

## **Editorial**

Welcome to this apparently eclectic issue of the European Journal of Probation. I call it ‘apparently eclectic’ because it seems that way when reading the titles but, when reading the content, you will see that there is a great deal of consistency and inter-connectivity between these papers.

The first article – Unpaid work as an alternative to imprisonment for fine defaulters in Austria and Scotland - McIvor, Pirnat and Grafl, looks very closely at how the introduction of unpaid work for fine defaulters affected the custodial rate. Although unpaid work seems to reduce the number of custodial sentences for fine defaulters this is not without some important risks. In Scotland, for instance, there is an increase in the number of offenders being given custodial sentences as a consequence of breach, and for longer periods of time than would have been warranted by the original fine.

The next three papers are situated more in the practice field. In the Good Lives Model: Aligning Risk Reduction with Promoting Offenders’ Personal Goals, Ward and Fortune describe once again the principles of the GLM and emphasize the idea that the risk posed by offenders can be reduced by building the competencies needed to achieve a more fulfilling life. At the end of the paper, the authors very usefully present how this innovative model can be used in working with sex offenders. In this respect, readers may want to consider this paper together with other similar articles published in the European Journal of Probation or elsewhere. In articles published in European Journal of Probation (2009 and 2011) or in Durnescu and McNeill (forthcoming), Ward and collaborators offer an important basis for practicing GLM with sex offenders, offenders with fire-setting behavior and so on.

In her article – Desistance by design: Offenders’ reflections on criminal justice theory, policy and practice – Barry gives voice to young offenders in their journey towards desistance. Once again, it is demonstrated that desistance is a very complex process with numerous dimensions. One very important element seems to be the structural one represented by all the opportunities or constraints put before potential desisters by the criminal justice system and society in general.

The same idea is stressed also by Tompson and Chainey in their article Integrating environmental considerations into prisoner risk assessment. Their paper uses as a starting point the observation that most risk assessment instruments fail to pay sufficient attention to the structural/environmental factors that can have a determining role in re-offending. Drawing on the growing literature, they call for the integration of principles of environmental criminology into the practice of managing offenders.

As each of these papers suggest, individually and all together, there is no simple answer to crime. Reducing re-offending should pay due attention to legislation, practices, structural factors and so on. I hope this issue looks at these perspectives in a useful and convincing manner.

The Editor