

Editorial

Welcome to this another open issue of the European Journal of Probation. Although it was planned as an open number, the readers will notice that one theme can be discerned as a ‘golden thread’ running through all the papers. And this theme is penal transformation.

The first two papers – *Changing shape and shifting boundaries. The media portrayal of probation in Ireland* and *Reading between the lines. English Newspapers Representations of Community Punishment* – look into how community sanctions are reflected in the written media in Ireland and in England. In doing so, the authors discuss issues including the complex relationships between media and criminal justice, and their impacts on the legitimacy criminal justice. In spite the fact that the authors identify common features or common trends in the media – like the primacy of prisons in the public imagination, or the trend towards more ‘negative’ reflections in the mass media of probation services – there are still local factors that moderate or even challenge these trends towards convergence and globalization of the ‘punitive turn’. The sensationalist media seems to play an important role in promoting more punitive or populist views, confirming some aspects of Tonry’s theory of the determinants of penal policies (Tonry, 2009). However the papers also suggest that, even in the same jurisdiction, different media outlets – some national, some local – tend to reflect differently the presence and performance of community sanctions.

As both studies share more or less similar methodologies and research questions it would be extremely interesting to see a more in-depth comparative analysis between community sanctions in England and Wales and in Ireland, as they are reflected into media.

The next paper – *Changes in Probation Training in England and Wales: The Probation Qualification Framework (PQF) Three years on* - reflects on another transformation, this time a radical transformation in the training of probation staff in England and Wales. As seventy percent (or perhaps more) of the probation workload is likely to be privatized, it is not clear what the training implications will be in future. In the context of this uncertainty, the authors make a convicting case for a nationally recognized Higher Education qualification.

When it was introduced in Belgium more than ten years ago, electronic monitoring (EM) was used as a combination of social support and technical control, creating the so-called ‘Belgian model’ of EM. The authors of the next paper – *Electronic monitoring in Belgium: a penological analysis of current and future orientations* – observe and explain the reasons of this distinctive model faded away and drifted towards a more controlling or managerial form of EM.

Using a single case study – Evan – Elizabeth Weaver demonstrates in the last paper of this issue of the transformative power of social relations for individuals in their pathways to desistance from crime.

All of these papers can be read in different other keys but for me, after hearing David Garland speaking in the recent annual conference of the European Society of Criminology in Budapest, the way that global and local social and cultural factors interact with political mechanisms and institutions seems clearer – or at least, the dimensions of our understandings of these interactions are more apparent (visit www.ofendersupervision.eu for a summary of that presentation). In different ways, all of our papers speak to these complex dynamics which shape not just penal systems and institutions, but also practitioners and subjects of punishment.

Although I said at the beginning of this editorial that this issue is not a special one, I have to contradict myself and confess that it is special in its content and in its moment in time. This is the last issue with open access. From April 2014, European Journal of Probation will be published by the University of Bucharest in partnership with SAGE Publishing. In this transition the cooperation between European Journal of Probation and Probation Journal will be strengthened in an innovative and, we hope, inspiring way. A good example of this cooperation is the first issue of next year which is edited by the editor of Probation Journal – Lol Burke - on a very timely subject – probation privatization. We hope to receive reactions to the call for papers from as many European or non-European countries as possible.

Another novelty for the journal is that Fergus McNeill has been invited to join me as co-editor and has kindly accepted.

I hope that all these changes (transformations again!) will increase the quality of the papers the journal publishes and also that the journal will play a more visible role in European and international debates.

Ioan Durnescu
Editor