

Volpris.eu

How did volunteering shape prison life in 2020? Web event: 11.12.2020

Welcome speech: Dr Alexander Vollbach, Bremen
Ministry of Justice and Constitution, Germany

Project Number 2019-1-DE02-KA204-006497

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Logo of the Ministry of Justice and the Federal State of Bremen

Bremen Ministry of Justice and Constitution, Germany

Welcome to the event by Dr. Alexander Vollbach¹

Volunteers are the bridge between prison inmates and society outside, providing social ties. In our meeting today, we will discuss current developments. In order to gauge what tomorrow will bring, it helps to look back. Bremen Ministry of Justice and Constitution is proud to coordinate the Volunteering in Prison (VOLPRIS) project. Today, we want to share experiences with you.

1.

Volunteering in prison emerged from a shared history in Europe in the 18th Century and first part of 19th Century. In the meantime, government programs have replaced the volunteer work, which was organized largely by the religious groups under the auspices of charitable work. Under Influence of the “modern movement” in criminal law there was a fundamental shift. Criminal law became more individualized and “began to pay more attention to the rehabilitation ... of offenders” (Kalmthout et al., 2008)

Today, volunteering is part of the fabric of work in the criminal justice system. For example, Article 56d of the German criminal law allows the use of volunteers in probation under guidance of probation officer. About our prison and probation service in Bremen and especially our experience during the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic, you can read my report in CEP news (“COVID-19 pandemic in

¹ Deputy Director General Prison and Probation, Federal State of Bremen

prison and probation, what is the impact,” 2020). Following a brief review of current reports², I see that in Germany, 17% of the population is engaged in voluntary activities, but only 1% of these volunteers are involved in criminal justice related work. In Bremen prison, we have many opportunities for volunteering in prison system and currently support seventy volunteers in our prison. Volunteers undertake a wide variety of activities, such as accompanying inmates on exit or after release. Law students from Bremen University offers legal advice.

I am interested in your experience and about current research about mobilizing and recruiting community volunteers. Volunteer work in prison can be fulfilling and rewarding. What do we know about current religiously framed activities of volunteers and fellow-members of their faith in prison today? Even today these groups are some of the most active with prisoners after their release. Nowadays, the work of volunteers is mostly framed as contribution to the rehabilitation to the prisoners. Do we have follow up studies?

2.

Looking to the future, due to COVID-19 there is a lot going on. We need new approaches. For example Kalmbach/ Krenzel (Online-Begleitung im Strafvollzug. Das Projekt “crimeic” – Revolutionierung ehrenamtlicher Arbeit im Strafvollzug?, 2017) suggest, that new media should also be used in volunteer work.

There will be a time after the COVID-19 pandemic and we must be ready. Volunteers are the bridge between prison inmates and outside society. They provide social ties. And how can we support them tomorrow? If we lose what we have built in volunteering in the meantime, it is a loss for society. That is the reason, why we have share our experience in [VolPris- project](#).

References

- COVID-19 pandemic in prison and probation, what is the impact [WWW Document], 2020. . CEP Probat. URL <http://www.cep-probation.org/the-impact-of-covid-19-pandemic-in-prison-and-probation-by-dr-alexander-vollbach/> (accessed 12.15.20).
- Kalmthout, A.M. van, Durnescu, I., Netherlands, Ministerie van Justitie, 2008. Probation in Europe. Wolf Legal Publishers (WLP), Nijmegen, Netherlands.
- Kalmbach / Krenzel, Der Strafvollzug im Zeitalter des Internets: über den Nutzen von Onlineangeboten zum Zwecke der Resozialisierung. In: Forum Strafvollzug ; 66 (2017) 5, S. 344 - 346

² The Centre for Criminology (KrimZ) maintains a literature documentation in the field of German-language criminology.