

A future-oriented solution to old problems and new challenges

First European Conference for small scale and community integrated forms of detention

24 h preparatory meeting

The efficacy and efficiency of prisons have been questioned for decades. Research has not only shown that little or no positive impact can be expected from imprisonment (Martinson, 1974; Council of Europe 1987), but also that imprisonment may have serious harmful effects – in social, psychological and financial terms (Sykes, 1958; Crewe, 2011). Nevertheless, detention rates remain high, which is also true for recidivism rates.

Penitentiary initiatives, which aim to work in a more qualitative way on rehabilitation within prison walls, have also faced an uphill battle.

Prisons are institutes of considerable magnitude. Their size is usually bigger than what is needed to develop a productive period of detention for inmates. The size of these institutions detracts from a more personalised approach as energy is required for their management and control.

Prisons are institutes in which security and uniformity predominate. This entails that everyone who works or stays there is subordinated to rules and management processes that mainly serve the institution. This leaves very little space for work to address the aspects of prisoners' behaviour that led to crime and individual change. In general, detention leads to a reorientation of behaviour focussed on sociability within the prison walls and segregated from society itself.

Prisons are places that are carefully cut off from the outside world. Walls, fences, bars and towers draw very clear borders. Prisons are not integrated in the community/in society. As a consequence prisoners are faceless during the time they serve their sentence, which makes the outside world conceive of them as dangerous individuals. Ultimately, this makes the re-entry and acceptance of ex-prisoners very difficult.

Prisons have desensitised people in society in how to deal with conflicts and the consequences of conflict and in this way have exacerbated the problems of prisoner reintegration.

On the contrary, detention as a sentence should aim to facilitate reintegration, rehabilitation and restoration.

Evidence and good practices show us the way to a detention that rests on three complementary pillars: (1) a small-scale concept, (2) differentiation and (3) proximity. This means that the prison sentence should no longer be executed in large institutions, but in small-scale **detention houses**, ensuring individual guidance, community involvement and

orientation rather than control, segregation, alienation and repression. A large number of small detention houses would not only make it possible to differentiate in terms of security level, training and assistance programs, thereby meeting prisoners' individual needs, but also to prepare prisoners' reintegration close to their homes. Finally, every detention house should play an economic, social or cultural role in its neighbourhood (which can differ according to its' security level) in order to reduce the gap between prison and society and contributing to restore the damage done to society and society members.

In order to start a **European movement to realise those small scale, community oriented forms of detention**, a First European Conference will be organised in spring 2019. At this Conference, academic partners, policymakers and field workers can elaborate their insights and arguments on the subject.

The pilot group invites you to join them for a 24 hour meeting, to prepare that Conference. This meeting will take place on Monday 30 and Tuesday 31 October, in [Diocesaan Centrum Groenhove](#) (Bosdreef 5, Torhout, Belgium).

Program

Monday 30/10/2017

12h arrival, meal
14h presentation of the new detention model and manifestation (pilot group)
16h pause
16h30 discussion, question and answers on the model and manifestation
18h30 meal
20h informal contact

Tuesday 31/10/2017

9h preparing the first European Congress (title/aims/content/forms/speakers/audience)
10h30 pause
11h to do's
12h meal
14h departure

Pilot group

Gert Jan Slump, *co-founder and criminologist at Restorative Justice Nederland*

Marjan Gryson, *co-founder of Touché and board member of The Houses*

Jaap Brandligt, *director of Bonjo*

Rob Schuddeimat, *(Formerly) Head of Youth-probation WSG the Netherlands. Specialist in mentally challenged youngsters who are involved in troublemaking and crime*

Hans Claus, *secretary of The Houses*