

***Recommendation from the Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and
Protection of Juveniles***
- Summary -

Voluntary but not without obligation!
Direction for volunteer policy within the framework of the application of sanctions

Recommendation to the Dutch Minister of Justice, dated 8 June 2010

The Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Protection of Juveniles has been requested to make a recommendation with respect to a draft policy vision concerning volunteer policy within the context of the application of sanctions. The final policy vision was sent to the Lower House on 24 June 2010. It is the basis for regulations in the field of the admission and subsidising of volunteer organisations and their implementation.

The Council considers it a positive development that the Minister of Justice has produced a policy vision of volunteer work. The deployment of volunteers within the context of the application of sanctions can make a useful and necessary contribution to the resocialisation and return of (former) detainees to society. For persons whose date of return to Dutch society is still far off or not coming at all, the Council considers the deployment of volunteers mainly in light of strengthening a humane detention climate. The Council also supports the deployment of volunteers with respect to compliance with special conditions. A carefully-considered and stimulating approach, both at the national level and at the level of implementation, is needed to support the deployment and added value of volunteers. In this connection, the Council observes an important task for the Ministry of Justice and, partly in view of the entering into effect of the Social Support Act, for the municipalities.

Over 70% of the detainees will reoffend within seven years after their imprisonment. In order to reduce recidivism, the Government has, inter alia, deployed policy aimed at aftercare for former detainees during the return to society. So far, the approach has focused on the deployment of professionals. The Council is of the opinion that said deployment of professionals needs to be strengthened and that this is possible with a well-supported (demand) focused volunteer policy. Having social contacts, restoring relations with partners, parents and others are important conditions for feeling accepted again and not reverting back to old behaviour. Volunteers can play an essential role during the restoration of these contacts or when establishing new contacts as counterweight against old contacts. Sound selection and training policy with respect to volunteers is essential in that context.

The Council considers the draft policy vision a necessary, but not yet sufficient step in the right direction. The substantive and policy-based embedment of the deployment of volunteers deserves further consideration. The Council recommends placing the deployment of volunteers with (former) detainees more strongly within the context of their return to society as well as to improve the detention climate. On the basis of the awareness of the importance of volunteers to the resocialisation and the starting of positive social relationships for (former) detainees, the deployment of volunteers can be further stimulated. The Council recommends making the deployment more demand based. Volunteer organisations are offered little certainty from a financial and organisational perspective, according to the Council. The Council has formulated several general recommendations to the organisations directly involved.

*The recommendation can be obtained from the secretariat of the Council
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