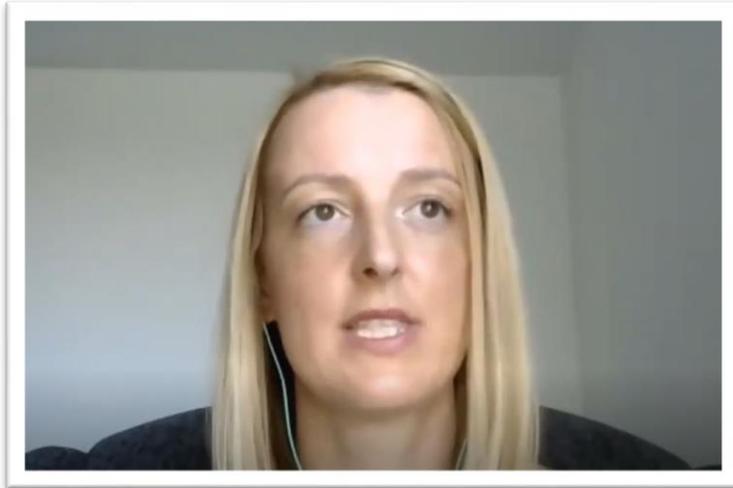
violence in probation, based on the desistance paradigm as well as the Good Lives Model. The other programme is a 10-month programme for sex offenders in prison and involves an analysis of risk factors, as well as work on attitude and behaviour of the perpetrator. Much attention is given to motivational work with the perpetrator, and Jana Spero noted the positive results shown by pre- to post-programme evaluations.



## Keynote Speech 2: Prison- & probation-based perpetrator programmes in Europe – An overview

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With the second keynote speech, Sandra Jovanović prepared the audience for the conference discussions by providing an overview over some of the key challenges encountered when working with perpetrators in the prison and probation context. There is diversity across Europe in terms of who offers perpetrator programmes – state agencies, community-based organisations, or both. She



emphasized the importance of addressing domestic violence within the criminal justice system not only through repressive measures but also through rehabilitative measures. To ensure that this combination is as effective as possible, close coordination between the treatment providers and the prison or probation services is essential. She outlined some of the particular challenges but also good practice of multi-agency work, citing examples from across Europe.

During the Q&A session with the two keynote speakers, participants were particularly interested in knowing more about how the programmes offered in prison/probation in Croatia link in with a gendered approach, but also about how many programmes offered in prison and probation across Europe are gender-informed. Audience questions also referred to data on recidivism after completion of the programmes, and the challenge of working in masculine environments like prisons on attitude change related to gender-based violence.

## Panel Discussion: Perpetrator work in the context of probation

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The first panel discussion focused on discussing perpetrator work in the context of probation. The panellists were:

- Carmel Donnelly from the Irish Probation Service
- John Doyle from the Men's Development Network, Ireland
- Andrew Blackhurst from the Drive project, UK
- Laura Negrodo from the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions, Spain





Along a number of guiding questions, participants discussed, for example, what differentiates work with perpetrators of domestic violence from work with other perpetrators on probation. One of the main differences pointed out was the importance of risk management with this particular kind of offence, with the perpetrator and the victim often still being in contact. Panellists emphasized the need for close coordination between perpetrator programme, probation service and victim support service to ensure the work with the perpetrator is as safe for the victim as possible.

One of the aspects that have been helpful in establishing good cooperation is the development of protocols between the community-based perpetrator programmes and the probation service, such as in Ireland. Additional experiences showed that pointing out the benefits of synergizing some of the work, in particular related to risk assessment, has been a helpful strategy to encourage cooperation of statutory agencies. However, there are still limitations to what can or is being shared across services – further complicated by the General Data Protection Regulation – which can make it difficult for perpetrator programmes to get a complete picture of the offender’s history and circumstances.

Respecting the differences between cooperation partners given their different roles and duties remains important for good cooperation, for example respecting administration-related duties of statutory agencies on the hand and the need for community-based perpetrator programmes to develop a trustful relationship with the perpetrator on the other hand.

It was also emphasized how close collaboration with victim support services enables tailored responses to the development of the perpetrator’s behaviour, both for the benefit of effective treatment and safety for the victim. It remains a challenge how to handle risk-related information from the victim without this disclosure putting the victim at risk for having shared it. Such service-generated risks require a careful consideration of the response and the development of strategies to mitigate them. A strategy of disrupting opportunities for abuse employed by the Drive project was deemed helpful and inspiring.

