



**“My parents have been arrested,
what now?
Public policies for the future”**

Conference Outcome Report



Acknowledgements

Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) would like to thank Confiar for co-organising and hosting the 2022 International Conference, entitled “My parents have been arrested, what now? Public Policies for the future”. COPE thanks to all the speakers, interpreters and participants who, respectively, shared their experience, enabled the exchange and contributed to the success of the event with their presence and contributions. COPE is grateful for the financial support of the European Union’s Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme for making this conference possible.



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Introduction

COPE's 2022 annual international conference took place on 2 June in Cascais, Portugal. Entitled 'My parents have been arrested, what now? Public policies for the future', the event was hosted by COPE member organisation Confiar. The day heard presentations from a range of Portuguese and international speakers on such topics as enabling imprisoned parents to participate in the lives of their children, building spaces that allow children to be closer to their parent and creating cross-sectoral support and one stop shops to protect the rights and specific needs of children with imprisoned parents. The COPE network works to encourage innovative perspectives and practice to ensure the rights of children with imprisoned parents are fully respected and that action is taken to secure their well-being and development. Involving children with a parent in conflict with the law in any decision that concerns them and ensuring that their voices are heard are key elements in this process.

Key conference outcomes

1. It is crucial to preserve the dignity of the child by listening to them, involving them in any decisions that concern their life, supporting their connection to the imprisoned parent (unless this isn't in their best interest) and fighting stigmatisation.
2. Children with imprisoned parents should be supported and cared for. Through the arrest and imprisonment of their parent they are exposed to toxic stress which they experience as a trauma trigger with long term negative consequences for their development and future. Therefore, implementing trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed policies and practices is essential. Different approaches must be developed for children who live in prison and those who are outside in line with their individual circumstances and needs.
3. In many countries, young children spend their first years together with their imprisoned parent. There is a need for further assessment to understand what is better for their development - to be with the parent but in prison or grow in alternative care outside of prison.
4. The right of being a parent should not be taken away. Further efforts need to be made to humanise prisons in terms of visiting spaces, timetables and call policy as well as to enable imprisoned parents to participate in the lives of their children and in the decisions that concern them.
5. There are gender asymmetries in the care-giving function and the way prisons

are organised which have implications inside and outside prison's walls. These need to be further looked at, addressed and resolved in a way that benefits both children and imprisoned parents.

6. A structure that supports children with imprisoned parents must be created on national levels to ensure that they are not forgotten in the design of social policies.
7. Building an interagency approach and a one-stop-shop would enhance the provision of effective and structured support to children.
8. There is a lack of data about children with imprisoned parents which makes it even more difficult to provide them with adequate support. Advocacy and awareness-raising would help for tackling stigmatisation and allow more children and their parents to gain the courage to share and be open about this issue.
9. The work for the prisoners, the children and everyone involved in supporting them should start on day one following an arrest. A holistic support system, based on the individual needs of each child, should be developed and implemented by all structures involved together with the child and their parents.

Presentations

I. Opening session

Luís Gagliardini Graça, Confiar President, opened the conference sharing his pride of and satisfaction with the collaboration with COPE. He then referred to the anguishing question in the conference title and the stigma of people who have been arrested, and shared Confiar's belief that everyone is greater than their mistake. Children with imprisoned parents should not bear the sentence of their parents; they should not have to carry it with them. It is essential to have public policies addressing the needs of these children, which should be created together with the public and should be put into practice. It is also crucial to have reliable data. Finally, he stressed the urgency of coming up with solutions which guarantee a better present and thus future for children with imprisoned parents.

Rachel Brett, COPE President, spoke about the Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents and the European Union's commitment to implementing as major developments. Another recent development has been the renewal, in December 2021, of the Charter of the Rights of the Children of Imprisoned Parents (Memorandum of Understanding) in Italy, a partnership involving the penitentiary system, the Ministry of Justice, the Guarantor for Childhood and Adolescence and non-governmental

organisations. COPE partner Confiar has been exploring ways in which to establish a similar MoU in Portugal since 2017 when they organised a national conference in Lisbon, in which COPE participated, and a Parliamentary expert meeting on children of imprisoned parents and translated the MoU into Portuguese. Other good examples of support for children with imprisoned parents include a nation-wide integrated approach in Germany. Rachel Brett highlighted the importance of sharing European expertise, experience and support and COPE's readiness to help with further strengthening the public policies in this respect in Portugal.

