



# Newsletter of the European Forum for Restorative Justice

## Editorial

Spring is in the air, bringing expectations for positive change and new activities! I am very pleased to present to you a spring issue of the Newsletter and news on forthcoming dynamic evolutions from within the Forum. Four new members of the Board of the European Forum need to be elected in the summer of 2006 and you are welcome to nominate candidates, in particular from the UK, Belgium and Eastern Europe. You can read more about the nomination procedure in the Newsflash. The European Forum also submitted a new proposal for an AGIS project to the European Commission. It will deal with implementing restorative justice in Southern Europe on the one hand, and with researching what the role of the European Union can be in the further development of restorative justice. Let's keep our fingers crossed!

There will be a number of international restorative justice events in spring and summer where you will have the chance to share experiences with colleagues from around the world, visit interesting places and make new friends. Check our Calendar and select the most interesting event!

However, winter was also quite busy in terms

of international cooperation and activities in the realm of restorative justice. After explaining the importance of data collection on VOM and RJ for the work of academics, policy makers and criminal justice practitioners, David Eyckmans presents the first results of the COST Action working group on data recording which met in Bremen (Germany) in December 2005. Later, Vira Zemlyanska shares her impressions about the international conference "Panorama of Restorative Justice as applied to minors in Europe" held in Vaucresson near Paris. You can also read about the establishment of the first School of Restorative Justice in Poland and an expert meeting for reviewing the UN Handbook on Restorative Justice that took place in Vienna recently. In addition, the Newsletter provides extensive information about VOM for minors in Greece and about the experience of dealing with sexual offending in Manchester in the spirit of restorative justice. As always, we invite the readers to send articles or topics for future issues of the Newsletter and to contact the coordinator at any time.

**Vira Zemlyanska**  
Coordinator of the Editorial Board

**March 2006**  
**Volume 7, Issue 1**

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## Victim-offender mediation for minors in Greece

This article is a brief report on the introduction of victim-offender mediation (VOM) for juveniles in Greece as well as on the practical implementation of this measure.

Juvenile justice in Greece is administrated by the Penal Code and the Code of Penal Procedure. During the half century of the implementation of these Codes, various amendments have been made via new legislative Acts, when new situations or ideas rendered modification necessary<sup>1</sup>. The measures and sanctions applicable to young offenders are: reformatory measures (Art. 122 PC, imposed to all minors 8-18 years old), therapeutic measures (Art.

123 PC, applicable to all minors in need of special treatment) and detention in a special institution (Art. 127 PC, applicable to minors between 13 and 18 years old).

VOM for young offenders in the context of penal cases was introduced in Greece by Act 3189/2003. The introduction was made unsystematically and unmethodically with no evidence from previous piloting programmes<sup>2</sup> suggesting how the specific criminogenic factors or local conditions could assist or undermine the implementation of the measure. It is unfortunate that the measure was introduced without piloting programmes; a quick literature research on juvenile

justice in Greece reveals that the need for a revision of the Greek juvenile legislation, for the introduction of diversionary policies and extrajudicial settlements, and for the enrichment of reformatory measures for young offenders in general, was called for long before the actual adoption of Act 3189/2003<sup>3</sup>. The necessity was already there, waiting for the implementation of reform measures.

The adoption of VOM was part of a wider effort to comply with EU Recommendations and to follow successful international policies on juvenile justice (for example Recommendation No R(87)20 on social reactions to juvenile delinquency, R(2003)20 concerning new ways of dealing with juvenile delinquency and the role of juvenile justice, No R(87)18 on simplifying criminal justice and No R(86)12 on the measures for the prevention and decrease of the excessive case load dealt with by the courts, as well as the recommendatory report accompanying the Bill of Act 3189/2003, stating that VOM is being introduced as a way to approach the problem of young offenders ‘on the model of many foreign legislations’<sup>4</sup>).

According to Art. 122, 1 e. of the Greek Penal Code, mediation between a minor and his/her victim is introduced as a reformatory measure through the intervention of probation officers for juveniles or by the prosecutor for juveniles. The measure is imposed on the minor as a means of making him/her realise the human dimensions of his/her action(s) and to assume responsibility for it as well as satisfying the victim in a more appropriate way. By bringing the offender closer to the victim we focus on repairing the harm done by the criminal act and try to reintegrate both parties into the community.

