

**Study on**  
**« Voluntary Prison Visitors and their**  
**Organisations in Western Europe »**

by  
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Practical remarks: This report is based on a set of documents subdivided into “contextual subjects” (B) and “countries” as above (C). For example, (Org3) is the document No.3 in the section “International Organisations” and (De6) is the document No. 6 in the section “Deutschland - Germany”. All documents are in their original language. A European dictionary of legal terms in Engl/Fr/German is available under [www.ju-lex.com](http://www.ju-lex.com).

**The complete report consisting of the sections A, B and C is WRITTEN IN ENGLISH ONLY and comprises about 140 pages. The “Introduction and Conclusion – A” of about 23 pages are available also in French, German, Italian and Spanish. All these texts can be consulted by going through the home page of the website “<http://visiteurs.prison.free.fr>” .**

## **I - Introduction**

The fact that the 46 countries of the European Council could agree in 2006 to the 108 new “European Prison Rules” on the basis of Human Rights and in an evident humanitarian spirit is somewhat surprising at a time when governments and the public tend to demand more “zero tolerance” and prisons are filling up. The ratification of these Prison Rules by most Eastern European countries also shows both that they have moved closer to the Western European views on prison matters, and to what extent the societies of the different European countries and their juridical and penitentiary problems start to resemble each other (youth delinquency, drugs, overcrowding of prisons, re-offending, foreigners, difficult re-socialisation, security, poverty, etc.).

Most of the information for this report has been gathered by consulting a great number of websites of which 5 full files of relevant documents have been copied. Numerous replies to letters and e-mails from experts, embassies, prison administrations and volunteer organisations of the countries concerned are also part of the present 4/2008 update.

As the research advanced on the main subject, I thought it useful to add 5 “contextual chapters” (Statistics, International Organisations, etc. - see above section “B”), because these facts and tendencies are or could become important for the prison volunteers in the future in one way or another.

The aim of this report is limited and pragmatic. Following the publication of the new “108 European Prison Rules” in 1/2006, I wanted to know whether the Prison Volunteers were somehow united on European level too. It became soon apparent that most associations worked on a local and regional level, rarely nationally and that national “Federations of prison visitors associations” were the exception. Some specialized European Associations existed, such Eurochips and EMNA, but there was no general “European Association of prison volunteers”. Therefore, I simply wanted

- to learn more about Western European prisons seen from the angle of an ordinary prison visitor and the information available to him (the reports “per country” are written less for the nationals of that country, but more for foreigners to get an idea of prison visiting abroad),
- to get to know our colleagues in Western Europe, how they work, how they are organised, and share my findings with whoever is interested in them,
- to know whether the national organisations feel the need to come closer together, to exchange information and to learn from one another in order to found, possibly at a later stage, some sort of a “European Association of Prison Volunteers”.

The bulk of the information gathered should allow the European prison visiting associations to decide on the options they wish to take in the future.

I would like to thank Mrs. Anne-Marie Klopp (Europäisches Forum für angewandte Kriminalpolitik, Düsseldorf) and Mr. Raphaël Bonte (former President of the ANVP) for the encouragement they have given me in carrying out this enquiry. My thanks also to my colleagues from England, Germany, Holland, France, Italy and Spain for the verification of the reports on their own country. Thanks as well to my friends Josette, Soledad, Mary-Jo, Françoise, Diana, Alan, Hans and Roberto for the linguistic improvements to the texts and Maurice for organising the website.

## II - Conclusions

1. Voluntary prison visiting has a **long tradition** in Europe. After the Quaker Richard Wistar had founded the “Philadelphia society for assisting distressed prisoners” in 1776, Elizabeth Fry and her helpers of the London South Gate prison formed in 1817 the first European “Women’s Association”. In 1819 the St. Petersburg Prison Association was founded followed by similar groups in 1823 in Amsterdam, 1824 in Copenhagen, 1826 in Düsseldorf (Rheinisch-Westphälische Gefängnisgesellschaft) and 1846 in Graz (Austria). The same year, the first international congress was held in Frankfurt comprising 75 delegates from 12 countries. On this occasion and later, the work of private religious associations in prisons and voluntary organisations providing accommodation/hostels for ex-detainees was discussed. In 1872, during the London Congress, those attending already recognized that “the best penal system is useless, if the prisoner has no work on release” and that “helping a released prisoner is an indispensable necessity in any future penal reform”.  
At that time, voluntary prison visitors were allowed to work in Austria, Belgium, France, Prussia, the Netherlands and partly in Russia and Italy; but their visits were forbidden in Denmark, Norway, Bavaria, Saxony, Great-Britain and Ireland. In 1905, on the occasion of the Budapest Congress, it was decided that, even if the prison volunteers acted with the agreement of the authorities, the state had no right to interfere in their work, because they contributed “to the moral elevation of their protégés”. (Extract from “Zum Selbstverständnis christlicher Straffälligenhilfe” by Gerhard Deimling).
2. According to official estimations, there are today about 700 voluntary prison associations working in Germany, 600 in England/Wales, 550 in France, at least 524 in Spain and 223 in Holland and about 500 in Italy, which means that probably **around 4000 associations are active today** in Western Europe on local, regional and national level. They reflect all the cultural and social diversity of the old continent. In addition to the prison administrations with their civil servants, the professionals of the justice system and those employed by a variety of organisations, voluntary prison visitors and volunteers work in at least **40 main areas, from prevention of crime to probation** and beyond.

The voluntary prison visitors are organised in many ways:

- a) They can be approved **individual** people working for a local prison.
- b) They can be part of **local** associations such as “La Touline” at Nivelles (Belgium), the “Centro de Ayuda e Inserción” at Lleida (Catalonia), the “Bezoekergroep Vreemdelingengevangenis”, Schiphol or “il gruppo volontario del carcere di Lucca” in Italy.
- c) Some organisations **specialize in one prison activity** either nationally, regionally or locally as, for example, ADEPPI, Belgium for education, “Fine Cell Work” who do needle work and embroidery in England, the “Ambassadors in Sport España” who teach sports in the Granada prison or “Solidaires” whose members run a prison visitors centre in Bois-d’Arcy near Paris.
- d) Other associations offer a **whole range of activities**, as, for example, “Freie Hilfe Berlin” or HOPE (Scotland) whose members give moral support to male and female prisoners and their families during and after detention, provide administrative help, general/professional education, are job hunting for released prisoners, and organize a “Prison Visitors Centre”.
- e) Many prison volunteers **are part of the known humanitarian and religious international** organisations, such as the Red Cross, Amnesty International, Caritas, the Salvation Army, the Association of St. Vincent de Paul or the International Prison Fellowship.

