



State Probation Service
Republic of Latvia

**When one plus one is more than
two?
Building partnerships and
facilitating community
involvement in the probation
work in Latvia.**

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Latvia in Brief

- Country in Northern Europe, one of the Baltic States
- With an area of 64,589km²
- A population of approximately 1.9 million
- Latvia was part of the Soviet Union for 45 years;
- Latvia regained its independence in 1991
- Member of the European Union from 2004





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Probation in Latvia

- SPS an institution was founded in **October 2003**
- **Main functions:** community sanctions and measures & mediation
- **Persons on probation:**
 - 5594 persons on 31 January 2021
 - 8499 persons entering probation during the year 2020
- **SPS as organization (2021):**
 - Central office + 7 regions (31 local offices);
 - 410 Probation staff (326 staff in direct contact with the probation client)
 - 128 volunteers



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The Early Years of Service (2003-2010)

Main functions of the SPS :

- Community service (from 2005)
- Community supervision (from 2006)
 - conditional discharge with probation supervision;
 - suspended sentence with supervision;
 - conditionally release (parole)
- Victim–Offender Mediation (from 2005)



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The Early Years of Service (2003-2010)

What was done during these years?

- The institutional framework was established
- A cooperation network was established/strengthened
- Created and put into practice a system for working with a probation client (assessment, planning, intervention)
- Introduced group work programs
- Trained volunteer mediators (mediation program)



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The Early Years of Service (2003-2010)

Models of Probation Practice

- Community Supervision system/practice is designed and based on the RNR model (probation practice was based on cooperation between the probation officer and the client)
- Victim-offender mediation is based on Restorative Justice approach/principles (within this practice community engagement is important)
- During this period these two models existed separately (RNR for Community Supervision; RJ for Victim-Offender Mediation)



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At the beginning of the second decade of SPS

Experiences gained in the first decade, differences in rehabilitation theories, conflicts between models, challenges in daily work, all these encouraged SPS to review existing practices and seek solutions to existing challenges.



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Development and expansion of probation practice **(2010 –)**

The development of SPS were influenced by:

- Import of knowledge (discovery of "new" theories/knowledge; entry of new approaches, methods and practice models into Latvia - e.g. GLM, TIC, strengths-based approaches)
- The success stories (collected in 2013) showed the important role of community engagement in client change processes

Cooperation as a resource and community engagement became one of the priority directions of development in the Service



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New initiatives for joint work and community engagement (2010 –2020)

Interinstitutional cooperation:

- 23.11.2015 - the first agreement between SPS, the Prison Administration and the State Police was signed ensuring the implementation of a new Joint supervision model (MAPPA Latvian version)
- The initial cooperation was expanded - new partners joined (social services, children's rights protection service, etc.)

Project «Circles4EU» (2013-2015)

- The implementation of Circles of Support and Accountability in the Latvia
- COSA, as a volunteer-driven and community-based initiative, was important for the Service to bring together the practices based on different models (RNR and RJ)



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Today - an example of a **mentoring program «Līdzgaitnieks»**

What does the word «līdzgaitnieks" mean?

- This word is made from two parts «līdzi» + «gaita»
- «Līdzi» - indicates that someone is moving, moving together, at the same time
- «Gaita» - relates to movement, way of walking, manner, also speed
- «Līdzgaitnieks» - **One of two or more people who act together at the same time and are close in values/beliefs**



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Today - an example of a mentoring programme «Līdzgaitnieks»

- A new mentoring program was started in 2020
- Programme operating on RJ principles
- It is based on Latvian COSA and mediation experience
- Designed to help the probation client in various everyday situations, build a better life and desist from crime
- **The main focus of the Program is building an agency**
- In 2021, there were 83 trained volunteers and 72 probation clients involved in the programme



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Some questions/reflections about the future of Probation

- How to move from Office-based Probation to Community-based Probation? Do we need it?
- «Rehabilitation as an obligation/condition» vs «Rehabilitation as a free choice»?
- Is agency building what we want to achieve?



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