However, the fact that VOM was initiated as a court-based reformatory measure gives grounds for concerns. These are mainly founded on the argument that the imposition *per se* of VOM as a sentence by juvenile courts is contradictory and inappropriate, especially since the success of the measure depends on the offender’s consent and his/her conscious assumption of responsibility. Instead, the case should *be referred* by the judge to the probation service for juveniles or to a social service where the outcome of mediation could affect the decision of the court, *or* VOM could even take place within the framework of an extrajudicial settlement, namely before the case reaches the court.

In addition, the measure is underused because practitioners are unaware of it. The absence of any piloting programmes or any guidance and ‘mention concerning the logistics of the measure’s enforcement’<sup>5</sup>

in the Act itself, the recommendatory report of its Bill or any other circular containing instructions, could only limit the confidence of practitioners in the measure and its outcome. The vague character of the measure has so far restricted its usage since either its imposition is accompanied with uncertainties or it is not imposed at all. According to the statistical reports of the probation service for juveniles, during the judicial year 2003-2004 (the first year of the introduction of the measure), VOM was imposed in 6 cases (nation-wide) (in 4 of which with additional measures)<sup>6</sup>. According to the same statistics, a total of 1258 cases resulted in the imposition of a reformatory measure in the given year (see table 1).

The extremely limited number of cases dealt with by VOM leaves no doubt as to the need for education and training (through conferences and seminars by restorative justice experts) concerning VOM schemes and their successful results, even when the schemes are initiated in the context of the criminal justice system. In Greece, and perhaps elsewhere, the criminal justice sector is a very slowly developing area, rooted in the past, and much more concerned with maintenance of the *status quo* than with the furtherance of its stated aims and with meeting social needs<sup>7</sup>. It is, therefore, criminal justice practitioners’ duty to be informed about and make more use of the progressive regulations that appear in the law and make them the rule rather than the exception.

Table 1. (The table shows the number of cases resulting in the imposition of each specific reformatory measure during the judicial year 2003-04)

Reformatory measure	Cases
Reprimand	217
Placement of the minor under the responsible supervision of parents or guardians	831
Placement of the minor under the responsible supervision of a probation officer	189
Intensive probationary supervision	12
Community service	2
Victim-offender mediation	6
Compensation order	1
TOTAL	1258

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- 1 For more details, see Spinellis, C.D. & Tsitsoura, A., *Juvenile Justice in Greece*, in [http://www.esc.eurocrim.org/files/juvenile\\_justice\\_in\\_greece.doc](http://www.esc.eurocrim.org/files/juvenile_justice_in_greece.doc)
- 2 Only in very few cases, VOM has been imposed (as an additional measure, before its actual introduction) by progressive judges, familiar with foreign legislations, based on art. 122, 2 which states that ‘further obligations concerning the juvenile’s way of life or his/her edification

can be imposed to the young offender as an additional reformatory measure’.

- 3 See for example Aleksiadis, S. (1996), ‘Victim-Offender Reconciliation: A Path for the Victim’s Restoration’, in Artinopoulou, B. & Magganas, A. (eds.), *Victimology and Aspects of Victimisation*, Athens, Legal Library, pp. 195-204; Diminas, D. (1994), ‘Necessary Reforms and Improvements in the Current Legislation on Juveniles’, in *MD Criminal Annals*, pp. 585-596; Kormikiari, E. (1994), ‘Diversionary Policies and Alternative Treatment for Young Offenders’, in Kourakis, N.E. (ed.), *Anti-criminal Policy*, Athens, Ant.N. Sakkoulas, pp. 283-304; Miliopoulos, A. (1996), ‘The English Law on Young Offenders and How It Can Help the Greek Judge for Juveniles’, in 50 *Armenopoulos*, pp. 669-677; Spinellis, C.D. (1992), *The Greek Law on Young Offenders and Victims; A Sector under Formation*, Athens/Komotini, Sakkoulas.
- 4 Recommendatory report of the Bill on the ‘Reformation of the Criminal Legislation for Juveniles and Other Clauses’ (2004), in v. 2 *Criminal Annals*, pp. 183-191.
- 5 Terzoglou, M. (2003), ‘Act 3189/2003 on the Reformation of Criminal Legislation for Juveniles’, in 11 *Criminal Justice*, pp. 1180-1183.
- 6 Unpublished statistical data provided by the Probation Service for Juveniles concerning the judicial year 2003-2004.
- 7 Aleksiasis, S. (1996), ‘Victim-Offender Reconciliation’, in Artinopoulou, B; & Magganas, A. (eds.), *Victimology and Aspects of Victimisation*, Athens, Legal Library, pp. 195-204.

