



**‘Not my crime, still my sentence’**  
*A kaleidoscope for change in the pandemic world*



Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network of non-profit organisations working 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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A large, stylized yellow hand graphic is positioned behind the Table of Contents text, with the fingers spread out.

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## Part 1: Introductory text

The COVID-19 pandemic has had dramatic effects on everyday life. Measures and restrictions to limit the spread of the virus have had a significant impact on children with a parent in prison. With the suspension of in-person visits in prisons and despite measures to facilitate the continuity of the child-parent relationship (notably video-visits), some children did not have face-to-face contact or hug their parent for close to a year. Even when most public restrictions were lifted in summers 2020 and 2021, and people were able to gather in restaurants and go to the cinema, many children were still unable to visit their parent.

As prisons have reinstated visits, there are still restrictions to the number of visitors and the presence of glass or plexiglass barriers has eliminated the possibility for children to hug their parent. Children and their parents in prison are left feeling forgotten and as if no one cares about them.

As the re-opening of prisons and in-person visits becomes more frequent, there needs to be a guarantee that the rights and needs of children with a parent in prison will be met and adequately considered in this process.

Children of Prisoners Europe's 2021 "*Not my crime, still my sentence*" campaign provided a platform and opportunity for these children to voice their interests, needs and feelings given the context. This document brings together children's voices in a 'Bill of Rights' inspired by Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 concerning children with an imprisoned parent, and a compilation of children's input from the 2021 campaign. The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 is a landmark instrument regarding children with imprisoned parents. It does the work both of recognising parental imprisonment as having long-lasting effects on the well-being of millions of children, and of addressing the needs of those children with a parent in prison through fifty-six guidelines for good practice.

As part of the 2020 campaign, children were asked to illustrate the COE Recommendation by selecting the article they considered to be the most important or the article that most spoke to them, demonstrating their priorities within the framework of the Recommendation. It is important to note that this document has been drafted supposing that all children with a parent in prison have contact with their parent, whereas for many children they have no contact with their parent for a variety of reasons.

The intention is that this advocacy tool will raise awareness of the challenges created or compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic for children who have a parent in prison or in conflict with the law. It proposes potential solutions to these issues, considering the context of prison visits re-opening across Europe as a catalyst for change.

Children with an imprisoned parent should have a central position in the European and national 'post-COVID' strategies regarding prisons and prison visits.



## Part 2: Compilation of submissions from 2021 campaign

The aim of the 2021 “*Not my crime, still my sentence*” campaign was to provide a platform for children and young people to share the difficulties they’ve been facing since the beginning of the pandemic and voice their opinions on how to move towards positive changes.

Children were asked the following questions:

- *How are you feeling ?*
- *What is the effect of COVID on your life ?*
- *What do you need ?*
- *What was something that worked well or that was ‘good’ about the COVID pandemic that you would like to continue ?*
- *What is something that didn’t work well or that you did not like about the COVID pandemic ?*
- *What information do you need ?*
- *What would you like to see when visits reopen ?*

Eighteen children from five countries responded through written submissions, artwork and audio clips.



# Catalonia

1. How do you feel when you come to prison?

*The truth is that I feel good and bad.  
Good because I will see [my dad], bad because I'm not with him.*

2. What would you like to see or find when you come to prison?

*I would like to spend more time with [my dad]  
and not be locked down in a room.*

