

Eurochips

The European Network for Children with Imprisoned Parents



Annual Report 2011

Help us help them



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About us

Each year, more than 800,000 children within the EU are affected by the imprisonment of a parent. These children frequently experience trauma stemming from the separation from their parent, social stigmas and prejudices associated with prisons and violations of their international rights (as stipulated by Article 9 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Eurochips is the only network in Europe working exclusively on behalf of these children.

Who we are:

The European Network for Children of Imprisoned Parents (Eurochips), funded by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation, is a European-wide initiative on behalf of European children with imprisoned parents.

With our network of European partners active within prison-related, child's rights and welfare fields, we seek to boost awareness and achieve new ways of thinking, acting and interacting on issues concerning children with imprisoned parents.

Our Mission:

At Eurochips, our mission is to safeguard the social, political and judicial inclusion of children with an imprisoned parent, while fostering the pursuit and exchange of knowledge which enhances good practices, and contributes to a better understanding of the psychological, emotional and social development of these children.

What we do:

Acting as a voice for children with imprisoned parents, we boost public awareness by educating judges, schools, childcare professionals, prison staff and relevant organisations and administra-

tions on the plight of children with imprisoned parents. In 2012 we are completing a three year project entitled Children of Prisoners, Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health (COPING). The study spans six European nations and research findings are expected to have international application for prison-policy reform.

Where we work:

Acting as a voice for children with imprisoned parents, we boost public awareness by educating judges, schools, childcare professionals, prison staff and relevant organisations and administrations on the plight of these children.

Our network spans over 15 European nations with partner organisations working towards maintaining the rights of children with imprisoned parents throughout the EU. Our primary office is based in Paris, France where we share offices with our French partner, Relais Enfants Parents.

Our Members:

We have a European-based network consisting of full, associate, affiliate and individual members each working in their own capacity towards the rights of these children.

Each partner organisation brings with it a set of culturally-specific standards and social norms which provides the network with a diverse range of perspectives and opportunities. Combining these elements together, we actively seek to work towards an EU-based set of guidelines for children of imprisoned parents based on various methods currently put into place throughout Europe.

Together, it is our objective that the needs and rights of this vulnerable group of children are met at a unified international level.

About us

Initiatives we promote:

- Special child-friendly visiting areas in prisons as well as extended visits for children.
- Accompaniment of children by specially-trained volunteers when prison visits are hindered by geographical distances, family conflicts, logistical problems, etc.
- Initiatives that facilitate communication between children and detainee parents, such as increased telephone access.
- Parenting programs such as discussion groups and crafts workshops in prisons where parents can create objects for their child/children.
- Measures that give parents the means to

exercise their parental responsibilities from the time of arrest, and during any subsequent proceedings, by promoting disciplinary measures and custodial alternatives to prison whenever possible, particularly for mothers with very young children.

We believe that:

- Children have a right to maintain contact with an imprisoned parent when it is in his or her best interest, a right enshrined in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Supporting prisoners' children is a long-term vision crucial to society.

Our Practices:

- All of our action is guided by the best interest of the child.
- We take a holistic approach, not only working with the child, but with all those involved in the child's life to produce healthier family dynamics.
- We strive to build partnerships that help us fulfill our mission.
- We preserve our credibility by remaining independent and objective.



Our board members

President Alain Bouregba



Alain Bouregba is a Doctor of Psychology and a Psychoanalyst. He is the Educational Head of Relais Enfants Parents (REP) and a lecturer at Paris V University. Alain has written several books dealing with children's psychology. His work is aimed towards raising awareness on children with imprisoned parents.

Treasurer Elias Kastner



Elias Kastner is the founder and President of the Spanish association Niños sin Barreras in Barcelona. Prior to that he provided support to ex-detainees including women, their families and their children.

Board Member Kate Philbrick



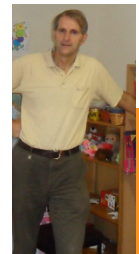
Kate Philbrick was the joint UK national coordinator for Kids VIP 1996 - 2005 and a trustee from 2006 - 2011. Kate also runs a small voluntary organisation in the north of Glasgow supporting vulnerable families and is a Director of Parent Network Scotland.

Vice-President Lucy Gampell



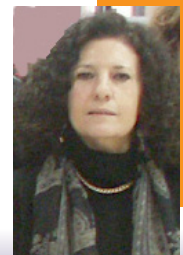
Lucy Gampell is an independent member of the Parole Board for England and Wales. She is also a trustee of the UK charity Clinks. Lucy is the former Director of Action for Prisoners' Families (APF), where she worked for 15 years. Whilst at APF she sat on many government advisory groups and committees.

Secretary Larry de Cleir



A psychotherapist by profession, Larry de Cleir began community youth work in 1990 on the streets of Limerick City with young people considered at risk. He worked with Outreach Barnardos and, in June 2007, became Project Leader of Bedford Row Family Project.

