

## Annex A

### ESTONIA

Having left Exeter at 02.10 on Sun 3 Sep, I travelled by coach to London Heathrow and then by Czechoslovakian airlines, arriving in Tallinn (Capital of Estonia) at 14.30. After checking in to my hotel I set off to establish my bearings, identify the key landmarks and begin the process of experiencing life in this small Baltic state. With only 5 days to achieve my objectives I knew that I would have to take advantage of every opportunity.

#### First Impressions



My immediate impressions were that of new road works and the construction of high rise modern glass fronted buildings, most of which I later established belonged to banks, other financial institutions and international businesses organisations. The smell of cement and dust within the city was apparent.

#### New high rise offices and hotels

With the aid of a simple street map I eventually found myself walking through the 'old town' with its mix of medieval, renaissance and later period properties. Now primarily given over to tourism, the cobbled streets, narrow alleyways, poorly maintained buildings, central square and market place, all provided an insight as to the extensive history and former cultures of the this part of the city and what life might have been like through the ages.

#### The Old city

Scattered throughout other areas of the city I was also struck by the remains of an industrial era under Russian / Soviet dominance. Most of these buildings are in a desperate state of repair or totally derelict. My taxi driver from the airport was quick to point out the remains of a large Russian vodka distillery. Looking at it I was left wondering what the health regime might have been like in the production line! Then again, the alcohol probably killed off



any bugs that might have existed. It was interesting to see the mix of new buildings being constructed so close to derelict properties and I was left wondering if there was a strategic plan.



### Examples of another Industrial Era



### The Impact of 1991/2

The changes that Estonia has continued to experience since 1991/2 are clearly significant. During my visit a number of people (mid 20 – mid 30 years of age) described to me the social impact that has arisen and is still underway. In order to portray an image of how much change has taken place, it was suggested that prior to 1992 everyone was able to purchase bread and sausage; now everyone can buy bread, but not everyone can afford the sausage. The gap between the rich and poor has grown enormously. Similarly, the discrimination between Russian and Estonian citizens is strongly felt with Russians being considered second class. Of note, 70% of the prison population is Russian. I will return to this issue in a moment.

The population of Estonia is only about 1.4 million. Of these, over 400,000 live in Tallinn and the north of the state. Because of the work opportunities more are moving there. If this flow of movement is to be stemmed, the rural middle and southern areas are in desperate need of investment and development. Having taken a 2.5 hour bus ride to Valjandi in the south, I felt it was very much like going backwards in time. Isolated old wooden houses and small farm complexes could be seen in what was otherwise a vast expanse of forest and fields. Valjandi itself was quiet and the buildings appeared tired, as did many of those living there. I was told by my host (Head of the local Probation Office) that people in the town know everybody else. Upon arrival at the bus stop and then walking through the streets, I was clearly a 'stranger in town' and I sensed viewed with some suspicion.

The older generation has had to make the greatest adjustments, particularly those who lacked savings and access to a suitable pension. Those born post 1991 have seen a growth in consumer and material values and many are clearly seeking opportunities for more. The result is an increasing spirit of entrepreneurship. Others who lack such confidence and skills undoubtedly fear what the future may hold for them. I felt that there is already an identifiable divide between the have and have not's. My Probation host described how many teenagers, particularly those in rural areas, are lost and confused. Their parents are themselves lacking in education and understanding of what is happening. As a consequence they struggle to make the necessary adjustments and do not have the skills to help their children adapt.

Estonia's GDP is running at between 8% and 10%. Yet for many citizens the gross average wage is about £400 a month, of which £90 is paid back in tax. At the other end of the spectrum, I was told that the wealthy have become significantly richer. I was fortunate to purchase a ticket to see Swan Lake at the Tallinn Opera House; such wealth was clearly evident.

Having been in the country for 5 days, I was left wondering how those on less than average wages survive. This is apparently causing some resentment and jealousy. It appears that many people do not trust the Government and have little faith in Ministers or the opposition parties. Some young people that I spoke to suggested that 'they would not vote in the elections as it was a waste of time'. They went on to suggest that various Members of Parliament are all the same



and have little regard for the people. At this moment and probably for the next decade, I suspect the country will see enormous social changes. The values of the younger generation are being shaped by a new and fast changing environment. It is uncertain what exactly the positive outcomes of these changes will be.

