

NETHERLANDS

In no other European country is the change from an authentically liberal society towards stricter rules more visible than in Holland. Of the 800 “Coffee Shops”, where one could buy soft drugs, 250 only remained in 2006. The rejection of the European Constitution, the murders of the nationalist leader Pim Fortuyn by a lunatic animal rights activist and of the film maker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic fanatic, the departure to the USA and return of Ayaan Hirsi Ali (controversial MP of Somali origin) and the 100 % rise of the prison population in the last 10 years, are just some of the features which have marked the past decade.

Already in 1995, the Dissel-Report (Div 4) talked of

- tightening prison conditions to prevent escape and disorder,
- harsh punishment for prisoners in possession of drugs,
- tougher sentences, more surveillance and fewer means for re-integration measures,
- building of new prisons for 11.000 inmates in 10 years.

The 2006 Report (Ne1) the Dutch Justice Ministry Report within the “European Crime and Employment Briefing” talks of

- a rehabilitation project to fight recidivism undertaken in 6 institutions, which will be introduced across the country in 2007,
- aftercare links in co-operation with 240 municipalities
- the creation of a separate juvenile sentencing institution in 2008,
- the fact that the number of offenders with serious psychological disorders and the misuse of drugs is growing. 50 % of the prison population has an addiction problem, 6 % has some form of psychosis and 10 to 15 % suffer from depression and personality disorders – and prison staff are not trained to cope with such people and problems.

With regard to the “Lelystad Detention Model”, which the Ministry defines as “an investigation of effective rehabilitation for inmates serving short sentences”, the “Guardian newspaper” (Ne2) calls it the “Dutch open Big Brother-style prison”. Thanks to an electronic wristband, the whereabouts of detainees within the prison can be checked at any time. “Emotion recognition” software alerts the guards to violent disputes so that they can intervene. The detainees who are in different places during the day (education, training, visitor, family etc) sleep at night in a 6-bed dormitory which, it appears, favours the reintegration process. A credit system which recompenses good behaviour, grants the inmate all sorts of favours (telephone, extra visits, earlier release on condition, etc). The usual ratio is 15 guards for 150 prisoners which equals a daily cost of Euro 100,- per prisoner. With the new surveillance system only 6 guards are needed which reduces the cost to Euro 70,- per prisoner. The prison administration qualifies this experimental innovation as promising. Other experts would have preferred low-risk offenders to benefit from such a surveillance system, but at home, where they could work, learn, re-adjust and be with the family.

BONJO (Ne3), founded in 1984, is a confederation of more than 70 prison volunteer organisations (Belangen Overleg Niet-Justitiegebonden Organisaties). It provides information on incarceration conditions, the legal rights of the prisoners, gives recommendations for the re-insertion of ex detainees, advises their families and operates a “helpdesk”. Bonjo stresses its independence from the government and penal administration so that it can be truly neutral between the Justice system and the individual in conflict with the law. Bonjo is the sole representative of its member-associations to the Ministry of Justice, organizes reunions around

specific projects and trains new prison visitors. Looking at its publications and website, Bonjo seems to be rather vigilant with regard to miscarriages of justice, questionable prison conditions (example: refusal of access to the prison ships Reno and Bibby Stockholm and the deaths of 11 foreigners in Schiphol prison) and the negligible subsidies the government grants the voluntary associations for their work; and all this against a background of rapidly filling prisons and the demand for additional prison volunteers.

The Bonjo Activity Report 2005 (Ne4) mentioned for example:

- The Prisons administration asks for more volunteers in a variety of areas. The number of voluntary prison workers has increased by 15 % in one year.
- Bonjo wants its member associations to co-operate more among themselves as their activities are largely complementary,
- 8 new associations joined Bonjo in 2005 (defence of the prisoners' interests, teaching, intensive probation, community work, etc),
- Bonjo tried to mediate between several associations active in the defence of detainees' rights (EORG, LGC, BBG) and the Ministry of Justice,
- Bonjo organises meetings of specialized lawyers during which they can exchange experiences and obtain the most recent developments of penitentiary law,
- In 2005, State subsidies were € 1.000.000 to be split among DOOR, Exodus, Moria, Ontmoeting, Humanitas and other Bonjo-members. (This amount increased to 1.5 million Euros in 2007). Bonjo itself received 89.000 Euros with no guarantee of state financial help for the future.
- Objectives for 2006 (Ne5) were: re-integration of the prisoners, denunciation of bad prison conditions, accommodation for prisoners leaving jail, more effective preparation for prison leavers, encourage Muslim organisations to join BONJO.