Carla Semedo, Councillor of the Municipality of Cascais, discussed the traumatic experience of children with parents in prison and the anxiety of a mother whose child would be placed in alternative care if she were to be imprisoned. There is a need for creating a structured process for receiving these children when their primary caregiver is sent to prison. Maintaining the connection between mother and child is an objective for the Municipality of Cascais and they approach this with compassion. Children with imprisoned parents should grow up in a stable environment and should be well cared for. Cascais Municipality is committed to implementing policies that take into account the rights of children with imprisoned parents and wellbeing and set an example.

II. Keynote speaker

Paulo Guerra, Judge, Court of Appeal of Coimbra, shared the story of "Alice" who lives with her mother in a cell, while we are celebrating the 33rd anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). 'What is the point of waking up if what I live is worse than what I have dreamt?' asks Alice. 'A mistake in a parent's life should not be a stain on a child's life', she continues. Paulo Guerra's response to this is that every child has the right to be oriented and to have a connection to an adult who can support him/her in this process; that they must be offered therapeutic help and be carefully listened to. He invited the audience 'to go UP to the level of the children.' Portugal, after Norway and Iceland, is the UN country with the highest scores in five children's rights – to life, health, education, protection and safe environment. Portuguese law allows for the mothers to have their child with them until the age of five if the prison has the necessary conditions. In November 2020, there were 24 women serving a sentence or deprivation of liberty with children in their care, in two prisons in Portugal (Santa Cruz do Bispo (female) and Tires). At that time, there were 24 children with their mothers in these prisons (1 child/mother). As of today, there are 10 children living with their mothers in the SC Bispo and two pregnant women. In Tires there are 17 children living with their mothers, four of whom are pregnant. There is day care, school, training programmes for the women deprived of liberty with children for

strengthening their parental and personal skills. The right of being a parent should not be taken away. Imprisoned parents should participate in the decisions that concern their children on a case-by-case basis.

There is a clash between the child's right to be with their mother and the right to freedom and there are pros and cons in the implementation of each. When a child is under physical or psychological risk in prison, they should be released but there needs to be a careful look at the alternatives. Also, when the mother does not provide necessary care to the child, they can be taken away. However, the fragility of the mother's condition due to being in prison should also be considered when assessing the situation. The separation of the child from the mother should be a gradual process and should include time together during the holidays. Both mothers and children need support networks. After the mother is released, the child should receive adequate emotional support during the reintegration period. Finally, Paulo Guerra addressed the children who are separated from their parent in prison. The bars that separate them are the same. For these children the separation is abrupt. He raised the question how to best regulate and secure the contact between the parent and the child.

III. What is the State doing? How can it improve?

Moderator Luísa Verdasca Sobral, Deputy Attorney General Lisbon Court of Appeal (2021) and Coordinating Magistrate of the Lisbon West District (2017), talked about the pertinence of addressing the role of the State. She then focused on the three realities which are subject to the discussion: the first reality involves children up to 5 years of age who spend their early childhood in prison and whose parents are trying to reintegrate into society; the second, those children who are not in prison; and the third, children whose parents have been arrested and are awaiting sentencing. She opened the exchange between the panellists with a question about whether they find the current public responses adequate.