**Construction is drawing more people into Tallinn**

### **Youth Crime and Reducing Re-offending**

This is perhaps a good point to shift my diary to my other interest, that of youth crime and the reduction of re-offending. During my visit I met with senior staff at the Ministry of Justice, the senior Prosecutor for Estonia, the senior Probation Officer in Southern Estonia, two representatives of an NGO working with HIV and substance misuse issues, as well as visiting three prisons. These included the only juvenile establishment, the only woman's prison and finally Tallinn male prison with its population of 1000 prisoners.

As one would expect, because of the dispersal of the population, 60% of Estonia's crime takes place in Tallinn and the northern areas of the country. Since the early 1990's crime has increased. Currently there is no accurate statistical evidence available regarding re-offending. Most judgements are based upon anecdotal reports from the Police, Probation and throughput in the Courts. I was told that overall re-offending rates are estimated to be well over 80%. The causes of crime are essentially no different from those experienced in UK – social deprivation, lack of education, family breakdown, low self-esteem and confidence with no access to work and accommodation. That said, the situation that alluded to above is obviously adding to the difficulties.

The process of change within the Justice system is clearly evident with new Government policies being discussed and developed over the next 1-3 years. Indeed, it was apparent from my discussions that lessons from the UK are being used as the basis for future policy changes in Estonia, albeit on a smaller scale. The senior Prosecutor proudly showed me a Gloucestershire Constabulary senior woman's police hat that she had been given and now kept in her office. I was also told that consideration is being given to amalgamating the Estonian Prison and Probation Services, this being based upon NOMS. I explained that the plans for NOMS had changed since its original conception. I sensed that this was received with some surprise and that they may seek further clarification as to what is happening.

My main briefings were associated with policies for juvenile reform in the courts, probation and prison services, women prisoners and work by an NGO in dealing with HIV and addiction. There are seven prisons in Estonia. One is solely for juveniles and another for women. A new prison at Tartu will eventually accommodate 1000 prisoners, including women and juveniles.

Within the Ministry for Justice there is a major drive to promote alternatives to the criminalisation of children. I sensed that this is based very much upon our Youth Offending Team concepts and Youth Panels. This includes the use of warnings and specialist interventions and diversion schemes. Only after repeated failure will children be subjected to the Court system with the possibility of a custodial sentence. The new organisations are known as Juvenile Committees. The challenge is that the interventions and diversion schemes do not yet exist and Probation is already overstretched. The lead for such work is being provided from Tallinn and the north of the country. Other areas are being encouraged to follow this example.

I was told that the old Soviet style special schools for difficult children are due for reform. They are apparently in a very poor financial and physical state with a lot of violence; many children run away. If they are worse than the prison for juveniles that I visited, I can only suggest that they must be homes from hell and should probably be closed immediately.

Of note, it was explained to me that the Prosecutors and other associated decision makers are now well educated and trained people. *'They have all been trained in how to question young people and in understanding child psychology'*. That said, the senior Prosecutor admitted to me that she had never visited the prison for juveniles. Having done so myself, I think it is essential that she do so soon.

In my visit to Valjandi I met with the senior Probation Officer and visited the only state prison for juveniles. My Probation host was a highly committed lady who clearly believed passionately in her work; however, she appears under resourced and there is no real structure of joined up activity and provision. From an outsider's perspective her salary did not appear commensurate with her level of responsibility. It is difficult to see how new and motivated Probation staff will be recruited, especially in the environment of new entrepreneurship and increased opportunities for wealth development. She described to me many of the deep social issues that I have already alluded to.

With regard to my visit to the prison for juveniles, I can only say that I was both totally dismayed and pleased. Dismayed by the extremely poor physical state of the buildings and conditions, yet pleased to have met two members of staff who are again committed to their work. The property is essentially ready for immediate demolition. It really is a left over from the Soviet era. Most of the Guards are still Russian and by their apparent attitude are themselves ready for immediate retirement; unfortunately, very few Estonians are willing to do the work in this part of Estonia. It is proposed that a new and larger establishment be constructed within the next 2-3 years. Whilst new is essential, with the limited resources of the Probation Service, I think larger is a subject for further debate.

I did see an excellent workshop where a few prisoners are trained in furniture upholstery. Unfortunately, there is no link in place to enable prisoners to continue with their new skills in work after release. I described the concept of a Social Enterprise and its potential for development. Whilst thinking it was a good idea, none of the staff I met thought that it could or would ever happen in Estonia. I felt there was a sense of depression and hopelessness. Upon reflection of the conditions I can well understand why. That said, there is hope; on average 10 of the 130/50 prisoners in the establishment are allowed out on day release to undertake work in the community. Unfortunately, this is not part of any meaningful structured individual case plan.

