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National Offender
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Project Summary

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

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STEPS2 Resettlement Project Summary

STEPS 2 Resettlement aimed to support the effective delivery of Framework Decision (FD) 2008/909/JHA (transfer of prisoners) by investigating and analysing the legal and practical obstacles that may hinder its implementation and execution in all Member States (MS). The project assisted in working towards the goal of common European standards of working effectively with offenders. The project ran from March 2014 to February 2016 with funding from the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Union.

The project built upon previous research and projects (Implementation Support for the Transfer of European Probation Sentences (ISTEP) project - JUST/2010/JPEN/AG/1531, Developing the Use of Technical Tools for Cross-Border Resettlement (DUTT) -JUST/2010/JPEN/AG/EG/1462) in continuing to identify challenges that countries must meet to put the FD's into effect. In order for FD 909 to be implemented correctly, it is essential that staff and officials are well informed; this project aimed to increase mutual understanding and recognition of FD 909 to this effect. It also addressed the links between this FD and 2008/947/JHA (Probation & Alternative Sanctions) and 2009/829/JHA (European Supervision Order) and aimed to support both European Union (EU) MS and the European Commission to action these instruments and understand the practicalities of using them.

The project undertook foundation research into the issues and practicalities relating to all EU MS progress with implementation of this package of FD's, with a core focus on FD 909. Knowledge gained assisted in the identification of training needs and the provision of an evidence backed training package for officials.

Furthermore, this project developed a handbook for offenders which informs them during the transfer process under FD 909, and what to expect, aiding their social rehabilitation and re-integration into society. In turn, this will increase awareness for prison officials regarding the processes for transfer of offenders.

A series of expert groups and research involving representatives from a diverse spread of MS drew out information on MS current victims' agenda and liaison processes. This resulted in a short guidance document for MS concerning how victim liaison could be approached in light of FD 909, with specific regard to the context of the EU Victims' Directive.

STEPS 2 Resettlement acknowledges that any work towards social rehabilitation and reintegration which is undertaken during the prison sentence must be built upon after release. Much is known about 'what works' in resettlement, but the distinctive challenges in working well with prisoners transferred from abroad are less well understood. For this reason, resettlement practices are central to the success of FD909 and were the focus of workstream 3.

This project examined the transfer of data on offenders; not only the type of data to be transferred but also the legalities and data protection requirements associated. It gives an insight into the information being collected and recorded by MS, examines how this information is transferred across borders considering data protection and security issues, and identifies what data prison systems require in order to transfer an offender. The project examined the strengths and weaknesses of existing information exchanges and produced recommendations, best practices and an architectural design for a possible platform to facilitate data transfer.

The project had 5 main workstreams:

- 0. Project Management and Co-ordination** (Board meetings, research meetings, final conference, website development, stakeholder management, quality assurance and monitoring and reporting including the final report)
- 1. Enhanced cooperation and mutual trust between Member States** (The objectives of this workstream were:- to identify the obstacles and difficulties in the transfer process of foreign nationals to the executing state - to develop effective solutions that will aim to assist countries when transferring offenders - to build up a co-operation system between the Member States in order to facilitate the process. This co-operation system was trialled between Romania and Italy, The UK, Spain and Catalonia and then recommendations based on this are used to encourage all member states to undertake similar practices.
- 2. Research into overall awareness of Framework Decision 909**, including; current implementation and effectiveness across the EU; the awareness of those implementing and delivering and cross border cooperation and challenges that are faced throughout the whole process.
 - a. 1: Practitioners - Training package development
 - b. 2: Offenders - Offender handbook
 - c. 3: Victims - Member State Guidance
- 3. Development of resettlement and aftercare practices** in the member states to respond to the distinctive needs and risks of prisoners transferred under FD 909 with a specific focus on social rehabilitation.
- 4. Transfer of data on offenders**; not only the type of data to be transferred but also the legalities and data protection requirements associated. The project gives an insight into the information being collected and recorded by MS, examines how this information is transferred across borders considering data protection and security issues throughout, and identifies what data prison systems require in order to transfer an offender (executing and issuing).

The project involved ten partners including the University of Bucharest (Romania), De Montfort University (UK), University of Huelva with Huelva Prison (Spain), Ghent University (Belgium), European Organisation for Prisons and Correctional Services (EuroPris), National Administration of Penitentiaries (Romania), Belgian Prison Service (Belgium), Confederation of European Probation (CEP), Research Institute for Social Development and Innovation (Romania) and the Custodial Institutions Agency (Ministry of Security and Justice, The Netherlands). There were also four associate partners involved in the project including the University of Brescia (Italy), Italian Department of Penitentiary Administration (Italy), Ministry of Justice (Croatia) and Ministry of Justice (UK).

The results, products, e-learning module and guides from this project can be found on the project website <https://steps.euopris.org> and the offender handbooks can be found on www.euopris.org