## Statistics: data recording on VOM and RJ cases in Europe

Restorative justice (RJ) in general and victim-offender mediation (VOM) in particular are among the most important developments in the field of criminal justice in recent years. The European Union has committed itself to support and promote this development both in the member states and in the candidate countries.

So far, however, neither academics and researchers nor politicians and policy makers have an accurate overview of the development of VOM and RJ cases in Europe. Therefore it is not clear if the high regard of RJ among academics, policy makers and criminal justice practitioners has resulted in a broad and intensive use of mediation and other restorative procedures. In addition, the number of cases is not the only significant factor. If mostly cases of petty crime are sent to RJ programmes, not much has improved. Beyond that we should know whether the programmes meet the needs of victims, offenders, and other stake-holders after a criminal offence. The readiness to participate and the rate of agreements are therefore further very important figures.

It seems evident that by a joint data recording system the development of RJ/VOM, its successes and problems can become much more visible on the European stage. Therefore a provision not only to collect such data, but also to analyse and publish them in a proper way, has to be made.

### First results of the working group on data recording in Europe

Within the COST-Action A21 “Restorative Justice Developments in Europe”, on the initiative of Prof. dr. Arthur Hartmann of Bremen University, a working group summarised the existing data recording systems on VOM and RJ cases in Europe. The first objective was to explore whether it would be realistic to find a method to make the collected data in different European countries, compatible so as to allow them to be summarised in a meaningful way.

From the different presentations of the first meeting from 14-16 December 2005 in Bremen, it became

obvious that the core elements of the data reporting schemes are rather similar beside different social welfare systems and jurisdictions. It turned out that RJ and VOM has its own rationality that shaped the recording systems of different countries independently from each other in a comparable way.

Due to these findings, the members of the group became very optimistic that a joint European Data Recording system is possible and that they should go forward and outline the core elements of such a system. The participants decided to continue this work and set a clear agenda.

A second objective of the working group is to spread the idea to regions where data recording systems are not in use and support the development of systems that not only fit the legal and practical framework of the respective countries, but also provide data records that are compatible with a developing European standard. Therefore the scheme has to become flexible enough for variables and items to be added and modified in order to adjust them to different social welfare systems and jurisdictions. In the early stages, the technological basis of such a joint system is of relatively minor interest. Different proposals e.g. for a centralised internet based system of a project based system can and should be developed later on. From the perspective of a joint European system it is essential that the technology allows a given system to be adapted to the needs of different countries.

The participants of the working group will become members of the Research Committee of the European Forum for Restorative Justice to connect their work to the broader perspective of the European Forum.

The working group consisted of: Lidia Ayora (Spain), David Eyckmans (Belgium), Borbala Fellegi (Hungary), Alyona Gorova (Ukraine), Arthur Hartmann (Germany), Peter Keeley (Ireland), Robert Mackay (UK).

David Eyckmans, vzw Suggnomè, Leuven, Belgium



## Panorama: Juvenile and Restorative Justice in Europe

On 16-17 January 2006, practitioners, researchers and state officials in the realm of juvenile justice and VOM met in Vaucresson near Paris at the international conference "Panorama of Restorative Justice as Applied to Minors in Europe". The main objective of the conference was to exchange and compare experience with different models of work with juveniles including use of RJ across Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, Catalonia and France. However, the conference also gathered representatives from Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Ukraine and Uruguay.

