

## Report on the study visit to Göttingen

*Prof. Kerner: 'Repeat offence represents a second chance for the authorities to work with a second offender and put him [or her?]\* back on the rails' \*est-ce que le programme est mixte ou uniquement masculine ?*

Thursday morning:

### JVA Rosdorf – The open prison

#### 1. Presentation of the project and public

The *Länder* having control over their prison policy, the government of Lower Saxony opened the JVA—or open prison—in 1982, in the premises of a former youth club located in one of the Göttingen suburbs. The centre has since been enlarged and developed and takes in a maximum of 125 young people aged 15-24 (average: 19 years and 6-7 months, 19.8) sentenced to a maximum of three and a half years for violent acts (no petty offences). An annex houses 72 young people in Hammeln, and a *Land* institution is specialised in the 20-27 age group.

This experimental centre, singled out several times at the federal level and maintained for more than 25 years (yet still the only one of its kind in Germany), lies within a repressive preventive whole that is complex and inventive. The centre is not, in the strict sense, conceived as an alternative to prison, of which it preserves confinement, but sets itself apart by the absence of isolation. Entrance into this structure follows selection by the authorities (of the *Land* and the centre), in keeping with the personality and facts for which the person was sentenced (the decision-making team consists of a psychologist, a social worker and a judge).

It is a matter of determining what the best solution is for each one, the open prison being the last chance before confinement (18.19% of the young people sentenced in Lower Saxony are in this type of structure). Some profiles are dismissed straightaway (drug addiction, serious illnesses, pyromaniacs), but approximately 50% of the dossiers studied are accepted

The decision is not definitive: in the event of using this semi-freedom to perpetrate or prepare a criminal act, return to a closed centre is immediate. But this *a priori* reflection explains the limited rate of repeat offences upon release (approximately 40%, as opposed to 80-90% for closed prison). The entire project is based on the young people's motivation for an open solution.

- Open prison in the community

Trust is primordial = a relationship of trust between the prisoners and the social worker is indispensable, and the success of the project is based on this relationship.

Success relies on responsibility, continuity and information

The open centre is better received than the traditional prison (outside of town, with the bizarre impression of seeing the Wall).

As much connection with parents and family as possible, even though family contexts are often unfavourable to the reduction of violence.

#### 2. Objectives

- individual and collective life

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Upon arrival, the young people spend a few weeks in the only building resembling a classic prison—locked doors, bars on the window—, for the risks of escape are still too great at that point, despite the ‘sorting’ carried out in principle by the authorities. After some twenty days, the convict—if he so wishes—returns to the open centre and its obligations. The buildings being in fact open on the neighbourhood, the only wall is mental, for outings require permission.

Beyond the individual responsibility to not give into the temptation to escape, each prisoner moves into a flat of six individual rooms (3x8), overseen by a youth worker, and within which daily individual and group tasks are assigned. The objective, according to Siegfried Löprick, initiator of the project, is to ‘set realistic living standards’ and experiment with conflict management other than by violence. Here, the role of the warders is a deciding factor: beyond their primary security function, they are party to social work, in liaison with the specialists. In the flats, persons with comparable profiles (types of offence, length of sentence) are grouped together. One of them is specifically open to those who hope to break with narcotics use; here, entrance is on condition of agreeing to regular urine tests and specific work with the social workers (more applications than places).

- **professional training**

The second objective is to acquire technical skills on the basis of the wishes and needs of each (no standard). Professional training is carried out between the classic establishments in Göttingen (for the theoretical training) and the centre itself (which has a woodworking and metal workshop, a garden, a garage and a restaurant, all open to visitors).

During the visit to the metal shop, the person in charge insisted on the specificity of the training at the JVA. This is naturally secondary as regards presence at the centre but functions as a motivation for both the present (outside work and classes, slight remuneration) and for the future (acquisition of a skill that can increase the person’s standing after release). The challenge is finding a motivating activity, learning to meet the needs of a market and integrate into a team and its schedules and constraints. This favours a mental attitude different from that of a young inmate and favours reintegration upon release from prison, for the young person is already in a real-life context.

- **Free time:** sports 3-4 times a week, for relaxation, the free time occupation + health steps (project START) + work on managing a budget and debt

**3. Financing and partnerships**

- Decrease in public financing

From 180 to 78 employees since 1982. Owing to the costs of personnel and the social and pedagogical project, numerous activities (in particular, training programmes) have been developed by outside partners. The centre also works with NGOs (advice), police and legal institutions (awareness/reflection), schools and social workers.

The project had begun with European financing under the ESF (European Social Fund); now they are trying to perpetuate federal funds, as well as draw on city funds and pursue partnerships with the private sector.

One of the partners in the project is the NGO Jugendhilfe (‘Youth Help’), which runs the BASIS project.

## **BASIS – Accompaniment on release following a stay in a juvenile detention centre**

Owing to both the *a priori* selection and its own structure, the JVA-Rosdorf open prison can pride itself on a repeat-offence rate half that of traditional prisons for young delinquents (approx. 40% vs. 80%). Although the objective of ‘zero repeat offence’ appears illusory, the JVA team has nonetheless developed, since 2001, a pilot project that has achieved this goal for a limited group of volunteers (16 in all). Having identified, amongst the causes of repeat offences, the difficulties on release linked to the loss of all the supports provided by the JVA, the social workers have sought to make release a process and not a break. According to Christine Stolze, the project co-ordinator, it is not the responsibility of the penitentiary system to take care of the consequences of incarceration, but the final months can be made the most of to ensure a transition.

