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Many prison workers across Europe are facing longstanding problems of understaffing, overcrowding and, as a result, significantly increased risks of violence. These were common to three country case studies carried out for EPSU by researchers at the HIVA research unit at Leuven University. In the UK, Italy and Greece the situation of prison workers had deteriorated in recent years with the prison service in Greece in particular having faced the deep cuts to funding and workers' pay imposed across the whole of the public sector. While Sweden presented a contrasting case study, the evidence was that the system was being put under pressure as new public management methods were leading to more administrative work for staff and less direct contact with inmates. The approach to the penal system was also changing with a shift to a harsher societal climate looking more to punishment than rehabilitation of prisoners. Further work would be carried out on the case studies in response to comments from EPSU affiliates. Nadja Salson responded to the debate and indicated the key issues to be addressed by the EPSU prison network.

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