- f) Others belong to big **national associations**, such as the protestant Diakonie or the non-confessional Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband in Germany, Proyecto Hombre in Spain, CIMADE in France, NACRO in the UK, ARCI in Italy or USG Restart in Holland,
- g) they may work for **non-profit making companies** as Neustart in Austria (Probation) or for **regional authorities**, as the “Kantonale Bewährungshilfe”, Bern,
- h) .....and finally, there is a great variety of organisations, such as
- \* La “Compagnie de Charité”, Liège founded in 1654 or the “Encomienda de acción penitenciaria » which has its roots in the “Real Orden de Caballeros de Santa Maria del Puig” of the 13<sup>th</sup> century and the “Association Luxembourgeoise de Visiteurs de Prison” and “Prélude”, the Swiss cultural prison association, both of which were founded only in 2006,
  - \* Lay organisations such as the French ANVP or the English NAOPV and the catholic “Pastoral Penitenciaria” in Spain, the Samaritans of the Anglican Church, the protestants of “Schwarzes Kreuz” in Germany or the evangelical “Alpha for prison” world-wide,
  - \* “Gamblers’ Anonymous” in England try to help addicted gamblers, “Arge Abschubhaft”, Innbruck assist foreigners in their struggle against deportation, the “Rosarote Gefängnishilfe”, Augsburg supports homosexual inmates, “Circles of support and accountability” England deal with former sex offenders, “When the eagles learn to fly”, Den Haag care for adolescents and the members of EORG in Holland assist prisoners in their legal struggle;
  - \* ..... and then there are associations with such imaginative names as “De Regenboog – the rainbow” in Amsterdam, “Dar a mão – give a helping hand” at Tires (Portugal), “un tetto per tutti – a roof for everybody” in Italy, “s’Häferl” which means in Viennese “small pot or mess-tin” and “Girasol Levante – sun flower of the Orient” whose members work in detoxification centres in Alicante and Valencia.

Apart from the assistance the states provide to prisoners, **what are the prison volunteers’ main fields of activities?** The subdivision below of some 400 associations out a total of about 4000 can only be indicative, as many of them work in their specific ways in several fields and could fit, therefore, into several sections:

#### Prevention:

Probare, Trier (Germany)  
 Helamaniskan (Sweden)  
 AVP, Florence  
 Sacro (Scotland)  
 Prison.Me?No way ! (England)  
 Verbrechensverhütung VUS, Hanover  
 Papyrus (Eng)

#### Theatre

Chicken Shed, Geese (GB)  
 Teatro Yeses, Madrid  
 Compagnia della Fortezza, Volterra  
 Pantagruel, Pistoia  
 Théâtre de l’Opprimé, France  
 Aufbruch, Berlin  
 Riksteatern (Sweden)

#### Listening, moral support

La Touline, Belgium  
 ALVP, Luxemburg  
 Centro francescano di ascolto (Rovigo, Roma)  
 GAVAC, Roma  
 Einzelbetreuung (Germany)  
 Guild of St. Philip Neri (Ireland)  
 Families outside (Scotland)  
 NAOPV, England  
 “Ultimi degli ultimi”, Roma  
 NAGA, Milano

#### Children

Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe, Reutlingen  
 Relais Enfance-Parents, France + Belg.  
 Eurochips (Europe)  
 Kids VIP (GB)  
 NEPACS (Eng)  
 Policino, Tessino -Switzerland  
 Horizontes Abiertos, Spain  
 Coordinadora de Barrio para menores y juvenes  
 Telefono Azzurro, Italy

Samaritans (GB)  
ANVP, France  
Red Cross (Den, Nor, Fin)  
Vrijwillige Bezoekersgroepen, Holland  
Résilience asbl, Mons

#### Justice, Administration

Fair trials abroad (Europe)  
Diritti dei detenuti, Roma  
Miscarriage of Justice (GB)  
Prison Reform Trust, (GB)  
Anlaufstelle, Göttingen (Germany)  
Partners of Prisoners (GB)  
PILD, Italy  
Antigone, (Italy)  
L'altro diritto, Italy  
EORG (Netherlands)  
OIP (Fr, Bel)  
No more prison, England  
Howard League for Penal Reform (UK)  
Alteña, Spain  
Avvocati di strada, Italy  
Juridisch Loket, Holland  
REDA, Belgium

#### General/ Professional Teaching

EPEA, Europe  
Génépi, France  
ADEPPI, Belgium  
Forum Prison Education (GB)  
Rückenwind, Bernberg  
Die Werkstatt, Speyer  
Insert, Belgium  
La Calle, Madrid  
Il Varco, Italy  
CNED, France  
Derode Antriciet, Flanders  
PECP/UNED, Spain  
ASJ, Belgium  
Funoc, Belgium  
ESLABON - Centro promoción de empleo, Spain  
AVANTI, Belgium  
Clip (France)  
MABIS, Münster  
Business in Prison, GB  
Auxilia (FR, GER, Spain)  
TWCA, Holland  
Shannon Trust (England)  
HZBB, Berlin  
Die Brücke, Lippe  
Presos sin fronteras, Barcelona  
Confraternidad Carcelaria, Spain  
Aide et Reclassement, Belgium  
Stichting Herstellng, Holland

Action for Prisoners' families (Engl)  
Commission des Patronages (Belgium)  
Pact (GB)  
Spirit, Amsterdam  
Espace libre, Charleroi

#### Family

Résilience, Mons  
Ass. Carcerati e famiglie, Gallarate  
SACRO, Scotland  
Mothers Union (Scotland)  
POPS (GB)  
Bremische Straffälligenbetreuung  
Family Helpline (GB)  
Humanitas (Ne)  
Gefangenenzorg (Ne)  
Nepacs (GB)  
Scottish Prisoner's families Helpline  
Prisoners' Families and Friends (Eng)  
Prisoners' Families Infoline, Ireland  
Riksbryggan, Sweden  
Mujeres Progresistas de Andalucía  
Gezin in Balans, Den Bosch  
Autrement, Brussels

#### Restorative Justice/Mediation

Opfer-und Täterhilfe, Trier  
Fondazione per le vittime, Bologna  
Neustart (Austria)  
SACRO (Scotland)  
Inside Out Trust, England  
CRISI, Istituto Don Calabria, It  
Sunnmoek Rad, Norway  
Mikkeli Median, Finland  
Le Radian, Belgium  
Fairmittlung, Germany  
Victim Support, Nederland  
An Garda Siochana, Ireland  
Weisser Ring, Vienna and Germany  
Accord, Strasbourg

#### Probation

Bewährungshilfe, Neumünster  
Verein f. Bewährungshilfe, Sarrebrück  
BayLBG, München  
Neustart, Austria, Germany  
SOVA, London  
SACRO, Scotland  
Salvation Army, Holland  
BSDG, Colone  
Activ, Schwerin  
Stichting Reclassing, Holland  
Freie Bewährungshilfe, Stuttgart  
Kantonale Bewährungshilfe, Bern

### Drugs, detoxification

Proyecto Hombre, Spain  
UNAD, Spain  
Remar, Spain  
Centro toscano dipendenza, Lucca  
ADFAM (GB)  
Antox (Spain)  
De Regenboog (Ne)  
Act-up (France)  
From dependency 2 work, England  
Release, England  
AIDES, France  
Grüner Kreis, Vienna  
Reto a la esperanza, Spain  
Ambit, Valencia  
Girasol, Spain  
Transit, Brussels

### Mental Illness

FEAPS, Spain  
Mind (England)  
AISME, Italy  
Trimbos, Holland

### Employment

Brücke, Germany  
Gefährdetenhilfe, Breitscheid  
Zorgconcept, Holland  
YIP, Holland  
Confraternidad Carcelaria, Madrid  
Via, Bochum  
HZZB, Berlin  
Chance ev, Münster  
Business in prison, England  
Fine Cell Work, England  
Freie Hilfe Berlin  
Après, Brussels  
Neustart, Austria  
Nacro (England)  
Inserimento lavorativo, Forli  
Consorzio Sollo, Brescia  
APEX, England  
Stichting Herstellng, Holland  
Reto a la esperanza, Spain

### Accommodation/hostels

Haus Rupprechtstrasse, Colone  
Un tetto per tutti, Milano  
Housing sociale, Vigevano  
Sacro, Scotland  
FNARS, France  
Exodus (Ne)  
Perspektivwechsel ev, Frankfurt  
Stoneham Housing Ass. England  
YMCA, England