In partnership with the Jugendhilfe Gottingen association and with financing by the authorities of the *Land* (Prevention Council and Ministry of Justice), since 2002 specific supervision and a flat have received certain young prisoners—volunteers selected on the basis of an interview—in preparation for their life ‘afterwards’. Facing a ‘social but bureaucratic’ state and the vicious circle of crossed requests for documents (rent receipt, work contract, proof of social aid), the beneficiaries of the project are put in contact with all the institutions concerned, contacted beforehand and brought together by the team. The continuation of the apprenticeship can also be prepared by the prisoner by beginning training in his city of origin, thereby leaving the centre whilst remaining under its legal responsibility and in daily contact with the team. The project is based on permanent support **before** and **after** release from prison. It is conceived round the **network**, the involvement as early as possible in close collaboration of all the partners concerned by the social reintegration of young people getting out of prison. These partners are primarily represented by

- the Church,
- sports clubs,
- addiction counselling centres,
- employment agencies,
- probation offices,
- social aid agencies,
- schools,
- police,
- private companies,
- vocational training centres,
- etc., etc.

The young person preparing for release has a capital of 24 hours to spend outside (which are usually used up the first week). He/She can also spend weekends with the family, if the social worker deems that the home environment is conducive to helping reintegration. Work is paid at a rate of 1€/hour, which represents pocket money for outings in town as well as a small capital upon release from prison.

Communication between the young person and social worker following him/her is quite close and can range from the obligatory weekly telephone call up to 2-3 calls a day in case of a problem.

**Noon: Lunch in the framework of the open prison: the Programme Café**

Another project taking place inside the open prison is the **Programme Café**, where young people are in apprenticeship for the cooking and catering professions (meal service, bartending) so that they might easily find a job upon being released from prison.

#### ***Thursday afternoon***

##### **D. Presentation of the city of Göttingen's activities in terms of prevention**

*See the attached presentation by Monika Gleitze, specialised youth worker, holder of a state diploma, working for the youth legal protection division, a specialised division of the City of Göttingen's youth department.*

Project monitoring

#### ***Friday morning***

**Visit to the headquarters of the Jugendhilfe Göttingen NGO** – Youth help. Presentation of the different projects being carried out with the support of the city of Göttingen (*see attached presentation*).

The NGO works a great deal with young people in difficulty. They have actions either in the street or in schools, as well as reception centres for the first contacts, then they accompany the young people towards specialists according to their needs.

The **Blechtrommel** project offers specialised counselling for young people aged 12-27 who are going through crises.

The **Kontakt** project offers to help young people in the street to define a professional project and accompany them in all the steps. It initially began with some sixty homeless young people.

The **Second Chance** project focuses on school absenteeism for the under-13s, working with parents—especially the mothers—, youth workers, the police and social aid agencies.

The **Sprint** Project takes place in the open prison and proposes to make young people more aware in order to live a healthy life. The topics broached are sports, physical training, drugs, sexuality, family planning... The programme is developed under the aegis of the WHO and financed by the national lottery.

A special project focuses on a 'difficult' neighbourhood of Göttingen, **WeststadtBuro**, inhabited for the most part by immigrants. Its aim is to facilitate the children's integration into the schools and the parents on the Göttingen job market.

They work a great deal with the city, the police and other specialised NGOs (drug addiction, victim shelters, etc.)

*See attached presentation.*

##### **Presentation of the Police's prevention activities in the schools**

The person in charge of the juvenile prevention cell of the Göttingen municipal police presented the arrangements and measures set up in order to heighten children's awareness as to crime prevention. In all cases, the accent is placed on the educational component of each play activity.

*See the attached presentation of police activities.*

##### **Visit to a vocational training centre**

The object of this visit is a highly successful example of public-private cooperation. The centre takes in young delinquents who have been sentenced either to alternative sentences or

young people from the open prison who have just completed their training in the various professions proposed. This part makes up a third of the centre's young people. The rest consists primarily of young people who have dropped out of school or committed acts of violence in school. In all cases, they are obliged to be there for training. In the event of refusal, they are either sent to a closed prison or there are sanctions at the level of receiving social benefits either by their parents or by they themselves for unemployment. Obtaining social benefits is thus based on regular attendance at the training classes.

The objective is to stabilise these people who are quite fragile and therefore quite easily influenced. Through these classes the idea is to inculcate a certain responsibility in them and help them get into a daily routine that corresponds to everyday life. Each one benefits from individualised training according to his personality and needs.

Aside from the training classes in ironwork, masonry, gardening and computer skills, the centre also gives German and mathematics classes in order to help the school drop-outs to catch up, as well as classes in social sciences such as conflict and debt management.

The centre has become financially viable thanks to partnerships with private companies. However, its success is also due to very close collaboration with all the players involved in reintegration: schools, municipalities, employment agencies, addiction prevention agencies, youth help centres, parents and religious authorities. The furniture made in these workshops is sold at market price, allowing for the purchase of competitive material and minimal remuneration of the apprentices.