



children of prisoners europe



Annual Report

Children of Prisoners Europe



2019

CHILDREN OF PRISONERS EUROPE

Founded in 2000, Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network working with and on behalf of children with imprisoned parents. The network encourages innovative perspectives and practice to ensure that the rights of children with imprisoned parents are fully respected and that action is taken to secure their well-being and healthy development. COPE is a membership-based organisation made up of non-governmental organisations, individuals and other stakeholders across Europe and beyond, linked by a staff team based at its Paris headquarters. With our network of European partners active within prison-related, child rights and child-welfare fields, we seek to boost awareness and achieve new ways of thinking, acting and interacting on issues concerning children affected by parental imprisonment.

COPE'S VISION is that every child will be guaranteed fair, unbiased treatment, protection of their rights, and equal opportunities regardless of social, economic or cultural heritage or their parent's status.

COPE'S MISSION is to safeguard the social, political and judicial inclusion of children with an imprisoned parent, while fostering the pursuit and exchange of knowledge which enhances good practices, and contributes to a better understanding of the psychological, emotional and social development of these children.



Foreword

COPE has worked closely with the European Union, a primary funder of the network since 2013, in putting children affected by parental imprisonment at the heart of policymaking, effecting meaningful action on their behalf, and promoting policies that respect their rights and safeguard their well-being. With the support of the Commission, we look back on the remarkable progress that COPE and its network of member organisations working with and for children across Europe have made on behalf of children over the past several years: participating in the drafting of the *UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty* and in the 11th EU Forum on the Rights of the Child, which spotlighted children with parents in prison to over 350 UN, EU, Council of Europe and national stakeholders; joining forces with the PC-CP in elaborating a Council of Europe Recommendation for Children with Imprisoned Parents, an Explanatory Report and a questionnaire for all Council of Europe member states; working closely with children and young people to draft *It's Time to Act*, a version of the Council of Europe Recommendation that is accessible to and resonates with them; identifying children's needs, articulating positive solutions, exchanging good practice; using young people's messages to inform policy makers while ensuring they receive support; spearheading further collective action and expanding COPE's reach to those children impacted by parental incarceration who are not yet receiving much-needed support—children in institutions, those from minority ethnic groups such as Roma and Travellers, children of foreign nationals in prison, among others.

The year 2019, with additional impetus via support from Stichting Benevolentia, saw the launch of efforts to build stronger child protection systems, with COPE and a noted child protection expert serving as a vehicle for evaluating and strengthening child safeguarding policies across its membership in Europe, to culminate in a trans-European child safeguarding workshop in 2020. COPE enhanced its work with children, fostering greater child participation and empowering young people in developing peer-to-peer support resources. In addition to launching *It's Time to Act*, a key strategic tool currently available in French, Dutch and Bulgarian, European youth focus groups and a youth panel were organised in Krakow as part of COPE's Annual Network Meeting. Other dynamic tools for advocacy and bolstering multi-sectoral child support networks were developed, including a Sentencing Toolkit for judges and sentencers; a Media Toolkit that helps NGOs foster more responsible reporting in media; drawing on stories and calling for a more human and ethical role of the media; a Toolkit for Prison Services and an Implementation Guidance Document

boosting CM/Rec(2018)5. The year 2019 was also a key year for fortifying our partnerships with the Council of Europe, and with prison services across Europe through COPE's participation in the EuroPris Expert Group on Children with Imprisoned Parents, a primary aim of the group being to enhance data collection and to promote implementation of Council of Europe CM/Rec(2018)5. COPE also bolstered partnerships with Eurochild, UNICEF, UN Child Rights Connect, Alliance for Childhood and other multiplier organisations through more intense advocacy within the Child Rights Action Group (CRAG).

COPE continues to break down the silos between children's rights and penological matters, working to ensure that national criminal justice policies and legislation in the various countries incorporate a child rights perspective when a parent is imprisoned; and that government policies for children address the rights and needs of the estimated 2.1 million children separated from a parent in prison in Council of Europe countries. COPE also plays a crucial role as a catalyst and link to bring together synergies on EU, Council of Europe and UN levels and ensure that advocacy work continues; to reduce stigma and mitigate violence; and to foster a reflective and ethically driven approach to working on behalf of these young people. As the only pan-European network working on behalf of children separated from a parent in prison to date, COPE plays a vital role in ensuring that they receive this understanding and support, that their rights are upheld and that their voices are heard.