### Alcohol

ASH, Berlin  
Ruban Bleu, Finland  
ELG (Scotland)  
Vie libre, France  
Alcoholicos Anonimos (Spain)  
From Dependency 2 work (Engl)  
Alcoholicos Liberador (Spain)  
Kreuzbund, Germany  
Blaues Kreuz, Vienna  
Tactus/InTact, Ne  
Lankernas Riksförbund (Sweden)  
AICAT (Italy)  
Rio, Norway  
Fare, Spain  
Alcohol Anonymous (International)  
Anaden, Brussels

### Women

Straffälligenhilfe kath. Frauen,  
München  
Women in Prison, England  
Asociación Mujeres Progresistas, Sp  
Womens' link (England)  
Humanitas (NE)  
HOPE, Scotland  
ACOPE, Spain  
Parcours des femmes, France  
Tussenfasehuis, Holland  
Hibiscus, England  
SKF, Köln  
Women in Prison, England  
Kath. Gefängnisverein "Draussen"  
Düsseldorf  
Creative and Support Trust, England  
Dar a mão, Tires/Portugal  
BerThaF Frauenberatung

### Prisoners abroad

APEX, Spain  
Utlandbryggan, Sweden  
EGFAS, Nederland  
EGPA, Europe  
Prisoners abroad, England  
Prison World (International)

### Foreigners/Deportation

ProAsyl, Frankfurt  
Asylcafé, Mannheim  
Abschiebehaf, Büren  
Flüchtlingsrat, München  
Glasmoorgruppe, Hamburg  
Glasgow Welcomes Refugees  
Bezoekergroep Grenshospitium,  
De Vuurdoop, Tilburg (Ne)

Salvation Army (Internat)  
Kontakt, Bayreuth  
Don Bosco-Haus, Düsseldorf  
Aurore, France  
STEK, Holland  
Integrationshilfe, Vienna  
Kontakt in Krisen, Göttingen  
HZZB, Berlin

#### Religious Organisations

Scharzes Kreuz, Celle  
IPCA, international  
Compagnie de Charité, Belgium  
RETO a la Esperanza, Spain  
Prison Fellowship (international)  
St Vincent of Paul (internat)  
Dignitas, Italy  
Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle Juden (Germany)  
Scheideweg, Hückeswagen  
Gefährdetenhilfe, Breitscheid  
Caritas/Secours Catholique  
Alpha for prison (internat)  
Sesta Opera San Fedele (Italy)  
Pastoral Penitenziaria, Spain  
SEPAP-BARNA, Barcelona  
Assemblea de Deus, Portugal  
ISNA, Holland  
Muslim Council of Britain  
Encomienda acción penit., Spain  
Gott und die Welt, Essen  
De open Deur, Holland  
Christian Ministries Service, Holland  
Kath. Gefängnisverein Bergisches Land  
Gefangenenzorg, Ne  
Sverige Kristna Rad (Sweden)  
Amanecer, Burgos  
Mateus 25, Portugal

#### Humanitarian Organisations

International Red Cross  
Amnesty International  
Human Rights Watch (internat.)  
Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband

#### Umbrella organisations/federations

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (BAG-S), Bonn  
BSDG, Köln  
LAG-Bayern, München  
Prisoners' Families Helpline, UK  
Conferenza Nazionale Penitenziaria Giustizia  
SEAC, Italy  
Consejo Social Penitenciario, Spain  
UNAD, Spain  
Eurochips, Europe  
AVP, Florence, Piemonte, Venice

Arge Abschubhaft, Innsbruck  
AVID, England  
Hanslar, England  
Dover Detainee Visiting group  
ANFE, France  
MIB, France  
Hope, Scotland  
CIMADE, France

#### Local Organisations

Jesus lebt, Lenzburg (Switzerl.)  
Diakonie, Rosenheim  
Pfälzischer Verein für  
Straffälligenhilfe, Zweibrücken  
Colectivo La Calle, Madrid  
Il Granello di Senape, Venice  
Bénévolat, Thorberg, Switzerland  
VOC, Tandem (Holland)  
Gefangenenfürsorgeverein,  
Feldkirch, Austria  
Asociación Bideresari, Bilbao  
Darse, Madrid  
Presos sin frontera, Barcelona  
Asociacio ExPres "4Camins",  
Granolars (Catalonia)  
Soziale Eingliederung, Rheinbach  
Compagnie de Charité, Liège  
Straffälligenhilfe Allgäu, Kempten  
La prison dans la Ville, Brest  
Le Cri, Marmande  
De Brug, Katwijk  
Een Nieuwe Start, Amsterdam  
SCAPI, Molenbeek - Belgium

#### Special Organisations

Prison Dharma (buddist)  
CAGE (muslim)  
Mujeres Gitanas (Spain)  
Black Prisoners Support (England)  
Rosarote Gefangenenhilfe, Augsburg,  
help for homosexuals  
Gernika Gogratuz (Spain)  
Libero (anti-mafia)  
Rote Hilfe (left-wing), Germany  
Gambler's Anonymus (England)  
Glückspielsucht, Neuss  
Garten und Therapie, Detmold (De)  
Sverige Muslimer Riksförbund (Sw)  
ICVA (police stations), England  
Prison Phoenix Trust (yoga), England  
Out-side-In (homosexual prisoners)  
Prison Links (for blacks), England  
Weisser Ring (Victims'supp.) Aut/De  
Knastnet (Prison blog), Germany  
Prison Talk (Prison blog), GB

European Prison Education Association  
Prison Art Network  
FNARS/FARAPEJ, France  
BONJO, Netherlands  
FAFEP, Belgium  
EMNA, Europe  
REDA, Belgium

Cercle of support + accountability  
(sex offenders), England  
KRIS (ex prisoners), Sweden  
Unlock (ex prisoners), England  
Samaritans (telephone service), UK  
Prisonniers sans frontières, Africa  
CAB, Brussels (sex offenders)

#### Help for ex prisoners

APEX Trust (UK)  
Merchant Quay (Ireland)  
“Das Trampolin”, Vienna  
MRS, Paris  
L’ESTRAN, France  
Emausbewegung (Germany)  
Delinkwentie & Samenleving, Holland

#### Information

DHB (Lotse), Köln and BAG-S, Bonn  
CLINKS, England  
OIP and BAN PUBLIC, France  
FIVOL and L’altro diritto, Italy  
Fuoriluogo and CESVOL, Italy  
Fundición Atenea grupo GID, Spain  
Nazorggroep, Holland

#### Culture/fine arts

Changing Lives through literature, England  
Prélude, Switzerland  
Colectivo Parentesis, Murcia  
ACFE, Switzerland  
Association Pulsart, Villepinte (Paris)  
Kunst kennt geen Tralies, Belgium  
Koestler Trust, England  
Escape Artists, UK  
ART-IG, Vechta (Germany)  
Ann Peaker Centre – England  
Music in Prison, England  
Kunst im Knast, Germany

#### Prison visitors centres

PACT, England  
POPS, England  
Mothers’ Union (UK)  
Assisted Prison Visits Unit (Sc)  
Quakers (Ireland)  
Carrefour Prison, Switzerland  
Solidaire, France  
AVISO, Montpellier  
St. Vincent de Paul, France  
HOPE, Scotland  
Nepacs, England  
UFRAMA, France

Students’ involvement in prison: Génépi (France), Initiative Zelle (Würzburg), Goldsmith College Students (London), Solidarios para el desarrollo (Madrid), Students of the Granada University working in the Albolete prison,

Aids/HIV treatment and information: Body Positive (England), LILA (Italy), AVACOS (Valencia), Aidshilfe Erfurt, SICACTION (France), Lighthouse (England), Ciudadano Antisida (Spain), Associació Anti-Sida (Catalonia), CAST (France),

Associations offering a **whole range of activities** are, for example, the SKM (Bochum/Freiburg), Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe (Reutlingen), NIACRO (Northern Ireland), NACRO (England), Freie Hilfe Berlin, HOPE and SACRO (Scotland), Humanitas (Netherlands), Secours Catholique (France), Fundición Padre Garralda (Spain), the Centro di Ascolto Francese at Rovigo, Service de Réinsertion Sociale, Brussels, Neustart (Austria), Kath. Gefängnisverein, Düsseldorf, the regional associations (AVP) in Italy and the Red Cross in the Scandinavian countries.