The merging of a gender-based approach and a clinical approach for the work with perpetrators in Spain added a particularly interesting component to the discussions, as these different understandings of domestic violence can be an obstacle to cooperation between state agencies and community-based services.



During the Questions and Answer session following the panel discussion, participants were interested in how the gender-based and therapeutic approach were integrated, as they are often seen as being in opposition to one another. Questions were also asked in relation to managing complex needs of perpetrators such as addiction or mental health issues, how to deal with the dearth of practitioner skills in relation to work with perpetrators, and dealing with service-generated risks, in particular in relation to risks posed to victims.

## Workshops

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Workshop 1: The Caledonian System - Scotland's integrated approach to address men's domestic abuse and to improve the lives of women, children and men – Rory Macrae & Gill McKinna (Community Justice Scotland, Scotland)

In the workshop, participants learned about the Caledonian system and its trauma sensitive approach to working with men, women and children. Additionally, the facilitators offered an analysis of the political context which made implementation of the system possible, and the collaboration between the Justice Department and Equality Units of the Scottish Government. The workshop discussed how the Scottish government's adoption of a gender based analysis of domestic abuse and its promotion of a robust community justice model has supported the Caledonian System.

Workshop 2: Developing a shared protocol of cooperation between probation and community Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes in Ireland – the challenges and the opportunities. – Owen O'Neill (MOVE, Ireland) & Carmel Donnelly (Irish Probation Service, Ireland)

The workshop focused on the process of creating a shared protocol between the Probation Service and NGOs delivering Domestic Violence Intervention Programmes (DVIPs) in Ireland. Participants learned about the specific context of men referred to DVIPs from probation.

The workshop looked at the challenges for organisations coming from different sectors, statutory and non-statutory, in creating a shared protocol that respects the differences within each organisation. It looked at the critical issues that emerged and how they were resolved. Together with participants, it was examined what has worked well and what remains to be done. The facilitators shared an outline of the protocol.

Workshop 3: Journey towards our collaboration with courts, prisons, probation service and other stakeholders in Albania – Bledar Zeneli & Iris Luarasi (CLMB, Albania)

In the first part of the workshop, the facilitators presented a brief history of how they established agreements with prisons, probation and courts. They gave a short summary of how the Istanbul Convention embeds perpetrator programmes in its strategy to prevent violence against women (Article 16), how it requires states parties to fund and co-fund perpetrator programmes and to set up programmes in close co-ordination with specialist support services for victims. The workshop also gave participants an insight into the benefits from and challenges in the cooperation with the various



agencies and stakeholders in Albania. What have been the results of the work thanks to these collaborations for the victims, children and for perpetrators? What are the CLMB's plans and objectives for the future in this direction? In the interactive part of the workshop, participants were invited to share their own experiences regarding the collaboration between perpetrator programmes and state institutions.

Workshop 4: Integrating virtual reality in rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators in prison and probation settings – Nicolas Barnes-Mendez & Tania Johnston (University of Barcelona, Spain)

In this workshop, the facilitators presented and discussed the work they are conducting with perpetrators in prison and probation settings in collaboration with the Department of Justice of Catalonia and as part of the VR Per GENEER European project (Virtual Reality Prevention of Gender-Violence in Europe based on Neuroscience of Embodiment, peRspective and Empathy). The project aims to reduce intimate partner violence through the deployment of cost-effective prevention and rehabilitation tools. The workshop gave an insight into the actual experience of working with virtual reality with offenders by showing a brief video so that participants could experience the virtual reality tool themselves.

## DAY 2

After welcoming participants for the second day of the conference, WPP EN Executive Director Alessandra Pauncz introduced a video WPP EN has produced to introduce its work on promoting child-centred perpetrator interventions and encourage members to join the activities offered.

## Keynote Speech 3: Working in collaboration with prisons

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In the conference's third keynote speech, Darren O'Connell, manager of the Drive project in South Wales, UK, shared his experiences in building up an effective collaboration with the prison service as part of the Drive project.

He explained how they succeeded in attaining a 'buy-in' from statutory agencies for close collaboration and information sharing, and how the importance of developing a respectful relationship with the offender has helped attain very positive results in relation to re-offending rates. Some prison staff have a very punitive view on prisoners and will resent any notion that they are able to change. This can



work against the very notion that the perpetrator intervention is aiming to transmit to the perpetrator to increase his motivation. Working on an attitude change towards the perpetrator and on establishing a collaborative relationship with prison staff is therefore an important aspect in creating an environment conducive to change.

