

Summer Courses, Barcelona - 4th to 7th July 2017

Workshop Report

Workshop Title: Desistance

Moderator: Willem van der Brugge, CEP Secretary General

Leader 1: Dr Ioan Durnescu, professor at University of Bucharest, Romania

Invited speakers: Marc Cerón, Deputy Director of Probation, Catalan Ministry of Justice
Esther Montero, jurist and PhD in Criminology Loyola University Seville

Topic Speaker: Dr Beth Weaver, senior professor at the University of Strathclyde, UK
Scotland

Participants: 8 participants (5 Countries represented)

Notes: Anna Esquerrà Roqueta

Impression: It was an interactive and participative workshop which included many different methods. The structure that was developed along with the plenary session for the same subject was very well received by the participants; it began with a plenary where the main questions related to Desistance theory were explained followed by the first session of the Desistance workshop where all the theories were discussed in further detail and with real cases and examples. The workshop combined a theoretical approach to the phenomenon with a very applied and practical methodology what fostered the integration of learning by the participants. The materials and explanations that the workshop leader offered were very welcomed by the participants who, although they were from different countries and cultures, felt identified with what was said by the workshop leader and other colleagues. The fact of having invited guest contributors representing policy makers, practitioners and probationers was also very much welcomed by the participants. In the final session, individual Desistance action plans for the future were developed which included what was learned during the 4 previous sessions.

Introduction

Dr Ioan Durnescu, the workshop leader, is professor at University of Bucharest, Romania and brought his international experience as a leading academic on the subject of Desistance. The topic speaker Dr Beth Weaver, senior professor at the University of Strathclyde and Associate Director for the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (SCCJR), gave a plenary providing an overview of theories and research into how and why people give up

crime (desistance) and what sustains it, as well as the kinds of practices that can support not only processes of change but processes of social integration.

Workshop Methods

The workshop combined a theoretical approach with different practical methods. The workshop had invited guest contributors representing policy makers, practitioners and probationers.

- Trainer presentations
- Case works, case study and role playing
- Individual, small group and large group exercise discussions
- Viewing movies
- Experiential learning exercises
- Interviews on the desistance topic with high officials, researchers, practitioners and offenders

Summary of Presentations (Power points attached as Appendices)

The workshop examined Desistance from different perspectives: theory, policy, practice and the experiencing of desistance by ex- offenders. It focused on what practitioners in probation and prison can do to make their work more effective in terms of desistance and participants were encouraged to develop personal action plans.

Session 1 – Why people stop offending? Set the scene in terms of Desistance theories; clarify participants' expectations and enable them to share their own experience of working towards desistance.

Session 2 – Policy implications for Desistance. Examined the policy implications of desistance theories. How is the process of desistance supported by legislation? Desistance is not an event, it is a process. Is the so-called zig-zag process acknowledged in probation practice? Are the issues of consent and involvement of offenders in their supervision programmes relevant concepts for current policies? How breach procedures shaped and what are is their impact on desistance? Do our structures actually impede progress and what can be done to change them for the better? During this session a high official of the Catalan Ministry of Justice was interviewed to see in what extent the probation service supports desistance processes.

Session 3 – Working with individuals. Building up work alliance. Addressed the practice implications of Desistance theories. In particular it examined the centre of any effective intervention- the setting up of a working alliance with involuntary clients. Based on Trotter (1999) and Rooney (2009) participants worked towards developing the relationship skills required such as: role clarification, self-disclosure, maximising self-determination, empathy and others. In this session an expert researcher and practitioner was invited in order to reflect on the working alliance with involuntary clients through a practical methodology of role playing and group discussions.

Session 4 – Desistance and experiencing supervision. Focused on experiencing Desistance. How do people under supervision experience that supervision; How can supervision support or hinder desistance; What is the relationship between the so-called pains of supervision and desistance; How can the painful and counterproductive in the desistance journey be minimized. During this session the workshop leader interviewed two clients under Probation in order to learn through lived experiences and real cases on how supervision is experienced and identify what elements of Desistance played an important role to stop offending.