3. Which information would you need to have?

*The truth is that none.*

4. What has the prison or your father done from prison that has helped you to feel better during the Covid pandemic?

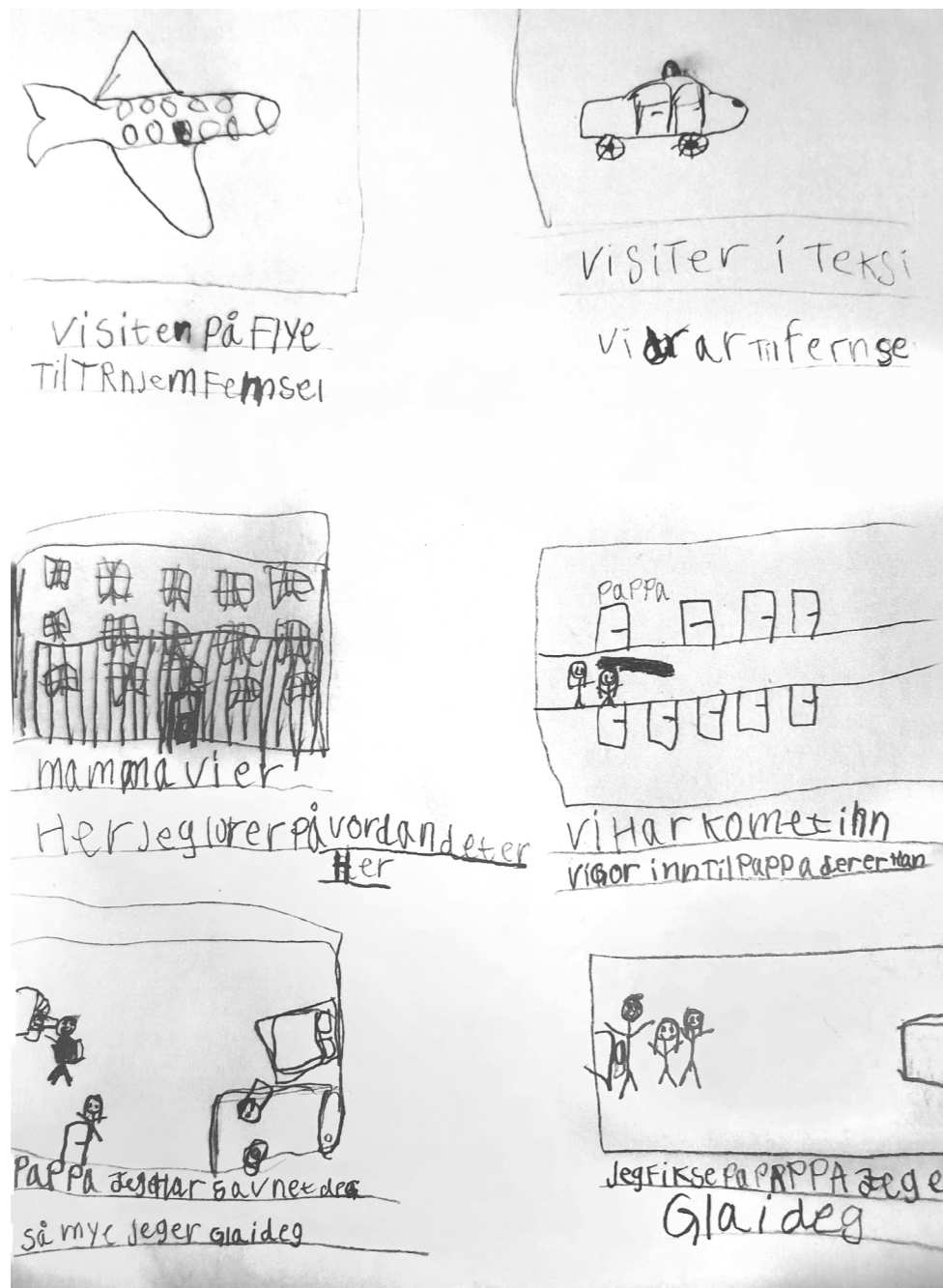
*When he used to tell me that he was  
fine because I love him a lot.*

Norway



- Boy, 10 years old





Vi sitter på flyet til Trondheim fengsel. — We're on the plane on our way to Trondheim prison.

Vi sitter i taxi, vi drar til fengselet. — We're in a taxi, we're going to the prison.

Mamma, nå er vi her. Jeg lurere på hvordan det er her. — Mom, now we're here. I'm wondering what it's like here.

Vi har kommet inn. Vi går til pappa; og der er han. — We're in. We go to Dad; and there he is.

Pappa, jeg har savnet dere så mye. Jeg er glad i deg. — Dad; I've missed you so much. I love you.

Jeg fikk se pappa. Jeg er glad i deg. — I got to see Dad. I love you.

- Girl, 8 years old

“

There was nothing good about COVID.  
**We could not get in touch with Dad.**

- Girl, 11 years old

COVID meant that I was not allowed to visit my father who lived in another country, I was only allowed to talk to him on the phone and send letters.

- Boy, 15 years old

**COVID has meant that I cannot hang out with the people I want to.**

- Girl, 11 years old

I would like to be able to go out somewhere, such as to an amusement park or a restaurant.  
 - Girl, 11 years old

**When prisons reopen people must be able to see those they know in prison.**

- Girl, 11 years old

I did not get the opportunity to visit my father at all, nor was there a solution in relation to meeting on Skype.

- Boy, 15 years old

Home school is good, because I get to be more with my family, and I do more homework.