*Liz Ayre,
Executive Director*

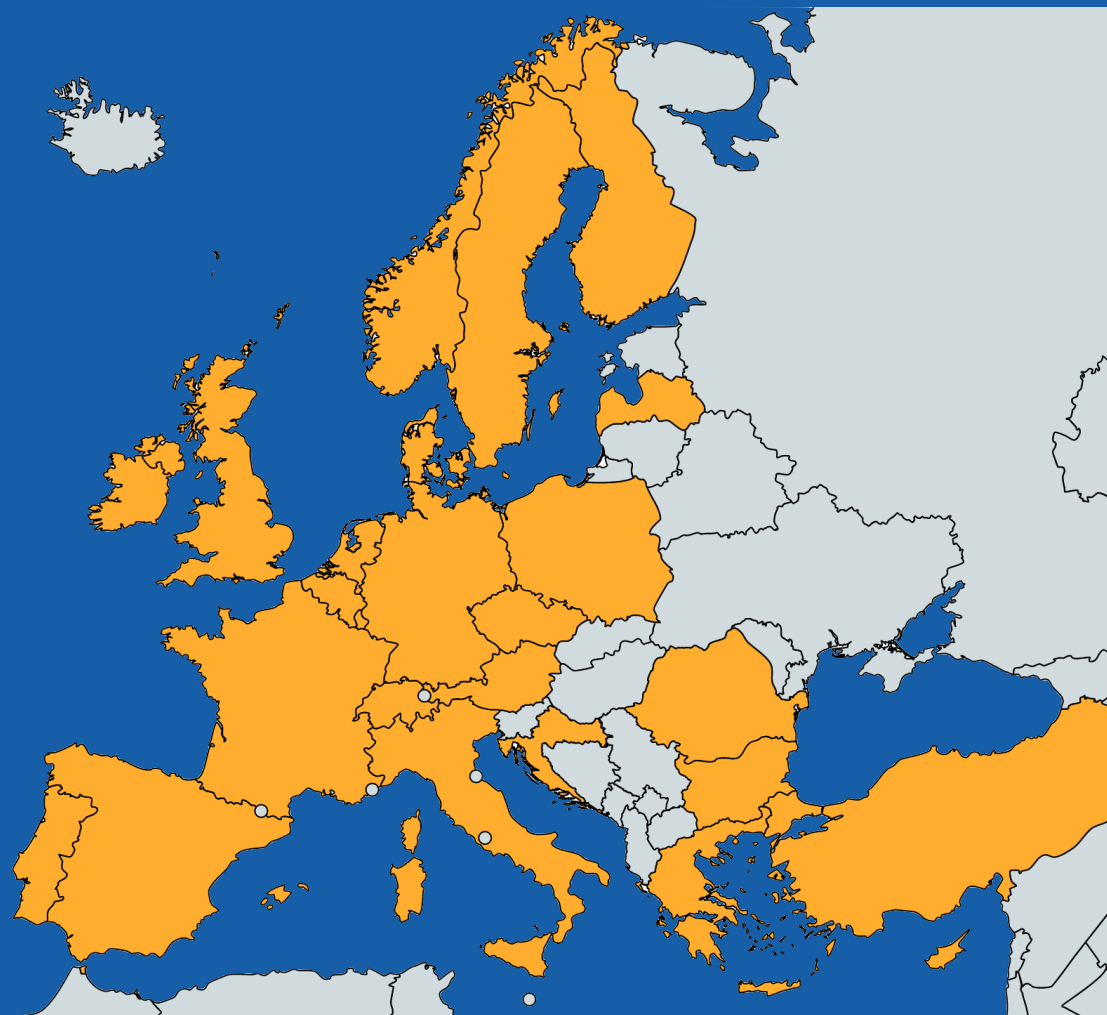
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Impact summary

Since 2011, COPE's membership has tripled, from 28 members and affiliates in 19 countries to 91 members and affiliates in 31 countries. COPE has affiliates in Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Catalonia, Greece, Latvia, New Zealand, Portugal, South Korea, Turkey, the United States and Zimbabwe.

Countries in Europe where COPE has a member or affiliate:



Indirect support*

COPE works to support the nearly 1 million children separated from a parent in prison in the 26 European countries where it has a member or affiliate. COPE is working to extend that support to the estimated 2.1 million children separated from a parent in prison across Europe.

*estimates

Direct support

COPE supports children with imprisoned parents directly through its members and by involving children and teenagers in international campaigns and events, such as the annual European Campaign 'Not My Crime, Still My Sentence'. An example of this involvement is COPE's 2019 publication *It's Time to Act*, a child-friendly compilation of children's own interpretations of each article of Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents, and the focus of COPE's 2018 campaign. Fourteen children and young people from five countries across Europe also participated in the 2019 international conference 'Bridging the gap: Boosting the visibility, voices and cross-sectoral support of children who have a parent in prison' held in Krakow, providing momentum and inspiration for work moving forward.



Advocacy

COPE focused its advocacy work in 2019 around the implementation of the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation, with some emphasis on Roma and Traveller children impacted by parental imprisonment, who face particular difficulties in maintaining family relationships and communication. COPE advocacy has put children with imprisoned parents on the agendas of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the European Platform for Investing in Children, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. COPE advocacy has increased service provision for and boosted awareness of children with imprisoned parents, with the network growing from 28 members and affiliates working on the ground in 2011, to 91 in 2019.