In 2006/7, BONJO received subsidies from the Oranje Fund (Ne6) for the following projects:

- Euro 29.000 for "Help! Ik sta buiten" (which could be translated as: I have left prison, I need help). This is a sort of "manual" for prison leavers with useful addresses, information and advice,
- Euro 30.000 were granted for the compilation of a guide for female ex-prisoners under the title "Op Weg naar een zonnige Toekomst – heading for a sunny future",
- Over 3 years Euro 75.000 were made available for the project "Huisbewaring Gedetineerden" which means the administration of a house/flat whilst a person is detained. Bonjo launched this project, because it is one of the main preoccupations of prisoners during and after release from jail. The organisation called for interested partners to make this project financially self-supporting within 3 years.
- Some people are lonely not only in prison, but in outside life too. Reducing their loneliness will improve their integration and avert re-offending. Bonjo now offers a "go-between" service between partners who wish to live together or simply to meet. Bonjo calls this service factually a "contact bureau". Truly innovative and far away from traditional voluntary prison activities!

Among the BONJO members are organisations such as:

- HUMANITAS (NE7) - Apart from general assistance to people in need, this organisation seems to be involved a number of prison activities. 591 volunteers helped 1528 people in 2005 and co-operated in 62 projects.

Main activities:

- . organisation of family visits,
- . family support of detained people,
- . individual visits and group work,
- . helping women after their release from prison,

#### Projects for 2006:

Creating accommodation for the homeless who live in sometimes dreadful conditions at Schiphol Airport. “Zorgboerderij”, a kind of “health farm” where victims of domestic violence will be cared for. In 2008, Humanitas was active in 12 different places in Holland.

- EXODUS (NE8) was founded in 1997 and in 2003 joined the inter-confessional aid program of the Dutch Protestant and Catholic Churches (ISNA). Thanks to subsidies from the Ministry of Justice, churches, local authorities and private donations, Exodus runs today 18 hostels and accommodation centres (Instellingen) with the help of 1000 volunteers. Some 40.000 people leave prison every year and about 200 of them find accommodation in these hostels which function somehow like the YMCA, with individual rooms, kitchens and evening meals in common and rather strict rules (urine checks for drugs and alcohol). During the day, former detainees follow courses organised by the volunteers, look for work and lodging outside or meet with their children for whom play rooms are installed. Every 13<sup>th</sup> September (Monumentendag), Exodus has its own “open house day” to which the public is invited, former and present volunteers and ex-detainees who have spent some time in the Exodus Homes to meet the present occupants and to exchange their experiences. It appears that only 25 % of the prisoners who passed through Exodus Homes re-offend. This very positive result is said to be due to the Exodus principle of “living, working, relationships and perspectives for the future” and a “longer-than-usual” follow-up period during which the ex detainees stay in contact with the Homes and their volunteers.

The Bonjo website reflects the central role this organisation is playing not only in Dutch voluntary prison activities, but generally in social matters and prevention. It covers in 14 sections all the essential information, from the State Prison Services to probation, to clinics for addiction, to help for ex-detainees, the families, legal help, hostels and, of course, prison visiting associations. There are more than 600 entries and 223 prison-related associations, among them the 70 Bonjo members. Extract:

- “Vrijwillige Bezoekersgroepen” (prison visiting and general help) at Haarlem, Oosterhoek/Grave, Rotterdam, Buiten voor Binnen, De Geniepoort, Utrecht, De Hartelborgt, De Dordtse Poorten, etc. (there are 29 of these local groups)
- „Juridisch Loket“ with its 30 affiliations gives legal advice all over Holland,
- “Nazorggroepen” with 21 affiliations in the 12 provinces works in after care (administrative help, information for detainees and families). They are affiliated to Exodus (formerly ISNA),
- “USG – Restart” is a nation-wide organisation in outplacement, job coaching, professional teaching and reintegration,
- SNWA is an organisations with 11 regional centres for mentally unstable people,
- “Delinkwentie en Samenleving” with 5 affiliations works for the re-integration of ex prisoners,
- “De Open Deur – open door”, Amsterdam, is a religious organisation with 10 affiliations,
- EORG (Ne9), Arnhem was founded in 1992 with the aim of defending the legal rights of prisoners. Their members are active in all sorts of committees and are working with action groups in support of individual cases. Now EORG has extended its services Europ-wide.

