

Work Stream 1

Deliverable Report 1.2

STP Methodology Paper

## **Exploring existing STPs for restorative justice in prisons in Europe**

### **A literature review**



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**Table of contents**

- 1. Introduction .....3
- 2. Methodology .....3
- 3. Exploring existing STPs in a literature review .....4
  - 3.1 Overview of available literature about STP .....4
  - 3.2 Results of the content analysis.....7
    - 3.2.1 STP as an example of restorative justice inside the prison .....7
    - 3.2.2 Victim selection .....7
    - 3.2.3 Advantages for victims to take part .....8
    - 3.2.4 Defining success.....9
- 4. Conclusions.....13
  - 4.1 Recommendations for Building Bridges .....13
- 5. References .....14
- 6. Annex: Questions guiding the literature review .....15



## 1. Introduction

The Sycamore Tree Programme (STP) is an in-prison restorative justice programme developed by Prison Fellowship International (PFI) bringing together unrelated victims and offenders in a 6-8 week programme to discuss crimes and their effects. Offenders have the chance to understand the harm caused by their crime, assisting them in reducing the likelihood of reoffending, and victims have the opportunity to talk about their crime experience and get answers to their open questions in the programme, finally supporting them in their healing process (see Parker, Van Ness 2010).

The STP programme has said to be effective in a number of countries around the world, but has not been implemented throughout Europe yet. With the help of a European Action Grant in the Criminal Justice Programme of the European Commission the project “Building Bridges” analyses, adapts and evaluates the STP approach in Europe and seeks to transfer it to more European Member States.

This report is the result of a literature analysis of STP documents available in English. The main aim was to explore how victim oriented the STP-programme is and how more victims could be attracted to the programme. We wanted to find out, how the original STP methodology was documented, what works and why it is seen as successful. We would like to answer the main research question: *What can we learn from STP documents in different countries about victim and offender work and about integrating victims into STP?*

From April to June 2014 three Prison Fellowship Ministries (in Spain, Portugal and the Czech Republic) reviewed existing documents about STP in order to learn about the programme and to be able to implement it in their Ministries for the first time in 2015.

## 2. Methodology

In order to systematically review available documents, an internet-based search was carried out and found 8 specific documents about STP in English, which were put into a list. This search is not exhaustive, but contains all easily available documents about the programme. In a second step a literature review guide was developed by researchers, guiding the way the 8 documents were supposed to be read and analysed. The analysis was guided by several questions (see Annex).

Three Prison Fellowship Ministries in Spain, Portugal and the Czech Republic reviewed the listed documents. Then all results were edited together to this report by the researchers.



### 3. Exploring existing STPs in a literature review

The review of literature about the STP-programme showed that there is not much literature available on an academic level, which is understandable since STP is a practical programme for restorative justice prisons, and does not in itself have academic expectations. However, some evaluation reports are available throughout different countries programmes, which have been taken into account in this review as well as practical reports of facilitators or/and officially published documents by Prison Fellowship International.

#### 3.1 Overview of available literature about STP

There are three official documents published by Prison Fellowship International (PFI) about the Sycamore Tree Project: the participant workbook, the session guide and the programme guide (Parker, Van Ness, all 2010). These are the basic documents for using and transferring STP to countries in which the programme has not taken place yet.

The *STP programme guide* (36 pages) starts with an introduction to what STP is and goes on with seven steps in the preparation phase of STP:

- Recruiting team members
- Obtaining support and permissions
- Training team members and adapting material
- Recruiting victims and offenders
- Preparing victims and offenders
- Running the programme
- Conducting follow-ups

Also the participation of volunteers is described in five selectable roles: leaders, facilitators, recruiters, prayer leaders or event organizers. The document also contains a section with resources and frequently asked questions.

The *STP session guide* (71 pages) leads facilitators and volunteers through the restorative justice programme. It starts with an introduction to facilitators informing them about their roles and responsibility. Then each of the eight sessions is described in detail (first: overview, second: detailed curriculum).