Network development

In 2019, COPE grew support for children with imprisoned parents through missions in five European countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia and Latvia), with activity including a national conference, workshops and meetings with representatives of family and justice ministries; through presentations at the International Coalition of Children with Incarcerated Parents global conference; and through advocacy in EU institutions, namely the Child Rights Action Group, the European Parliament and the newly formed Child Rights Intergroup. COPE is partnering with UNICEF Bulgaria, which is poised to help collaborate in translating and disseminating COPE's toolkit for sentencers, as well as in efforts to enhance data and information on children with imprisoned parents in Bulgaria. UNICEF has also offered to translate the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation into Bulgarian.

Co-production of knowledge

COPE co-authored a chapter on 'Children living in prisons with their primary caregivers' in the landmark UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, published in October 2019. The study is the first work to quantify the number of children deprived of liberty worldwide, and to attempt to understand the conditions of their detention, its impact on their health and development, and its root causes. In addition, the study identifies non-custodial best practices and proposes recommendations to support the UN and its member states in addressing the issue.

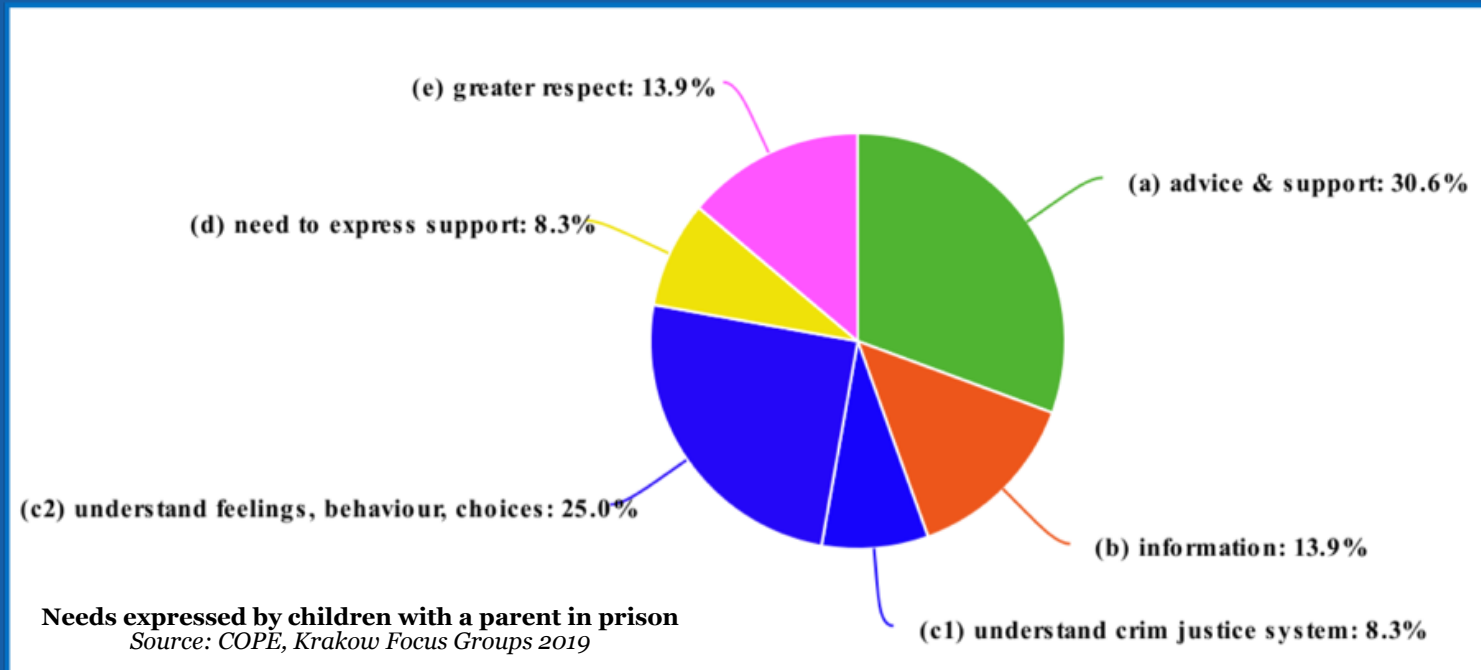
Why it matters

“Many people don’t think about the children’s perspective. Adults need to understand that we are children. The questions they sometimes ask take a toll on the child. All I advise them is to be careful with the questions they ask and be open-minded. Please get up and give the kids support, that’s all they’re asking for!”

— Olivia, 16

“I had a real confidence knock: I had no confidence or self-esteem at all. Coming here, speaking out about my story, participating in community groups and workshops, has boosted my confidence. If you were to say to me three weeks ago ‘you’re going to be speaking in front of people about your story, I wouldn’t have done it; I wouldn’t have been able to.’ I want to say to the kids that things get better. You’re not alone.”

