

Electronic detention

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What is electronic detention?

Electronic detention is the execution of a custodial sentence at the prisoners own home, with the use of technological means to monitor the detainees presence.

An electronic prisoner may leave his house at pre-arranged times only, monitored by a wrist band with transmitter. Monitoring takes place throughout the day at various times. When arrangements are not complied with, this is reported automatically. Attempts to remove the ankle brace are reported also.

Electronic detention is based on the following basic principles: an optimal and economic use of detention capacity while retaining the penal character of detention. This makes ED principally different from electronic monitoring (ET) introduced a while ago. ET is used within the framework of penitentiary programmes aimed at reintegration and limiting detention damage. ED was introduced as a pilot in the Netherlands in November 2003, mainly in answer to the cell shortages and from a cost-related point of view.

Study object of the evaluation study

- Is ED being carried out as intended?
- How is ED experienced by the detainees involved and people in their immediate surroundings?
- How do the costs of ED compare with the settlement ED is replacing?



Study method

- 1 study of literature, memorandums, etcetera;
- 2 inventory and analysis of administrative data;
- 3 interview with key figures (policy staff from the Ministry of Justice and management of the penal institutions that keep an administrative record of ED participants);
- 4 interviews with people who implement ED (staff of the five penal institutions that keep administrative records of ED);
- 5 face-to-face interviews with 66 ED-participants;
- 6 face-to-face interviews with 16 partners/people sharing the household of ED participants;
- 7 a cost analysis.

Outcome

Implementation as intended

As a form of home detention without monitoring or reintegration object, ED is being implemented as intended. The aim to create at least 200 places was easily realised. Also, the aim to create a low threshold for ED has been realised: 75 percent of people invited for an intake interview, qualify for the scheme. The selection criteria used prove sufficient as no more than 7 percent of all participants fail.

Participants' and their partners' perception of ED

For every aspect, participants are more positive about ED than about a prison sentence. This applies to both participants who have experience with serving time, and to people who only have experience with ED. Social or social detention damage appears to occur to a very limited degree only as a result of participation in ED.

Drink and drug abuse and the use of tranquillisers do not increase during ED, nor do participants experience more physical or psychiatric complaints than before their electronic detention.

While the punishment is experienced as not as severe as a prison sentence, participants do regard ED as a punishment as it does restrict them in their freedom. ED appeals directly to one's self discipline. The electronic detainee is, initially, the person responsible for not leaving his home. He will not feel the same responsibility in an institution where security is tight. Moreover, being forced to be at home all day and not being able to participate in society as normal is regarded as burdensome.

Partners of electronic detainees do not or hardly feel limited in their freedom of movement as a result of fact that the ED participant is home all day.

Literature discussed

Bob Post, Lenneke Tielemans, Clara Woldringh

Geboeid door de enkelband. Evaluatie pilot elektronische detentie

Costs

Costs of an ED placement total some € 40 per day and per participant. This is about one third of the costs of detention in a low-security institution.



Use for policy purposes

The Minister of Justice has presented a bill to parliament that introduces ED under the name of house arrest as a new and autonomous sentence to be imposed by the court. Home arrest could fill the gap between community service and imprisonment.

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