In addition, there are specialized associations working in

- Financial Advice and Settlement of debts (such as Hamburger Fürsorgeverein or Stiftung Traugott Bender in Stuttgart, Centre de Réinsertion Sociale, Belgium),
- supervision of community work (such as Stadtmission, Kiel; Espace libre, Charleroi)
- counselling by telephone (Samaritans, Telefono Azzurro, Telefonseelsorge),
- group counselling (as in Austria, Italy, Scandinavia)
- re-socialisation of adolescents (such as Outside Chance in London, Die Brücke, München, Bravvo-Bravvo, Brussels and Bijzonder Jeugdwerk Brabant),



- writing letters to prisoners, administrative support (such as le Courier de Bovet in France and international pen friends/pals),
  - international advice organisations (such as Accord in Strasbourg and the Beratungsstelle, Görlitz),
  - Prison radios, magazines and blogs which are run with the help of volunteers in a number of prisons,
  - sport activities (such as the Ambassadors in Sport España, Escola esportiva, Brafa-Barcelona),
  - Inspection of Police stations (as ICVA in GB and Altus, Holland are doing)
  - Involve prisoners in “peer support”, as the Shannon Trust, the Samaritans and NOMS are trying to do,
  - computer courses (ideal for students and retired engineers, as CLIP in France),
  - libraries (as in the JVA Münster, which obtained the first prize in 2007, because “inmates preferred to read rather than to watch television”. 30.000 books in 30 languages.
  - behavioural training, anger/conflict management, social skills (as Starthilfe, Trier),
  - national and foreign language teaching
  - general group and leisure activities,
  - work for more human conditions in African prisons (such as “Prisonniers sans Frontières » in France),
  - discussion groups (organised by prison delegates together with volunteers and the prison administration covering any interesting subject),
  - Social Sciences and basic economics (money, elections, social security, law, prison).
  - “Finding-a-partner service” and “administering the detainee's flat” as Bonjo is doing.
3. At a time of general religious weariness, it is surprising to note the extraordinarily strong involvement of **religious organisations** in prison visiting. The associations reach from groups with a strong evangelical message, such as the American “International Prison Fellowship” and “Alpha for prison”, to Caritas, the Diakonie, the Church of England, the Pastoral Penitenciaria, ecumenical associations in Holland and France, the Scandinavian national Churches, and the many hundreds of local Christian associations and charities everywhere in Europe. In addition, the prison chaplains and their helpers guarantee the basic right to exercise one’s own religion in prison. Following the biblical passage “I was in prison and you visited me”, the Christian Churches which were at the beginning of the idea of prison visiting, continue their work in Europe and world-wide. In view of the high proportion of Muslims imprisoned in European jails, the small number of Imams and prison visitors officially recognized by the Muslim organisations and actually working in prisons, must be surely a disadvantage not only to Islam, but to Western society as a whole. The increasing public fear of Muslim fundamentalism complicates matters in prisons even more.
4. There seems to exist a general **convergence of opinion** among criminologists, most judges, national prison administrations and the prison volunteer organisations all over Western Europe that incarceration must be a very last resort, because severing a delinquent from his family and his job and the usually negative experience of prison life certainly do not improve his chances of social (re)integration. Today the principle of punishment as a “purification or deterrent” has been abandoned generally by the experts. Apart from the protection of society from dangerous criminals, the aim (at least officially advocated) of imprisonment is the “**re-socialisation and normalisation**” of the delinquent in order to avert re-offending (imprisonment being understood as a “constructive time-out”, a chance of rehabilitation, a new start thanks to a “reconciliatory” judiciary and society).

With their policy of “making delinquents responsible for the offences committed and their treatment with respect during their stay in prison with the aim of a durable

insertion in society”, the "Scandinavian model" seem to have succeeded better than most other European countries, which are still attached predominantly to securing the proper execution of the pronounced sentence and a very tight grip on security.

**In the USA**, the “storage” of detainees (with long periods for re-offenders according to the baseball rule “strike three and you are out”) seems to be accepted as a “regrettable, but inevitable necessity” which has as a consequence a rate of imprisonment seven times higher than in Western Europe. However, the statistics of the last 10 years show that in Western Europe too, more prison sentences are pronounced for longer periods, the remand time in custody increases, more prisons are built, the occupancy rate is increasing and the level of re-offending is stagnant at best.

5. The Voluntary Prison Visitors’ Organisations **reflect generally the structure** of the national States:

- As a consequence of the federal structure of Germany, each of the 16 Länder has its own legislation and prison administration. The approximately 700 associations of voluntary prison visitors are organised mostly on a local or regional level, rarely on a national one. Apart from BAG-S, there is no central federation of prison volunteers as in Italy, Holland or Spain. The case is similar in Switzerland with their 26 Cantons in spite of the central prison administration in Bern.
- Spain has a strong central prison administration with a great variety of religious and non-confessional associations which have been united since 2007 in the “Consejo Social Penitenciario”. Catalonia has its own prison administration and more than 30 prison volunteer associations.
- The voluntary prison sector with its roughly 500 organisations in Italy is well developed, not only in the 23 “regioni”, but on a national level too with the “Conferenza Nazionale Volontariato Giustizia” as its head organisation and SEAC, the confederation of all catholic prison visiting associations.
- As in football, Great Britain has 3 Prison Administrations (England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland) and a strong “National Association of Official Prison Visitors – NAOPV). About 600 associations are working in a great variety of fields. There is no national confederation of prison volunteers.
- The French Prison Administration (SPIP) is very centralized and runs not only the closed and open prison system, but probation too. Apart from local prison volunteer organisations, there are well-organised national associations, such as the “Association National des Visiteurs de Prison”, GENEPI (the students’ organisation), AUXILIA (correspondence courses), CIMADE (assistance to foreigners), FARAPEJ, UFRAMA and FNARS.

6. The term **“visiteur de prison”** is a French/English particularity which is legally well defined. The European legal dictionary under [www.ju-lex.com](http://www.ju-lex.com) does not mention the term “Visiteur de prison”. The more general term is “bénévole - volunteer”. Definition:

- In English, the precise terminology would be “voluntary prison visitor, volunteers or befriender” to differentiate it from the “prison visitor”, who is a member of the family passing through a “Prison Visitors Centre” to visit a detainee. In England, there is a fine difference between the “Official Prison Visitor” of the NAOPV and all the other volunteers who are “visitors to prisons”.
- In German “Visiteur de prison” would be translated literally as “Gefängnisbesucher”, which means, as in English, anyone visiting a detainee in prison. The “Ehrenamtlicher/freiwilliger Mitarbeiter or Vollzugshelfer” would

- designate any kind of volunteer. The “Einzelbetreuer” (individual “one-to-one” contact with the detainees) is close to the way a “Visiteur de Prison” operates.
- In Italian “il volontario penitenziario” stands for the general term of “prison volunteer”. The “volontario di assistenti” (according to art. 78) would correspond more to the function of the French “visiteur de prison”, although the “assistente’s” tasks are more diversified and officially recognized.
  - In Spanish there is no distinction either between the general term of “voluntario de prisión or voluntario penitenciario” and the “Visiteur de Prison à la française”.
  - “Vrijwilliger or Gevangenen Bezoeker” would be the Dutch equivalent.