— Alex, 12



“I think that people can assume parental imprisonment only affects the child’s relationship with that parent, but it can have an effect on almost every other aspect of their life. As a child, I felt completely disconnected from everyone. When you’re carrying around this huge burden it makes it almost impossible to truly establish an emotional connection with anyone... I felt like I just didn’t really belong anywhere... In hindsight the only reason I felt like I had to hide it is because I’d never heard anyone talk about it before. We had never discussed the legal system in school. There was no information on how to deal with this at all, and I truly felt like I was the only person in the world with this experience... But that was only my experience, and every experience is different. We still have a lot of work to do, and I’m hoping to continue to use my own experience to make sure that children going through the same thing will not go through the same pains I did.”

— Dylan, 25

Milestones

It's Time to Act

After the adoption of the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation, COPE members across Europe conducted significant work bringing the Recommendation to children and soliciting their interpretations of it, with the goal of publishing a version of the Recommendation articulated in their voices to make the milestone document more accessible. This translation of the Recommendation into child-friendly, child-authored language was published by COPE as *It's Time to Act: Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents*. *It's Time to Act* is designed to help encourage action, as well as being a useful resource for children, parents and professionals to allow children to engage with the Recommendation directly, and to better support children with a parent in prison, advocate for and promote their rights. Children from countries across the region participated in the project, coordinated by COPE partners in Croatia, England & Wales, Italy, Northern Ireland, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland.



Toolkit for sentencers: *Keeping children in mind*

COPE completed a major project in its 2019 sentencing toolkit, *Keeping children in mind: Moving from 'child-blind' to child-friendly justice during a parent's criminal sentencing*, produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. *Keeping children in mind* is a resource for sentencers, child's rights advocates and practitioners. Taking as its starting point that children facing separation from parents in criminal courts are treated differently from those facing separation from parents in family courts, the toolkit highlights the need for sentencers to account for children's best interests and sets out concrete provisions for how the principle of the child's best interests can be put into practice. It compiles the major sources of international law relevant to the protection of child rights in a sentencing context; describes and analyses case law developments and illustrative



"Children should be part of sentence planning"
— Art. 40.1



jurisprudence from around the world; and presents critical perspectives that highlight issues relevant to stakeholders in the broad sense, based on particular European examples.

The purpose of the sentencing toolkit is to sensitise stakeholders and guide them through the application of international and regional child's rights standards, including the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation, in order to advance a standard of child-friendly justice that takes into account the ways in which children with imprisoned parents are impacted by their parents' incarceration.

INCCIP Conference: Keynote presentation and Roma workshop

In August, the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents (INCCIP) held its second biennial conference at the University of Huddersfield, in England. COPE Director Liz Ayre was an invited keynote speaker, along with Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated at Rutgers University and Dr Avon Hart-Johnson, President and co-founder of DC project Connect (DCPC). In addition to its keynote presentation, COPE Vice President Rachel Brett led a workshop on Roma and Traveller issues related to imprisonment and participated in a panel discussion on data collection and ethics.

COPE's keynote presentation served to highlight the organisation's main strategies and areas of focus, particularly its multisectoral approach to action; its ongoing work in the areas of data collection (such as its contribution to the *UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty*), and in using networks more efficiently; its reports on Roma and Travellers; its sentencing toolkit *Keeping children in mind*; and the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation.

COPE's small-group workshop on Roma and Traveller issues was attended by representatives from multiple institutions in the United Kingdom, the United States Corrections Service and other organisations working with Roma

populations in Europe. The focus of this workshop was the intersection of parental imprisonment and the social marginalisation of Roma and Travellers, among the most disadvantaged minority population groups in Europe, with a long history of persecution and statelessness and vast over-representation in European prisons. Roma and Traveller children are particularly impacted by the stigmatisation of parental imprisonment. The workshop introduced participants to two reports prepared for COPE by Rachel Brett (*Children of Roma and Traveller Prisoners: A Short Guide* (2017) and *Roma & Traveller Children with a Parent in Prison: A Follow-Up Report with Case Studies & Recommendations* (2018)) and provided opportunity for discussion of the reports. In addition, participants were able to learn about the experience and interest of other stakeholders with regard to Roma and Traveller prisoners and their children.

Krakow youth focus groups

COPE hosted a series of youth focus groups in Krakow, Poland, in May 2019. These groups, facilitated by Sarah Beresford of Prison Reform Trust (UK) and Lindsay Jessiman of Families Outside (UK), both COPE member organisations, included participants from Italy, England, Norway, Poland and Sweden. As part of the sessions, children shared reactions to prison visits, coping strategies and feedback for judges and discussed ways teachers and law enforcement personnel could be more helpful, all while conducting intermittent check-ins to articulate their emotions. The children also prepared a presentation that they delivered at COPE's annual conference. A number of other member organisations attended the focus groups as observers, among them Children Heard and Seen (UK), Probacja (Poland), Solrosen (Sweden), Bambinisenzasbarre (Italy) and the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (USA).



COPE chapter for UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty

In October 2019, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) published the *United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty*, an in-depth study commissioned by the UN Secretary General and overseen by an interagency taskforce, with the goal of providing a comprehensive overview of the situation of children deprived of liberty worldwide.