The conference was organised as part of BEST: Alternatives for Juveniles project as a joint initiative of the Czech Republic, Catalonia (Spain) and France, supported by the AGIS programme of the European Commission. The two days of the conference were organised in the form of presentations. The first day was dedicated mostly to work with juveniles and

youth justice systems in the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Serbia and Montenegro and Catalonia. On the second day, the participants had a chance not only to hear presentations, but also to watch two short movies about repairing and mediation measures in Amiens and Angoulême (France).

As was shown in the discussions, the topic of the conference and the questions raised were met with great enthusiasm of the participants.

I would like to thank the organisers for the good organisation. The French cuisine and warm welcome contributed a lot to the creation of a friendly environment and fruitful work during the conference.

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## The first School of Restorative Justice in Poland

The Association for Legal Intervention, in cooperation with the Polish Academy of Sciences, has created the first School of Restorative Justice in Poland. The initiators are three members of the Association: Witold Klaus, Dorota Jaworska and Maria Niełacznna. They started planning the project in the summer of 2005, its concep having been raised during meetings and discussions among them, with academics and students interested in RJ. The main purpose of the School is to educate 'experts' in RJ and prepare them to put it into practice in their environment.

Prior to the creation of the school, the members of the Association for Legal Intervention participated in RJ workshops held by Jim Consedine, an expert from New Zealand. Having been well trained, they began to formulate the idea of RJ in order to adapt it to Polish conditions. In the meantime, the Association attracted many students to which it offered interesting activities in the field of mediation and RJ.

The initiators of the School remarked that students in the faculties of law, political and social science, are looking for knowledge of a new concept of alternative means of communication and conflict resolution. In the programmes of teaching of Polish universities there was a 'gap' - a faculty of RJ was missing. Therefore, in order to educate the students and provide them with a competent knowledge of RJ as an alternative model of conflict resolution, the initiators considered the need and possibility to create the seminars conducted by experts and professionals

from different branches of human science (history, criminology, psychology, resocialisation).

The School of RJ was established in January 2006. The initiators recruited 15 students from the faculties of law, resocialisation, ethnology and sports. Also participating are two prison officers who were invited in order to prepare for the implementation of the culture of RJ into Polish prisons.

The scope of subjects is very large. In cooperation with the Polish Academy of Sciences and academics from Warsaw University, the founders appointed a special Council whose purpose is to ensure that every interesting subject in the field of RJ is covered. The emphasis was put on: relation of RJ to criminal justice, the position of victim and offender in the restorative process, the role of RJ in the local community (in schools, workplaces, homes, neighbourhoods) and in prison. The School also foresees a two-day workshop. It will consist of two parts: (1) applying mediation and communication technique and skills; (2) planning central and local political activity referring to RJ as a way of democratisation of society.

The School's programme puts more emphasis on the concept of RJ than on mediation, although the latter predominates in Polish practice. Both the initiators of the School and academics find that a RJ philosophy and use play an important role in the community, in relations among people.

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## Newsflash

- The European Forum has introduced a new project with the European Commission under its AGIS programme. Whether or not the Forum will be funded for this project will be known by the end of May 2006. The project, if granted, will concentrate on two things: meeting the challenges of introducing restorative justice in Southern Europe, and the role of the European Union in the further development of restorative justice.
- The Selection Committee of the European Forum is seeking nominations for the Board. At the Annual

General Meeting in June 2006 four new Board members need to be elected in order to replace Ivo Aertsen (Belgium), Martin Wright (UK), Margaret Carey (UK) and Vidia Negrea (Hungary). Only members with full voting rights can nominate or be nominated. Each nomination must be supported by a proposer and a seconder. For more information about the nomination procedure, please contact the Secretariat or Dobrinka Chankova, chair of the Selection Committee ([chankova@yahoo.com](mailto:chankova@yahoo.com)). The deadline for nominations is the 1st of April.

## Not a member of the European Forum yet?

Please visit our website [www.euforumrj.org](http://www.euforumrj.org). Under the heading 'Membership' you will find all information concerning categories of membership and fees. You can also apply for membership online. The process only takes 5 minutes. You can also contact the Secretariat at [info@euforumrj.org](mailto:info@euforumrj.org)

As a member you will receive:

- three newsletters a year
  - regular electronic news with interesting information
  - reduced conference fees and special book prices
  - access to a virtual discussion forum that provides the possibility for direct communication with more than 200 restorative justice professionals from Europe and beyond
- and much more ...