Nothing is ever simple in multi-national and multi-lingual Europe, not even the apparently obvious meaning of a “Visiteur de Prison”. Reading through the European on-line legal dictionary under [www.ju-lex.com](http://www.ju-lex.com), one gets an impression of how divergent the national legal systems are. As many legal provisions and functions do not exist from one country to another, it is rather difficult to find the right terminology.

7. “Prison Visiting” happens on the wish of the detainee to meet someone unrelated to the prison administration, his fellow-inmates or his own family; someone non-judgemental, a discreet person from outside who **listens and takes an interest in the person**. For many detainees, the prison visitor is the only contact with the outside world, because either family and friends have dropped him for good, or he does not want them to know that he is in prison or he is a foreigner who is isolated linguistically and culturally. The fact that about 30% of the detainees are illiterate adds to the isolation. In France, 47 % of all detainees have no visit from the outside during their whole incarceration time. As the relationship between the prison visitor and the prisoner normally ceases upon liberation and is free from vested interests and social status, it can be fairly equal and trustful. Depending on the openness of the detainee and his wish to reintegrate society, the sometimes delicate relationship between the two can go far beyond reducing the detainee’s loneliness with superficial talk about football and food. It happens that these meetings evolve towards a real project of life without delinquency. The usually weekly meetings become events to look forward to for the prisoner - and his visitor. “Making oneself available to the detainee and going toward him in an open and friendly way” is at the heart of all voluntary prison work. Claire Capron, a Belgian prison visitor for 13 years, describes the problems and people encountered in her book “Ce monde hors du monde – this world apart”. In his book “In carcere, scomodi” Livio Ferrari talks of the role of prison volunteers in this tough and uncomfortable world .
8. The prisons administrations usually offer basic occupational measures such as general and vocational education, leisure activities and (if feasible) a job. They provide assisted legal counsels for defence, psychologists, voluntary prison visitors, transfer them to the open prison system and should prepare them adequately for final release. As social prison workers are chronically understaffed, Prison Volunteers assist in their specific ways. Thanks to their great variety of interests and talents they can adapt to the individual needs of the detainees (and could so even more, if properly organized). Beyond traditional “prison volunteering”, and following the principle “what works should be done”, new ways of helping the delinquent to lead a life without crime, have been tried in some countries (but far less or not at all in others), such as:
  - a) The basic idea of “Community Chaplaincy” or “Offender monitoring/ management” is to have “promising” detainees accompanied by a sort of “tutor”. According to the inmate’s profile, the tutor prepares him as best as can be for release and accompanies him outside as long as possible as a sort of “fatherly/motherly friend” to be consulted in case of problems (accommodation, job, studies, family), and particularly when he risks falling back into delinquency. Faith-based organisation in the USA, NOMS in the UK, the Danish and Swiss probation service and the French

MRS work according to this kind of “voluntary probation” after release.

And what could be done for “less promising” detainees, those who cannot or do not want to see their time in prison as a chance for a new start; those who are released into the same precarious environment as before incarceration, but now with the additional stigma of a “convict”? Even if asking for a prison volunteer should remain the choice of the detainees, it would certainly be of help to them, if they could contact one quickly in case of need both inside and outside prison.

- b) The aversion by professional probation officers in certain countries to co-operate with volunteers for fear of an insidious privatisation, seems somehow unrealistic in view of the dwindling social budgets everywhere. Considering the sometimes great personal problems of the probationers, it is impossible for one Probation Officer to deal effectively with 80 to 120 of them and improve on the present high percentage of re-offending. If the professional probation officers co-operated with a few voluntary people, they could concentrate on the difficult cases and function as a qualified councillors and back-ups for the volunteers. In this way, the already proven efficiency of probation and community work over costly imprisonment would be even more visible. Their professional position could improve and a higher remuneration would be amply justified. Professionals and volunteers work together in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, etc. Why not everywhere?
- c) Restorative Justice and Mediation is an infinitely delicate task which requires great skills and maturity. More often judges, social services and prison administrations in Northern countries seem to initiate this more lasting form of reconciliation. But in case of a repentant and sensible delinquent, a conciliatory attitude on the part of the victim is also required which is the contrary of the present old-testament-like “right for an exemplary punishment of the offender”; just as if such a vengeful attitude could relieve the effects of committed crime in the long term. If some voluntary organisations can work in restorative justice with innovating ideas (as for example, the “Athelier d’expression et d’écriture” in Brussels) why not others in other countries too?
- d) Both in the USA and Europe, an ever greater proportion of perpetrators of violent offences fill the prisons where promiscuity, drastic discipline and personal humiliation increase, if anything, their potential of aggression. In some countries volunteer organisations are involved in anger management, conflict prevention, Yoga, group counselling and teaching behavioural skills. If some voluntary organisations can offer it, why not others in other countries and more frequently?
- e) Divorce, the loss of an employment, careless contraction of credits, consumerism and ignorance of financial matters has as a consequence the accumulation of debts, of which some people think they can liberate themselves through reprehensible acts. In the same way in which lawyers give free advice to detainees and people in need, volunteer organisations could offer financial advice and debt management, enabling them to see more clearly their real situation and restart life with a clean sheet. Such services organised by volunteers with competent professionals would certainly be welcome by detainees and their families.
- f) It is a reality that many prisoners become delinquent, because they feel mentally and emotionally unable to find their way through our sophisticated and materialistic society. Young people who cannot count on the traditional family support or are separated from the parents, belong to the same precarious group of people. . More supervised accommodation and well-run hostels with the involvement of volunteers in the function of trustworthy friends and counsellors would prevent a number of

these marginal people from becoming delinquents in the first place. Leaving prison, they could find some kind of home and not consider prison as a valid option to freedom.

- g) The “alternatives to imprisonment - diversion” (in France it is called also “the third way”) have become popular everywhere in Europe, not only because they produce less re-offending, but because they are so much cheaper too. The care and supervision for these people is an ideal field for trained volunteers. Diversion has still a big potential for development in Europe.

Because of difficulties of communication with the outside world, detainees are frequently preoccupied with the administration of their homes and furniture. Such a service not being foreseen in the regulations, Officials usually cannot help. As finding their previous accommodation on leaving prison is an important re-integrative measure, BONJO (Holland) has created a service to take care of such property of those prisoners who ask for it. Truly innovative.

Many willing and long-serving prison visitors find it difficult to recognize government and prison administration aiming at the principal goal of imprisonment, i.e. the lasting rehabilitation of the detainees. These volunteers cannot see the logic of ever more incarcerations which are 5 to 20 times more expensive compared with alternative sentences, produce more re-offenders, and exclude many people from society forever. The non-co-operation of complementary prison volunteer organisations working in the same prison, is often felt as regrettable too.

9. Interest in the fellow-citizen, determination and available time are essential to become a prison visitor; but **training and further education** are also important to understand better the psychology of the detainee and to react adequately to his behaviour, accounts of his situation and his expectations.