Lígia Rebelo, Director of Montijo Prison, representing the General Directorate for Reintegration and Prison Services, addressed the challenges in maintaining contact between children and parents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisoners received the necessary equipment to be able to participate in video calls. Online calls became part of the visits routine, and this is something that will continue. There is also a proposal to improve the concept of intimate visitation rights and to expand the visiting spaces so that they can accommodate family members and be more comfortable. This should enable contact both with the spouse and the children. The timetable also needs to be adjusted — there are many rules in the prison due to limited space and time. The

profile of the prison officers has been reviewed in the framework of the project "Prisoners for the 21st century" and they, as well as all the people who are in touch with the prisoners they work with, have been offered continuous training to adapt their skills. In Coimbra, a partnership for an integrated approach to children with parents in prison has been developed. Yet giving attention to one individual could be very difficult when there are over thousands of them. Lúgia Rebelo has witnessed the benefits that reinforcing the family ties and connections has on people in prison. Another important question she raised was about the interaction between all the structures involved in supporting the children. Montijo Prison reaches out to the other structures to have the full picture and assess who could step in with respect to parental responsibility. Preparing a child to be placed in alternative family care is a gradual process which starts with short visits and establishing a bond. Measures are also taken to support the child outside of prison. There is a huge need for awareness-raising and changing the paradigm so that society understands the problem. The legislation needs to be amended in order to better address the needs of these children. A coordinated response should be sought as well as the development of a speedier process. Finally, Lúgia Rebelo recommended the creation of a one stop shop for providing effective and structured support to the children.

Pat Dawson, Prison Support and Development, Cork and Midlands Prisons. Chair of EuroPris Children of Prisoners expert group (Ireland), shared the political journey on this topic in Ireland which was triggered by the publication of a family support best practice report in Zagreb, Croatia in 2016. They started with a three-year strategic plan (2012-2015) which had the objective to strengthen family support. The Strategic plan 2019-2022 is considering more concretely how this can happen. It has five pillars: communications, visiting facilities, staff training, courses and community follow-up and recognises visits as a core element of rehabilitation. They are guided by the principle that while video visits are important, they could never replace physical connection between a child and his/her parent. They offer inside and outside training, prisoner support and family support, including a parenting programme for families dealing with imprisonment. One of the outcomes has been empowerment of mothers. They have faced the following challenges with the implementation of their plan: finding agreement on a common vision and approach between disparate organisations; layers of communication; considering that prisoner's family profiles can be complex so follow-up in the community could be time consuming; helping fathers improve their parenting skills when they have limited access to their children; balancing a family-friendly approach alongside the need to maintain security; logistical issues regarding inside versus outside programme delivery; and working towards a culture shift within prison in relation to families and resources. The next steps they envisage regarding strengthening the family links are: 1. Appoint a national organiser (IPS) — a family liaison person in each prison; 2. Relaunch the Family and Imprisonment Group, a national advisory group implementing IPS policy; 3. Identify resources at prison level

to continue the work; 4. Quarterly reviews nationally. They have developed a government policy entitled *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*, which makes recommendations to the government, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, the Irish Prison Service, the Office of the Inspector of Prisons, the Ombudsman for Children's Office and Ireland's Child and Family Agency, Tusla. They have established a new families of prisoners network. Also, they have developed, for the first time, a Criminal Justice Sectoral Strategy 2022-2024 with the following leading principles: Be a champion; Be the voice of the child and the family in what we do; and Stay the course. The Strategy supports families but it is really about supporting the child and his/her relationship with the parents. They are also changing their culture from security to intervention.

Paulo Guerra, Judge, Court of Appeal of Coimbra, stressed the importance of talking about the realities of children with a parent in prison. A child that goes into a prison is a child in danger. It is not good for children to be deprived of their freedom because one or both of their parents is in prison. The first thing is to open procedures to secure these children with a proper check. This visibility gives us the right to make changes. We have to have the courage to look at the law and consider what we can modify. We need to look at the child and assess whether it is good for the child to be in prison with their mother. But then the question about the affection and the right of the mother in a standardised way arises — could these be, respectively, provided and exercised in short weekly visits? Another question is the one about alternative care – 7000 children in Portugal are in institutions while in Ireland most children in alternative care are in foster care. Children over 16 shouldn't be behind bars but behind a system, a system that supports them and meets their needs. There are many missing elements that compromise the cognitive development of the child. Not being stigmatised because of having an imprisoned parent is essential. These issues need time, and the distance sometimes is problematic — especially when there was violence in the family. If it is in the best interests of the child, this distance should not be maintained for too long, Paulo Guerra concluded.