## Readers' Corner

- *Crime policy in Europe*, by the Council of Europe (2005). This book concentrates on examples of promising practices in specific countries. It contains separate chapters related to mediation and other community sanctions, including the impact of the Council of Europe Recommendation No. R (99) 19 on Mediation in Penal Matters, VOM with serious offences, community service as a means of restoring civic dialogue after offending and reducing the prison population in Finland. Available from Council of Europe Publishing: <http://book.coe.int>.
- *Supervising Offenders in the Community - A History of Probation Theory and Practice*, by Maurice Vanstone (2005). In this work the author provides an authoritative and original account of the history of probation. This invaluable reference tool offers readers a new way of reading probation history and presents an original context for thinking about current policy and practice. While the study is essentially UK-focused, it also explores the history of probation in the USA. Available from Ashgate Publishing: <http://www.ashgate.com>.
- *Forgiveness and the healing process*, by S. Ransley

and T. Spy (2004). This book considers the place of forgiveness in working with individuals and couples, explores the benefits of mediation as a way forward both for the individual and the organisation, and also within the criminal justice system. It offers a valuable insight into South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the crucial role of forgiveness in post-apartheid South Africa. Besides, it examines a client's view of seeking forgiveness and presents new frameworks for workers seeking to help people cope with trauma and injustice. Available from Brunner Routledge: <http://www.brunner-routledge.co.uk>.

- *The Positive Effect of Restorative Justice on Reoffending*, by Restorative Justice Consortium (2006). There have been numerous studies carried out across the globe focusing on the relationship between RJ and re-offending. This report focuses solely on results that have illustrated the positive effect that RJ can have on re-offending. You can download the full text of the report here: [www.restorativejustice.org.uk/Resources/pdf/RJReductionReoffending.pdf](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk/Resources/pdf/RJReductionReoffending.pdf).

## Calendar

- March 16, 2006, Edinburgh (UK), “Positive Conflict Resolution - Mediation and Community Development in Scotland”. For more information: [www.sacro.org.uk](http://www.sacro.org.uk).
- March 29-31, 2006, Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), “Peace-Based Development”, seminar organised by the International Education for Peace Institute (EFP-International) and Education for Peace Balkans (EFP-Balkans). For more information: [www.efpinternational.org](http://www.efpinternational.org) or e-mail: [academic@efpinternational.org](mailto:academic@efpinternational.org).
- March 30-April 1, 2006, Barcelona (Spain), International Penitentiary Congress. For more information e-mail [penitenciari@meetingcongress.com](mailto:penitenciari@meetingcongress.com).
- May 3-5, 2006, Mainz (Germany), 11th German National VOM Conference “Enhancing the Dialogue - Promoting Peace Under the Law”. For more information: [www.toa-servicebuero.de](http://www.toa-servicebuero.de).
- May 8-9, 2006, Nuremberg (Germany), 11th German Congress on Crime Prevention. For more information see: [www.gcoep.org](http://www.gcoep.org).
- May 26-28, 2006, Helsinki (Finland), The Fourth Nordic Conference for Mediation and Conflict Management. For information see: [www.ssf-fm.com](http://www.ssf-fm.com).
- June 1-2, 2006, Prague (Czech Republic), International Seminar on Restorative Approaches in Juvenile Justice. The main objective of the seminar is to exchange and compare experience with different models of work with juveniles across Europe, particularly in the Czech Republic, Catalonia and France. The seminar is intended for foreign and local professionals and is part of BEST: Alternatives for Juveniles Project. More information can be found on [www.best.spj.cz](http://www.best.spj.cz).
- June 5-8, 2006, San Antonio, Texas (USA), “We belong to Each Other”. For more information see [www.familypower.org/library/ah06info.html](http://www.familypower.org/library/ah06info.html).
- **June 15-17, 2006, Barcelona (Spain), Fourth conference of the European Forum for Restorative Justice, “Restorative justice and beyond: an agenda for Europe”. The provisional programme and all registration documents can be found on our website [www.euforumrj.org](http://www.euforumrj.org).**
- August 20-25, 2006, Orlando, Florida (USA), 12<sup>th</sup> International Victimology Symposium organised by the World Society of Victimology. For more information see [www.world-society-victimology.de](http://www.world-society-victimology.de).
- October 18-20, 2006, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), “The Next Step Part 2: Developing Restorative Communities”, organised by the International Institute for Restorative Practices. Pre-conference workshops: October 15-17. More information see [www.restorativepractices.org/beth06/index.html](http://www.restorativepractices.org/beth06/index.html).