The *STP participant workbook* (48 pages) is structured into seven separate assignments and additional documents. The seven assignments are: the story of Zacchaeus, the ripple effect of crime, taking responsibility, confession and repentance, what is forgiveness, and two open assignments after session 6 and 7.

The first page is always illustrated in a graphical way and one page of each assignment is available for writing down feelings connected to the seven sessions.

Also there is literature about the STP-programme in the Netherlands for young offenders, called "SOS" (Klaassen, de Jong 2009). Experiences were documented in a handbook in English language written for the programme and group leaders of the Sycamore Youth



Programme. The main purpose of the Sycamore Tree Youth programme is to help participants change their attitude, ways of thinking and behaviour. The key aim of the programme is helping offenders see the effect that criminal behaviour has on victims and on society. This includes having offenders gain awareness of the pain and damage suffered by victims and their specific needs, to accept responsibility for their actions, as well as gain an understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. The programme also allows offenders to identify opportunities for personal change and restoration and to take part in an act of restoration.

The programme in the Netherlands is well documented, also in English (Klaassen, de Jong 2009), and is split up into six sessions lasting approximately two hours. The programme is divided up into two parts. Sessions 1 and 2 focus on the crime incident and Sessions 3, 4 and 5 are all about restoration. The conclusion of the programme is with session 6 in which participants share their contributions with a number of guests and are awarded with a certificate.

Another document is available in English from the Netherlands, which contains restorative justice programmes in the Netherlands performed by Prison Fellowship in the Netherlands (Gevangenzorg Nederland 2013). The purpose of the document is to inform readers about the background and contents of Restorative Justice and on the programmes which were developed on the basis of these principles. The main readership for this document is staff members and volunteers of Prison Fellowship as well those interested in the programmes of PFI. In 2004, the Dutch Minister of Justice outlined two principle goals for justice policies: to restore the rule of law and to increase security. Prison Fellowship Netherlands believes that this includes more than just criminal justice and focuses on the restoration of the suffering inflicted on the victims, the perpetrators taking responsibility for their actions, and to involve society in the resolution of the conflict. The Prison Fellowship's mission is "Belief in restoration!" and thus developed programmes in the past to help support this including visits by volunteers, family care, work placement, restorative justice programmes such as SOS, and SOS youth under the Sycamore Tree project.

Additionally the STP-approach has been evaluated in some countries. These evaluation reports are also available in English and give insight into success and failure of such restorative justice programmes in prison (Feasey, Williams 2009; Marshall, 2005).

The report by Feasey and Williams (2009) shows a quantitative analysis about the effect of the Sycamore Tree programme on the offenders' attitudes. The evaluation report was written for all those who are related with restorative justice and for the Prison Fellowship organisations which are running the Sycamore Tree Programme with the final aim of evaluating the efficiency of the programme. It demonstrates that the positive changes in attitudes such as victim empathy and anticipation of future offending are attributable to participation in the Sycamore Tree Programme. The report confirms that the Sycamore Tree Programme has a significant impact upon all the inmates groups, independent of gender and age of the participating offenders. However, it suggests that the prison has great influence on the actual effectiveness of the programme.

The report of Marshall (2005) gives an overview of the STP-sessions, analyzing the efficiency of the programme. It is divided into six differentiated sections, covering subjects such as contents of the programme, the orientation of the programme, predisposition of the



inmates, stakeholders, and dialogue during the sessions and respect to the participants. The report by Marshall (2005) was written for Prison Fellowship New Zealand in order to document STP to determine whether it was running appropriately and to analyse the opinions of participants.

Also some facilitators have written practical reports about their experiences with STP in Europe, like an unknown facilitator from the UK (“My experience with the Sycamore Tree Project”) published on the website of PFI. In the document, the author speaks about his own experience as a facilitator in STP. He explains how the programme runs and how it affects inmates along the different sessions. In his perspective the offenders start the programme a little bit unsure about the outcomes but when they reach the last session, they are different people and have changed. They are aware of what they have done and the consequences of their actions on themselves and others. The author is a prison chaplain and documented his experiences in STP, not just for those interested in Restorative Justice and related to law, but also for the wider society and local communities to make them understand that STP produces desirable results.