The study, which was presented to the UN General Assembly by appointed Independent Expert Professor Manfred Nowak of the European Inter-University Centre for Human Rights and Democratisation, emphasised a child rights-based approach to methodology, with the best interests principle articulated in Article 3 of the UNCRC serving as the guiding principle of analysis. The study focussed on non-custodial solutions and the reduction of the number of children deprived of liberty. It is envisioned as the first phase of a longer-term process of implementing international standards for child rights.



COPE was a co-author of the chapter on 'Children living in prisons with their primary caregivers'. This chapter outlines several key recommendations, for example advocating that during pre- and post-trial phases decision-makers take into account the best interests of the child when considering detention of primary caregivers; give preference to non-custodial solutions over imprisonment when imposing sentences on primary caregivers of infants and young children; and ensure recognition of the affected children as rights holders in all criminal matters involving sole or primary caregivers. It encourages governments to recognise and remedy both the detrimental impact of family separation due to parental incarceration, and the detrimental impact of depriving a child of liberty along with their parent.

In addition, COPE participated in a June UNHRC session on the *UN Global Study of Children Deprived of Liberty*, contributing to a panel on data collection entitled 'Count Children to Make Them Count: Filling the Data Gap', which looked at data collection in the context of the Global Study.

Other key achievements

On-site missions

Over the course of 2019, COPE conducted on-site missions in 5 countries and conducted training sessions in Poland.



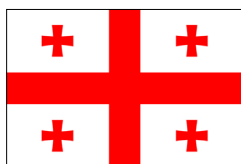
In **Austria**, representatives from the Ministry of Justice expressed interest in learning more about children with imprisoned parents and in implementing initiatives such as adapting visiting areas for children; sensitisation training for staff working in prisons; and developing specific projects such as parenting support programmes in collaboration with other organisations. The possibility of exploring good practices around prison visits for children was discussed, with the idea that COPE could provide guidance in this domain for future inter-prison conferences.

COPE is partnering with UNICEF in **Bulgaria** on the translation and dissemination of the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation. *It's Time to Act*, COPE's child-authored and child-friendly publication of the Recommendation, is also being translated into Bulgarian. In 2019 COPE began working with the Director of Social Services and Educational Work at Sofia Prison, as well as the Art Club Director at the prison, on a project to culminate in a father-child event.



COPE's advocacy in **Cyprus** over the course of 2019 culminated in meetings with several important stakeholders, among them staff from the country's Prison Services, Children's Commissioner's Office and National Addiction Authority. As a result of this work, Cyprus' National Addictions Authority has taken steps toward joining the COPE network.

COPE is cultivating a relationship with an international law expert at the Ministry of Justice of **Georgia**, where we have also consulted with representatives of the Prison, Probation and Rehabilitation Services regarding their 2020 Strategy/Action plan and response to the Council of Europe anti-torture Committee (CPT) report of 2018. This response addresses the recommendations of the CPT, as well as European and international good



practices, for the effective application of a human rights-based approach. Penitentiary Services will be paying more attention to dynamic security and tailoring sentence plans and rehabilitation activities to each inmate's risks and needs. It also aims to improve facilities for families and encourage family contacts.



In **Latvia**, COPE attended a national conference and presented on the topic of supporting children with incarcerated parents. Participating in the conference were the Director of Prison Services, staff of the Latvian Ministry of Justice, prison officers, probation services and volunteers, for a total of approximately 200 attendees. COPE's presentation addressed the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences, supporting incarcerated parents' communication with their children, removing stigma and avoiding trauma. Outside of the conference events, COPE was able to meet with the Child Rights Representative at the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights, along with the organisation SOS Children's Villages.

In **Poland**, COPE' member Małopolskie Stowarzyszenie Probacja conducted five training sessions, hosting 60 prison officers representing 10 prisons across the country. The training sessions, modeled around COPE's Papa Plus initiative, represented a first step towards creating programming and support mechanisms specifically for fathers who are incarcerated, with the goal of sensitising prison personnel and developing child protection and child rights initiatives across the various institutions.



Roma & Traveller briefings



Continuing its work to address the over-representation of Roma and Travellers in prison populations across Europe, COPE has developed a variety of information briefings tailored to particular national stakeholders, such as child protection agencies, child ombudsperson offices, prison services, education ministries and health ministries. Completed in 2019, these briefings provide critical information regarding Roma and Traveller issues and are being translated into Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Hungarian, Latvian, Romanian and Slovakian. They will be disseminated together with COPE's *Children of Roma and Traveller Prisoners: A Short Guide* (2017), written by Rachel Brett, and *Roma & Traveller Children with a Parent in Prison: A Follow-Up Report* (2018).