## Restorative justice and adolescent sexual offending

Adolescent sexual offending presents a number of challenges for workers within the criminal justice setting. Many of these challenges are especially problematic for this area of work but few are so unique that they don't have similar parallels in more general work with offenders. One such concern is how to best address the needs and interests of offenders, victims and the community at large. Restorative justice (RJ) is by definition and necessity primarily focussed in this triangle of mutual interest and as such can offer a potentially powerful tool to employ in working with adolescent sex offenders and the victims of their offending.

Sexual offending can devastate individual lives, of both the offender and the victim; but it also can have massively damaging effects on all those affected by the behaviour: siblings, parents, carers, extended family and even the broader community.

RJ takes an approach, which focuses on repairing the harm done by an offence in the broader context. It recognises the ‘ripple effect’ of offending and puts the

emphasis on restoration, repair and re-integration.

Equally, current thinking in the adolescent sexual offending field puts considerable emphasis on the offender being seen in the context of his/her ‘social ecology’, the immediate/extended family, the web of complex social relationships through school, friends, youth activities. The focus of work often is the recognition of the positive strengths in a young person's life and a corresponding attempt to return them to ‘positive pathways of development’.

On addition it is a characteristic of adolescent sexual offending that the victim is most often well known to the offender. Studies have shown that in 70% of cases the victim may come from the immediate or extended family of the offender. This represents a particular challenge and opportunity for a restorative approach to be considered.

RJ is rapidly gaining confidence and expertise in its application; as practitioners we see a range of interventions which might take different forms and



employ different methods but are bound together by a consistency of belief and philosophy. One strand of that belief is a recognition that through participation in the process the 'key players' gain some empowerment through regaining some control over events and taking some responsibility for 'putting right' the harm done. Sometime this is rather easier to say than to do but it says something profound about a process which is 'future focused' and not attempting to favour the narrow interests of one individual at the expense of the needs and rights of another.

Again the emphasis on 'future focus' has a resonance in the field of addressing sex offending in that the necessity for future security for past or potential victims, safety management strategies and even a return to the immediate family are all part of the concerns of those working with the offender and his/her family.

### **Our experience in Greater Manchester**

Early in 2000 we received a phone call from a Police Officer in a Youth Offending Team (YOT) to ask if she was able to consider a Restorative Conference on a young man who had received a Final Warning for indecently assaulting two younger children who he was babysitting. In the end the YOT workers Manager ruled out any possible Restorative Intervention with the blanket statement that 'RJ is inappropriate for sexual offence ...'.

This set us off thinking why not??? What would need to be in place for us to consider the possibility of this being offered? In the end, in that case the two families met informally to resolve their differences, they lived just across the street and had to face each other each day. Without professional help/assistance they arrived at their own resolution. Perhaps this was a true form of empowerment but perhaps more realistically it was the result of 'professionals' letting them down. Being too pre-occupied with their own fears/prejudices/lack of imagination to see the potential.

### **The possibility of restorative work in this field**

RJ has not traditionally worked in this field for a number of reasons which are complex and interesting to consider. Perhaps due to practitioner caution, perhaps the fear of what we might encounter working with victims of sexual offending, perhaps because the system simply doesn't have confidence in us to do so. We believe, however, that this passes up some exceptionally powerful possibilities and opportunities. There is we would suggest one further compelling reason to consider a restorative approach to sexual offending; practitioners within the criminal justice system will be aware of how the system defines

the extent and nature of the offending behaviour in terms of what can be proved most easily. This is a systems need and feature and it seems to have its most pernicious effects in the field of sexual offending.