and there are more local groups such as

- “Bijzonder Jeugdwerk, Brabant” at Deurne who work with young delinquents,
- “Gezin in Balans” in Den Bosch help women with their reintegration into society. They have a project for women with children to find accommodation nationwide for one year.
- “PrisonLaw”, Amsterdam, offer legal advice to Dutch citizens abroad,
- “SAMAH”, Amsterdam, give single, young asylum seekers help to sort themselves out (information, lawyers, administration, work, languages),
- “Spirit”, Amsterdam, works for young delinquents,
- TWCA with 3 affiliations helps detainees to integrate professionally into society,
- YIP, Amsterdam, works for young people in African and South American prisons,
- Christian Prison Ministries (Nederland), Amsterdam, care for (ex) prisoners according to their religious beliefs,
- “Steunpunt Moslim Gedetineerden”: 20 volunteers visit prisoners,
- “Stichting Herstelling” at Muiden provides professional teaching and apprenticeship in repair and restoration shops,
- “When the Eagles learn to fly”, Den Haag, finances music and sports projects for the young together with the “Welzijns Organisatie Centrum – WOC”,
- “Bezoekergroep Vreemdelingengevangenis”, Schiphol-Oost, is a group of volunteers who try to alleviate the problems of the foreigners who arrive at the airport and are then placed in this retention centre,
- “Dress for success” has 5 affiliations. It provides appropriate clothes for women with very low income to be successful when they have to go for job interviews (!),

Other organisations are called “De Brug – the bridge” at Katwijk, “Capability” with 4 affiliations, “Centrum Maliebaan” for detoxification, “Een Nieuwe Start – a new start” at Amsterdam, “Stichting Vrijwillige Hulpverlening aan (ex)gedetineerden – VRIJ” visit detainees, write letters and help with the administration, “Halt Haaglanden”, Den Haag work in youth prevention, “Surant Bezoekergroep” at the Bijlmer prison (Amsterdam) comprises also students and former detainees, etc.

In 2003, the magazine “Diakonie en Parochie” published a very complete document of 18 pages (NE10) by Graaf Woutering on “Gevangenen Bezoeken – prison visiting”. In addition to the above information on Bonjo, Humanitas and Exodus the following seems interesting:

- In 2001, it appears that 120 chaplains and 1100 Volunteers worked in 61 prisons, 24 institutions of juvenile delinquents, 10 psychiatric clinics and 7 prisons specializing in narcotics.
- The Salvation Army (het Leger des Heils) runs 9 training centres in which people with 3 to 6 month sentences are placed as an alternative to incarceration. The Salvation Army works in 6 additional centres in their traditional fields for the homeless and young people with multiple problems,
- In spite of a considerable re-socialisation effort, re-offending was at a rate of 75 % at the time. Holland had the highest rate of juvenile (9,7%) and female detainees (8,7%) in Europe. 60 % of all prisoners were under the age of 35.
- “Verslavingzorg - Verslavingsreclassering” comprises a number of institutions where mainly faith-orientated volunteers work in detoxification. Stichting De Regenboog (Ne11) provides, for example, overnight shelters for homeless heavy drug users with showers, clothes, clean needles, something to eat, activities. The Drugspastoraat, Stichting Horeb, De Hoop and Francasa are other such organisations involved in the daily care for addicts. Jellinek, Amsterdam is a well-known private institution both for in-

house and visiting patients with drug and alcohol dependence. Other private institutions/clinics working in this field are Brijder and Bouman.

- “Vincentiusvereniging” is a catholic association very active in prison life,
- STEK (Stichting Tijdelijk Eigen Kamer) is an organisation which provides temporary accommodation,
- Stichting “Tussenfasehuis” offers lodging to mothers with or without children,
- STOEL is a project of prison chaplains in the North of Holland who supply on a farm accommodation, work and treatment on a long-term basis. Strong support from volunteers and private sponsors.
- Foreigners without a chance of being granted asylum were cared for by volunteers at the extraterritorial “Grenshospitium” (which, in fact, was a prison and shut in 2007).

The inter-confessional involvement of churches in prison matters is very strong in Holland, as for example in the diocese of Limburg. Many individual prison visitors come from Parishes situated around the prison establishments.

Holland is probably the country which looks best after its incarcerated nationals abroad, because the Dutch Consulates around the world provide ample information and visit them physically. “Reclassering Nederland” published a 35-page paper on “Prison Volunteers abroad” and how to become one (Ne14).

