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EUROPEAN ORGANISATION OF
PRISON AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

ECOR Conference, February 10th – 12th 2016, Stuttgart, Germany

Speaker's report – Gabriela Slovákova

In February 2016 I had a chance to represent EuroPris at the **ECOR** (European Communities of Restoration) **conference**. It was a very fruitful meeting focused mainly on Restorative Justice.

My contribution was focused on the important role of after care, governmental and non-governmental organizations cooperating with the Czech Prison Service with the joint aim to lower the high numbers of recidivism and help inmates to reenter the society. As a part of my speech I presented a comparison of various approaches how to define recidivism since each state has a different attitude to this issue. One of the joint themes of almost all speakers was a **call for professional European research and for comparable data** to make professional recommendations and joint efforts to lower the recidivism rates. **No doubts, the role of Restorative Justice is essential for making the society and victims of crime safer.**

The ECOR project focused on the exchange and development of good practices and on promoting alternatives of traditional detention and integration programs after release (including programs focused on addiction).

ECOR seeks for alternative solutions for prison overcrowding, social discrimination, high recidivism with the methodology in which communities of restoration help inmates and ex-offenders take responsibility.

ECOR is a transnational project on European level, co-funded by the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Union. During two years (2014-2016) seven institutions from Germany, Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary, Austria and the United Kingdom pilot ECOR sites in prisons and aftercare centres, backed by scientific monitoring and evaluation. The Prison Fellowship International was strongly represented in this project as well as the Bue Cross Germany.

The ECOR project built on the successful experience and understanding of the APAC methodology.

APAC prison methodology ([Associação de Proteção e Assistência aos Condenados in English translated as: Association for Protection and Assistance of Convicts](#)) was developed in Brazil over 40 years ago and is now used in more than 50 independent APAC prisons in Brazil. Additionally, approximately 150 units have been established in state run prisons in Brazil. The original **APAC prison** in San Paulo, Brazil, was reported as the **“first contemporary prison” to totally apply with a faith-based approach to the whole system of imprisonment.**

The APAC methodology has been extended, usually through the network of Prison Fellowship International, to 12 other countries including some in Europe. The ECOR project aimed to understand and adopt best practice and adapt the APAC methodology to the European context. Consequently it can be made available and disseminated across Europe.

ECOR has adopted APAC's holistic approach to rehabilitation by empowering offenders to take responsibility for their crimes, provide communal living conditions for participating prisoners, and facilitate their transition to the community. The ECOR project has adapted the APAC methodology and, as a result, advocates the following 10 essential elements in 'communities of restoration' where inmates live in a community setting in a separate unit or facility away from the general prison population:



- 1) community participation,
- 2) participants helping participants/positive peer culture,
- 3) work and education,
- 4) spirituality,
- 5) human valorization,
- 6) including the family in the recovery process,
- 7) involving volunteers,
- 8) using a merit system (social integration through gradually granting more freedom),
- 9) integrating the participants into the community step by step,
- 10) using restorative justice principles (especially victim awareness and victim reconciliation programs) and encouraging restitution.

All the speakers and participants confirmed that the prison system itself cannot solve the high recidivism rates and without the consequent after-release care it is impossible to change the high numbers of prisoners. Communities of Restoration should be an official part of modern prison/social system if we want to succeed.

In Leonberg, Germany there is such a project running on the principles on ECOR/APAC methodology called “**Seehaus**”. This alternative to prison sentence is designed for juvenile and young man offenders and meets all the above mentioned principles. All participants of the ECOR Conference had a chance to visit Seehaus. The conference was concluded by the speech of **Rainer Stickelberger**, Minister of Justice, State of Baden-Württemberg, Germany who strongly supported modern and effective alternatives to imprisonment such as Seehaus. The participants worked out a resolution with three recommendations trying to support and spread the idea of communities of restoration among Europe.

Resolution of the ECOR Conference, February 10th – 12th 2016 in Stuttgart/Leonberg, Germany

Building on the recommendations of the EU and the experience of the ECOR project, which was made possible by the support of European funding, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1

We encourage NGOs and other organisations in the criminal justice field to continue to follow examples of best practice and of experience of running units in prison. We also recommend using alternative ways to run a prison, or an alternative form of prison that includes resettlement, especially using the APAC methodology or the main elements of it.

Recommendation 2

We encourage prison and criminal justice officials, and other related statutory bodies, to allow their criminal justice systems to incorporate charitable NGOs that run separate communities in prisons or penal institutions, or alternatives to prison. This is especially for programmes using the APAC methodology and other, similar programmes based on restorative justice.

Recommendation 3

We encourage continued development of the APAC methodology, in Brazil and worldwide, and from the experience and findings of the ECOR project, and similar models of prison programmes and management. We think it would be helpful for this to be encouraged by both institutional statutory funding bodies, for example through targeted operational grants at state, national, and European levels, and by non-statutory foundations, umbrella organisations, and networks operating in these fields.



Speakers:

Anne Babb

General Secretary of the International Federation of the Blue Cross, Switzerland

Marita Derbach-Jüpner

Head of Department, Ministry of Justice, State of Brandenburg, Germany

Valdeci Ferreira

Prison Fellowship Brazil, Developer of the APAC Methodology, Brazil

Sue Hall

Vice-President, Confederation of European Probation, United Kingdom

Col. Attila Juhász

Council for Penological Cooperation of the European Council; Principal Administrator of National Prison Service and Commander of the Heves County prison, Director, Hungary

Dr. Caroline Lanskey

Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Prof. Friedrich Lösel

Institute of Psychology, University of Erlangen- Nürnberg, Germany and Professor Emeritus of Criminology, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Magyari Márton

Executive Director of Prison Fellowship Hungary

Tobias Merckle

Executive Chairman
Seehaus e.V., Germany

Thomas Peschel

Alumni of the Blue Cross programme, State of Brandenburg, Germany

Dr. Klaus Richter

Blue Cross Germany, Chairman of the Board, Germany

Gabriela Slováková, Ph.D.

Prison Governor and Executive Board Member of the International Corrections & Prisons Association (ICPA), EuroPris expert, Czech Republic

Rainer Stickelberger

Minister of Justice, State of Baden-Württemberg, Germany

Daniel van Ness

Executive Director of the Centre for Justice & Reconciliation, Prison Fellowship International, USA