IV. Impacting kids, impacting society

Moderator Dália Costa, PhD in Family Sociology; Assistant Professor at the School of Social and Political Sciences of Lisbon University who coordinates the specialisation course in Criminology and Social Reintegration shared that the topic of the conference is personally dear to her. She highlighted that this is an area in which knowledge should be increased in order to define public policies and to monitor and evaluate what is being done in practice both in Portugal and Europe. She also stressed

that this is the right time in Portugal to address this issue, together with the government, in a much more pragmatic way.

Ann Adalist-Estrin, Director of the National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated, Rutgers University, presented the work and the history of the center. Families impacted by the criminal legal system are not one monolithic group – there are themes and variations in their lives and stories. She shared that in the US close to 60% of the children are not known to public or private systems. She also highlighted that parental imprisonment is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) and referred to the toxic stress around the entire process – from arrest through sentencing, imprisonment, reintegration. Children experience this as trauma. Toxic stress can have long-term consequences if adequate support is not available – children exposed to it may be faced with difficulties at school, they might drop out of school, they might have attachment disorders. While the suffering of many of these children is hidden, they may seek comfort in gang involvement and early sexuality leading to early pregnancies as well as self-medicating and substance abuse. Bullying, peer rejection, poor academic performance, poverty, racism, unsafe environments, community violence, food insecurity are common issues faced by these children at some point in their lives. This might have implications for programmes, policies and practices. Therefore, implementing trauma-sensitive or trauma-informed policies and practices is essential. It is not unusual, however, for caregivers and families to hide the imprisonment of a family member out of fear of being judged or shamed or of unfounded claims of child maltreatment. Ann Adalist-Estrin emphasised the importance of creating guidelines for providing relevant and sensitive services to caregivers. Hearing children's voices is of paramount importance, as is considering families by including them in defining problems and designing solutions. She also advised to engage those personally impacted early and effectively and without exploitation. Finally, she stressed the importance of defining child well-being. Which is better: separating the child from the mother or allowing them to live in a prison? She admitted that this is still unknown. Studies that look at cortisol levels, comparing levels of stress during the infant's co-residing with the mother with those for infants separated from their mother in prison could help to answer this question. At the end she quoted Albert Einstein's saying: We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

Police Sergeant Russ Massie, Lead for Child Centred Policing. Thames Valley VRU, Thames Valley Police talked about his experience with identifying and quantifying the scale in which the children are impacted. He acknowledged the lack of a statutory mechanism to identify children affected by parental imprisonment and in which ways. In Oxfordshire (England), local authorities and agencies have joined forces around the initiative Operation Paramount: Identifying & supporting children affected by parental imprisonment. Seven authorities and agencies have created a database

which they update daily. The data is compared to Police and Partnership data at the point of imprisonment. Children are identified through police and partnership data and the local police team is notified. Local police visits the affected family and offer to refer them to the charity Children Heard and Seen for support. If the child and their family is open to support, the police share the details with the charity who then contacts them, or they leave contact information with the family. Thames Valley Police in Oxford has successfully piloted the process since November 2021. Over six months, 170 children were identified. Thames Valley Together (TVT) is a working concept able to automate prisons data alongside police and other partner data, including education and social care. TVT will become operationally available during 2022/23. OP Paramount is monitored by the National Police Chiefs Council and other forces nationally.