Training of voluntary prison visitors is generally well organized in Germany with 3-day (10 evenings) initial courses, obligatory attendance of seminars which can last up to 2 years, exchange with experienced prison visitors and the opportunity to consult professionals. The Swiss Cantonal Probation Authorities impose a 54-hour introductory course. The prison administrations (for example the French SPIP) frequently organize courses in which they explain the rules and function of the prison administration, the contribution of the voluntary sector, its meaning and limitations. As can be gathered from the “Reports per country”, there are frequent weekly courses in Spain for the qualification of future “voluntarios penitenciarios”. The Catalan prison administration (Serveis Penitenciaris) insists on periodic refresher courses for all active volunteers working within one of its programs. Bonjo (Ne) forms the future prison visitors of its 70 associations. The regional Italian volunteer organisations (Conferenze regionali volontari giustizia) frequently invite volunteers to general courses of one week. Those for the “volontari di assistenti” which last for 14 days within a period of 6 months, look quite detailed and demanding.

10. The **co-operation between prison staff and the voluntary prison visitors** seems to be uneasy at times everywhere. The annual conference of the CEP in 1999 at Potsdam (D6) had as its main theme “Practice and significance of volunteers working in the field of criminal justice” and revealed a latent discontent on either side. In 2001, a seminar organised by “Freie Hilfe Berlin” reflected on: “are the volunteers in competition with civil servants?” (D6A). In 2005, the Italian federation CNVG openly criticized the fact that the civil servants did not sufficiently appreciate the positive contribution of the voluntary sector concerning prison problems. The 108 European Prison Rules do not clarify the situation either when they “encourage” only the involvement of civil society “when this is possible”.

Should the prison volunteers be perceived as a bunch of idealistic people with no obligation to achieve tangible results, who cause only additional work and mangle in matters for which well trained prison professionals would be more efficient? But how could one assess the efficiency of the volunteers anyway? And if yes, according to what criteria could the efficiency of the professionals be evaluated (professionals in general, police, judges, prison administration, government)?

Gerhard Deimling (De1) talks about the frustrations and resignation of many voluntary prison volunteers because of more and more “professionalisation”, where prison staff and professionals organise education and activities of many kinds, with or without the involvement of volunteers. But “social” prison staff are too limited in number everywhere in Europe (usually 80 to 120 inmates per civil servant) to administer the individual files of the detainees, organise the activities and, in addition, be available for listening to the detainees with their enormous problems (a task for which they have been trained). The prison staff too has reasons to be discouraged at times. And when volunteers try to make up for the overloaded prison officers, when they dare to intervene in favour of their detainees, frictions can occur easily.

But this adversity and unease between voluntary prison visitors (idealistic and free of charge) and prison staff and professionals (trained and remunerated) is a well-known fact in the whole of society and not only in a prison environment. The voluntary prison visitor who, by conviction, wants to bring a little more humanity to prisoners in great trouble, sometimes has problems in understanding the actions and attitudes of prison staff who, on the other hand, are obliged to conform to strict bureaucratic prison rules which seem at times far removed from the advocated aim: the lasting (re)integration of the detainees into society.

The prison administration, on the other hand, by tradition gives priority to “surveillance” (because legally well defined and measurable on the spot), whereas the individual needs of the prisoners for their lasting (re)integration into society are much more vague and verifiable only 10 years later through highly theoretical evaluations of re-offending statistics. Has any decision maker ever been held responsible personally for the results in prison matters?

In the higher administration and in official documents, the positive contribution of prison visitors is recognized. Today the voluntary sector is an integrated and indispensable part of prison life. Therefore, the sometimes tense relationship between full-time staff and volunteers does not make much sense.

11. In many ways, the prison **problems have become rather similar** in most Western European countries: a high number of re-offenders mainly among the young and drug-dependent, theoretically innocent remand prisoners mixed with convicted criminals, illiteracy, lack of work in prison, foreigners, the high cost of detention, the high proportion of mentally ill people, evident or supposed racism, overcrowding, the new poverty, etc..

But “a society can choose to have a higher or lower detention rate and this choice is expressed through the (frequency and length of) prison sentences pronounced by the judges” (Professor Coyle, ICPC - Div 2). Anne-Marie Klopp (Europäische Forum) says that “Europe has drawn closer in many areas, but only very little in penal legislation” - and in prison administration, because the **individual States** decide according to their own **national values** and the political opportunities of the moment (example: in 2005 the German Supreme Court toppled the European directive on the extradition of German nationals to other EU-countries).

There are considerable differences between, for example:

- the more “personalized and respectful treatment of the detainees with proven social measures for a lasting integration into society” of the Scandinavian countries and most other European nations, where security and avoidance of escape have priority,
- the detention rate increase of between 40 and 100% in the last 10 years in England, the Netherlands, Spain and Luxemburg (countries which have followed more the American pattern); and Portugal, Italy, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland where there was little or no increase.

Following the spirit of the new “108 Europeans Prison Rules”, it would be ideal, if there could be a consensus on legal and penitentiary policy on a European level, as has been the case in Finland for many years. Unfortunately, disagreement is substantial on prison issues between conservatives, populists and those of a more humanitarian approach, because the fascination with crime and the security of the population is a hot electoral subject. The tabloid press, mainly in Great Britain and Germany, is greatly responsible for a one-sided presentation of facts and panic-mongering with regard to prison matters (Div 10).

12. In 2000, the Italian “Conferenza Nazionale Volontariato Giustizia” drew up the project of a “European Forum of Prison Volunteers” (It13). This present study also arrives at the conclusion that such a confederation could be beneficial to the European prison system as a whole - provided, of course, that the governments and the judiciary truly believed that the voluntary sector has a significant role to play in the reconciliation of offenders with society (as somehow the British NOMS project and the Swiss concept of prison visiting do) . How could such a “European Association” be founded?

a) In view of the different definitions and functions, it would be necessary first to define who should or would want to be part of such a “European Association”:

- \* Restricted definition: only those volunteers who enter prison essentially “to listen and to give moral support” such as the English NAOPV and the French ANVP, the “Einzelbetreuer” in Germany or the “Assistenti” in Italy?
- \* Wider definition: it would also comprise all volunteers who teach literacy or professional skills to prisoners, animate working groups with detainees, run libraries, organise sports activities, prepare plays and artistic programmes, organize family visits, settle administrative matters for the prisoners, prepare them for conditional or definite release, work in probation; in other words, all those volunteers mentioned in paragraph 2 above?
- \* General definition: and also all volunteers (and professionals?) of “mixed” associations and NGOs working in a prison environment who are part of
  - British charities, non-profit making organisations, foundations and private (voluntary) welfare agencies,
  - which would correspond in France to “les Associations à but non lucratif - les associations 1901”, ONGs and “l’aide privée”,
  - in Germany to “gemeinnützige Vereine” and “Freie Trägergesellschaften“, associations which are called in Belgium “asbl” (association sans but lucratif),
  - which are known in Italy as “associazioni no-profit” or ONLUS (organizzazione non lucrative d’utilità sociale),
  - in Spain “asociaciones de utilidad pública”
  - or “Belangen Overlege Niet-Justitiegebonden Organisaties” in the Netherlands.

And why would non-profit companies with a strong portion of volunteers, such as “Neustart” in Austria, or local or state entities, such as the “Kantonale Bewährungshilfe, Bern” with its more than 200 voluntary helpers, not qualify for a “European Association of Prison Volunteers”?

