

2021 WORLD CONGRESS ON JUSTICE WITH CHILDREN

15-20 November 2021

“Ensuring access to justice for all children: towards non-discriminatory and inclusive child justice systems”

Workshop programme

Challenges to provision of care for children and parents in conflict with the law; recommendations for improved protection and support

Date	Wednesday, 17th November 2021	
Timing	16:00 - 17:30 CET	15:00 - 16:30 London
Organiser(s)	Brianna Smith- Project Manager, Children of Prisoners Europe	
Institution	Children of Prisoners Europe	
Type of Workshop	Panel discussion	
Topics	Ensuring that the voice of the child is heard in child justice.	
Region	Europe	
Language	English	

Abstract

There are an estimated 2.1 million children in Council of Europe member states who have one or more parents in prison at any given time. To this number should be added the significant number of children of former prisoners and the number of adults who, in their childhood have experienced having one or more parents in prison. Children who have or have had a parent in prison are vulnerable to emotional, physical, academic and financial instability, discrimination, violence (e.g. witnessing parental arrest, bullying) and disruption to the child-parent bond. Fearing stigma, many children with imprisoned parents (CIPs) don't speak about their stress. Without support, toxic stress responses can adversely impact brain architecture development, increasing risk of stress-related disease/mental ill health. Parental imprisonment is a recognised adverse childhood experience (ACE) impacting health and wellbeing. With support, CIPs can build resilience and agency. Support factors include a supportive adult as anchor, open communication, stability and routine, tolerant communities, contact with a parent in prison. A cross-sectoral approach is crucial: criminal justice, law enforcement, education, child welfare, health and social service agencies are building blocks of holistic support systems to meet CIPs' needs, minimise violence and stigma.

In April 2018, the Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states concerning children with imprisoned parents was adopted. It is a milestone document with 56 articles related to the support and protection of children with imprisoned parents for police, judiciary, prison and probation services. Since its adoption, the Recommendation has been the focus of much of Children of Prisoners

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Europe’s work, as well as that of the EuroPris expert group on children with imprisoned parents. Both organisations have worked to raise awareness of this key Recommendation through a range of workshops, publications, and training initiatives.

While Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 was drafted and adopted with children impacted by parental imprisonment in mind, the articles proposing more support, more protection for the rights of the child and improved access to justice are also potentially applicable to teenager parents who are in conflict with the law or imprisoned. This group, and more specifically teenage fathers and mothers as well as pregnant teenagers in prison, is largely unrecognised and yet these children have the same rights as all other children. The UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty and this workshop maintain that children should not be incarcerated, and that alternatives to incarceration need to be explored for children and teenagers, but also for adults who have a primary caregiving role. Questions to be addressed include who is caring for children when their parent is in prison? Are children and families receiving adequate support? Are the voices of children being heard? How can the court consider the best interest of the child when sentencing caregivers?

Three key takeaways and one output of the session

By the end of the session you will have, the Participants will leave with:

- an awareness of children with imprisoned parents – the challenges they face in maintaining a relationship with their parent and that they are not covered by international standards intended for children deprived of liberty;
- awareness of work done on the European scale to place children at the centre of decisions made in the justice system
- knowledge of existing tools that focus on child-centred justice and the monitoring and the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 produced by Children of Prisoners Europe and EuroPris.

Output: to gain attention from key stakeholders and authorities in terms of creating a legislative framework to maintain a child-parent relationship when a parent is in conflict with the law.

Objectives

- Explore the challenges and recommendations in addressing the protection of children of imprisoned parents

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- Learn from research and the contentious areas, particularly with teenage parents who are in conflict with the law, ensuring that the voice of the child is heard

Expected outcomes

By the end of the session Delegates will have:

- awareness and knowledge about children with imprisoned parents and the ways to ensure the protection of their rights in line with the international standards on deprivation of liberty

Speakers

- **Moderator**

Annette Lyth

Chief of Office UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. She has a Master of Laws and more than 20 years of experience from promotion and protection of human rights in Africa, Asia and Europe. She has developed and managed national and regional programmes in the area of rule of law, gender, child protection and human rights in general, both in development and humanitarian contexts. She has worked for different UN agencies (OHCHR, UNIFEM, UNDP and UNICEF) as well as regional organisations (OSCE).

- **Chat moderator**

Brianna Smith

Project Manager, Children of Prisoners Europe

- **Panelists**

1. **Mihai Enache**

Mihai Enache is a project manager at Terre des hommes Foundation - Switzerland.

He has a degree in sociology and social work and has been working in the social field for about 20 years.

He worked in the field of child protection at the General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection for about 4 years as a specialist inspector. Since 2008, Mihai has worked with Terre des hommes Foundation in programmes for the prevention of migration, trafficking and exploitation of children. He currently works in the same organisation in programmes in the juvenile justice sector and implements projects for minors and young people in contact with the criminal law as victims or abusers.

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2. Viviane Schekter

Director, Relais Enfants Parents Romands. She began her career in prisons as a psychologist in 1996. She has worked for more than a decade in various prisons in French-speaking Switzerland. She joined Carrefour Prison in 1995 and developed support for families and children of prisoners. She became director of the organisation in 2005, which then became the Relais Enfants Parents Romands (REPR) Foundation in 2012. REPR has since expanded its activities throughout French-speaking Switzerland. She has taught psychology at the Swiss Training Centre for Prison Staff and continues to participate in the ongoing training of officers and the direction in the prison environment. She is a member of the EuroPris expert group on children with imprisoned parents, a founding member of the Swiss society of legal psychology and an active member of Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE).

She has a Master’s degree in psychology with a speciality in legal psychology FSP as well as a training in psychotherapy.

3. Anamarija Sočo - President, Status M.

Anamarija is a project manager, facilitator and trainer working in the field of youth and gender equality. She has a background in social sciences and has worked extensively in civil society organisations. She has worked with Status M, a grassroots non-profit organisation based in Zagreb, Croatia, since 2018. Status M is focused on the promotion of gender equality and is concentrated on working with boys and men with a strong gender-transformative approach. Anamarija is in charge of the Fathers' Programme, which includes working with imprisoned men on the promotion of active fatherhood, building parenting skills and preserving the father-child link. Status M also works with minors in the penal system, offering long-term interventions which contribute to strengthening their life skills.