Board Member Lia Sacerdote



Lia Sacerdote is the founder and President of Bambinisenzasbarre in Italy. Since 1997, Lia has worked as a counselor in prison with incarcerated parents. She is the project leader responsible for the activities inside prison - aimed towards protecting the rights of children.

Our member network

Eurochips is keen to extend the partner network in order to further raise awareness on the issue of children with imprisoned parents, establish our expertise and develop projects within the network.

Membership is open to public and private organisations as well as individuals who work for the welfare of children of imprisoned parents, or individuals who simply want to support the cause.

What we provide our members:

- Promotion of their work
- Access to a European network of expertise/exchange of experiences
- Sharing of research and development
- Information on events
- The opportunity to participate in European projects and lobby together for change at the EU level
- Advice on searching for partners in European projects

What our members contribute:

- A commitment to sharing the Eurochips mission
- Helping to 'think network' - or think on a European as well as national level
- A commitment to consolidate and strengthen the network via expertise
- An exchange of intercultural good practice guidelines
- Campaign participation for European Prisoners' Children Week

Types of Membership:

Full

Open to European-based public, governmental, private and non-profit organisations working with or for children of imprisoned parents.

Organisations ideally have a national remit and their work is consistent with the ethos of Eurochips. The Board considers smaller organisations doing excellent work in this field as potential members. Full members actively participate in network operations and have the possibility of steering network development.

All European organisations wishing to be considered for full membership must first become associate members. Full members are voted in during the network's annual General Assembly and are granted full voting rights.

Associate

Open to European-based public, governmental, private and non-profit organisations as well as individuals from Europe working with or on behalf of children with imprisoned parents and/or specialising in prison-related, legal and justice-related or psychological, social and child-welfare fields.

Affiliate

Open to private and public associations and individuals inside or outside Europe.

In 2011, The Eurochips network spanned over 15 European nations as well as affiliate memberships in Brazil, the United States and New Zealand. Member breakdown is as follows:

Full Members: 12

Associate Members: 10

Affiliate Members: 5

Research

The COPING Project

The Children of Prisoners: Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health (COPING)¹ project is Eurochips' major accomplishment to date. Started in January 2010, the EU-research study co-founded by the EU Commission is a child-centred project, which investigates the resilience and vulnerability to mental health problems of children of imprisoned parents. It is the first time that a study of its size focuses on the resilience and vulnerability of children of imprisoned parents throughout Europe.

The study covers 4 countries: Sweden, Romania, Germany and the UK. COPING research findings are aimed towards implementing European and international public policies in the view of enhancing the welfare of children. Support for children in accessing prisons and participating in prison visits, for example, is highly needed since only non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide such services. Moreover these methods vary greatly from one country to another. Often, imprisoned parents need assistance in communicating with their children within the prison environment as such a setting can create tension and anxiety within both parties.

The COPING project has interviewed over 200 children with imprisoned parents in each country using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, to ascertain coping strategies and mental health problems for these young people, which are then compared with normative population samples. Smaller groups of children and parents have been involved in in-depth qualitative interviews to explore the impact of parental imprisonment



1. A copy of the final [COPING report](#) is available online.

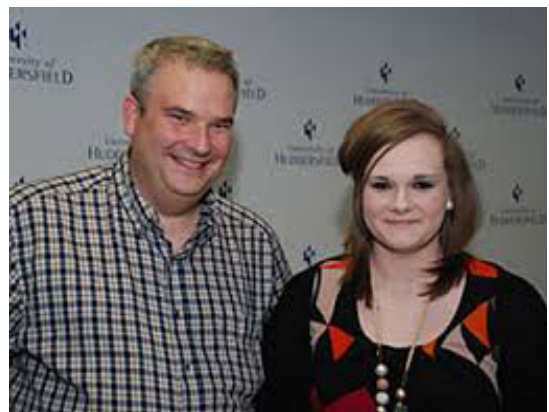
and support services available in greater detail. Interventions to support these families have been comprehensively mapped throughout Europe by the research staff.



Eurochips has been established to implement the project as a Pan-European umbrella organisation. Our mission consists in disseminating information and prospecting further alliances to enhance the research. The international organisation, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) based in Switzerland ensures that our findings have the maximum impact on public policies.

The study has been spearheaded by a consortium of ten member organisations, comprising two from each country where the research is being conducted. Each country group comprises a research institution and an NGO working with prisoners and their families.

The project has its own patron: Pr. Sir Patrick Stewart, Chancellor of the University of Huddersfield and internationally renowned as an actor, has used his own childhood personal experience with domestic violence to campaign against this crime.



Ben Raikes, a researcher and Sian, a young person from within the project pose at the University during a COPING event

Research

Danish Institute of Human Rights Report

On 25th May Eurochips and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) hosted an exhibition of children's art on the theme of parental imprisonment, alongside specially commissioned, powerful sculptures by Mieke Vase, a Paris-based Dutch artist, in an open gallery space within the European Parliament.