A practical report from one of the facilitators of STP in the United States mentions that offenders are not aware of the victim’s perspective on the crime at all (Rea 2011). Victims often remain faceless for offenders

Also, literature from Prison Fellowship New Zealand was taken into account (PFNZ 2007, PFNZ no year) in this review. The RECAP newsletter addresses the strong international evidence that Restorative Justice conferences and programmes such as Sycamore Tree produce positive results for both victims and offenders, and in some cases even reduce re-offending. Conferencing consists of either the victim or the offender requesting a meeting and will proceed if there is mutual consent by both parties with help from Prison Fellowship in facilitating a meeting within the prison. In 2001 PFNZ developed an evaluation framework since they started delivering the programme up to 40 times per year in different prisons in the country. The evaluation was conducted at least three times by a clinical psychologist. In 2004 the same evaluator was asked to develop an evaluation process which was able to measure the effects of the programme (impact evaluation). Five scales were used to measure pre- and post-programme participation and aimed at showing that it was possible to increase the offender’s responsiveness to address their criminal behaviour.

As the case in New Zealand, the government has partially helped fund the programme where the remainder of the expenses is to be obtained by fundraising. It is the recommendation of the newsletter articles that the government further considers the effectiveness of programmes such as Sycamore Tree and in-prison victim-offender conferencing and panels as part of its ongoing commitment to effective interventions strategy.

Shapland et al. (2011) developed a guide for best practice in restorative justice. The guide consists of Section A which is the core of restorative practice. Section B discusses sensitive and complex cases. These cases are determined by the initial risk assessment and should only proceed if facilitators can provide a safe environment. A number of additional knowledge and skills are needed in these cases. Section C discusses informal restorative processes.



This section discusses how the knowledge and skills learned in Section A can be used in a number of different settings. This can be done either individually, or through the use of circles in a small group or large group. Section D describes the benefits of co-working with individual agencies and practitioners. Section E, F & G discuss guidance for case supervisors, line managers, and service providers. The guide is written for those inside and outside the criminal justice system, and those interested in endorsing the restorative justice system.

## 3.2 Results of the content analysis

The documents were searched according to different factors interesting for the European Action Grant “Building Bridges” which aims to transfer the STP-approach to European prisons. Factors analysed within this literature review were how the selection of victims takes place, which hints there are for the implementation of the STP-programme inside and outside the prison, the advantages explicitly named in the existing literature for victims to take part, and how “success” of STP is defined.

### 3.2.1 STP as an example of restorative justice inside the prison

All documents speak about STP being carried out inside a prison. The evaluation report by Feasey and Williams (2009) give insight into this: Offenders have taken part in STP from every category of prisons: from high security prisons to remand centres. The results of the evaluation show that STP takes place predominantly within Category C – those who cannot be trusted in open conditions but who are unlikely to try to escape – and in Local prison establishments. It can be observed that there is a low participation of offenders from Category D – those who can be reasonably trusted not to try to escape, and are given the privilege of an open prison. There is no evidence that STP takes place outside the prison yet. The STP youth programme performed in the Netherlands (Gevangenenzorg Nederland 2013) takes place in youth facilities for young offenders.

Klaassen and de Jong (2009) state that two distraction free rooms are needed for STP’s small group work. Marshall (2005) stresses that STP needs to take place in an appropriate environment for restorative dialogues, no matter where the programme takes place. It also explains that the last session of the programme consist on a celebratory meal to which members of the community are invited. Although it is not said, it could be reasonable to think that this meal could also take place outside the prison establishment.

However, it can be assumed that STP would have a bigger impact inside the prison establishment where the offenders are anyway since it might be easier to think about the situation they are facing inside the prison rather than outside the prison.

### 3.2.2 Victim selection

The selection of victims for STP follows certain principles, namely:

- Voluntariness

There is no pre-determined profile for victims in STP, but it is necessary that participants take



part voluntarily and are ready to listen and respect offenders. The same criteria apply to the selection of offenders (Marshall 2005). Most articles do not say anything about victim selection, but it is stressed that they take part in the programme voluntarily and sometimes they are trained by Prison Fellowship to present their stories without the risk of re-traumatisation.