- b) As the idea of a general “European Confederation of prison volunteers” would have to mature, a gradual working toward that final goal would be possible, maybe even advisable, for example:
- through the foundation of European Federations according to activities, as EMNA (alcohol), Eurochips (children), EPEA (education) and the “European Forum of victim-offender mediation” have already done,
  - the foundation of national federations, where they do not yet exist, such as in France, England and Germany,
  - cross-border co-operation, as already is the case between the ANVP-Alsace and Freiburg/Breisgau or the “Arbeitskreis Straffälligenhilfe“, Aachen with Belgium and Maastricht.
  - the co-operation could take place on the level of regions with a common languages (German, French), as simultaneous translation services are expensive and, therefore, reserved usually to rich professional associations, governments and the European Institutions,
  - or one could admit the fact that English has become the European “Lingua Franca” (as has been the case in industry and commerce for some time), which would ease the communication considerably on the European level.

- c) How **useful** would an EAPV be and how could it be **financed**?

The Italian project of the year 2000 foresaw a sort of European platform, an exchange on-line of legal/prison subjects to give the European public more visibility on prison matters. In the 1990s, there was an intense debate in Italy on the social aspects of imprisonment which led to the foundation of the “Conferenza Nazionale Volontariato Giustizia”. The CNVG’s aim was to carry the national debate on social fundamentals into the neighbouring countries involving the European institutions and social organisations already in place. Obtaining a consulting status at the European Council, exchanging useful information among the local, regional and national associations were some of the additional objectives. This project went into some detail, including a financial projection for its functioning. Pursuing such an ambitious aim would be (whatever its final definition) reasonable only if sufficient financial means for its policy-making and co-ordinating function could be obtained. But it is a stern reality that most of the NGO’s already have problems in financing their present projects. Financing a European organisation in addition?

It is likely that European institutions and national governments would be favourable to it only if it could be **PROVEN** that prison volunteers are indispensable and effective in a **MEASURABLE WAY** to help reduce re-offending. Another possibility would be if privatisation advanced even more quickly than at present, because the states can no longer afford the prison system in its present form. The stronger involvement of the volunteers would then become indispensable.

Most criminologists, members of the CEP, educators and promoters of prison health work for and are paid in one way or another by their national administrations. Their additional activities on a European level are, therefore, paid directly or indirectly by their own governments. The ordinary voluntary prison visitor and volunteer, on the other hand, usually work in the private sector. Consequently, an additional European activity would have to be paid out of their own pocket, as is the case



essentially for his prison work on a national level.

This present, rather general report shows already how the working methods of the volunteers differ from one European country to the other. The working of some organisations is very original and innovative so that it would be useful to make it known Europe-wide. A greater involvement of Civil Society, networking and **offering what the delinquent needs for a lasting (re)socialisation are required and not only what the State and traditional volunteer associations are willing to give.** Only a well structured and well-equipped “European Confederation of Prison Volunteers” with a clear mandate could carry out effectively the analysis and exchange of the important volume of information to organisations working in the same or in complementary fields.

- d) Without doubt, most local, regional, national, humanitarian, religious or non-confessional associations could agree to a basic European “**Charter of Prison Visitors/Volunteers**”, because the humanitarian principles are practically the same everywhere. However, the working method and public image of a “European Association” could create problems. Should it:
- be discreet and work hand-in-hand with the national prison administrations (source of the essential funds for the upkeep of the volunteer organisations and on which they depend for the day-to-day work)?
  - Display in public its humanitarian principles, oppose openly certain questionable trends in jurisdiction and prison practices, criticise too cautious rehabilitation efforts, act as the mouthpiece of the European prison volunteers at conferences – in other words, should it be more “militant” and have a lobby function as the “Italian 2000 project” advocates?
  - Try to function like a dynamic, multinational, European NGO or should it be limited to an “administrative turn around Office” and to loose personal contacts among directors of the national voluntary organisations (people who change their function frequently and are overloaded with work on national level anyway)?
  - Use English as the language of communication right from the start which would simplify communication a great deal, but hurt national sensitivities of some members (the experience of Eurochips and EPEA would be valuable in this regard) ?
- e) Whereas in Western Europe, prison volunteer organisations are an integral part of the social tissue, the situation in **Eastern Europe** (which also signed up to the 108 Prison Rules) is largely unknown. Following the idea of the EU preamble for a “Europe coming together to an ever closer union”, of which the 108 Prison Rules are a visible proof, this new “European Association” (ideally helped by the Council of Europe) could
- carry out a study similar to the present one in order to know the situation of the voluntary prison organisation, their status and working methods in Eastern European countries,
  - encourage initiatives for the foundation of “National Associations of Prison visitors” (the American evangelists of the “Prison Fellowship” have been working in Eastern Europe for some time. They did not wait for the “new prison rules”, but went ahead according to their missionary convictions).

### 13. How do the prison visitors organisations finance themselves?

This report will not attempt to speculate on this important problem, because reliable information is scarce. At any rate, there are big differences:

- a. In small organisations everyone is a volunteer. Their members benefit at best from reimbursement of travel expenses.
- b. Bigger “all-volunteer” associations may have a voluntary management and a salaried half or full-time acting “general secretary” and full or half-time helpers. The subsidies from the government, local authorities, foundations, spontaneous donations and membership fees allow the accounts to be kept in balance (often with difficulty).
- c. More structured organisations with full-time staff, professionals and volunteers which work with social services on the basis of defined contracts or programs, (for example in education, detoxification, accommodation, supervision of community service, foreigners, children of prisoners and probation) receive lump sums, daily indemnification fees and part of the "fines" which represent the bulk of their income.
- d. Enabling them to continue their activities, the non-profit associations must find ever new financial sources. Particularly in England and Germany, the prison volunteer organisations appeal through fund raising actions to foundations, banks, commercial and industrial companies, football clubs and private sponsors much in the way big humanitarian organisations (Médecins Sans Frontières, Unicef, Oxfam) have been in the habit of doing for a long time.
- e. It appears that only a negligible part of the “Church taxes” in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, the Italian “otto per mille” and the Spanish “IFPF” find their way to religious prison voluntary organisations.
- f. There are other organisations, charities and commercial companies in which volunteer work, salaries, personal expenditure and commercial profit cannot be always easily separated. This is the case mainly with professional associations using also volunteers, the production companies operating inside and outside prisons and associations closely involved in paid social programs for the prison administration.

The overwhelming reality is that the associations of voluntary prison visitors receive very little financial support from the state. The probably more than 100.000 volunteers working in and out of Western Europe’s prisons do so **without ever receiving a penny**, or, at best, having their travel expenses reimbursed (this is not the case in France where they can be declared only in the annual income-tax return).

14. Here are some of the more interesting points of the complete report:

#### **B - Contextual Information:**

##### Statistics:

- They show that the prison population has increased much quicker in the last 10 years than reported crime.
- Several studies on recidivism show the prevailing tendencies: high probability of re-offending for the young, drug and alcohol addicts and violence-prone males. Incarcerated delinquents re-offend more often than those who do community service instead.
- What sort of a person is the detainee and what kind of help does he expect for a life without delinquency? There are revealing statistics from France, Scotland, Austria and USA.
- 3 tables sum up the essential figures of the prison situation in Western Europe.

##### International Prison Organisations

- The work of the Council of Europe and its projects,

- The International Prison Fellowship and its evangelical mission around the world,
- Several federations in specialized fields are already working on European level, such as Eurochip, EMNA and the European Forum for Victim-Offender mediation.

### Privatisation

This chapter tries to establish a link between voluntary prison visiting and the reasons for the trend towards private companies building prisons and running all kinds of private prison services.

### United States

America has been the forerunner in many aspects of modern life, including crime and penitentiary innovations. This chapter tries to shed light on the “zero tolerance” principle, the massive number of prisoners it has produced and the racial disparities. It describes also the important involvement of evangelical churches and movements in prison activities.