Rafaela Granja, PhD, Assistant Researcher at the Communication and Society Research Centre of University of Minho, also talked about the lack of data and emphasised that there is no formal information on how many prisoners are fathers or mothers. An existing survey suggests that 85% of women in prison in Portugal are mothers and 67.3% of the men in prison are fathers. The law in Portugal is gender neutral and allows for both men and women to have the child with them until the age of 3, exceptionally the age of 5. Nevertheless, there are no men who have their children with them. One of the reasons for this is that male prisons do not have the necessary logistics. Reorganisation of childcare configurations usually reinforces gender asymmetries — it is predominantly the women who take care of children. If a mother is arrested, it is usually the grandmother who takes over the responsibilities for the child; when the man is arrested, it is either the mother or again the grandmother. Therefore, there is no gender equality. Another issue is that Portugal does not have particular policies guaranteeing prisoners' contact with their children. There is often inconsistency of patterns of contact due to unavailable resources. The calls and visits can sometimes be very expensive for the family – especially if the prisoner is far from their home. Families might also be expected to bring food and/or money to their family member in prison. If they do not have enough resources, they do not go. Prisoners in Portugal are obliged to pay for the phone calls, which can last only 5 minutes a day. This changed during the pandemic. Examples of creative negotiation involving parents and caregivers can be found. Both men and women try to manage with the caregivers the roles and decision-making regarding the children as well as to actively participate in children's life and maintain or recreate presence at a distance. Rafaela Granja concluded that:

1. Parenting in prison remains an invisible social issue, without concrete policies addressing it;
2. The gender asymmetries have implications inside and outside prison's walls;

3. Strategies to promote connection are conditioned by several volatile factors, mainly beyond prisoners' control, that range from prison restrictions to negotiations with carers and scarce economic resources.

V. What Works: Sectorial partnerships to support children

The Moderator Marina Pimentel, Journalist at Rádio Renascença reminded conference participants of Virginia Woolf's words that reality doesn't exist until it is told. **Carolina Viana, Executive Manager of Confiar**, spoke about the costs related to imprisonment. In Portugal, a prisoner costs 54 euros a day. She also shared statistics according to which there have been 9.7% more incidents of crime since 2018 with 75% being committed by those previously incarcerated. Portugal has 49 prisons, including the islands, and the majority of them are overpopulated. A total of 7% of prisoners are women and the average age is 30-39. In Portugal, the average length of imprisonment is the second highest in Europe.¹

Carolina Viana addressed the isolation and discrimination that children with imprisoned parents are exposed to. She also focused on the role of restorative justice and recommended that the process starts between a year and six months before the end of a sentence. Confiar creates a plan including social, judicial and psychological support together with the family and help with housing when the person has no place to go. Confiar also has volunteers who help them with the various tasks, support them with coordination and implementation. The volunteers receive training on the responsibility of being a trainee in prison. They work with 56 prisoners and their families and have carried out 7,000 conversations. They have a two-year project (2021-2022) – Barbaearia do Bairro which encourages people to talk, to have conversations. Another project entails helping them with finding jobs. Yet another project is restorative neighbourhoods - building healthy neighbourhoods. Their current projects include restorative practices – looking together at alternatives and solutions; restorative circles, where former prisoners and their partners meet and talk once a month; multimedia workshops, among others. During the first week of June, they started classes in

¹ Editor's note: Portugal's average length of imprisonment is the second highest in Europe, according to the SPACE 2019 report, yet the admissions rate is the second lowest. This suggests that prison is being used as a measure of last resort, mainly in the case of long-term sentences that do not allow for replacement by non-custodial alternatives. Moreover, 2019 data reveals that only 8.8% of all convictions led to prison sentences. In short, data show that proportionally fewer people are imprisoned per year compared to other European countries, but most of those in prison have been sentenced to imprisonment of 5 years and over. Source: Rodrigues, A. M., Antunes, M. J., Fidalgo, S., Pinto, I. H., & Ishiy, K. T. (2022). *Non-custodial sanctions and measures in the Member States of the European Union. Comparative Report*. University of Coimbra. Available at: <https://www.prialteur.pt/index.php/home/comparative-study/comparative-report>

capoeira and hip-hop in a school with senior grade students from the neighbourhood. The project Alcotown neighbourhood aims to renovate a number of common areas where people can meet. They also share stories from the neighbourhood linking them with photos and pictures.