EPAFRAS, the Christian Foundation (Ne15), says that in January 2007 at least 2550 Dutch nationals were detained in 90 countries. This organisation is sponsored by the Foreign Ministry and co-operates with the International Prison Fellowship and IPCA.

PRISONWORLD is an international association based in Holland which encourages people to write to detainees in foreign jails.

ALTUS (Ne16) is a “global Alliance” of 6 Member Organisations and 2 Associate Organisations on 5 Continents with the aim of “overseeing police stations to improve public safety and justice”. The General Secretariat is located in The Hague; affiliates are in Moscow, New York, Lagos, Santiago de Chile and Chandigarh/India. Altus seems to work on similar principles to the British “Independent Custody Visiting Association – ICVA”. According to their 2006 report, 75 police stations were inspected in 7 European countries. 2000 civilian visitors checked 450 police stations in 23 countries world-wide. All visited police stations are evaluated and a “score” is attributed. The Altus brochure says that “a complaint from a civilian to the police is free advice to do better”.

The Dutch Probation service (Stichting Reclassering Nederland) at Utrecht was completely reorganized in 1995 and operates today in a form of “state-funded”, private sector structure and entirely separate from the prison administration. The aim was cost reduction (Evans: Spotlight on probation in the Netherlands – Ne17) on one side and better re-offending results on the other. The tasks of Probation were redefined at the time. The number of State probation officers was reduced; others were replaced with part-time personnel and volunteers.

3 organisations substituted the former “National Agency”:

- the “Dutch Probation service – Reclassering Nederland” which deals with about 70 % of the customers and receives the bulk of state funding. It operates through 55 local executive units and deals with the supervision of court-ordered probation, orders, community service, employment and training programs, etc.
- The “Salvation Army” deals in 9 centres with homeless people which accounts for about 10 % of the total probation activity. Educational courses.

- The state GGZ Nederland's probation department specializes in programs for drug addicts in 16 affiliated institutions with more than 60 officers which makes up for 20 % of the probation work.

As in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, volunteers are given a large role in probation in the Netherlands too. The Dutch tried to rethink and reorganize the Probation Service more than 10 years ago; a painful task which other countries still have ahead of them.

## BELGIUM

According to the information (Be 1) received by the Walloon Prison Administration (the one for the Flemish-speaking provinces is separate), the legislation concerning prison chaplains and volunteers dates back to 1965 and defines in 13 paragraphs their rights and obligations (Be2). A decree dated 19.7.2001 was issued for Wallonia stipulating in chapter 5 the role of voluntary prison workers. The "Law Dupond" of 2005 tried to put the Belgian penitentiary law on a European level, but the enactments have still not been published in 2008 .

The following are approved on national level (Be3):

- the protestant and evangelical Council with altogether 65 chaplains,
- the Jewish Consistory
- the Orthodox Church
- the Executive of Belgian Muslims,
- the Catholic Chaplaincy
- the Foundation for the moral support of prisoners (La Fondation pour l'Assistance morale aux Détenus), Brussels which is a non-confessional support organisation offering moral assistance, education, accommodation and work.

Apart from the professionals, voluntary prison visitors are active in organisations such as:

- The "Fédération des Services Laïques d'Aide aux Justiciable - SLAJ" asbl in Brussels and 4 provinces ( Hainault, Namur, Liège and Luxembourg). (Be4).
- In each of the 15 "arrondissements judiciaires – judiciary districts", ASBLs (association sans but lucrative) work within the "Service d'aide aux Détenus" (Be5) under the authority of the "Ministère de la Communauté française". Among these associations are
  - \* "La Touline asbl", Nivelles which counted in 2006 25 volunteers (Be6),
  - \* "Aide et Reclassement asbl" in Huy, help for (ex) detainees, their families, drug addicts, prevention, legal advice,
  - \* « APRES asbl », Brussels, professional projects, psychological help for (ex) prisoners,
  - \* « Autrement », Brussels which offers groups of parole, help for remand and judged prisoners and their families,
  - \* « Résilience asbl », Mons, help for detainees and their families,
  - \* « Espace libre », Charleroi (Be7) offers psychological help, advice for non-incarcerated delinquents, alternatives to prison, child-parents relationship,
  - \* and the « Services d'Aide aux détenus » in the remaining 9 « arrondissements judiciaires »
- There are other associations, such as
  - . "Service de Réinsertion Sociale asbl" (Be8) which works in 3 prisons of the Brussels region (Forest, St. Gilles, Berkendael) and gives psycho-social help to (remand) prisoners, their children and families. The association provides general

information on imprisonment, administrative and legal help, gives advice in case of debts, finds accommodation and looks for jobs. In a so-called “Atelier d’expression et d’écriture” the association tries to encourage both victims and offenders to write/talk about themselves in order to, hopefully, heal deep-rooted shame and frightening experiences. Meaningful texts are later published in the magazine “Jonctions”.

