

# Compliance and Architecture

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**Offender Supervision  
in Europe**  
COST Action IS1106



# Introduction

- Phillips J (2014) The architecture of a probation office: A reflection of policy and an impact on practice. *Probation Journal*, 61(2), 117–131.
- Used architecture – the physical space of a probation office – to think about policy and practice.
- As with prisons, the building does mean something – as we'll see from the photos we're going to look at today.

# Goffman – front and backstage

- The frontstage ‘functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance [i.e. offenders]’ (Goffman, 1969: 32).
- ‘the back region will be the place where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude’ (Goffman, 1969: 116).

# Building exterior as frontstage



# Building exterior as frontstage



Croatia

Our office does not have any visible or recognizable sign or identity at the main entrance to the building.



England



Netherlands



# External Security



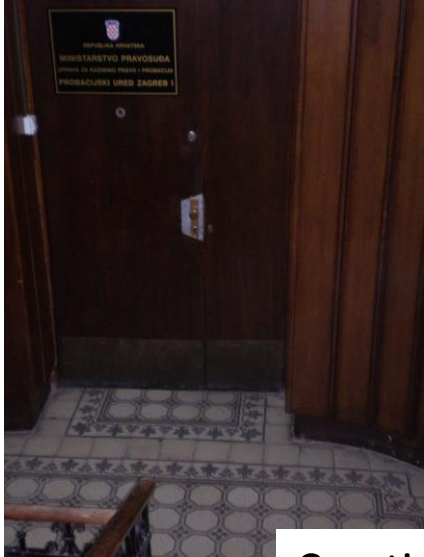
Netherlands

**“Double sliding doors, a pole with a bell where visitors have to report. Via a camera in the pole can be seen who is reported; this is a bright blue light on a person's face, which I find unpleasant to people.”**



Croatia

# Building interior as front stage



Croatia



England



Netherlands

**The receptionists are after glass. This was installed after an incident when a client ate a poisonous plant and threw the rest at the receptionist. This measure is understandable. The receptionists are very friendly.**



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# Waiting rooms as front stage



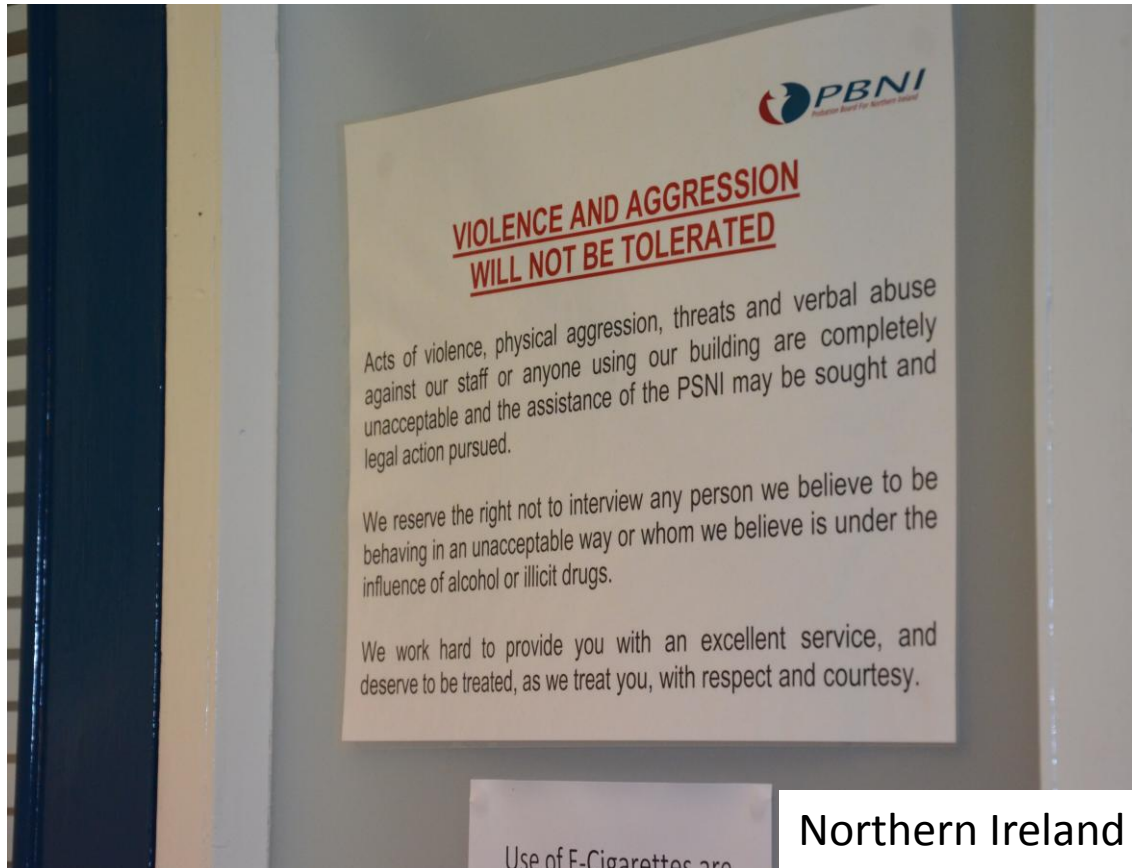
**“[The reception] meets safety requirements established nationally, but I think it is impersonal and aggression exciting rather than de-escalating. The colder you treat people, the more undesirable behavior you call or maintain, is my opinion.”**

**(Netherlands)**





# Messages to clients



Northern Ireland

We encounter very little violence and aggression. There is usually some bravado in the first groupwork session, but people tend to settle down.

