

## BB Conference Proceeding Report

Today, 20 November 2015, the BB Conference ended, the two days on "**Supporting the victims of crime through restorative dialogue**" The meeting, which was held at the Hotel Bellambriana in Rome, deepened through the authoritative voice of subject matter experts and leaders of the Building Bridges project, the complex issue of restorative justice and dialogue, and presented the international European project: Building Bridges (BB). A project that was born in the wake of the Sycamore Tree Project, intends to pay greater attention to the figure of the victim of crime, than the author of the crime.

The Conference, promoted and organized with the cooperation of nine European partners (Confiar Portugal, Confraternidad Carcelaria de España, Gevangenenzorg Nederland, PF Czech Republic, Hungary PF, PF Italy non-profit organization, Seehaus eV, Makam Research GmbH and University of Hull) whose chairman was the Prof, lawyer, Federico Reggio, and with the participation not only of excellent speakers:

- Professor **Martin Wright**, former director of the Howard League for Penal Reform and Policy Officer & Victim Support
- Dr. **Gerry Johnstone**, Professor of Law at University of Hull;
- Dr. **Dan Van Ness**- vice president programme and strategy issues Prison Fellowship, one of the world's leading experts on restorative justice;
- Dr. **Flaminia Giovanelli**, undersecretary of the Pontifical Department for Justice and Peace;
- Undersecretary for Italian Justice, Dr. **Cosimo Maria Ferri**;
- Prof. **Luciano Eusebi**, a professor at the Catholic University of Milan;
- Dr. **Giacinto Siciliano**, Director of the High Security Prison in Milan - Opera;

But also important personalities from the academic world and penal institutions:

- For **Italy** the Dr.sse Rosalba Casella, director of the prison of Modena and Stefania Petrera, Honorary Judge and educator of the Juvenile Court of Rome

for **Spain** "Association of Mediation, especially in the person of Francisca Lozano and Penal Institutions particularly Jesús Manuel Pardo"

for **Check Republic** Prof. Dr. Helena Valková, Ex-- minister for Justice, now Member of Parliament of Czeh Republic in Committe for National Security And Also undercommittee for prisons, who enabled BB to become true in CZ

and Ph Dr.Andrea Matouskova, leader of Probation and Mediation Service, partner of BB Project

and JUDr. Simona Diblikova from the Institute for Criminology and Social prevention in CZ

For **United Kingdom** Stephen Hawkins and Mandy Thompson for Prison fellowship; the University of Hull

For **Portugal** Mr Jorge Monteiro, from General Management of Prison Administration, Mrs Isabel Flores - Prison Director

Professor Sonia Reis - ISCSP University and BB Facilitator

For **Hungary** Commander Colonel Dr. István Budai, Main Advisor, Director of Balassagyarmat Maximum Security Prison;

Csilla Katona professional leader, president of Hungarian Crime Prevention and Prison Ministry Foundation, Board member of PF Hungary

Gábor Roszík Lutheran pastor, president and founder of PF Hungary and HICP Hungary

The Conference was a valuable opportunity to become better aware with the realities of Prison Fellowship and, more specifically, the BB Project. Why do the victims receive benefits from the meeting with offenders? How and where can you "recruit" the victims to run a project? How are the facilitators trained? Even the legislation, the funds to finance the initiatives and prospects of a project either all over Europe, or in America, projects that have achieved excellent results right from the start, especially in the healing of wounds of the victims.

The Secretary for Justice, **Cosimo Maria Ferri** said "People, victims of crime have specific needs that the legal system must take into account through measures aimed at repairing the damage and ensuring that the trial avoids a greater harm. The conviction of the guilty and sentencing should gradually give way to recognition of the suffering that accompanies the experience of every victim of crime. It is thus essential to favor the encounter and dialogue between the victim and the offender, produced by the activation of programs and practices, to replace the punishment and the trial and designed for repair and resolution of the conflict in an effort to overcome the logic of punishment, through a relational reading of the criminal phenomenon. In order to establish an adequate standard of protection, both in the trial and out of it, it is of central importance to make a serious assessment of the victim, of his/her features and his/her specific needs of protection. It is also necessary to develop any trial whereby the victim and the offender participate actively, free, with prior and informed consent, towards the resolution of issues concerning the criminal event, with the help of an impartial third person."

Very moving the intervention of the director of the maximum security prison in Milan Opera, Dr **Giacinto Siciliano**:

"I am here today to tell you the experience of the Milan Opera Prison, the largest Italian one with more than 1,300 offenders most of whom also convicted for severe crimes and organized crime, called to serve very long sentences in many cases, even over 30

years if not even one or more life sentences. Life sentences that do not help a process of change severely limiting the possibilities for the concrete reintegration into society in line with the aims of our Constitution.

In prison the offender continues to wear his mask, to play a role that allows him to survive the failure of conscience, a choice of life, often made by bad choices.

... The meeting with victims puts men in front of themselves: the offenders and the victims, the anger and hatred that often accompany those who have suffered against the arrogance of those who denies having hurt. We will move from the level of "done" to the plane of the effects, the consequences for others and for you, gives rise to the need to make peace with others before it first of all with themselves.

An explosive mixture that can raise an insurmountable wall or bring it down for good for ever.

