

**Creating a Transnational Network
for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture
and other Kinds of Violence
to overcome their PTSD
(posttraumatic stress disorder)**

The idea of this network emerged among a group of individuals,

- who once had suffered a torture themselves in different parts of the world, in Chile under Pinochet, in Iraq under Saddam Hussein, in East-Germany under the Stasi, and somewhere else,
- who successfully overcame the imprints of torture in their mind and personality,
- who are laymen, literates, professional psychotherapists, etc. and have used different skills, means, and resources in doing this,
- who want to use their experiences as an input for the promotion of mental health in Europe and in the world
 - with a stress on rehabilitation of victims of torture
 - and similar kinds of violence and posttraumatic stress disorder,
- who are quite aware that doing this requires
 - to transform their experiences and skills into comprehensible methodology
 - developed and used by a network with a European dimension
 - based on a combination of
 - ❖ professional knowledge and
 - ❖ commitment in civil society.

We have the idea that this network should contain three levels of activities. The central level or element consists out of counselling activities of

- professional psychotherapists (or other professionals) in other fields, who serve as therapeutic partners for victims of torture and other violence as a secondary task besides their main tasks and
- well trained volunteers and lay therapists (comparable to the Samaritan telephone service).

On one hand, those, who are counselling victims of violence, should be supported by a supervision.

On the other hand, the victims, who are counselled in this network, should be encouraged to organize themselves in selfhelp-groups (perhaps guided selfhelp-groups). Selfhelp-groups are a location, where the forms of social learning take place, what is necessary to reconstruct the personality of victims of torture and other violence, becoming again actors guiding their lives in the direction, what they desire, rather than remaining passive objects of treatment.

There might be some professional psychotherapists, who might argue that victims of torture and similar violence were unable to practise selfhelp, being dependend on their therapists for lifetime. We vigorously contradict such opinions claiming that they are dangerous, when they are transferred from the "therapist" to the client.

There exists a number of Rehabilitation Centres for Victims of Torture in those European countries and areas, which have the economic power to afford them. They are doing a valuable work. But the whole problem of traumatized persons cannot be solved alone by these Rehabilitation Centres. Marginal areas of Europe and countries with economic weakness, for instance, are unable to afford such centres. And even in wealthy countries like Germany the Rehabilitation Centres have frightening long waiting lists. The therapeutic network therefore might complement the Rehabilitation Centres quite well, where they exist.

And last not least it might allow a more active rôle to the victims than other forms of therapy.

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