

Editorial

It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the editorial board, I welcome you to the first edition of the European Journal of Probation. This peer reviewed, internet based publication exists to stimulate academic debate and to foster dialogue about probation in Europe. For the sake of clarity, our use of the term 'probation' is not intended to refer to any specific sanction or organisation; rather, we use it as a short-hand term to refer to community sanctions and measures used at any stage of the criminal justice process; pre-trial, post-trial and post-custody. With rates of imprisonment in Europe rising rapidly, the case for focusing academic attention on alternatives to incarceration is not difficult to make, whether we look to technical debates about effectiveness and public safety, or whether we look to more normative issues around moral principles and human rights. And so the launch of European Journal of Probation could hardly be more timely.

I am sure you will agree that this first edition sets a very high standard; one which we will endeavour to maintain in our twice-yearly issues. Though it is accidental and perhaps unfortunate that the contributions to this edition come from just two jurisdictions – both of them within the United Kingdom – we are nonetheless lucky that they address some of the most fundamental issues and challenges that probation in Europe is currently facing. Peter Raynor 's and Gwen Robinson's contribution sets an important and helpful precedent in compelling us to engage with fundamental moral questions about the nature of offender rehabilitation. Reviewing the history of probation in England and Wales, they show how rehabilitation has been cast somewhat differently at different stages in probation's history. They conclude that rehabilitation can and should attend to the interests of offenders, victims *and* communities as its beneficiaries of rehabilitation need not be in conflict.

Fergus McNeill's paper, which is based on his recent address to European Directors of Probation, is principally concerned with more technical questions about the effectiveness of probation – or more accurately about the effectiveness of probation might be enhanced through a reflective and critical engagement with research not just on 'what works?' but also on desistance from crime. However, McNeill concludes that the evidence base that we look to in exploring these apparently technical questions inevitably draws us back to normative questions about the moral character and social context of probation work.

Mike Nellis takes us into different territory in exploring one of the most significant developments in community sanctions in recent decades; the advent

of electronic monitoring (EM). Nellis makes a compelling case that this development has been under-theorised in that we have tended to conceptualise electronic monitoring as a form of confinement rather than understanding it as a distinctive form of surveillance. Nellis's insistence on learning from the available evidence about offenders' experience of and their accounts of the consequences of being subject to EM is what enables him to advance our conceptual grasp of this new form penalty.

In our final paper in this edition, Rob Canton provides those of us interested in comparative research and policy (and practice) transfer with an insightful analysis of how and why policy transfer might succeed and fail. Returning us to the normative questions with which this edition begins, Canton concludes that the enhancement of human rights should be the principal measure by which we make judgements about the success and failure of policy transfer.

This edition concludes, as we hope all future editions will, with some excellent book reviews. Anyone interested in receiving books for review purposes should contact the Book Review editor.

If all of our future editions manage to reproduce the range, quality and depth of analysis contained in this one, we can be confident that this journal will make a fine contribution to the development of excellent scholarship about probation in Europe. Though that would be achievement enough in and of itself, our aspiration is that better comparative and critical probation scholarship will pass Rob Canton's test – and contribute to the enhancement of human rights across the Continent. To do so, we will need your help as readers, reviewers and authors, so please become involved in any and all of these capacities.

The Editorial Board
1 April 2009