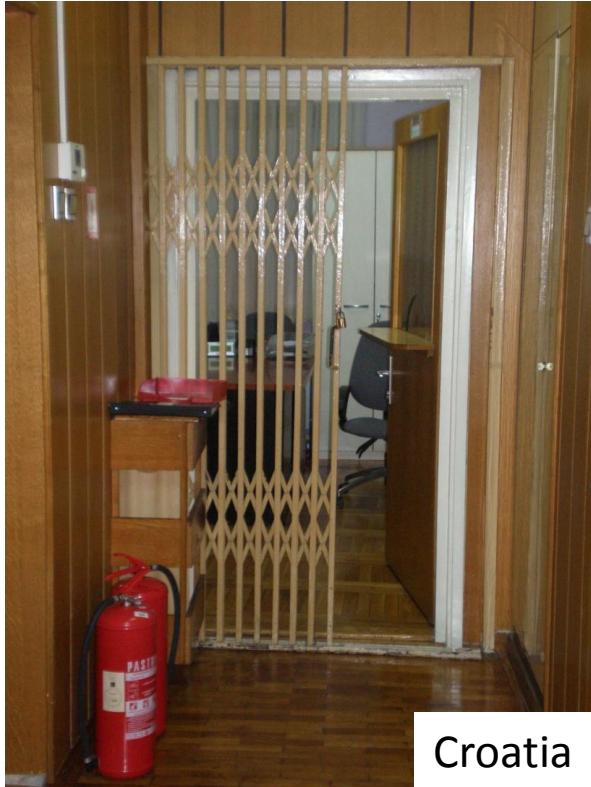
# Waiting rooms as front stage



Northern Ireland

Some guys like to come in this area, there's nothing to do there, just look at leaflets.

# Moving around the building



Croatia



Northern Ireland

This is one of the group rooms. The slats on the window are a security feature.



There are CCTV cameras in the group room. Some sessions are recorded this is part of the programme accreditation process. We have personal alarms – these are linked to the office during the daytime and the PSNI (police) at nighttime. No one has ever used them.

# Interview rooms

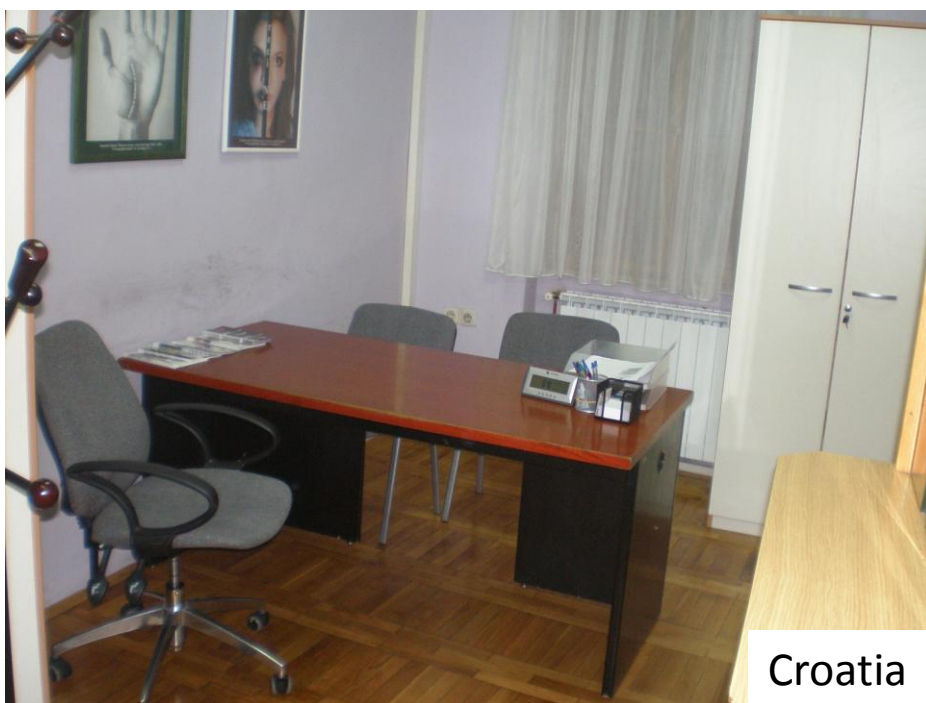


This photo shows the group room and the pipes along the walls. When someone flushes the toilet you can hear it throughout the building.

It looks like a prison.



# Interview Rooms



Croatia

‘We made new furnishing arrangements on our own to better protect ourselves from risky clients’



Belgium

“This is the place to be; to start building a working relationship with your client”

# Interview Rooms



# Office space



**Behind reception desk** - “Leaflets for referral –  
Perhaps we refer too often to other services”



# Compliance

- Much of what we see in the pictures encourages constraint-based compliance, formal compliance through an imposition of risk and hierarchy on offenders
- Not much in the way of collaboration.



# It's not all bad

- There are some personal touches.
- Interactions in 'shared spaces' were more 'natural'
  - Waiting rooms
  - Home visits

# It's not all about the building...



Croatia

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# Conclusion

- Think seriously about the impact of buildings on practice
- Design spaces in a way which allow for collaboration between offender and officer
- Try not to impose risk-based identities onto offenders through security devices (or, at least, try to do something to counter this as well)