Julie Williams & Hayley Morris, Schools and Prison Coordinator & Family Services Manager – G4S HMP Parc Wales presented “My father, my school and me” - outlining the ‘School Zone’ service which promotes imprisoned fathers’ engagement with their child’s school. School Zone takes a holistic approach to supporting the relationship between the father and the child which consists of four stages:

1. Contact between prison and family members in the community
2. Communication between school, family and prison
3. Father and child attend the “You and Me” Club together, once a month, enhancing the bond between father and child
4. Teacher, prisoner and family come together in the Children’s Showcase intervention every school term within the prison visits hall.

Children are at the heart of this initiative, which reduces so many barriers for parents, teachers and the child. Bobby’s Story clearly identifies that the School Zone approach creates a circle of support around the child, enhancing their chances of a happier, healthier future. Working with schools in this way ensures imprisoned fathers can remain engaged with their child’s education, teachers have the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the complexities facing a child with a parent in prison and these children are then better supported during their school day. School Zone has connected 92 fathers with schools since May 2020 and have received school reports for 138 children since 2020. A total of 230 schools have engaged with them since 2010. Since 2014, 351 children have been present at Children’s Showcase events with their imprisoned father, their mother and the teacher. Julie Williams and Hayley Morris showed the short film “Bobby’s story” which demonstrates how their project works in practice and what impact it could have on a child. The schools intervention is now being replicated in the UK as well as Denmark.

Sylvia Vogt, Head of Offenders Support Department, Treffpunkt e.V. Nuremberg – “Netzwerk Kinder von Inhaftierten Deutschland”, shared that one of the main problems she has faced is securing sustainability for her programmes. In 2018, she started a German network – initially as a project. It aimed to connect NGOs, youth welfare, social care and services, justice system and prisoners with the goal to improve the situation of children with imprisoned parents. This has led to the creation of a nationwide network — Children of Prisoners Germany — with a regular newsletter, targeted public relations, regular exchanges between its members, organisation of

conferences and creation of a database. Since 2022 they have a new project, sponsored by Auridis foundation for a period of three years. The overall goals of the network are: development of interdisciplinary care structure; advancement of family-oriented prison system; inclusion of data collection; advocacy.

They work along the ten fields of action related to the COE Recommendation. Sylvia Vogt provided Bavaria as an example of a federal state project. In its framework, they set up an interdepartmental working group to develop the concept for the overall project: Their partners included two Bavarian prisons, two city youth welfare offices, the Bavarian State Youth Welfare Office and the State Ministry of Justice and State Ministry of Youth Welfare. They advised that the work for the prisoners, the children and everyone involved should start on day one.

VI. Building Public Policies for the Future

Debate with Portuguese Deputies from the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Rights, Freedoms and Guarantees

Moderator Helena Roseta, Coordinator of “Bairros Saudáveis” Programme, by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, further reiterated the essential nature of putting principles into practice. She mentioned a public programme started in 2020 in Portugal under which 10 million euro has been granted to 240 projects dealing with various social issues. Confiar has been supported by this.

Ada Rumo, human rights lawyer with a focus on migrant rights, referred to the conference as an opportunity to give visibility to a theme nobody likes talking about. She further addressed the title of the conference — putting this question in the mouth of a child reveals that there is something wrong in society. The first question should be whether we are going to address the parents and what we will do with the child. She highlighted that restorative justice was already in the programme of the government and that legislation can be sorted out. She shared her experience with advancing the rights of migrant people. Currently, they have a project in Coimbra that aims to give voice to children whose parents are arrested. Eight children have shared their experiences through this project.