Data collection

COPE's continuous efforts to find robust data on children with a parent in prison starts from a deontological code of ethics for data collection, beginning with constantly questioning the purpose of data collection and ensuring that data collection itself protects children and does not further stigmatise them. Past efforts to collect data, notably the 2018 questionnaire to Council of Europe member states, has led to development of a follow-up strategy for advancing reporting on children with incarcerated parents through cooperation with the Council for Penological Co-Operation of the Council of Europe (PC-CP). The goal of broad data collection is to obtain data on the number of children impacted by a parent's imprisonment as a prerequisite to the development of effective child-friendly initiatives and policies, and to ensure that systems for anonymised data collection are established. This type of data collection fosters mutual trust, with the understanding that data has a purpose, involves the prisoner-parent, and is in the best interests of the child.

In 2019, COPE broke new ground in gathering qualitative and quantitative data with respect to the experiences of children and young people who have a parent in prison. Qualitative data was obtained by organising youth focus groups as part of COPE's annual network meeting, held in 2019 in Krakow, and identifying mechanisms that empower children and young people and provide them with coping devices, solace and support. During the focus groups, children were asked what they would say if speaking with a judge, prison officer or other stakeholder. Using qualitative content analysis as a methodology, their responses were examined to provide quantitative findings with respect to their needs.

In addition to furthering the agenda for data collection through collaboration with the Council of Europe, in 2019 COPE research added to our existing understanding of the incarceration of Roma and over-representation of that community in European prisons, including calculation of the national percentages of Roma prisoners (see COPE website), and identifying and mapping national percentages of Roma prisoners. COPE research was also incorporated into the data used in the UN Global Study (discussed above).

European Commission conference: funding for the rights of the child

In October, COPE participated in the European Commission's conference on 'Protecting and Promoting the Rights of the Child Through EU Funding', organised by the Commission's Rights of the Child team and hosted by the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumer's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme. This meeting allowed COPE to participate in discussions with

Valeria Setti, the EC Coordinator for the Rights of the Child, on the question of how the Commission can network more effectively with grantees, and how to enhance COPE members' bids for EU funds through capacity building. Other officials participating in the conference were Barbara Nolan, Head of Unit, Fundamental Rights Policy; Marta Tarragona-Fenosa and Marta Kuljon, Rights of the Child team; and Francesco Zoia Bolzonello, Programme manager.



EuroPris meeting in Cork

EuroPris, the European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services, held a 'Children of Prisoners Expert Meeting' in October at University College Cork, in Cork, Ireland. The meeting, which focussed on the importance of taking a child's rights-based approach to parental incarceration, rather than an exclusively children's welfare or child protection approach, also marked the launch of a EuroPris 'Expert Group on Children with Imprisoned Parents'. COPE was invited to participate in the expert group meetings to contribute its knowledge on the subject, and members Madelein Kattel and Viviane Schekter delivered a presentation at the meeting describing COPE's work and current projects. The EuroPris expert group comprises 11 experts from various European national prison services who will support EuroPris members in their implementation of the 2018 Council of Europe Recommendation. COPE will assist the group in the implementation of the Recommendation, which will involve collecting, sharing and disseminating information among members, disseminating learnings across members' respective countries and authoring 'Good Practice' reports. Ultimately, the work of the group and of EuroPris will be presented at the 2021 Conference of the Council of Europe.

On the Horizon

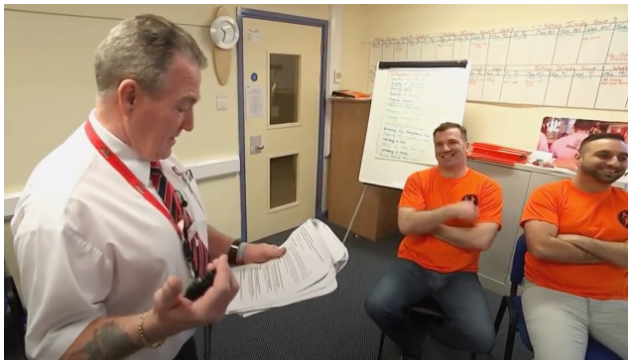
Child safeguarding enhancement

Thanks to a capacity-building grant from Stichting Benevolentia, COPE has put into motion a Child Safeguarding Enhancement project, to be developed through 2020. The goal of this project is to formalise and systematise the work being done by members across the network to implement clear and effective child protection policies in activities where children are involved. Working with consulting firm GCPS Consulting, COPE is acting as a pioneer, undergoing rigorous assessment of its own child protection policies to assess and enhance measures that ensure children's safety, well-being, and agency. This assessment will be used to develop a policy specific to the children of prisoners, which will ultimately be disseminated across COPE's network so that all members have the opportunity to partner in reviewing and adapting their existing practices toward creating a network-wide child safeguarding standard.

Papa Plus

Papa Plus is a cross-sectoral programme model that offers concrete pathways for supporting and strengthening the child-father bond, minimising risks to that relationship and protecting children's healthy development. It also serves to raise awareness among prison personnel on how their daily work can incorporate children's rights and needs.