- Boy, 15 years old

It makes me happy that my brother stays active and tries to work in prison and get opportunities and not just sit in a cell. It makes me very happy that he is not alone there and that he has someone he can talk to.  
- Girl, 18 years old

I miss my brother who is in prison. I feel that there is always something missing and that Mum is not so well when he does not call often.  
- Girl, 18 years old

When prisons reopen I want to give my brother **a big warm hug.**  
- Boy, 15 years old

When prisons reopen I want us to be able to bring our own food so that my brother can have some home-cooked meals that give him joy. I hope that we can play games there, and that **more people can come to visit** so that the whole family is gathered.  
- Girl, 18 years old

It makes me happy when my imprisoned family member calls me. Because that is better than nothing, and **I just want to hear his voice.**  
- Boy, 15 years old

I'm fine, I feel that this year has been a bit difficult but we try to do our best based on the situation we are in.  
- Girl, 18 years old

To be honest, I have everything I need. All my needs are completely covered.  
- Boy, 15 years old

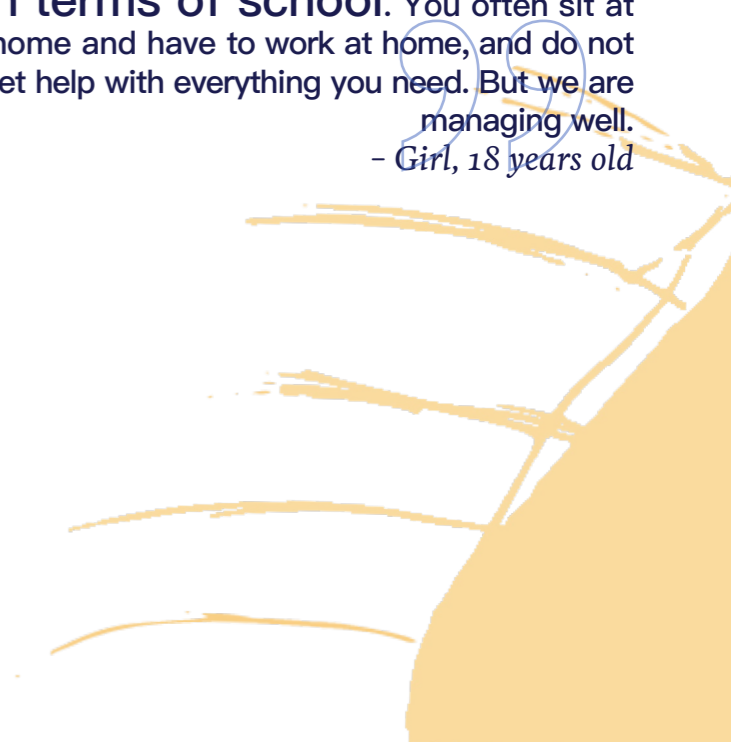
I have had the opportunity to get to know the family better during the lockdown. Despite the fact I was not allowed to meet my friends, I actually got to know them better as well.  
- Boy, 15 years old

The prison itself has done nothing to make me feel happy during COVID. My father, on the other hand, often asks how I'm doing. He has sent several letters and spontaneously called to hear if things are going well.  
- Boy, 15 years old

I wonder if we can go to other countries soon, will it soon be green (Dad is doing time in another country).  
- Girl, 11 years old

When prison visits reopen **I think the possibility of Skype should be possible** for those who have a family member who lives far away.  
- Boy, 15 years old

With COVID **it has been demanding in terms of school.** You often sit at home and have to work at home, and do not get help with everything you need. But we are managing well.  
- Girl, 18 years old







- Damian, 7 years old

Jak się czuje?

W zasadzie to bardzo łatwe, a zarazem skomplikowane pytanie.

Z jednej strony czasem czuje się uspaniałe, a zarazem z drugiej strony czuje się smutna, gdy przypomina mi się cała sytuacja związana z aresztowaniem mojego taty co niestety stało się na moich oczach. W dobie dotęcia się do tego pytanie:

Jaki wpływ miał covid na twoje życie?

W prost mogę powiedzieć, że w dużym stopniu przyczynił się do rozerwania moich rodziców poprzez brak odwiedzin i także kontaktu telefonicznego.

Daria 13 lat

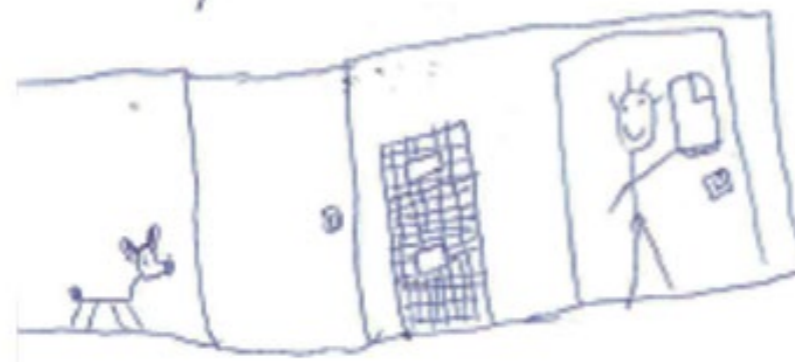
How I feel? In fact, it's a very easy question, and on the other hand, a complicated question. On the one hand, sometimes I feel great, and on the other hand, I feel sad when I remember the whole situation related to my dad's arrest, which unfortunately happened in front of my eyes.