- . “Office de Réadaptation Sociale asbl”, Brussels offers visits, legal help to prisoners and ex-detainees,
  - . “TRANSIT asbl”, Brussels deals with heavy drug users, gives them short-term accommodation, psychological and administrative help
  - . REPR – Administration Communale de Schaerbeek”, help for the detainees of Schaerbeek and their families, prison visiting,
  - . “Centre d’appui Bruxellois - CAB”, psychological evaluation of sex offenders in view of therapeutic treatments,
  - . “Centre Médical ANADEN asbl”, Brussels, psychological help for drug and alcohol addicts, prison visits, help for their families,
  - . “Relais Enfants-Parents” is part of the Eurochip federation and works in Brussels and Wallonia with children, families and imprisoned parents to maintain the family relationship,
  - . “Service Communal d’Accompagnement pour primo-incarcérés – SCAPI” helps in particular the first offenders in Molenbeek to find work and reintegrate society,
  - . “Service d’Aide Sociale aux Détenus de l’arrondissement de Dinant asbl” works in the prisons of Dinant and Nemour for prisoners and their families, parole groups, meeting places for imprisoned fathers with their children,
  - . Associations involved in making alternatives to prison (Diversion) work in practice mainly for young people are “Arpège Prélude” and “Praxis”, Liège, “Bravvo-Bravvo”, Brussels, “Espace libre” in Charleroi and the “Service de l’aide à la Jeunesse – SAJ”.
- The “Compagnie de Charité” (Be9) was founded in 1654. It is known as well as “Visiteurs de Prison de Liège”. Their website shows full details, including their articles, but little is said about their present activities.
- . The “Commission Royale des Patronages”, Brussels (Be10), founded in 1894, is involved in giving moral support to prisoners and is active in several prisons in Flanders too. This association works also for the children of prisoners.
  - . “Welzijn en Justitie” is an important organisation in Flanders.
  - . The “Observatoire International des Prisons – OIP” reports on prison issues as it does in France.

REDA asbl ((Réseau detention et alternatives) is a “pluraliste” forum working in favour of alternatives to imprisonment (Be11), prison reform and “respect for human dignity”. It comprises most of the NGOs, magistrates, Chaplaincies, universities and human rights organisations and co-ordinated the “Réseau pour une réforme globale du régime carcérale” in 2000. Its Flemish equivalent is called « Network Samenleving en Detentie ».

KUNST KENNT GEEN TRALIES (Arts sans barreaux, Art without bars –Be12) is an NGO which was founded in 2004 with the aim of not only stimulating art activities by inmates and whatever beneficial effect this might have inside prison, but to show their work outside, as a kind of tool for re-integration. In co-operation with active artists, not only conventional art work is encouraged and exhibited, but tattoos and graffiti too. Co-operation with DeRode Antraciet (education in prison).

A rather caustic report by INSERT (Be13) describes Belgian prison conditions and the measures initiated to improve them (or rather the incoherence of such measures). More than 50 % of the Belgian inmates have no professional qualification or work experience and the State does little to improve the situation. After providing general educational courses for years to prisoners, a “Development Partnership” was concluded in 2002 by INSERT with several Ministries, Administrations and NGO’s and the European commission (Equal) which operates today in 17 prisons and 28 training centres of the Walloon region. Detailed progress reports for 2005/2006 are available on Internet.

FAFEP (Fédération des Associations Francophones pour l’éducation permanente en Prison) seems to be remarkably organised according their detailed offer in 17 of the 22 prisons (professional formation, sports, music, Yoga, painting, African percussion, library, magazine, accompanied visits, etc). On 20 pages (Be14) the participating associations of this federation are enumerated (Adeppi, Aide et Reclassement, ASJ, Avanti, Ciep, Funoc etc), with their correspondents and programs per prison.