The exhibition helped draw people to the launch event of the DIHR & Eurochips' report 'Children of Imprisoned Parents', produced as part of the DG Justice EU-funded study entitled "When the Innocent are Punished – Children of Imprisoned Parents," piloted by the Danish Institute of Human Rights (2009-2011). which was generously hosted by the Danish MEP, Britta Thomsen.

The event was attended by some 70 people from within the Parliament (MEPs, advisors and researchers) and outside organisations - including several Eurochips members who came to support the event.

Over the two days the exhibition was on show, many more 'passers-by' were drawn to the exhibition, spending time to take in the pictures and

read the messages, while several outsiders were spotted reading the 'glossy' report from cover to cover.

Alongside the events, Eurochips and the DIHR held a select number of meetings with representatives from the Euro-

pean Commission, the President of the European Parliament's office and strategically chosen MEPs, who provided extremely useful advice on taking the recommendations forward.

Green Paper

Eurochips submitted a paper following a call sent out by the European Commission this year for their Green Paper on the application of EU criminal justice legislation in the field of detention.

The Green Paper contained 10 questions and the Commission was interested in receiving feedback, comments and replies from persons and organisations with an interest in DG Justice's activities.

The contributors who were invited included legal practitioners such as judges, prosecutors and lawyers, police officers, directors of prison administrations and those working in social and probation services, pre-trial detention centres and prisons, academic circles, relevant NGOs and government bodies.

European institutions, such as the Council of Europe, various agencies and committees, and the United Nations were also welcome to participate. The Commission sought to explore how detention issues (following a criminal offence) impact mutual trust and consequently mutual recognition and judicial cooperation within the EU. Detention conditions and prison management are the responsibility of Member States; however, the Commission raised this issue because of the central importance of mutual recognition of judicial decisions in the domains of freedom, security and justice. Eurochips' response concerned children with imprisoned parents throughout Europe, so as to ensure that their rights were acknowledged within the Commission's dialogue.



Events

UN Day of Special Discussion

The United Nations (UN) Special Day of General Discussion (DGD) on Children with Imprisoned Parents, held in Geneva in September, was a landmark event - representing the first time that the issue of children with imprisoned parents was discussed substantively in a UN forum.

Opened by Jean Zermatten, Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, it was the largest DGD to date, with an estimated 200 NGOs, agencies and organisations present, some of which have been working on behalf of children dealing with parental imprisonment for over a quarter century.

Eurochips was well represented at the event, with members from seven European countries urging that the issue of children with imprisoned parents is one of public health and that the child's right to family life must be taken into consideration in all relevant decisions throughout the criminal justice process. In general, it was agreed that non-custodial sentences should be used as alternatives when the offending parent is a primary carer.

Over the course of discussions, Eurochips emphasized that the child's right to maintain contact when separated from a parent is inviolable, when in his or her best interest, and should not be subordinate to public security needs.



Raheel and Sian, the two youth delegates presenting on the day

When certain security restrictions are required for imprisoned parents, the network argued, the onus is on the State to enable the child to remain in contact with the parent and to work to ensure that separation due to the incarceration of a parent is not interpreted by the child as abandonment.

In addition, Eurochips suggested that governments establish legislation to guide the arrest process, ensuring that the parent is not humiliated in front of the child; that children could provide impact statements to the court on how custodial sentences would impact them; and that visits should be construed as a child's right, not as a parent's privilege.

Other general recommendations from participants included: identifying if individuals have children prior to imposing custodial measures; carrying out a best-interest assessment on a case-by-case basis for children; providing training for all officials at all relevant levels; and fighting against social stigma and media sensationalism. A lack of research at all levels and of methodology for clear statistics/data was also cited.

In addition to discussions, two youth representatives from the COPING project participated in the plenary session, voicing some of the concerns that these children frequently have, in their own words:

- Why isn't anything explained when we visit the prison?
- Why don't prison staff treat us like human beings?
- Why can't we have any privacy?

The youth representatives offered advice to other children in similar situations, urging them to seek out both available information and other young people dealing with parental imprisonment, and to use their experience to inspire constructive change through NGOs and other agencies.

Events

COPING Paris Event

In March, Ms. Dominique Versini, Ombudsman for Children in France and Mr. Christian Le Roux, Representative of the Mediateur de la Republique attended a Eurochips sponsored art event in Paris.

Both individuals assist in providing help to maintain the parental bond by assisting imprisoned parents and grandparents to gain access to their children by negotiating extended visiting hours.

The one-day exhibition took place in the heart of Paris and was open to the public in order to raise awareness and exchange ideas on the subject of children with imprisoned parents. Paris-based Dutch artist Mieke Vase agreed to donate her time and talent to further the cause of this vulnerable group of children by presenting her works around the exhibition's theme: 'Parents and Prison'. Her work was presented alongside children's drawings and artwork from France, Switzerland, Italy, as

well as other European nations.