In 2019, the Krakow-based Małopolskie Stowarzyszenie Probacja, a member of the COPE network since 2016, held a Papa Plus training for some 60 prison workers from ten Polish prisons, including officers, heads of units, heads of security departments, educators and psychologists. Officers and practitioners reflected broadly on the impact of imprisonment on fathers and their children, proposing ideas for facilitating the child-father bond, including working towards ensuring that prison visits are child-friendly, and identifying some of the context-specific challenges to improving bonds between prisoners and their kids. They viewed a Probacja-



produced film entitled *Children, families and imprisoned parents speak up* and a COPE-produced Papa Plus training video. The workshop was well-received, with some participants pledging a more child-sensitive approach to their work. Additionally, the organisers received requests for training in prisons throughout Poland (where an estimated 62,675 children have a father in prison) and for specific advocacy work to encourage residential childcare institutions to recognise Roma culture.

The Papa Plus initiative was launched in 2018 in response to a lack of programming adapted specifically to maintaining relationships between fathers and their children. An estimated 96 per cent of incarcerated parents in Europe are fathers. Given that fewer support mechanisms are in place for imprisoned fathers than for mothers, this leaves a majority of children with imprisoned parents vulnerable to difficulties related to parental separation and impoverishes these child-father relationships. Many incarcerated fathers experience difficulty remaining responsible, committed parents, and some lose contact with their children. This can be compounded by the humiliation, alienation and exclusion common to many prison settings, which negatively impact parenting and distort the child-parent bond, with the child often 'taking charge' of the parent emotionally while the child's need for emotional support from the parent goes unmet. Furthermore, inadequate support for fathers during incarceration can have deleterious effects once the parent is released back into the home.

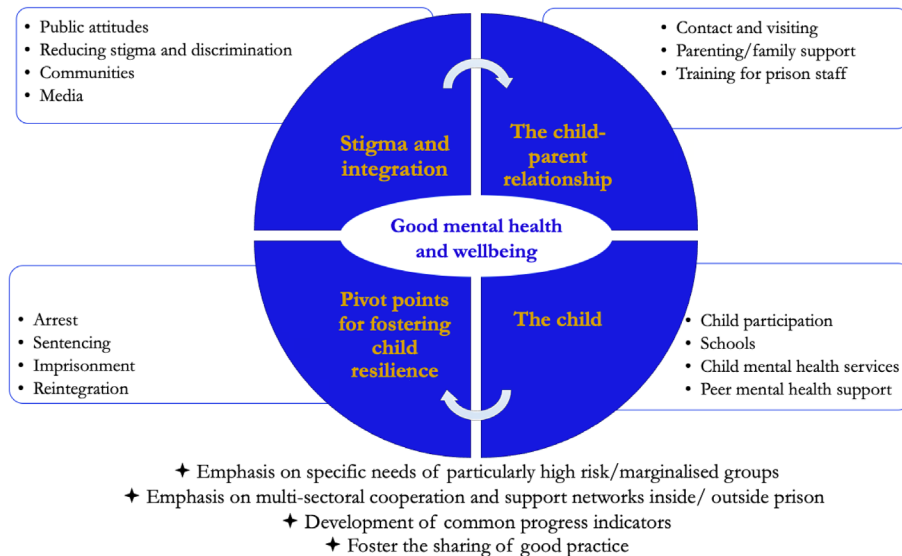
The ultimate goal of the Papa Plus programme is to enhance the protection of children's rights and well-being by supporting the bond between father and child, and in so doing to support a more respectful and calm prison atmosphere. Papa Plus encourages a shift in the way imprisoned fathers and their children are seen by prison staff and other professionals whose work directly or indirectly impacts their lives. This shift not only strengthens the self-esteem of imprisoned parents (thus enhancing their relationship with their children), but also acknowledges and boosts the key role that prison staff and other professionals play in changing the lives of children affected by the imprisonment of a parent.

“ [Prison officers] are not merely prison guards in the old-fashioned sense of the word...We look upon them as “agents of change.” This expansion of the role of prison staff, however, means that more training and education is necessary...where the consciousness about ethics, attitudes and a humanistic approach, plays a central role.

— Directorate of Norwegian Correctional Services, responding to a 2017 EuroPris survey ”

Dynamic security: engaging prison officers

Dynamic security—the idea that promoting family contact calms the prison atmosphere—is a central tenet of Papa Plus, which aims to demonstrate the positive reciprocal relationships that can emerge when prison administrations and staff work with prisoners to support them as parents. The programme itself focuses on integrating techniques and practices already in use by COPE members Relais Enfants Parents in France, and Child and Space in Bulgaria, which emphasise training for all prison employees who might come into contact with a child.