According to the best practice guide for restorative justice (Shapland et al. 2010) the facilitator should obtain consent for both the victim and offender and ensures that both sides are participating voluntarily.

- Matching principles with offenders (similar crimes)

Marhsall (2005) points out that the victims are selected are victims of a similar crime that the offenders have committed. Victims of STP are unrelated, indirect victim of the offenders and never their own victims.

- Safety issues for victims

For selecting victims different safety issues have to be taken into account, reducing the likelihood of re-traumatisation. The facilitator of a restorative justice programme should make an assessment of participants based on a number of factors and make a determination to start or continue the programme based on these safety and risk factors. Risk and safety concerns include mental health needs, substance abuse issues, and/or prior incidents in the life of the victim. (Shapland et al. 2010)

From 2001 to 2007 STP was able to facilitate 33 referrals and 12 victim-offender conferences in New Zealand. Offenders initiated most of the conferences, but four conferences were initiated by victims themselves (PFNZ 2007).

### **3.2.3 Advantages for victims to take part**

STP allows for an opportunity for reconciliation and restoration (Klaassen, de Jong 2009). It allows participants to receive the account of a victim of the themes discussed in earlier sessions such as offenders and victims having their say, and acknowledging and taking responsibility. It is shown that when the victims take part in STP, the offenders improve their attitudes in aspects like cognitive and emotional empathy and it increases the consciousness of the impact of their crimes on the victim (Feasey, Williams 2009).

In addition, STP has a positive effect on reducing the probability of future offending.

According to Marshall (2005), the participation of the victims in STP has only positive consequences. The programme gives them the opportunity to tell their stories and experiences, so the offenders are able to become aware about the consequences of their crimes in the victims' lives. Also, it is demonstrated that the victims enjoy the programme and they recommend it.

One facilitator describes the participation of the victims as an impact on offender's life. Especially during the third session of the programme, when the meeting between victim and



offender takes place, being a quite transformative experience for the offenders.

Within the RECAP newsletter a comment from a participant was used to show the success of STP. It is as follows, "About six weeks ago I completed the STP programme, which is amazing as I'm sure you have heard. Taking part of the programme closed a lot of doors for me as a "victim" and has made an incredible difference in my life, however there was one last thing that I needed to do. I need to meet the man who is in prison for raping me. I need a face and I need to be in the same room as him."

Research shows the following benefits to victims (Shapland et al. 2011, p. 6): "Practitioners reported that in practice the informal 'tea and biscuits' time after a formal restorative meeting has finished can be the time where the most restoration happens." The research evidence shows that the great majority of victims taking part in restorative processes do not seek material reparation as the outcome. Apologies, dialogue, the opportunity to ask and have questions answered, to speak their truth are all far more important to them.

### 3.2.4 Defining success

The evaluation performed by PFNZ (no year) shows at least five elements which were measured in New Zealand. In this evaluation five scales were used to define the success of the programme:

- General attitude towards offending
- Anticipation of re-offending
- Victim hurt denial
- Evaluation of the crime as worthwhile
- Perception of current life problems.

