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Prof. dr Sonja Snacken is Vice Rector International Policy and Professor of Criminology, Penology and Sociology of Law at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), where she held a 'Research Fellowship' (2006-2016). She has master degrees in law and criminology and a PhD in criminology. Her research focuses on penalty in Belgium and Europe, including sentencing and implementation of custodial and non-custodial sanctions and measures. She has been involved in over 40 research projects, at a European, national and local level, with a special emphasis on the integration of an empirical social scientist approach with human rights concerns. Her interest has recently broadened to other forms of (extreme) institutional dependency. She is currently supervising PhDs on the changing position of prison governors, on open reception centres for asylum seekers, on elderly prisoners, on euthanasia requests by prisoners, on community reintegration of former prisoners, on the impact of legislation on relations of extreme dependency in prisons and health care institutions, on the impact of European norms on prison reform in Russia, on the pathways of prisoners without legal permit of residence,...

She participates in several international scientific networks, English and French speaking. She is a founding member and was elected president of the European Society of Criminology (2004-2005) and member of the ESC Working Group on Community Sanctions and Measures and of the ESC Working Group on Prison Life and Effects of Imprisonment. She is member of the Editorial Board of Punishment and Society, Déviance et Société, Panopticon. She has acted since 1994 as an expert to the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and was a member (2001-2012) and President (2006/2012) of the Council for Penological Cooperation of the Council of Europe, drafting Recommendations such as the European Prison Rules (2006) and the Council of Europe Probation Rules (2010). She was actively involved in the drafting of the Belgian Prison Act (2005) and the Act on the External Legal Position of Prisoners and Victims's Rights (2006).

She was Research Fellow at the Straus Institute for the Advanced Study of Law and Justice at the New York University School of Law (2010-2011) and is Collaborateur-membre of the Centre International de Criminologie Comparée of the Université de Montréal (since 2010). She was awarded the Belgian Francqui Chair at the Université Catholique de Louvain (2008-2009), the Ernest-John Solvay Prize for Scientific Excellence in the Human and Social Sciences by the National Science Foundation (FWO, 2010) and the 2015 European Criminology Award for her lifetime contribution to European Criminology (by the European Society of Criminology).

International publications include: van Zyl Smit, S. & Snacken, S. (2009) Principles of European Prison Law and Policy, Penology and Human Rights, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Snacken, S. (2011) Prisons en Europe. Pour une pénologie critique et humaniste, Bruxelles: Larcier ; Snacken & Dumortier (eds) (2012) Resisting Punitiveness in Europe? Welfare, Human rights and Democracy, London, New York: Routledge; Daems, T., van Zyl Smit, D. & Snacken, S. (eds) (2013) European Penology? Oxford: Hart; Body-Gendrot, S., Hough, M., Kerezi, K. Lévy, R. & Snacken, S. (eds) (2013) The Routledge Handbook of European Criminology, London, New York: Routledge.