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Developing a training package

STEPS2 Resettlement: Support for Transfer of European Prison Sentences towards Resettlement

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<p>This report presents the results of workstream 2.1, the development of a training package, as part of the STEPS2 Resettlement project funded by the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Union.</p> <p><i>This report has been produced in close cooperation with the Dutch Probation Service, members of Europris and members of the project board. All phases have been conducted under the supervision of the National Offender Management Service as lead partner of the project.</i></p>
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Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRAINING PACKAGE</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION/MEMBER STATES.....</u>	<u>8</u>
<u>CONCLUSIONS.....</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS</u>	<u>10</u>
ANNEX 1: RESULTS OF THE SURVEY	

Introduction

As part of the STEPS2 Resettlement project funded by the European Commission, the Custodial Institutions Agency agreed to develop a training package for officials with a role in the decision making process concerning the transfer of custodial sentences.

Workstream 2 of the STEPS 2 project aimed at increasing understanding and awareness of EU Framework Decision 909 with staff, offenders and victims. NOMS and the Custodial Institutions Agency took responsibility for this workstream.

The Custodial Institutions Agency was responsible for the delivery of a training package for practitioners, later defined as officials with a role and responsibility in the decision-making process. These officials differ per Member State and include judges, prosecutors and civil servants.

On the basis of the results of research a script was developed and tested and reviewed by most of the Member States. The training package (e-learning) produced is available in English and Spanish on the EuroPris website for all Member States to access [www.europris.org](http://www.europris.org/projects/STEPS2Resettlement/e-learning) (projects/STEPS2Resettlement/e-learning platform).

The Custodial Institutions Agency worked with many different project partners to aid the development of the training package including the Dutch Probation Service, EuroPris, University of Bucharest, National Administration of Penitentiaries (Romania), Huelva Prison (Spain), HMP Maidstone (UK), HMP Huntercombe (UK), HMP Wandsworth (UK) and De Montfort University (UK). All these partners provided contacts, testing groups within their own jurisdictions so that the questionnaires could be spread and the product tested in a European perspective.

This report details the development of the e-learning into its final version.

Development of the training package

The training package was developed by a practitioner with knowledge of and experience with the Framework Decision of the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency (central authority) and an educational advisor of the Dutch Probation Service.

Research

Research was done in order to define the target group and establish current knowledge and needs. Interviews were held with officials of The Netherlands, Finland and Belgium. Member States were invited to provide information by filling in a survey¹ (17 responses). Most of the respondents had experience with the Framework Decision. The results gave guidance and recommendations for the training package:

- Target group: public prosecutor (29%), judge (17%) and civil servants (64%)
- The use of the certificate was considered to be difficult or reasonable.
- Classical training was preferred to e-learning
- Lack of understanding of Framework Decision 909 and its provisions was considered cumbersome. Some complained about the limited information provided by the Issuing State in the certificate. Also the request for a translation of the judgement by the Executing State was mentioned.
- Issues to be addressed: basics of the Framework Decision, completion of the certificate, double criminality, those with mental health issues or learning disabilities, procedure, definition of social rehabilitation in each country, length of parole, relationship with the European Arrest Warrant.

Decision for e-learning

Although preference was given to a classical training the project board decided that e-learning would be more accessible via the internet and could be adapted more easily. E-learning, or parts of it, could very well be part of classical training.

Because of the differences in (legal) knowledge and experience with the Framework Decision in the target group the e-learning suggestions for relevant chapters are made in the introduction.

The e-learning should be acceptable and attractive for all Member States and different types of users which complicated the assignment.

No speech was added to the e-learning in order to make it useful for computers without a soundcard.

The length of the e-learning depends on the level of knowledge of the user and takes approximately between 1.5 to 2 hours to complete.

Content

On the basis of the guidance and recommendations provided by the interviews and survey it was decided that the content would be as follows:

- Basics of the Framework Decision
- Process (animation)

¹ Annex 1: Steps 2 Resettlement training survey of 26 February 2015.

- Certificate: general information and completing parts of a certificate in three cases on the basis of a judgement
- Information: where to find information, tips of practitioners

Testing

The e-learning was tested in several phases:

- Practitioners in The Netherlands (June 2015)
- Expert group of Europris (July 2015). Participating Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, The Netherlands (vice chairman), Romania, Slovakia, United Kingdom (chairman).
- Expert group of Europris (September 2015). Participating Member States: Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, The Netherlands (chairman), Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom (vice chairman)
- Project board (September 2015)
- United Kingdom (content and language)

Feedback

The expert groups gave very useful feedback:

- The e-learning was considered to be too difficult for some. Changes to the cases were made and information was added to the introduction about the required knowledge per chapter.
- Clarification of parts of the text by changing the text or adding information
- Discussions about the wording lead to changes of the text and animation.
- Changes to the text in order to make the e-learning 'EU-proof' and thus acceptable for all Member States.

The e-learning was presented in workshops during the final conference in Bucarest (4-5 February 2016). Valuable comments were made which led to small changes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the member states

Use

1. Consideration should be given to the fact that different officials have a role in the decision making process in the Member States: judges, prosecutors and civil servants, government officials, etc. Their legal knowledge or knowledge of the framework decision may differ. For that reason guidelines are given for the use of the e-learning, dependent on the level of knowledge.
2. Although the e-learning was not developed for prison staff, some parts (process, general information) might be useful for them.
3. The e-learning can very well be used as part of classical training.
4. In all cases it should be noted that the e-learning contains general information and does not contain information on national legislation.
5. Decision makers should always take note of their national legislation.

At the final conference of the project in Bucharest (4-5 February), the workshops were used to introduce member states to the e-learning. In order to enhance understanding of the Framework Decision Member States are advised to use the e-learning and give broad notice of the existence of the e-learning.

Recommendations for the European Commission

Translation

Member States clearly indicated that, in order for the e-learning to be used, availability of the e-learning in their own language is required. The budget of the project STEPS2 was not sufficient to arrange this. The European Commission is advised to provide translations in all other EU-languages and funds in order to realise this technically.

Conclusions

The finished e-learning training package has been produced using as much knowledge as possible from practitioners. Making it acceptable, attractive and relevant for the target group in all the Member States was an interesting challenge. Testing the results with members of the target group lead to insight in each other's way of working and thinking about the Framework Decision.

This e-learning training package provides general information and does not contain the national legislations of all the Member States.

The e-learning training package is easily accessible on the Europris website and the developers wish for it to be used intensively. The transfer of prisoners is not the daily business of all practitioners and an investment of 1.5 to 2 hours could help to increase the understanding of the Framework Decision.

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