In the eight meetings of BB that have taken place on a weekly basis and on time beginning almost distressing then faster release, we have seen people look lower with their gazes, escape and hide behind a table or a chair, we heard people crying, telling things never said, we have seen dissolving the rigidities of the victims that slowly opened a chink in their grief opened to discussion and dialogue, we have seen them get closer to each other in ways that clearly showed the difficulty of that gesture with respect to their story and respect for others , we have seen the birth of forms of solidarity and friendship between prisoners, victims and between each other; we saw people stagger, ask to leave, we feared that someone might do something foolish (calling into question the very possibility of continuing to live), we have confronted us, recounted, we supported the people and we have accompanied, we have seen them flourish and reborn, we have recognized the results asking them share public testimony, we run with them the consequences of those strong choices.

We learned that the relationship with the victims, which we traditionally neglect, helps to restore dignity to free and

convicted man, helps to lower the anger, to restore confidence in the prison institution by the prisoners and the apparently free person, who needs to get rid of barriers that often life circumstances raise in his/her mind.

We have learned that passing the anger and confidence in the institution become a major tool for proper management of the complex dynamics of a prison, help to make less hostile relations and raise the level of recognition and trust between operators and inmates.

We learned that the man's confrontation with himself and with another man in pain is stronger than the freedom and produces a respect that can not be replaced in any way by the freedom.

As director I am extremely pleased and proud to have been able to try this experience and to be able to be a witness. Because the strength of the testimony of these people has changed more lives, in jail and out, than I have seen in many years with traditional activities.

I greatly thank the people who have had the courage to cross that gate and to question their own lives and others. And that contributed to the miracle of "restitutions and repair."

Their strength has been a life lesson, of civilization, of love, of legality that allowed each of us Institution, operators, offenders, to grow and learn."

In two days we have been talking, however, even about the obstacles and limitations that exist in achieving this project. To give just one example, the despair of those "executioners" who, through the encounter with the victims, find themselves deprived of their safety and aware of the error committed. From there, though rarely, the death wish or a waiver of any new stimulus.

"The conference ends today - said Dan Van Ness, vice president of Prison Fellowship International - but from tomorrow we must begin to build bridges"!

Among the concluding interventions, including the reflection of Salvatore Martinez, president of Renewal in the Holy Spirit: those

entering the prison goes to visit God and is blessed by God. The hope was to continue to witness to the world the experience of PF and BB and the encounter with God in prisons.

To Marcella Reni, Chairlady of Fellowship Italy, the duty to "say thank you" to all partners and to the participating countries. "May you go home filled with joy," she said greeting the participants and concluded a meeting that, according to the responsible of the various PF, promises already proponent of new projects and effective initiatives.

**Hereinafter you can link to the keynotes' and workshops' proceedings, to enlarge upon the RJ issues:**

- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-Building-Bridges-conference-nov.-2015.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-Speeches-list.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS-4-D4.3-1B-Marcella-Reni-Saluti-ai-partecipanti.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-1B-Marcella-Reni.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-2-Speech-Joost-de-Jager-BB-Conference-Nov-20-2015-2.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-3-Flaminia-Giovanelli-ROMA-Restorative-Justice-2015-ENG..pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-3-Flamina-Giovanelli-IT-ROMA-Giustizia-restaurativa-2015.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-4-Martin-Wright->

[Conference-Keynote-paper-Better-criminal-law-or-better-than-criminal-law.pdf](#)

- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-4-Martin-Wright-Rome-2015-ppt-rev.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-5-Dott COSIMO-FERRI sottosegretario-alla-giustizia-1.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-6-Eusebi-Luciano-la-svolta-riparativa-libro-Mannozi-Lodigiani.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-7-Gerry-Johnstone-The-Building-Bridges-Project-aspirations-and-achievements-2.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-7-Iain-Brennan-The-social-ecology-of-building-bridges speech-text.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-8-Giacinto-Siciliano-intervento-BB-Sicomoro.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-9-Esther-Klaassen-BB-Training-and-Programme-organisation.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-10-Iain-Brennan-Evaluation-of-Building-Bridges-speech.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-11-Paul-Talbot-Sustaining-Reforms.pdf](#)
- [http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS-4-D4.3-12-BB-Workshops-Programme.pdf](#)

- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-Workshop-A-15-11-20-BB-Preparing-Victims-and-offenders.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-Workshop-B-BB-conference-Workshop-Facilitating-BB.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-Workshop-B-outline-sept-30-FACILITATING.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-WORKSHOP-B-Speakers-notes-Introduction-to-facilitating-a-BB-Programme.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-Workshop-C-Outline-STAKEHOLDER.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-WORKSHOP-C-Stakeholders -Rome -I-PART- nov2015-1.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-12-WORKSHOP-C-Stakeholders -Rome -II-PART- nov2015-2.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-13-Dan-Van-Ness-Building-Bridges-in-an-International-Context.pdf>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.3-14-Resolution-of-the-Building-Bridges-Conference.pdf>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y1c0h1kl5VA&feature=youtu.be>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQ1Jzs4taco&feature=youtu.be>
- <http://restorative-justice.eu/bb/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/WS4-D4.9-BB-Programme.jpg>