The event served as a kick-off for the pan-consortium partner meeting for the COPING project with several partners in attendance. For 2 days more than 40 researchers, child specialists, and NGOs from 6 nations (Sweden, Germany, UK, Romania, Switzerland and France) gathered to discuss progress and upcoming stages in the project.

General Assembly, Barcelona

Eurochips' annual conference and General Assembly was hosted in the beautiful city of Barcelona in May this year. Full Eurochips' Member Niños sin Barreras welcomed the network members for three days of intense work and discussion.

Nearly 30 organisations participated and used the opportunity to present their work over the year and desimate their latest study - research.

On 13 May, the conference, which focused on children's participation and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, gathered over 70 members of the network.

Several speakers of the day made suggestions regarding work with the child and encouraged partners to think of new approaches, which would highlight the role of the child throughout the long process of their parent's imprisonment.

Interventions from the UK, Italy, Sweden, Spain, France, Croatia and Norway were presented throughout the conference. Early in the proceedings, Eurochips' Board Member Marie-France Blanco from REP France was honored for her work and passion, which initiated the creation of Eurochips twelve years ago.



Awareness-raising

European Prisoners' Children Week

Eurochips hosted the 2nd annual European Prisoners' Children Week from 1-8 June this year.

Members throughout the network held events in their respective locations around the campaign theme, 'Invisible', in an effort to bring children with imprisoned parents into the media spotlight.

The message of the campaign was that the issue of children with imprisoned parents is one of public health, and specific attention needs to be focused on the repercussions of parental imprisonment on the psychological development of the child. 2011 marked the first time the campaign included its own microsite - a blog designed for raising awareness and gaining signatures on a letter drafted to the European Members of Parliament.

The letter asked the esteemed members for:

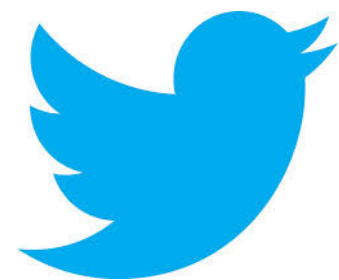
- Policy reform initiatives which would create better prison visiting hours and conditions for children
- The creation of monitoring groups, which would obtain further data collection on this group of children and current visiting centre conditions throughout Europe.

In total, the campaign e-petition gained over 1,700 signatures and officially launched Eurochips into the world of social media via the creation of Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as the full creation and maintenance of a blog to aid in disseminating information. By the end of the campaign, Eurochips had over 700 followers on Twitter and the number continues to grow.

Throughout the week, Eurochips members were asked to promote the e-petition and blog to gain signatures within their own national channels.

As it was the first virtual-based campaign, it was considered an overall success with many lessons learned for future years including the importance of utilizing social media channels, blogs and the need for Eurochips to further develop a strong and active online presence.

In 2012 Eurochips intends to continue the online campaign for European Prisoners' Children Week with the addition of a YouTube channel.



Lobbying

6th European Forum on Children's Rights



Margaret Tuite

Eurochips was invited to the 6th Annual European Forum on Children's Rights in Brussels on 23 November. The event provided a platform enabling participants to share, discuss and propose best practice on behalf of children's rights. Participants from European institutions, EU Member States, Ombudsperson offices, international organisations, NGOs and academics were in attendance. This marked the first year in which Eurochips attended the forum, chaired in part by Margaret Tuite, the newly appointed European Commission Coordinator for the rights of the child.

European Parliament Alliance for Children

Eurochips received an invitation from the Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for children, Roberta Angelilli, to attend the 3rd Meeting of European Parliament's alliance for Children. Launched in April 2011 in partnership with UNICEF and international NGOs, the Alliance - initiated



Roberta Angelilli

by Ms Angelilli - intends to mainstream children's rights in all policy areas of Europe and beyond. Eurochips was granted the opportunity to meet various members of the European Parliament and large organisations, such as Silvia Costa and UNICEF Brussels Director Philippe Cori.

European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

In December, Eurochips was accepted into the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Platform after submitting an application earlier in the year. The platform will provide further networking and raising awareness opportunities for the organisation as well as children with imprisoned parents.



Strategy & funding

Board Meeting Paris

In November, the Eurochips Board Members, working in collaboration with the office staff met for three days in Paris to discuss upcoming strategies and tactics for the coming years. Led by the consultancy aid of Eurochips' Individual Member Henriette Heimgaertner, the organisation put together a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis and discussed definitions of various key messages to be utilized throughout the network.

As the network continues to grow, regular meetings and communication amongst Board Members and office staff become more important and relevant, particularly for sharing information on the topic of children with imprisoned parents as it gains international attention.

2011 saw a great increase in Skype communication and strategy meetings amongst partners and Board Members, creating a more unified, communal atmosphere amongst many individuals working for the network.

