

Annual conference Victims Support Europe
Warsaw
15 - 16 May 2014

From 14 to 17 May the Annual Conference of Victims Support Europe took place in Warsaw. EuroPris was asked to contribute to the workshop session “Partner organisations and their approach to Victims” at which 60 international experts participated. EuroPris was represented by Jan Bouman from the Netherlands with a presentation on “Making the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency Victims Oriented”. He emphasized that the most urgent need identified by victims was for adequate information to be available.

In the Netherlands an office in Arnhem has been established to ensure that the right information reaches the victims and relatives of victims who have requested it.

The last figures showed that 92% of the information indeed is delivered adequately.

Contact with victims and relatives of victims has led to the following changes in the practice in the institutions:

1. In the treatment of prisoners in the psychiatric forensic institutions: In these custodial institutions for forensic patients the concept of the victim became the nucleus of the treatment delivered.
2. In the juvenile institutions a new general method was introduced: YOUTURN, which builds on the personal responsibility of the juvenile offender.
3. In the practice of leave and end of detention the role of victims and relatives became more important. Conditions for inmates leaving the prison were put in place when it was necessary for the victims or relatives of victims.
4. The instruments of mediation, restorative justice and victim – prisoner contacts became more used in the custodial institutions.

Jan Bouman also introduced two promising practices of the Dutch system.

- Working together with all the organisations of the criminal justice chain is important. All organisations from the police, public prosecution, probation, prison service to victim support have worked and are still working together.
- The direct contact in different ways between each one of these organisations and the victims or relatives, be it individuals, couples or groups changed the attitude of the professionals in a remarkable way.