With the help of my hosts I spent some time talking to the young prisoners. As I mentioned earlier, 70% of all prisoners in Estonia are of Russian origin. Discrimination is a major issue, so much so that the young men occupy separate ethnic rooms. Many Russian men understand Estonian, but refuse to speak it. Those born in Estonia pre 1991 do not have Estonian or Russian citizenship. They are lost citizens. Even those born post 1991 still have to take an

examination and speak Estonian in order to gain their citizenship. That said, assuming they are successful, their passport is a different colour to that of an Estonian's. With the exception of one young Russian man who had recently become married, none of the others appeared to have any hope for the future with many suggesting they would be back in prison again. The evidence appears to suggest that they are right.

My next visit was to Estonia's only women's prison. Although not nearly as bad as the prison for juveniles, it was also in need of massive investment and maintenance. On average there are about 140 women in the prison. Of these, 20% are there for offences of murder, mostly because of abuse and violence by their husbands or other male partners. Again the majority are of Russian origins. Currently there are two juveniles in this prison. They share a separate room from the other women. One woman also has her two year old son with her. They too occupy separate accommodation. Children can stay with their mothers up until 3 years of age. After that they are placed into alternative state provision outside of the prison or possibly with other family members.

The prison does have two industry workshops. The first involves the making and packaging of Christmas decorations. Individual items come from China and the women glue or stitch them together in particular designs. Flat pack cardboard boxes are put together in the workshop and the decorations placed inside for sale in Estonia and elsewhere. The other workshop involves the sewing and production of simple items of clothing, sheets and cloth. The women are paid for their work and most women have the opportunity to participate. Sadly, it is again not linked to accessing work upon release.

Two areas were more impressive. The prison has four rooms that families can rent for 1-3 days when they can be occupied with the women prisoner. Each room is equipped with basic furniture, beds and provision for cooking. These are new facilities and apparently popular. Unfortunately nobody was occupying them during my visit. The second was the medical centre. This is equipped to meet most essential requirements including dentistry. There are four isolation beds.

I attempted to speak to some of the women prisoners. Few were willing to discuss their offences. Most said that they would not be back; however, again the statistics and experience of the staff suggest otherwise.

### **The Role of NGOs**

My final visit was to Tallinn prison and a meeting with staff from one of only three NGOs working with prisoners and others in the community. Their focus is HIV and the organisation is known as Convictus. This was originally a Swedish organisation. Here again I met two very committed people working under very difficult conditions. Like the other prisons, the establishment is simply not fit for purpose. During 2002 – 05 there were estimated to be 10-15,000 HIV cases in

Estonia. Of these, 1850 were in the prisons. Convictus has just over 20 staff and is working in all seven Estonia prisons as well as drop in centres in the community. The organisation also works the reduction of addiction and self harm. Since it began its work in 2002, the number of cases in prisons has dropped to 601. Of these, 82 are on treatment programmes – 6 are women, 3 have HIV and TB and 80% include HEP C & B. Through education, the previous stigma associated with HIV is slowly being reduced. That said, those with HIV still occupy separate rooms from the other prisoners, normally with 12 – 15 people in each room.

The whole issue of NGOs and voluntary work is another subject that Estonian officials recognise must be addressed; however, it is an area of reform for which there is little knowledge and experience. Volunteering and charity are simply not values and principles that Estonian's understand or consider. Rather, because of what has gone before under Soviet rule and more recently since 1992, the mind set is that of 'self', 'take' and 'survival'. Funding for NGOs is viewed with suspicion and the concept of partnership work and joined up government does not exist – *'that is mine and you cannot have it'*. Convictus has no idea where its future funding will stem from and other voluntary organisations / NGOs are few and far between. I did explain it is only recently that some of these issues have started to improve in the UK and that the EU is good source of future funding. I was advised that they did not have people with the skills and knowledge to apply for such money. It is certainly an issue that Brussels and Estonia's Government might need to address if future access to EU money is to be secured.

## **Conclusion**

From this initial overview you can hopefully see that Estonia is on another significant journey of change. Regrettably, such 'change' is a concept that few people in this small state really understand; the learning and delivery is likely to be hard.