Daphne III (DG Justice)

Kate Philbrick, Board Member of Eurochips, delivered a speech at the 'Raising a Child through Prison Bars' Daphne III (DG Justice) conference on 23rd November in Athens, Greece.



Bernard van Leer Foundation



The Bernard van Leer Foundation, based in the Netherlands, granted another 3 years of funding to Eurochips. Research was conducted throughout the year to investigate various on-line auctions to raise funds as well as send out the Good Practice Guide (full of prison-reform and staff-training recommendations) to the 191 prisons throughout France.

Member activities

The following pages provide articles submitted by our network member organisations to highlight some of their activities in 2011.

Relais Enfants-Parents Belgique

Full Member Activities

Action for Prisoners' Families



In 2011, UK member Action for Prisoners' Families (APF) continued to raise the concerns of families affected by imprisonment as well as

promoting good practice and representing the views of the organisation's 800+ members.

APF works with prisoners' families to ensure their voices are heard by the UK government. This year, it responded to government consultations and provided feedback by drawing on the experiences of prisoners' families. The organisation offered training to family members to equip them with skills to raise their concerns and improve the local situation. Government ministers and officials have attended events to hear first-hand the concerns of these families.

APF worked with the Women's Institute (WI) on a prisons journey initiative to raise awareness of the distances families frequently travel to visit relatives in prisons. WI members gained insight into the experience by making visits themselves. Their findings were launched at the House of Lords, attended by the organisation's patron Michael Palin, MPs and other Parliamentarians.

In partnership with the government's National Offender Management Service the organisation published a range of briefings aimed at professionals who regularly work with prisoners' families. It also republished the best selling publication *Tommy's Dad*.



In 2011, the Belgium association Relais Enfants Parents Belgique (ASBL), organised several child-friendly events within prison visiting centres. The events took place on special occasions in order to provide an opportunity for incarcerated parents to enjoy festive celebrations with their children and families. Each event was organised by groups of volunteers including the ASBL Happy Clown, professional jugglers, make-up artists, caricaturists, and photographers. Pictures were taken of the families as they enjoyed the celebrations to ensure the memories were captured for the families.

In particular, St Nicholas Day (a Belgian holiday) was a successful day of celebration within 9 prisons. Working in collaboration with Dreamland (a toy wholesaler), ASBL provided a catalogue of age-appropriate toys for the children. During the planning stages, each imprisoned parent chose a toy to be given to their child by one of the "St. Nicholas" volunteers during the party. Three volunteers from the Red Cross, two jurists and one serviceman agreed to dress up as St. Nicholas during the various parties to present gifts to the children. The children sang to St. Nicholas throughout the party and some chose to recite poetry or present drawings. In total, 413 children participated in the day.

Member activities

Bambinisenzasbarre



In 2011 Bambinisenzasbarre carried out the first ever research conducted in Italy on children and prison “Children of imprisoned parents: a vulnerable group”, led in Europe by the DIHR. In May, the Italian Ministry of Justice attended the presentation to the press, held at the Foreign Press Association’s in Rome.

The research obtained the patronage of the Committee for the Celebrations of the 150 years of the Unity of Italy. An exhibition of all the printed outcomes - including Bambinisenzasbarre’s research - took place in Rome on 17 March. The President of the Italian Republic, Mr. Giorgio Napolitano attended the opening ceremony.

Bambinisenzasbarre, in cooperation with the University of Milan, has also been in charge of a training session cycle for prison officers, teachers and social workers in 19 Lombard prisons. The latter has been supervised by the Lombardy’s Superintendency. The main theme is “How to combine the security and the welcoming of children visiting prison”: the courses are set to end in spring 2012.

Bedford Row



Families so affected contribute on

Irish member Bedford Row has developed a unique design to address the serious issue of children who have parents or older family members in prison. The design involves families affected by imprisonment as its

a daily basis to the general direction, policies and practice of the project.

In July, nine graduates were presented with the Bedford Row Diploma in Family Support and Crisis Intervention (FSCI) after two years of intensely studying diverse methods of supporting families and children affected by imprisonment and addiction, which included a professional placement with a family in distress because of imprisonment and related factors.

Various educational and lifeskills courses held in Bedford Row over the years sparked the development of the course in FSCI, which combines life experiences with formal training in a wide variety of skills focused on listening, emotional presence and inclusiveness.

The methods utilised by Bedford Row are influenced by formal, academic, life-experience and anecdotal elements from a variety of sources and cultures. The organisation believes that all communities contain the capacity to create child-friendly, safe and healthy environments.

Bryggan



In conjunction with the 2011 Eurochips General Assembly, Swedish member Bryggan arranged an organisation conference, which clarified the social and penal policy issues the organisation will address in the near future. The

first directors’ meeting of the year established their general guidelines for policy advocacy, and the second meeting detailed the work Bryggan will undertake in 2012.