### Miscellaneous information and documents

- Comments on the new 108 prison rules, their expected impact in the future, and the modest part foreseen for the prison volunteers.
- The influence of the media and politics on sentencing and prison matters,
- A doctorate in preparation on the ethical dispositions of prison visitors,
- Several studies on mental health in prison, sexual violence and the effects of custodial vs. non-custodial sentences in re-offending,
- Theatre and the arts in prison and reflections on “migration and prison”.
- In May 2008 the annual congress of the “European Forum of applied criminology” has taken place in Strasbourg. The theme was “L’engagement bénévole et la criminalité en Europe – the commitment of the voluntary sector and criminality in Europe”. Interesting contributions are summed up in chapter 25.

## **C - Reports per country:**

### France -

- The SPIP (Service Pénitentiaire d’Insertion et de Probation) is organised centrally and on departmental level both for the open/closed prison system and for Probation.
- In addition to many locally working groups there are a number of nation-wide organisations such as the ANVP, Génépi (students for education), la CIMADE, AUXILA, FREP, FNARS, FARAPEJ and UFRAMA.
- The discussion around the orientation of prison matters is vivid in the press and on the websites of the voluntary associations.
- The “Groupe National de Concertation Prison” which consists of 9 major associations and federations organises once a year an “action week” with debates, presentations, films and publications to make the public aware of prison matters.
- The new "loi pénitentiaire" is disappointing for all volunteer associations.

### Germany -

- Not only do the prison administrations depend individually on the 16 Länder, the penal legislation will be decided by them in the future too. The voluntary prison visitors seem to work on a more local or regional level.
- Ever since 1977, the main objective of the penal legislation has been the lasting reintegration of the detainees into society, not the serving of the sentence. The official documents reflect this aim very clearly. Lately, however, security considerations have become a greater priority again.
- Many voluntary organisations offer complementary services: from prevention via legal aid, “listening”, group counselling, help for the families to probation and beyond. The work of the German volunteers seems to be less “segmented”.

- An independent report about prison volunteers in Nordrhein-Westphalia analyses their work and demonstrates the appreciation shown by the full-time professionals.
- “Freie Hilfe Berlin” has published an inventory of 160 prison volunteer organisations with their activity and location,
- The privatisation of state probation has started in Baden-Württemberg,
- The University of Tübingen is working on an extensive study with the title “Care of offenders and prisoners under pressure for change”. Their structures and efficiency will be analysed. Final results end of 2008.

#### England and Wales -

- They have followed more closely the American example and, as a consequence, have today the highest detention rate in Europe and a virulent tabloid press which pushes for more imprisonment. Re-offending remains high in spite of important investment in rehabilitation measures.
- The “National Association of Official Prison Visitors” – NAOPV is an organisation which greatly resembles the French ANVP.
- The “Independent Custody Visiting Organisation – ICVA” is an association of volunteers who visit police station to ensure that the procedures are respected.
- The “Shannon Trust” uses volunteers and qualified detainees to teach reading to the illiterates. The Samaritans co-operate with selected prisoners to prevent suicide (peer support scheme).
- NOMS is a government initiative for the reduction of re-offending. At the heart of it is the prison volunteer in the function of a “tutor”. Involvement also of suitable detainees as part of their own re-socialisation.

#### Scotland -

- In England, Scotland and Ireland “Prison Visitors Centres” are much discussed and sponsored institutions. The “Women’s Royal Voluntary Service” runs 8 of these centres in Scotland.
- HOPE and SACRO are 2 associations which cover most of the assistance to (ex)prisoners and their families.

#### Italy -

- The Italian voluntary prison visitors are remarkably well organised, not only through the large Catholic federation SEAC, but also by the “Conferenza Nazionale Volontariato Giustizia” which unites virtually all voluntary organisations involved in prison life.
- The “Fondazione Italiana per il Volontariato” is an institute specialized in voluntary work. It has developed a computer program which functions today in nearly all Italian prisons which not only registers and analyses quantitatively all movements involving volunteers in and out of prison, but tries even to evaluate their acceptance by professionals and detainees.
- The study “Volontariato nel carcere – le associazioni presenti in Toscana” is remarkable for the subjects covered and its in-depth analysis. The AVP, Florence is a typical example of a REGIONAL association comprising religious and non-confessional volunteers working together on certain projects.
- Le project “Forum Europeo Volontariato Giustizia” written in 2000, seems to be the first to envisage a “European Association of Prison Volunteers”.

#### Switzerland -Austria -

- Many prison volunteers work within the Swiss Cantonal Probation Services which are remarkably organised; intensive preparation of the volunteer for his work.
- For many years Neustart has administered all probation and complementary work. Neustart’s cost is considerably lower not only because 60 % of the employees are volunteers, but because they work according to the principles of a private company.

Neustart has started working in Germany too (not without resistance from the public sector).

- “Schritt für Schritt – step by step” is a EU sponsored project which tries to determine the discriminations which prisoners suffer when they are looking for a job. The statistics which accompany this enquiry, show the precarious situation in which most prisoners are.

#### Spain, Catalonia, Portugal -

- The prison administration seems very well organised. There is an inventory of 60 pages on internet with all the voluntary associations, their programs and the prisons in which they work. A remarkable piece of public information. The administration has openly criticised politicians and judges for the high level of prison population and overcrowding,
- The catholic chaplains of the Pastoral Penitenciaria with 2500 voluntary members work on all levels of prison life.
- But there is also a large number of non-confessional organisations which cover a great variety of prisoners’ needs. The fight against addiction of every kind seems to be particularly active.
- In 2007 the “Consejo Social Penitenciario” which comprises the major NGOs, public institutions and the prison administration, was founded.
- In Catalonia, the prison administration has a clear concept of the education of voluntary prison visitors.
- In Portugal an independent professor was appointed to compare the effective introduction of new legislation with the current practices. As in other countries, the introduction of innovative measures is slow or outright ignored.

#### Scandinavia and Finland -

- The Red Cross has a virtual exclusivity for prison visiting in these countries.
- Denmark in particular has conducted an exemplary prison policy for many years which has been rewarded with low re-offending rates.
- The disproportionately high evasion rates are surprising. In fact, they have nothing to do with dramatic prison breaks, but only with the non-reintegration of detainees after the frequent weekend visits to the families which are an important part of the Scandinavian way of rehabilitation.
- Kriminalvarden, the Swedish prison administration, tries to balance cultural and educational shortcomings with an impressive offer of general, professional and cultural education.
- Finland could be a good example for the gradual introduction of prison reforms in accordance with the social evolution. The study of the prison authorities on re-offending reflects the basic trends in all of Western Europe.

#### Netherlands and Belgium -

- The readjustments within a truly liberal society are visible through tougher policies on drugs and juvenile delinquency,
- BONJO is a federation of 70 voluntary prison associations for which it acts as the sole representative to the Ministry of Justice and encourages these organisations to cooperate among themselves for particular projects. Bonjo is the focal point for all prison volunteer work.
- Exodus, with its principle of “living, working, relationships and perspectives for the future” is exemplary for the reintegration of prisoners into society.
- The vast offer of general and professional possibilities of education is quite remarkable in Belgium (FAFEP, ADEPPI, Insert and Derode Antriciet).
- There are plenty of volunteer organisations in the Walloon region.

**Many of these “Conclusions” (which are available also in French, German, Italian and Spanish) will remain obscure without reading the 4/2008 update of the complete report. It is written in English and comprises about 115 pages subdivided into 5 “contextual subjects – B” and the “reports of 19 countries - C”. The complete report is accessible via the home page of the website “<http://visiteurs.prison.free.fr/>”. Most of the support documents which form the basis of this report, can also be consulted on internet.**