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First Batch of 20 Probation Officers Graduate

PRISTINA – The first batch of 20 Probation Officers graduated today in a ceremony officiated by Director of Justice Paul Coffey and Head of the Penal Management Division William Irvine. The graduating officers, who have successfully completed a 10-week induction training held at the Kosovo Police Service School in Vushtrii/Vučitrn, will now be on field training from January to March 2004.

Speaking on the occasion Mr Paul Coffey said, “There is a fine line between recidivism and rehabilitation. One of the major positive elements to keep offenders on the right side of that line is an efficient professional probation service. Today's ceremony is a major step in that direction.”

By implementing a Probation Service in Kosovo, Penal Management Division/Kosovo Correctional Service (PMD/KCS) have been doing pioneer work in providing Kosovo with a modern community-based service, providing “alternative sanctions and measures to imprisonment” which has proved to be successful in most western countries for well over 20 years.

Different consultants from Italy, Luxembourg and Sweden have been working under PMD/KCS since 2000, in order to have probation implemented in Kosovo. In December 2001, PMD/KCS of the Department of Justice initiated a Probation Service pilot project in Prishtinë/Priština with financing from the Council of Europe, the Italian and Swedish Government.

Probation, at the different stages of the criminal justice process, aims at avoiding imprisonment. The idea of probation as a community-based service is that a society built on the principles of social inclusion provides the best protection for communities from the harm and distress caused by crime.

The new Criminal Codes to be implemented on 6 April 2004 provide a legal basis for a number of these alternative measures. The principal provisions on probation in the Criminal Code are suspended sentences and semi-liberty, treatment and supervision orders as well as community service orders.

PMD/KCS plans to open three regional Probation Offices in Prishtinë/Priština, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica and Prizren at the beginning of 2004. In the second phase, two more offices shall be opened in Pejë/Peć and Gjilan/Gnjilane in order to service the whole of Kosovo.