In partnership with the Children’s Ombudsman this year, Bryggan worked to publicize the work of the UN DGD as well as the COPING project. Their

Member activities

efforts culminated in coverage by the public television news program *Rapport* the first week of October and affiliated stories on several local stations.

Bryggan also participated in the national channel TV4's program *Efter Tio* last year as well as in the Nordic conference "24 Hours for the Children of Imprisoned Parents", attended by the national prison and probation services from Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well as associated NGOs; the Children's Ombudsman in Sweden and Norway, the Danish National Council for Children and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The conference produced a joint letter to the UN DGD, consisting of recommendations to improve the situation of children of imprisoned parents.

Organisation for Friends and Families of Prisoners (FFP)



In 2011, Norwegian member FFP cooperated with the Norwegian Ministry of Justice in the process of drafting legislation that would establish "child ambassadors" in every Norwegian prison. The treatment of children with imprisoned parents varies greatly between individual prisons in Norway so FFP has advocated for the integration of a voice for children's rights and needs into correctional service institutions.

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice is currently drafting amendments to the Execution of Sentences Act that would mandate the Correctional Service to consider children's welfare. The proposed changes were inspired by Sweden's precedent of child ambassadors, as well as recent amendments in Norway concerning staff responsibilities in the health care system. The current proposed law was

available from October 2011 for public hearing and will subsequently be presented in Parliament.

According to these proposals, the Correctional Service would be legally obligated to record whether or not prisoners have children and subsequently work to address the children's needs for information, support and advice. Each prison would be required to appoint a child ambassador whose overarching responsibility is to implement a voice for child welfare in the prisons' work, routines and facilities. The child ambassador would be charged with, amongst other duties, spreading information about the Convention on the Rights of the Child to prison staff, ensuring that child-parent contact is maintained throughout the incarceration and monitoring children's wellbeing during their visits to the prison.

Federation Relais-Enfants Parents (FREP)

This year, French members FREP and Relais Enfants Parents (REP) of Ain hosted the 6th annual meeting of REP services.

The conference, entitled. "Teenagers Confronting their Vulnerable Parent", gathered several participants from the medical, legal and social sectors. Anne Donzel, Chief of the Social Policies and Insertion Bureau of the Ministry of Justice highlighted "the importance of working in honest partnership with associations like REP in order to raise the reality of both the parents' and childrens' needs since the progress made by the administration is and will be the fruit of this successful partnership."

Doctor Philip-Piere Tedo shared his experience as a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, who has worked at the head of the Teenager's Centre at the Hospital Complex of Bordeaux for 20 years: "Parents must be supported to create a dynamic parenthood, so that they perfectly fit their role, which is often put to the test during adolescence."

Member activities

Marie-Christine Tarrare, a district attorney, concluded the day by recalling that “in cases of vulnerability, we must find ways to maintain the parent-child relationship, to make the relationship possible, to find spaces for children and their incarcerated parent. We also need professionals who will work in cooperation, in close partnership with associations like REP and social workers in order to think, act together and bring about some change in everyone’s daily practices.”

Ninos sin Barreras



Niños sin barreras
Miembros de Eurochips

The Eurochips’ Annual Conference 2011 was the major event of the year for hosting partner Niños sin Barreras. The event provided an excellent platform for the Spanish members to present the skills, innovations and experiences of the organisation. The conference centred around the theme: “Making Children Active Participants in Strengthening their Resilience”. A group of experts in attendance facilitated conversation surrounding the social, judicial and clinical knowledge regarding children with imprisoned parents.

To conclude the event, Ninos sin Barreras worked in collaboration with Resonance Espagna to present a symphonic concert within a prison. The concert attracted much Spanish media attention and sparked the interest of several professionals. In addition, the organisation created discussion groups surrounding the strengthening of parenthood within female prisons. The conversations concluded with prison-reform initiative suggestions, which were well received by the public. In 2012, the organisation aims to take these conversations further into action in the Spanish community.

Prisoner Advice and Care Trust (PACT)



In 2011, UK member PACT merged with Kids Visiting in Prison (Kids VIP). The prison training, development work and play-worker network programmes implemented by Kids VIP continue to develop and share best practice on all aspects relating to children visiting family members in prison.

Following the positive evaluation of the initial pilot in three prisons, PACT successfully developed a new model of Integrated Family Support (IFS) in 11 prisons and 18 local authorities across England and Wales.

Working within prisons, the IFS team perform a unique professional role, which acts as a bridge between prisons and communities. The flexibility of the support ensures that the needs of various groups within prison are met - including women, young offenders, foreign nationals and both resettlement and remand prisons.

As part of the IFS project, PACT has integrated advocates based within a number of local authorities in London, Swansea, Kent and the North East. These advocates will establish a joined-up, multi-agency approach to working with children and families of prisoners and provide links between services from a range of agencies including integrated offender management services, children’s centres, the voluntary sector and prison-based Family Support.