Monica Quintela, lawyer, social justice, spoke about how to help prisoners become better people and break the cycle of crime. She referred to certain data that had been highlighted at the conference —that 70% of children with imprisoned parents will

commit crime²— and stressed the urgency of taking action to prevent these children from following the example they have witnessed. It is of paramount importance to understand the structure supporting the child, so that they are not stigmatised and doomed to have a similar future. There is a commonly shared view that prisoners are too well cared for. However, we must consider who will be leaving prison and returning to society. The Portuguese system is heavily criticised for not being aligned to human rights. For example, the prisoners in Monsant prison are in their cells 22 hours a day, with only half an hour out in the morning and another half an hour in the afternoon, and only those who do not know each other are scheduled to have their break at the same time so that they do not establish bonds. Monica Quintela raised the questions of what a person is going to do when he leaves prison after 25 years of 22 hours a day in a cell and how are we going to reintegrate them in society. Policies should prioritise supporting rehabilitation into society. For example, prisoners can work in farms or participate in workshops to acquire new skills and build responsibility. Monica Quintela concluded that this cycle is unacceptable and must be broken and addressed the urgency of implementing a law addressing this.

VII. Closing session

Liz Ayre, COPE Executive Director, began her closing remarks by addressing the dignity of the child – every initiative discussed has been an effort to preserve children’s dignity and to bring ourselves “up to the level of the child.” Each country needs to identify a model matching its particular situation while drawing ideas from the other best practices for the practical implementation. One common denominator is the need of some kind of support body, an NGO that supports children with imprisoned parents in order to ensure that the children are not falling into the cracks when a parent goes to prison. Another common denominator is building inter-agency approaches. The 2018 COE recommendation really helped close the policy gaps. Having one body would enable prisons and families to knock on one door rather than on five. Each child is unique in their specific situation and needs. Having a trusted adult is crucial. Humanising prisons and making their walls permeable is another key intake from the conference. Liz Ayre

² Discussion over this statistic was generated several times over the course of the conference. Ann Adalist-Estrin pointed out that a great deal of energy had been spent on trying to track this statistic, citing approximately 30% of children with an imprisoned parents go into prison as a plausible yet still controversial figure. The 70% related to a 1970s doctoral study in Florida examining the juvenile justice system (n=46 children). The causal path has not been proven and the use of these data may increase stigma and interfere with child well-being. COPE plans on publishing a paper refuting this statistic and proposing some COPE principles for network members. See Conway, J. M., & Jones, E. T. (2015). *Seven out of ten? Not even close: A review of research on the likelihood of children with incarcerated parents becoming justice-involved*. Central Connecticut State University, Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy-The Children with Incarcerated Parents Initiative.

reminded that we need to be very attentive in our messaging so that we do not communicate messages that stigmatise children further. COPE is looking forward to following up to this conference and to see what further measures Portugal will take. Liz Ayre concluded that the conference has been a significant building block in furthering children's dignity in Portugal.

Leonor Furtado (Final Speech), Judge Counsellor at the Supreme Court of Justice, area of crime, shared that she had the privilege of participating in the design of the Portuguese sentencing code which she considers as one of the most significant legal projects she has worked on. In her view, the conference was able to respond to the politics of reinsertion and promote the protection of children at risk. There is insufficient information, not only about the identity of the children with imprisoned parents, but also their financial situation. It is considered that they are in a risky context regarding their development. A child has to be respected and their dignity must be preserved. Leonor Furtado confirmed that there is no organisation, governmental or private, in Portugal whose mission revolves around the policy of reintegration post-prison. Reintegration measures to support adults and access to the courts is a very difficult and demanding mission and can only be carried out if there is political will and concrete measures to be applied. There is a big gap between the interventions. Some children are very young and live with their parents in the prison. The prison regulation however does not provide for children staying with male parents. At the same time, prisons are structured for men, therefore the needs of women and mothers are not met. Leonor Furtado also addressed the lack of data; the restrictive rules for phone contact and visits which need to be reconsidered; and the impact that being in prison can have on young children. She expressed the view that a good investment in prisons would reap many additional benefits given that resettlement is cost-effective. She recommended that there should be social responses to humanise the relationship between imprisoned parents and their children and that there should be a policy supporting the prisoners' vocational training and employment in order to facilitate reintegration in society.



Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network of non-profit organisations working with and on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. The network encourages innovative perspectives and practices to ensure that children with an imprisoned parent fully enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and that action is taken to enable their well-being and development.

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