Session 5 – Recap and plans for the future. Participants to draw together all their learning to produce individual desistance action plans for the future. Workshops 2 to 4 will have invited guest contributors representing policy makers, practitioners and probationers.

Key Learning Points

The workshop's key learning points were:

- ✓ Desistance is a difficult, complex, lengthy and individual journey.
- ✓ There are no recipes for success. Be creative!
- ✓ Focus on human capital but also on social capital and situations
- ✓ Foster hope and confidence. Celebrate progress!
- ✓ Build up on strengths and resources
- ✓ Develop relationships – with the probationers but also between the probationer and his/her family and community
- ✓ Desistance is more than Criminal Justice. Engage with families, communities, employers etc.
- ✓ Probation services should design procedures that would support desistance
- ✓ Probation services could design flexible procedures to deal with setbacks in a constructive way
- ✓ Probation officers will treat clients with respect and maximize their choices – encourage self-determination. Probation officers work will foster new identities and confidence for a better future.
- ✓ Probation officers will acknowledge the pains of probation and will work on reducing them while making the supervision experience a meaningful and useful experience.

Key Practice Issues for the Future

- ✓ Remind the practitioners why we do what we do. Go back to the basics.
- ✓ Introduce refreshing training every year even for the most fundamental skills (e.g. expressing empathy)
- ✓ Build up procedures and standards that allow controlled flexibility and support desistance.
- ✓ Encourage probation services to go out in the community and work inter-agency for solving offender's practical problems.

Appendices

- 1. Outline Programme of Workshop**
- 2. Material used in Session 1 presentations**
- 3. Material used in Session 2 presentations**
- 4. Material used in Session 3 presentations**
- 5. Material used in Session 4 presentations**
- 6. Material used in Session 5 presentations**
- 7. [References – provided by the workshop leaders – for additional reading]**

Further reading:

- Burnett R and McNeill F (2005) The place of the officer-offender relationship in assisting offenders to desist from crime, *Probation Journal*, 52(3), 247-68
- Farrall S and Bowling B (1999) Structuration, human development and desistance from crime, *British Journal of Criminology*, 39(2), 252-67
- Farrall S and Calverley A (2006) *Understanding desistance from crime*, Crime and Justice Series, Open University Press: London
- Laub John H, Daniel S, Nagin and Robert J Sampson (1998) Trajectories of change in criminal offending: Good marriages and the desistance process, *American Sociological Review*, 63, 225-238
- McNeill F (2006) A desistance paradigm for offender management, *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 6(1), 39-62
- McNeill F (2012) Four forms of offender rehabilitation: Towards an integrated perspective, *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 17(1), 18-36
- McNeill F and Maruna S (2007) Giving up and giving back: Desistance, generativity and social work with offenders, in McIvor G and Raynor P (eds), *Developments in social work with offenders*, Research highlights in social work 48, Jessica Kingsley: London
- McNeill F and Weaver B (2010) *Changing lives? Desistance research and offender management*, Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research: Glasgow
- Maruna S (2001) *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*, American Psychological Association Books: Washington DC
- Maruna S and LeBel T (2003) Welcome home? Examining the 're-entry court' concept from a strengths-based perspective, *Western Criminology Review*, 4, 91-107
- Maruna S and LeBel T (2009) Strengths-based approaches to reentry: Extra mileage toward reintegration and destigmatization, *Japanese Journal of Sociological Criminology*, 34, 58-80
- Rooney, R.H. (2009) *Strategies for working with involuntary clients*. Columbia University Press.
- Trotter, C. (1999) *Working with involuntary clients: a guide to practice*. Sage
- Weaver B and McNeill F (2010) Travelling hopefully: Desistance research and probation practice, in Brayford J, Cowe F and Deering J (eds), *What else works? Creative work with offenders*, Willan: Cullompton