The project is responsible for the development of several examples of best practice including prison-based family conferences enabling families to participate in plans for resettlement, father-baby groups, play-based parenting programmes and community-based workshops enabling parents to tell children the truth about their situation.

Member activities

Service Treff-Punkt

In May of this year, Eurochips member, the Luxembourg-based Service Treffpunkt hosted a party for children and their incarcerated parents inside a penitentiary as part of European Prisoners' Children Week.

The organisation welcomed 16 children from various situations and circumstances. The children were excited by the different workshops offered to them in various sections of the room. On one table, the children and their parents had fun with clay. Another workshop provided materials for making friendship bracelets and at yet another table, an accompanying adult helped parents and children make lovely jewels out of pearls. The whole group also created a calendar based on the theme: "My Parent and I". In order to honor the many memories of the day, Service Treffpunkt organised a giant tent outside the prison to welcome accompanying parents. The organisation believes that such measures are necessary in order to show the visiting parents and children that there are support groups and volunteers available for this vulnerable group of families. One such group, which aided in the organisation of the day, was the Association of Prison Visitors (AVP), which provided much support and encouragement for the children.

Associate Member Activities

Carrefour Prison



opened another creative workshop at the prison of Champ-Dollon in Geneva.

Thanks to the collaboration of the prison's staff and director, the organisation now has access to

the visiting room once a month. During the visits, the Carrefour Prison team re-arranges the room by bringing in games, toys and music to make it child-friendly. Some of the children are provided transportation to the prison by the organisation, while others join the team in their hosting room: "Le Chalet", located just outside the prison.

Once everyone is settled into the room, the children are paired with an accompanying adult and led into the prison to meet their parents. After everyone is successfully paired and inside the visiting centre, the creativity and fun begins. Throughout the workshop laughter, scrabble, arts, crafts and joy fill the room as the children play with their parents in family-friendly environment.

Czech Helsinki Committee



This year, the topic of children with imprisoned parents gained media attention throughout the Czech Republic, which encouraged the Czech Helsinki Committee to create a documentary about their work in a programme, entitled, "Family Crossroads" on Czech television. Israeli director Gregory Portnoy, who has been preparing a project on European children with imprisoned parents, also recently approached the organisation about filming their project to spread awareness on the issue.

Throughout the year the organisation has worked in collaboration with other NGOs in the area. Together, they are preparing various new projects, such as video interviews of prisoners in cooperation with Prison Fellowship International and engaging in successful negotiations with the Ministry of Justice - which has resulted in the preparations of a pilot project for next year, Skype in Prisons.

Member activities

Families Outside



In 2011, Scottish member Families Outside hosted an event in the Scottish Parliament to feed into the UN DGD. This included participation from a grandmother and her three

grandchildren, and was supported by an organisation entitled Circle Scotland.

The children wanted to stop visiting their mother in prison as a result of negative experiences when trying to maintain contact. The youngest of the three had never visited his mother in prison and their perspectives on the topic aided the discussion.

The UK-wide organisation Kids VIP divided its work between PACT in England and Wales, and Families Outside in Scotland. This work included training for prison staff and assessment of physical facilities. As a result of the collaboration, the focus on children and play greatly enhanced the early training material. The Kids VIP training on child protection and safeguarding has prompted the prisons that have received it to develop local child protection protocols and procedures for the first time.

Hoppenbank e.V.

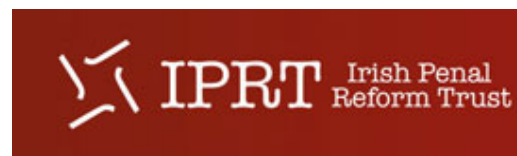


This year marked German member Hoppenbank's 40th anniversary and the organisation continued to further its work on the reintegration of (ex)-offenders into society.

Over 2,500 clients were targeted this year for help in a variety of areas, including follow-up support after the release of 200 prisoners from prisons; social therapy treatment and service of over 27,000 meals in the Hoppenbank cafe - which helped the organisation to reach between 80-90 ex-offenders on a daily basis with advice and time-management skills.

In the Juvenile Detention Centre, Hoppenbank provided access to 34 school exams, academic support programmes and also tested 104 adults to profile their professional qualifications in order to recommend proper vocational training. The "Step by Step" occupational therapy project was introduced in a juvenile prison housing 24 inmates with the aim of training them for future employment. The organisation maintained 54 expert volunteers who consistently provided advice and support on work with ex-offenders and a range of courses were undertaken by Hoppenbank's clients, including soft skills (handling money, cooking and nutrition, health, media, etc...). Finally, the "I read to you" programme allowed imprisoned parents the chance to record a story for their child, which was then burned onto a CD for the child to take home. 25 inmates created more than 50 CDs through the programme this year.

Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT)



The IPRT campaigns for prisoners' rights and progressive reform of the penal system in Ireland, with the idea that imprisonment be used as a last resort. In recent years, IPRT has received an increasing number of queries from prisoners and their families about life in prison, the rights of prisoners and the support available for offenders, ex-offenders and their families.