Darren emphasized the importance of addressing complex needs, some of which may stand in the way of the perpetrator's ability to fully engage with a behavioural change process. The Drive intervention links in with housing, mental health, or addiction support services that help pave the way for a seamless transition from prison to freedom. Cooperating with prison services to enable this transition ensures that the perpetrator has the resources to continue engaging on the journey of behaviour change.

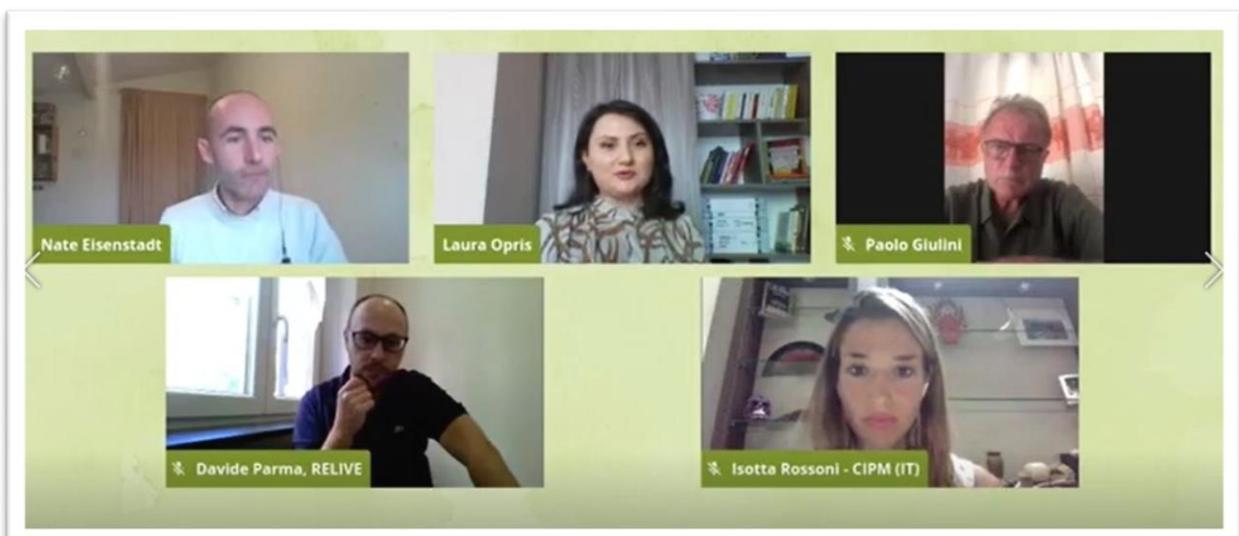
In the Q&A session, participants were interesting in knowing more about what the interventions with perpetrators as part of the Drive project involve, and which agencies and NGOs need to be involved in reaching a system change through a police-led, multi-agency approach.

## Panel Discussion: Perpetrator Work in the Context of Prison

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The second panel discussion featured four practitioners sharing their expertise in working with perpetrators in prison. The panellists were:

- Laura Opris from Oradea Penitentiary, Romania
- Paolo Giulini and Isotta Rossoni from CIPM, Italy
- Davide Parma from Relive, Italy



The discussion highlighted the specific challenges associated with work on gender-based violence in the often very masculine prison environments, especially for a female professional. The attitude change that the treatment programme seeks to achieve can be significantly undermined by negative



gender attitudes and behaviour displayed by staff working in the prison context. High degrees of denial and the particular stigma that is associated with sexualised violence means that motivating engagement with the programme is often difficult, which in turn is reflected in high drop-out rates.

Multi-disciplinary exchange and supervision were noted as helpful in responding to the complex needs that convicted perpetrators often present with. Work invested in building a treatment alliance with the perpetrator has an added significance given the limited contacts that prisoners have and the positive effects of continuity in prisoners' relationships. The contact restrictions due to COVID-19 have meant a setback in progress made, and opportunities to switch to online treatment have been very limited. Work of staff involved in treatment and that of prison officers is often siloed, and panellists agreed on the importance of raising awareness among correctional staff for the work being done with the perpetrators in order to avoid impressions of collusion and promote cooperation on a day-to-day basis. This point was also a key aspect in the keynote speech as well as the first panel discussion.