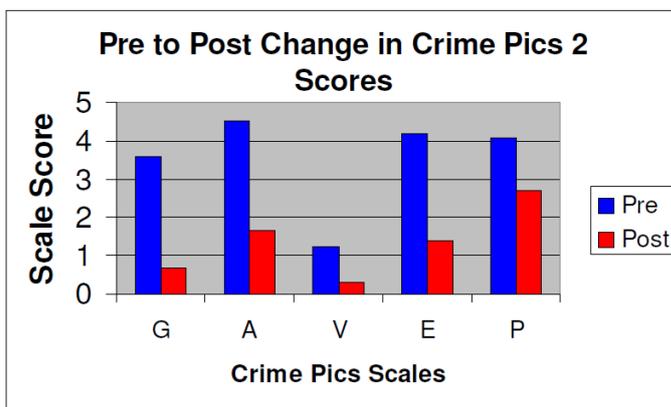
Psychometric Features	
<b>Crime PICS II</b>	
<b>General Attitude (G Scale)</b>	Measures the offender's general attitude towards offending. A low score indicates that the individual believes that an offending lifestyle is not desirable.
<b>Anticipation of future offending (A Scale)</b>	Measures the offender's anticipation of re-offending. A low score suggests that the individual does not anticipate re-offending.
<b>Victim Empathy (V Scale)</b>	Measures the offender's attitude towards his / her victims – whether they believe they have caused any harm. A low score indicates that the individual recognises their actions impact on victims, directly or indirectly i.e. higher victim empathy.
<b>Evaluation of Crime as Worthwhile (E Scale)</b>	Measures the offender's evaluation of crime being worthwhile. A low score indicates that the individual perceives the cost of crime as being greater than its rewards.
<b>Problem Inventory (P Scale)</b>	This problem inventory measures the offender's perceptions of their current problems (e.g. money, relationships, housing etc). The higher the score, the greater the number and gravity of identified problems. However, caution should be taken when interpreting these results as an increase may also indicate better problem identification skills.

(source: Feasey 2009)

As the graph below shows all five scales decreased after participation of offenders in the STP-programme although current problems in life remained high on a score between 0 and 5.



## Pre and Post Scores



(source: PFNZ, no year)

The following key findings are stated by Feasey et al. (2009):

- Statistical analysis indicates that these positive changes are associated with completion of the STP-programme.
- The positive attitudinal changes are associated with all groups of prisoners including male, female, adult and young prisoners.
- With regard to the V scale (victim hurt denial) both male and female prisoners demonstrated an increased awareness of the impact of their actions on victims, directly or indirectly i.e. higher victim empathy. This positive shift was marginally higher for female prisoners.
- With regard to the V scale (victim hurt denial) both adult and young prisoners (under 21) demonstrated an increased awareness of the impact of their actions on victims.
- With regard to the A scale (anticipation of re-offending) both male and female prisoners demonstrated a reduced anticipation of future offending. This positive shift was marginally higher for male prisoners.
- With regard to the A scale (anticipation of re-offending) both adult and young prisoners demonstrated a reduced anticipation of future offending. This positive shift was marginally higher for young prisoners.

It is interesting to see how “success” is defined in the literature about the programme. There are different elements to a “successful programme”, which are described below.

- Completing the programme

Success can be defined by simply completing the programme (Klaassen, de Jong 2009). Programme requirements entail attending and participating in each session, completing worksheets and activities, and finally completing the evaluation form. STP has a positive impact on respondents and the changes are associated with the completion of the programme (Feasey, Williams 2009).

Shapland et al. (2011, p.5) come to the conclusion that “...demonstrating their own confidence in the process, and remaining engaged with all the participants throughout the



process, was key to managing the anxieties of participants and enabling them to stay involved....”.

- Proof of some form of (behavioural) change

Feasey and Williams (2009) measured the effects of STP in a pre- and post-programme. They measured the likelihood of the change. In all the results it is possible to see the positive shift between pre and post scores. The behavioural changes (in G Score) were evaluated by:

- Gender:
  - Males: reduction from 5.23 to 4.44
  - Females: reduction from 36.12 to 31.24
- Age:
  - Adults: reduction from 35.49 to 30.97
  - Young Offenders: reduction from 38.65 to 33.88
- Prison Classification:
  - High Security prison: reduction from 35.87 to 31.42
  - Category 'B': reduction from 35.81 to 32.53
  - Category 'C': reduction from 35.49 to 30.65
  - Category 'D': reduction from 32.07 to 28.81
  - Local prison: reduction from 36.97 to 32.00
  - Remand Centre: reduction from 37.34 to 32.23
  - Other facility: reduction from 37.04 to 32.76

Although it is possible to see positive changes, the results between the different institutions show that some of them have better results than others.