Member activities

In 2010 IPRT started to plan a number of activities to make information available, including information for prisoners on life in prison and their rights while in prison; information for prisoners' families on how to access advice and support; and information for ex-prisoners on issues they face after leaving prison, and the services available to them.

The escalation in recent years of prison numbers in Ireland has led to the growing number of families affected by imprisonment. Although IPRT does not work directly with children of prisoners, it is currently working on a research paper which aims to raise awareness around the issues and make clear recommendations on how the rights of these children should be properly considered by relevant agencies.

Prison visits, financial difficulties, emotional constraints and information needs are just some of the main issues prisoners' families experience and which are addressed in the research paper. Having completed a literary review, focus groups and interviews are now in the process of being carried out in order to properly identify the needs of prisoners' families in Ireland.

NIACRO



In 2011, Northern Ireland Member NIACRO's Director of Services Dave Weir and Family Services Manager Donnie Sweeney were invited to speak at a conference in Maastricht on the rights of children of prisoners,

organised by the United Nation University (UNU-Merit) and the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance. The conference, inspired by the human rights work of Iranian prison lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh, celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the CRC through the lens of the rights of children of prisoners - political or criminal. Among the key-

note speakers were Maria Herczog, a member of the CRC. Additional speakers brought experiences from England, Iran, Northern Ireland, Syria and the US.

Sweeney utilized the words and stories of children whose parents had been imprisoned for politically motivated offenses during Northern Italy's 30-year conflict and highlighted their similarities with children of prisoners today. In many cases, both groups of children suffered similar experiences of shame, isolation, stigma, bullying and emotional loss.

Weir stressed that the emphasis in prisons be placed not only on security, but also on preparing prisoners for their reintegration into society. There ought, then, to be no conflict between good and effective prison practices and procedures that protect the rights and wellbeing of children.

Office of the Ombudsman for Children Croatia



In 2011, the Office of the Children's Ombudsman in Croatia encouraged and monitored the ongoing process of the

implementation of the Responsible Parenting Programme in all prisons and family centres.

The programme came following an agreement between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for Family Affairs, which aims to promote parental responsibility. Improving upon the support given to families, the programme helps incarcerated parents fulfill their role in developing strong and positive family relationships to alleviate the negative effects of separation. Revolving around the parent-child relationship, it seeks to improve mental health and promote a network between penal institutions and family centres.

Member activities

The programme was conducted in 21 penal facilities and involved approximately 270 prisoners. Psychologists and social workers held 90-minute workshops in each prison for groups of 12-15 prisoners. Family members were encouraged to utilize services provided by their local family centre.

Evaluations of the project indicate that participants gained a new awareness of the importance of respecting their children's rights and needs and acknowledged various difficulties their children face throughout the incarceration. Prisoners realized the need for active participation in their children's upbringing and were motivated to implement changes in their role as parents.

SAVN

This year, Danish member SAVN held 15 weekend courses for children of prisoners with attendance from 75 families. In total, over 125 children participated in the courses, which provided them with skills for coping with the separation due to parental incarceration. In addition the organisation held a summer camp that hosted 18 families.

2011 also marked a Nordic Conference, hosted by SAVN for individuals working with prisoners' families. The goal of the conference was to gather people from Denmark, Sweden and Norway to collaborate on ideas, methodology and good practice. Several representatives of the organisations participated in the event including the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Danish National Council for Children, the Children's Ombudsman from Norway and Sweden, Bryggen and FFP. In addition, criminal wards and national governments also attended. The goal of the conference was to sign a statement between the three countries, which would then be delivered to the CRC.

SAVN also became part of the Prison Guards Education in Denmark, allowing prison guards to be trained by the association. As a result, each guard spent an entire day with the SAVN team, during

which time they were trained in various methods for relating to children who visit their parent in prison.

Treffpunkt e.V.



German member Treffpunkt e.V. celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2011.

Starting as a small initiative which noted that prisons only put prisoners' interests first, Treffpunkt e.V. developed itself as an association of 30 employees, who were committed to providing the families of prisoners the help and advice they needed.

The organisation have provided help and support to families, young delinquents, adult offenders and victims for 20 years, using a variety of methods.

In May, Treffpunkt celebrated its anniversary with an exhibition about the history of the organisation as well as a buffet with sponsors, business partners and individuals who all have been supportive since it was founded. The event was also an occasion to celebrate the five years of their online counseling support aimed at families of prisoners.

As a result of the COPING Project, Treffpunkt e.V. managed to arouse the interest of the Bundestag German's Children's Commission. Subsequently, Treffpunkt's project manager was invited to present the COPING project to their expert meeting centred around "Children and Grief: Children of Prisoners" in November.

Led by ideas and full of energy, the Treffpunkt team will continue to support offenders, youth and families in 2012.

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