



MOBILITY PROJECT REPORT ON STUDY TRIP



« PRISON VISITING » AUSTRIA – SCOTLAND

- **Number of participants:** 2
- **Age of participants:** 55 and 72 years
- **Country of origin:** Austria (Graz)
- **Date:** 6 to 9 September 2009



→ **Aims of the study trip:**

Find out about the structure and operation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Scotland at the national level. Visit to the initiatives established in Scotland for visiting prisoners and supporting their families, with the aim of developing the same project in Austria.

→ **Activities in which they took part:**



Visit to the National Council of Scotland in Glasgow and discussions with the staff there; visits to three Scottish prisons: Barlinnie (one of the oldest), Addiewell and Schotts; informal meetings and discussions with prisoners at recreation times; lunch in the canteen with prison staff at Addiewell; a long, informal interview with two prisoners at Schotts prison, including one serving a life sentence; interview with the deputy director of the non-governmental organisation HOPE (Helping Offenders, Prisoners and Families) and exchange of advice and good practice to set up a

similar organisation in Austria.

→ **How did this study trip influence their voluntary work?**

The two volunteers are hoping to set up a similar project for supporting the families of prisoners in Austria, so they are trying to make the other members of their Conference, as well as their National Council, aware of the issues. After their visit to Scotland, they felt really motivated to create the same project in their own town and have already started to make some progress. They are staying in touch with their Scottish partner, HOPE, for this. Future visits to prisoners and their families will need many new Austrian volunteers to take part.

→ **Testimony...:** « Thank you for giving us the opportunity for this experience. We have learned a great deal from the exchange. What struck us most forcefully is the need to take care of people most affected by imprisonment: close relatives, family and children of prisoners who are growing up stigmatised by this unhappy experience. There is urgent and never-ending work to be done in this area. »