“International watch on Education in Prison” (Be15) gives an overview of the situation in Belgium. Some details:

- 75 % of the inmates have no school or professional diploma, 40 % are foreigners (50 % including the second generation), 25 % are Arab-speaking, the average age is 32.
- The 5100 prison staff should, according to the intention of the law, participate in the (re)education of the detainees and in educational projects. Unfortunately, this intention cannot be put in practice, because “their educational level is too low and they are little interested in this joint educational effort”.
- A “dossier pédagogique” should be established for every arriving detainee. This is important in case of transfer to another prison or for the evaluation of a conditional release. More papers only?
- The diplomas obtained in prison are “neutral” which means that future employers cannot see that they were obtained whilst the person was serving a sentence. As 39 % of all prisoners are on remand and can be released at any time, the motivation to start a schooling program is not very great. If such courses could be continued outside, the attendance would be more frequent and successful.
- In Flanders in 2003, the intention was to convey to a NGO the non-institutional education (Be16) of detainees (Derode Antriciet is one of these associations). “Words without Walls” is an association of volunteers who teach artistic and cultural subjects at the St. Gilles prison in Brussels where 60 % of the inmates speak neither French nor Flemish.

ADEPPI (Formation permanente pour personnes incarcérées) (Be17) is an organisation which is financed by several Belgian French-speaking institutions and which develops mainly alternative educational, artistic and cultural programs with the sole intention of “personal development by education adapted to a penitentiary environment” and meaningful preparation for life outside. Adeppi which employs 25 people (of whom 20 are full-time) works in 8 prisons, does prevention work in schools and publishes a magazine at the Nivelles prison. In a “Synthèse pédagogique prisons et droits de l’homme” (B9) of 2005, this organisation is very critical of the prison administration which makes, it appears, teaching for outside associations rather difficult. This 12-page report criticizes the insufficient follow-up of detainees, the “individual re-insertion plan” for each prisoner, because this essential document is treated as an administrative formality and has become rather meaningless for effective re-socialisation.



“Under lock and key: in and after prison” is a dissertation by Ruth Van Rompay in 2004 (Be18) which compares the Belgian and English prison system, their purpose and effectiveness and how society copes with their offenders and ex-offenders. 65 pages of detailed analysis and recommendations.

Eliane Henri de Frahan is a prison visitor at Namur and Ardennes. She belongs to the association “Aide Sociale aux Justiciables” with 50 Volunteers. In her book “Au-delà des barreaux” she talks about her doubts, what she is trying to accomplish, her grudge against prevailing opinions and often cites Canada as the model country for re-socialisation. Her book reflects well the mood of many Voluntary Prison Visitors. (Be19).

Claire Capron who has been a prison visitor for 13 years within the above mentioned “Service de Réinsertion Sociale”, published in 3/2007 “Ce monde hors du monde – this world apart” (Be20) in which she describes the types of people and problems prison visitors everywhere encounter frequently: prison jargon, the notion of time, the difficult choices and despair of some inmates, hate, illiteracy, drug pushing, the longing for freedom, the fear of AIDS, love and loneliness, prison guards, Muslims and their additional problems ..... This is easy and pleasant reading, full of “real prison life” and personal annotations.

Recently Claire Capron sent out to her fellow-prison visitors a questionnaire containing 22 main subjects from the usefulness of prison to conditions of incarceration, sanitary, mental and psychological care, how the prisoners envisage their release, what they think of volunteers, etc. On the basis of at least 80 replies to all these questions, she will publish the results soon. Although statistically not relevant because of the limited sampling, the conclusions will be, no doubt, interesting and controversial.

## LUXEMBURG

With an incarceration rate of 175 for 100.000 inhabitants, 42 % remand prisoners and 75 % foreigners, this small and wealthy country holds a sad record. In addition, the incarceration rate has increased by 46 % in 10 years. In view of this disquieting situation, the “Centre d’Action Laïque” is working on a pedagogical project for the population from the age of 12 years upwards (Lux 1). The Catholic Church too has acknowledged the problem and established a detailed study (Lux 2).

In October 2006, the “Association Luxembourgeoise de Visiteurs de Prison – ALVP” was founded officially with the help of the ANVP, Alsace (Lux 3). The Government has published a list of all NGO which benefit from government subsidies (Lux 4) of which Caritas is responsible for the social sector. The ALVP is one of the 17 associations co-operating with Caritas, and which supports the ALVP prison visitors financially and personally.