RJ allows the possibility to view the behaviour through the real experience of the participants; the narrative is their narrative, not the reframed constraints of the criminal justice system. As Hudson noted in a recent edition of *The British Journal of Criminology*, 'In RJ proceedings the abuser cannot ignore her, as is possible in the conventional court; her story will not be refracted through legal language but will be told in her words, using the forms of speech with which she always speaks to him, so he cannot claim not to understand. She will be the centre of her story ...' (BJC, vol. 42, no. 3, summer 2002, p. 625).

In a real sense those affected by the behaviour will be present, the family/friends/carers of both victim and offender. This is a more genuine 'audience of accountability' than any court process could construct. Yet achieved in a way which commits to re-integration, condemning the behaviour not the individual.

### **Progress so far**

The starting point for taking this work forward we believe is the necessity of an Assessment framework to consider suitability and appropriateness. This is in keeping with the approach suggested by the recently produced UK Home Office 'Best Practice Guidance for Restorative Practitioners' (Dec 2004).

We have for the past two years been cautiously developing this Assessment framework and accumulating some practice experience in the field. We operate a multi practice model but have found that the Family Group Meeting approach is often the most suitable.

There isn't the time or space here to give a detailed account of work however we are hopeful of presenting it in a workshop at the Barcelona conference in June and on the 27th June in Manchester holding a single day conference dedicated to the issue of 'Restorative approaches to Sexually Harmful Behaviour by adolescents'. On this day we hope to bring together representatives of the two communities of RJ and specialists in the Sexually Harmful Behaviour field for a dialogue around the work and future possibilities.

Details will be shortly available from us at: The AIM/RJ Project, Building 3, Quays Reach, South Langworthy Road, Salford, Manchester M50 2PW, UK, e-mail: [aimproject@msn.com](mailto:aimproject@msn.com).

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## Expert Meeting for reviewing the UN Handbook on Restorative Justice

A *Handbook on Restorative Justice* is planned by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to be published in mid-2006. A two-day Expert Group Meeting to review the draft text of the publication was organised by the Criminal Justice Reform Unit on 30-31 January 2006 in Vienna. It is one of a series of practical tools developed by UNODC to support countries in the implementation of the rule of law and the development of criminal justice reform. The handbook is prepared to assist criminal justice officials, NGO workers, policy makers and UN field officers who are working on improving current responses to crime and conflict in their community.

Altogether 16 people from the following countries were invited to the meeting: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, England, Hungary, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, USA and Venezuela.

During the two days they were reviewing page by page the draft version of the handbook written by two Canadian experts, Yvon Dandurand from the University College of the Fraser Valley and Curt Griffiths from the School of Criminology at the Simon Fraser University. The meeting took place under the relaxed but efficient chairmanship of Mark Shaw, Chief of the Criminal Justice Reform Unit of the UNODC.

The focused work provided a unique opportunity for discussing various conceptual issues of restorative justice. The fact that the final text should give a consistent overview about restorative justice in not more

than a hundred pages was an interesting challenge for all of us: on the one hand it stimulated lively discussions about the main conceptual issues of restorative justice; on the other hand, it highlighted the importance of finding the common ground amongst us.

Throughout the comments of the experts it was fascinating to gain a picture about the wide range of sociological backgrounds, criminal justice models, the various restorative practices evolved in different contexts as well as about the different theoretical approaches all over the world. Nevertheless, it was clear that there is a significant need for implementing and developing restorative justice both in the highly urbanised Euro-Atlantic as well as in the more traditional developing societies. No matter how current political, economical and criminal justice systems look in a certain country, the importance of peace and community-based constructive conflict handling methods is equally important both in an Egyptian village as well as in any neighbourhood of New York City.

Last but not least, it was encouraging to see the commitment of the United Nations in supporting and promoting the development of restorative justice in its member states. The publication will unquestionably help the everyday work of restorative justice advocates not only by its content but also by symbolising the importance and legitimacy of this approach all over the world.

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**Submissions:** The European Forum welcomes the submission of articles and information for publication. Please contact the co-ordinator.