Countering a prison sub-culture that stigmatises certain offenders, but also going against gender stereotypes among prison staff were named as important points to address in the future. Panellists regarded further research on the longer-term impact of the interventions as essential for convincing authorities and policy makers of the benefits of perpetrator programmes. A cultural shift on the political level would also pave the way for more investment into the work with offenders in prison, which is rarely structurally financed, but often through grants and projects.

During the subsequent Q&A session, participants asked about the experiences related to the proliferation of pornography in the prison context and how this influences the work with the men. There was also interest in panellists' experiences regarding the post-penal continuance of treatment in the community, but also if the programmes provide support to victims including safety planning.

## Workshops

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Workshop 5: The Croatian model of perpetrators programmes – Similarities, differences and challenges of programmes in the community and prison system – Senka Damjanović (Dom Duga Zagreb, Croatia)

In this workshop, the facilitator provided insights into how Croatia responds to domestic violence perpetration. Perpetrator programmes are implemented both in the prison system and in the community. She outlined two programmes, one programme corresponding to everyday life in prison, the other intended for perpetrators living in the community. As part of the workshop, the facilitator and workshop participants jointly examined the differences, similarities and specific challenges of these two curricula.

In the second part of the workshop, participants discussed some interesting questions such as whether it is useful to work with perpetrators with very long prison sentences, or participants' thoughts on the effectiveness of punitive versus rehabilitative measures in preventing further violence.



Workshop 6: The Conscious project – An inter-systemic network against gender-based violence – Antonella D’Ambrosi (ASL Frosinone, Italy) & Adele Di Stefano (ASL Roma 1, Italy)

The workshop facilitators presented key aspects of the CONSCIOUS project, including the partnerships created for establishing a network between public and private institutions to develop a coordinated response to stop and prevent gender-based violence, and information on treatment groups in the Cassino and Frosinone prisons and at the local health authority of Frosinone. The facilitators also presented the results of the project as well as the challenges posed by the COVID-19 lockdown. In the following discussion, participants were invited to share experiences regarding similar initiatives and their opinions on what is needed to implement a similar project in the public healthcare system of their country.

Workshop 7: Stalkerware - A digital dimension of abuse – Christina Jankowski & Victor Chebyshev (Kaspersky, Germany)

In this workshop kindly provided by Kaspersky, participants were given an introduction to understanding the basic functioning of stalkerware and how to detect it from a technical point of view. Stalkerware is an example of how technology facilitates intimate partner violence. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss how to better address stalkerware as a practitioner in working with perpetrators or victims. Participants shared their experiences with abusers using stalkerware, and exchanged thoughts on increasing victim-safety centred awareness.

Workshop 8: Latin American experiences of perpetrators programmes in prisons and probation – Karina Ruiz (Ministry of Women, Uruguay), Erika Troncozo (Ministry of Health, Mexico), Alfonso Martinez (EUROsocial)

In this workshop, a representative of the Uruguayan Ministry of Women outlined some of the initiatives by the Uruguayan government to tackle domestic abuse, including a departmental network that involves programmes for perpetrators at 17 locations across the country and various support services for victims of abuse. She briefly explained the use of electronic bracelets in the context of domestic abuse. Participants also learned about different initiatives implemented through the public health system in Mexico and cooperation structures between law enforcement and the public health service in domestic violence cases. In the final part of the workshop, participants were invited to share their thoughts on the similarities and differences between practice in Europe and Latin America, and what can be learned from one another.

The joint session that concluded the conference as well as the virtual social networking sessions at the end of each conference day provided participants with the chance to interact “face-to-face” and fully appreciate the diversity of participants’ backgrounds and nationalities represented. Particularly the social networking in small breakout rooms allowed participants to meet on a more personal basis, and to network and exchange contacts.



## Conclusion

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Two days of diverse, inspiring contributions have left both audience and speakers with much food for thought. Work with perpetrators in the criminal justice system involves additional challenges, given more complex multi-agency work between sectors that are often characterized by different modes of operation, different internal processes and responsibilities. However, many of the challenges are similar in nature, as all stakeholders work towards the goal of providing effective treatment and support to perpetrators of domestic violence to increase the safety of victims.

Online formats offer opportunities but also hold some challenges. Participants' very positive feedback during and after the conference showed that WWP EN was able to make the conference interactive and inclusive despite the physical distance between and among speakers and audience. The Question and Answer sessions, continuously integrating comments and questions from the chat, the use of breakout rooms for the workshops, offering a joint session with participants visible on live video as well as the virtual social networking sessions all allowed participants to contribute to discussions and make their voices heard.

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