

**Speech of Dr Gero Meinen,  
Director General Opening Reception  
to the ExOCOP Berlin Policy Forum, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2012**

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for me and my colleagues from Bremen, Mecklenburg Western Pomerania, Hesse, Schleswig-Holstein to welcome you to Berlin.

Europe isn't a an easy topic these days. In all European contries we talk more about the crisis than about the chances. I think we shouldn't do so in the next days here in Berlin. Twenty years ago no-one could imagine that in 2012 the prison and probation services of about 20 european contries would meet in Berlin to discuss new ways to deal with the re-integration of ex-offenders. And this is not our first meeting. Five years ago, in 2007, we came together in Warsaw for the Policy Forum. Many of you were there, me too. I think the good days we had in the Polish capital were because for the first time we talked systemetically of the European dimension of our conceptions, how we will deal with the question of re-intergration, which is neccesary if inmates are to have a life after prison, and how we can get ideas about fortifying networks and for example, how we get and stay in contact with the probation services, the labour agencies, the education institutes and so on. We discussed and designed a lot of regional and national programmes and projects, got closer to the solutions in other European contries and we saw, that our own questions are very similar to those of our neighbours. The European Union and the EQUAL-Project offered us this chance for a high-level discussion and we took it.

In the next two days we will continue the process we started in Warsaw. We will talk about our suceses but we also have to talk about our failures. We should discuss and think about the factors of success and about the screws we have to turn if we want to have more success in the future. And we should try to speak about standardization. But think of this please: When I prepared my short introducion I found in my Internet-Dictionary the following sentence: „The standardization of our processes and services is achieved with an attitude of respect for local cultures.“ I think, I couldn't get a better advice from LEO

(that's the name of my dictionary). What could be the topics of a discussion of standardization? I think we have three main points:

First of all: When we talk about standardization we have at the same time to talk about diversification. Because we are working together with people, and different people have different needs. That much is clear and I don't need to explain it.

My second topic: Questions of standardization should be focussed on the processes more than on the content. Of course there will be a lot of content which we can discuss for our common advantage. But there are also a lot of questions, which we can answer only in a local context.

And my third issue: There can be more than one good solution for one question. It is not up to any one of us to try to convince our neighbour, that we found the Philosopher's Stone.