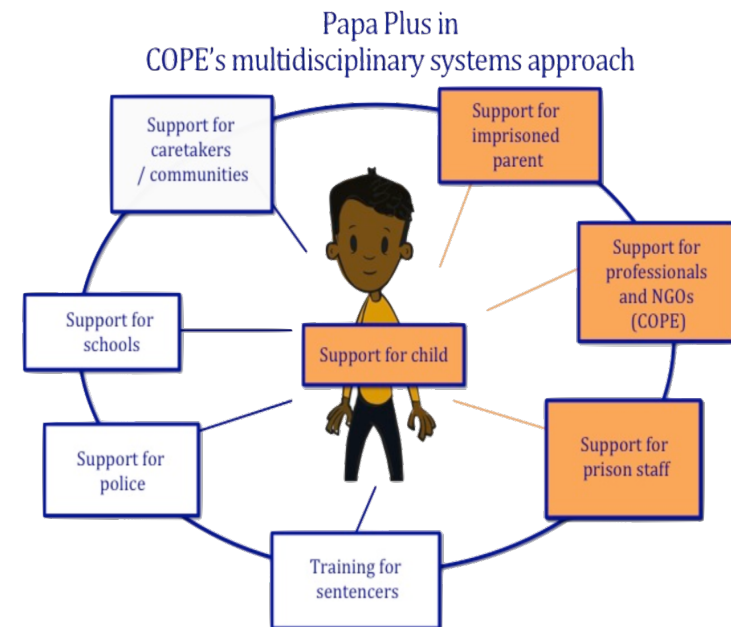
Papa Plus for practitioners

Support for the relationship between children and their imprisoned fathers involves support for practitioners, namely COPE's members. When implementing Papa Plus training sessions for prison staff, practitioners are encouraged to be self-reflective and aware of their biases; to remain concrete; and to emphasise areas in which the work of prison staff intersects with the overall aims of the prison support initiative, and how that work can be enhanced. On a technical level, as often as possible Papa Plus training sessions use small, non-hierarchical discussion groups that mix officers, administrators, psychologists, family contact officers and educators, with an emphasis on taking a systems-based approach when carrying out the training—the notion that every action and reflection can

create a cascade effect that contributes to the institutionalising of the action and the reflection, and to their sustainability. Workshop organisers are encouraged to follow up with the initial training sessions.

A cross-sectoral model

The Papa Plus programme exemplifies COPE's systems approach to supporting children with imprisoned parents. By providing support for imprisoned parents, prison staff, practitioners and NGOs (in orange in the below diagram), Papa Plus bolsters relationships between children and imprisoned fathers. Further, COPE's cross-agency, multi-disciplinary work reduces stigma and discrimination, safeguarding the child-parent relationship and supporting children, particularly at pivot points for fostering their resilience. This cross-sectoral Papa Plus model can be replicated across Europe, geared and tailored to the specific needs of each context, and can serve as a vehicle for the cross-fertilisation of COPE expertise and good practice. It is part of a multidisciplinary support systems framework that is crucial to progress for children affected by the imprisonment of a parent.



Sentencing perspectives

The sentencing of a parent is a singularly crucial moment in the criminal justice process, when it comes to intervening in the future of the child whose parent is in conflict with the law. Not only should the child be considered during the sentencing decision, but the best interests of the child should be placed at the front and centre of the legal procedure. When custody is the only alternative, sentences should be devised so that they have minimal impact on children. At the same time, the moment of sentencing is a complex one for a judge performing the ‘balancing exercise’ of assessing multiple factors, among those the gravity of the offence and the public’s safety.

“ *Every child has his or her own dignity. If a child is to be constitutionally imagined as an individual with a distinctive personality, and not merely as a miniature adult waiting to reach full size, he or she cannot be treated as a mere extension of his or her parents, umbilically destined to sink or swim with them.*

— Justice Albie Sachs, *S v M*, Constitutional Court of South Africa (2007) ”

COPE published *Keeping children in mind: Moving from ‘child-blind’ to child-friendly justice during a parent’s criminal sentencing* to provide sentencers and practitioners alike with perspectives and tools to help parse the ‘balancing exercise’ and to advocate for

child-friendly sentencing processes. Highlighting the implications of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with imprisoned parents, the toolkit emphasises, ‘without prejudice to the independence of the judiciary’, the importance of the best interests of the child, including the need to consider alternatives to imprisonment for primary caregivers.

The toolkit also presents guidelines for effective engagement with sentencers on matters relevant to children, allowing stakeholders to understand what sentencers can or are required to do when confronted with the sentencing of a primary caregiver, being mindful of the importance and challenges associated with judicial discretionary power and taking into consideration adversarial and inquisitorial legal procedures; legal definitions of parenthood; separation during pre-trial detention; indeterminate sentencing standards and their relation to judicial discretion; and use of Best Interests of the Child Assessments.



Not my crime, still my sentence: the 2019 campaign

Every year, COPE runs an international campaign with its members entitled **Not my crime, still my sentence**. With a strong focus on child participation, this campaign aims to:

- Raise awareness about the rights and needs of children affected by the imprisonment of a parent, and
- Effect policy change for these children on local, national and European levels.

COPE began this annual campaign in 2010, without a budget, and now it takes place every year, carried by COPE’s members across Europe and as far away as the US and New Zealand. Using online interactive tools, videos, artwork, emails and social media, the campaign targets key policymakers as well as the media and general public.



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