- Specific evaluation results which show the effects on victims and offenders

Marshall (2005) proves the effectiveness of the programme using surveys, showing a positive influence on both victims and offenders. Some of these results are:

- 86% of offenders had a lot more understanding about the harm done
- 94% of victims enjoyed the process
- 50% of victims desire to make changes
- 72% of inmates strongly desired to make changes (50% in relationships, 60% in attitudes)
- 60% of inmates felt very clear about the idea of repentance and making up what they did
- 90% of victim participants and 70% of inmates thought the programme was great
- 100% of the inmates would recommend the course to others

- Experiencing restoration

Success of STP can also be defined with experiencing restoration. It is possible to observe the success of the programme during the last session, in which the “act of restitution” takes



place. In this moment, participants realize about the changes the offender has experienced, becoming aware about the consequences of their crimes and desiring to change for the better. In some occasions, the offender is moved to ask to contact their own victim to apologize.

In an evaluation report of STP in the UK, results show that it had positive impact on prisoners (Gevangenezorg 2013). Of the five point Likert scale results show that attitudes towards victims were improved. Reports in New Zealand were similar. In an evaluation report of the SOS program for young offenders, some participants stated that the programme helped them to see what forgiveness is and gave them hope that restoration is possible (Gevangenezorg 2013).

- Reduced post-traumatic stress in victims

Results of international studies indicate that Restorative Justice reduces reoffending in offenders in some but not all cases (PFNZ 2007), reduced crime, reduced victims' post traumatic stress symptoms and costs and that restorative justice provided victims and offenders with more satisfaction with justice opposed to conventional justice in general. Also the desire for violent revenge within victims' was reduced.

Rea (2011) finds that victims experience greater satisfaction when they participate in restorative justice processes than through the traditional justice system.



## 4. Conclusions

The Sycamore Tree Project is well documented from the practical point of view and knowledge is available in a programme guide, session guide and a work book for participants.

More scientific or academic resources are missing which could put the programme into a wider context of “restorative justice in prisons” and which outline basic principles of the STP-programme from the perspective of law, sociology, psychology, or mediation theory. Evaluation reports are also scarce in Europe until now. However, there is a lot of “grey literature” on STP – texts which have not gone through a publishing house, quality control or an editorial office, like practical experience reports or working material.

### 4.1 Recommendations for Building Bridges

The United Nations’ definition of restorative justice fits well in Building Bridges. “A restorative process is any process in which the victim and the offender and, where appropriate, any other individuals or community members affected by a crime participate together actively in the resolution of matters arising from the crime, generally with the help of a facilitator.” (United Nations, 2006)

One evaluation report (Feasey, Williams 2009) says that STP supports all who request to participate in the programme, regardless of their faith. This could be important for Building Bridges because the social and religious situation is different in each European country. It is essential to make people understand that the programme, although it is based on a story from Bible, is not focused on evangelizing anybody; it is trying to teach the principles and application of restorative justice using the Sycamore Tree history as a valid example. The story of Zacchaeus introduces them to the idea that the crime is not just a matter between criminal and the victim, but also something that has wide impact on the community.

There are some ideas of Marshall (2005) that might be interesting for Building Bridges:

- To know the activities and methods used during the sessions, like role-plays and readings.
- The role of re-traumatisation in the selection of victims

Policy related recommendations following New Zealand’s example: According to Section 6(1)(d) of the New Zealand Corrections Act of 2004 the principle is set out that “[...] offenders must, where appropriate and so far as is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances, be provided with access to any process designated to promote restorative justice between offenders and victims”.



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## 6. Annex: Questions guiding the literature review

- What are the main contents of the document?
- Who was the document written for? Who is the main readership or audience for the document?
- What does the document say about the selection criteria of victims for STP? How are victims characterized, found and selected?
- What does the document say about doing STP inside or outside the prison? What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing it inside or outside the prison setting?
- How does the document describe the advantages and benefits for victims taking part in STP?
- How does the document talk about “success” of STP? Which hints are given to when STP is “successful” and when it is not?
- What else could be important for Building Bridges from this document?

