

SCOTLAND –

The Scottish Penal Administration is independent of that of England/Wales, but its organisation is quite similar with “Independent Monitoring boards”, “Prison Visitors Centres” (Assisted Prison Visit Union – APVU – SC1), a “Chief Inspector”, etc.

The involvement of civil society in the Monitoring Boards and their tasks (visit every 2 weeks, listening to complaints regarding health, access to work, bullying, family visiting, proper assistance by the administration, etc) are well described in a “Progress Report” of the “Community Justice Authorities” in 2006 (Sc2). There is a report of 2007 on the “Prison Visiting Committees” and the requirements for reporting (Sc3) which makes interesting reading for those European countries (such as France) which have not yet introduced or are learning how to live with an “independent control body” for the supervision of prisons. There is a detailed description of this function in Sweden, Netherlands, England, Spain, Czech Republic, Croatia and several other European countries.

The “Citizen’s Advice Bureau” publishes (Sc4) a list of useful volunteer organisations, such as

- SACRO’s – (Sc5) main mission is to reduce conflict and offending and make communities safer. It offers “intensive” probation, supported accommodations, restorative justice for adults and youths, tries to influence the government’s policies on sentencing; street mediation, reparation through community service,
- Association Saint Vincent of Paul for a wide range of services,
- Joint Council of Welfare for Immigrants,
- HOPE – was founded in 1989. As 25 % of all prisoners never received family visits, a group of volunteers was set up near a prison; an idea which grew later into the “National Prison Visitors Scheme”. Today a few full-time staff and 130 “Hope” volunteers visit prisoners, help families, look for employment for prison leavers, teach basic skills, try to resettle ex-prisoners, care for imprisoned women, administer the Perth Visitors’ Centre and work in the Dungavel prison for illegal immigrants.
- Families Outside – helps hundredths of families of prisoners. Contact through the Scottish Prisoner’s Families Helpline.

On internet one can find the Report of the “Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland” for 2000 (Sc6) which enumerates active and approved voluntary organisations, such as

- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Edinburgh and Lothian Council on Alcohol,
- APEX – a religious association involved in training and employment
- KIDS VIP to promote relationships between children and imprisoned parents
- “International Prison Fellowship”, the American evangelists,
- The Salvation Army which mainly provides accommodation in 11 centres and runs a Prison Visitors’ Centre,
- The Quakers,
- Organisations such as the Howard League for the reform of the legal system,
- the Prison Reform Trust and the Scottish Human Right Centre,

- “Toybox” – volunteers who run play schemes in prison visits rooms,
- The Samaritans with their befriending service and suicide prevention,
- The Scottish Forum on Prisons and families, etc.

The “Womens Royal Voluntary Service – WRVS” organises in Scotland 8 Prison Visitors Centres and offer clothing to leaving detainees. Every prison has its own conditions and instructions for prison visits of the family, such as the one for Edinburgh (Sc7). Voluntary Prison Visitors are appointed by the Home Office on the recommendation of the Prison Governor. The chaplains chose and approve their own helpers.

Members of the Scottish Prison Administration travelled to England, Denmark and Sweden to enquire about “Custody and Training for Female Prisoners”. Document (Sc8).

The “Scottish Office – Inspectorate of Prisons” launched in 1996 a comprehensive comparative enquiry into prison conditions visiting prisons in Canada, Massachusetts, Denmark and Sweden. Afterwards it published a “Thematic Study – The Importance of Visits in Scottish Prisons” (SC9).

The Quakers published a document (Sc9) which explains in detail the role of prison visitors (befrienders). The NAOPV is not active in Scotland.

IRELAND –

Concerning voluntary prison visiting one can find (Ir 1) the following organisations:

- The Samaritans, with their 24-hour telephone service and prison visiting, are present in most prisons,
- The International Prison Fellowship,
- The Catholic association of Saint Vincent de Paul organises several Prison Visitors’ Centres,
- the Guild of St. Philip Neri gives moral support to inmates in 5 prisons and keeps in touch with their families,
- The Quakers organise several Prison Visitors Centres (Cloverhill and Dublin)
- “Alcoholics Anonymous” and “Narcotics Anonymous” are present as in most other European countries,
- The volunteers of the “Bedford Row Project” deal mainly with the families of detainees of the Limerick prison,
- Prisoners’ Families Infoline for general information for detainees and their families,
- “Merchants quay” with post-release activities, work arrangements and legal advice,
- Of course, the Chaplaincy Service of the Catholic Church, is attached to every Irish prison,
- The US, faith-based “Brethren Volunteer Service” works in Ireland too; “Befriending people on death row” invites people to write letters to US prisoners (pen friend).

The “Irish Prison Service” has all available information on its website, including a description of Ireland’s model prison, Mountjoy.

In 2007, the Quakers published a detailed study (motherhood, health, mental health, addiction, minorities etc) on “Irish Women Detainees” (Ir2) with the unsurprising conclusion that they are “young, poor and uneducated”. In 2002, 90 % of them were imprisoned for “poverty crimes” = mainly shop lifting, and 97 % of them were held for less than 12 months. The Irish Prison Rules of 2005 do not contain a specific section on women, as is the case in England. (Ir3). In 2006, the Irish Minister of Justice gave a detailed report to the Prime Minister on the new Dóchas women’s facility (Ir4) in Mountjoy prison.

The independent “Monitoring Boards” publish annual “Visiting Committee Reports”. The Reports of Cork Prison for 2005 and Loughan House of 2006 (Ir5) are good examples.

As contextual information, Ann Costelloe’s article on “Wider perspectives in Adult Education and European Prison Rules” (Ir6) is interesting for 2 reasons:

- She is the President of the “European Prison Education Association – EPEA” which was inspired essentially by the European Rules. The Europe-wide formation of EPEA seems to progress well (see “International organisations”). It could serve as an example for the eventual foundation of a “European Prison visitors’ organisation”
- This document (Conference in 2005) is a quite comprehensive evaluation of educational needs in European prisons.

The last EPEA congress took place in July 2007 in Dublin.