Adding to it is the question: "What impact has Covid had on your life?" I can admit that it contributed to the separation of my parents by not visiting and forbidding telephone contact.

- Daria, 13 years old

CO ZROBIŁO WIĘZIENIE LUB TWOJĄ RODZIC  
ZE CZUŁEŚ SIĘ DOBRZE?

NiCooo



Co zrobiło więzienie lub rodzic, że czułeś się dobrze?

— What did the prison or your parent do to make you feel good?

Na obrazku pokazanie domu i psa przez skype.

— The picture shows the house and the dog by skype conversation.

- Hugo, 10 years old

Jak się czujesz (1)

Czego potrzebujesz (3)



Jak się czujesz? — How do you feel?

Czego potrzebujesz? — What do you need?

- Esmeralda, 9 years old

Czego potrzebujesz



Czego potrzebujesz? — What do you need?

- Darek, 11 years old





# Romania

The pandemic affected me very badly.

- Mihai, 11 years old

The fact that we are not going to the school anymore, and we have online classes is affecting our social life, because I would want to meet with my colleagues from school.

- Erica, 12 years old

“

The effect of COVID in my life is a negative one, because for one year **I have been “isolated”** from many people and things like my father, school, parties, going out with some friends.

- Maria, 17 years old

My lifestyle has changed, before I used to be more relaxed, but now I try to protect myself.

- Denisa, 13 years old

With COVID I stayed in the house for a long time and I missed my colleagues.

- Mihai, 11 years old

This pandemic has also brought good things, I learned to appreciate small things that I would not normally be aware of, for example going out in the city and spending more time with my friends. But then, **I hated not being able to visit my father** in prison.

- Maria, 17 years old

The online courses from school didn't work well during COVID.

- Mihai, 11 years old, Romania @ Erica, 12

The prison did nothing during the pandemic. My father teaches me well, **it helps me morally when I talk to him.**

- Mihai, 11 years old

The prison allowed us one visit with our father, that made me feel happy.

- Erica, 12 years old

A little thing that made me happy, was to find out that if I can't visit my father in prison, there is a possibility to see each other online.

- Maria, 17 years old

I can talk to my dad on the phone. When I feel alone and he calls me, I feel like he is next to me at home and **taking care of me.**

- Denisa, 13 years old

I would like to learn a lot of things, but right now, I would like to know more information about how to stay away from getting COVID and how to get rid of it for good.

- Erica, 12 years old

When visits reopen, I would like to be able to visit my father in prison.

- Mihai, 11 years old

**I would like to visit many places,** but I would start by going on a trip to the mountainside. Also I would like to visit a museum when the quarantine will be over.

- Erica, 12 years old

When things return to normal, I want to visit more sights that I would normally have done.

- Maria, 17 years old

Jag hade velat träffa honom alltid hela tiden, jag hade velat hälsa på även om det var corona, vi kunde ha suttit med en skärm emellan och bara kramas en gång.

/Pojke 8 år

I have always wanted to visit him, always all the time, even during corona, we could have had a screen between us and only hug once.

- Boy, 8 years old



## Part 3: COPE's "Bill of Rights" based on 2021 campaign responses

Man måste ha en glasskiva  
mellan, så man kan inte  
kramas, å det känns inte bra

/Flicka 13 år

You must have a glass screen between, so you can't hug, and that does not feel good.

- Girl, 13 years old

1. When prisons reopen, people must be able to see those they know in prison.
2. We would like to be able to visit our family members in prison in another country.
3. It is important to have spontaneous phone calls and letters from parents in prison, it makes us feel better.
4. When we cannot visit our family member in prison, we should be able to have video calls.
5. Even when prison visits reopen, video visits should be a possibility for those who have a family member who lives far away.
6. Hearing the voice of imprisoned family members on the phone makes us happy. It helps us feel like they are next to us at home and taking care of us.
7. When prisons reopen, we want to be able to give our imprisoned family members big warm hugs.
8. It makes us happy that our family members in prison can stay active and have opportunities to work. It is reassuring to know they are not alone and that they have someone they can talk to.
9. When prisons reopen, we want to be able to bring our own food so that our family members in prison can have some home-cooked meals that give them joy.
10. We hope that we can play games with our family members in prison, and that more people can come to visit so that the whole family is gathered.
11. It feels good knowing that we will be able to visit our family member in prison, but bad when we cannot be with them.
12. When prison visits reopen, we would like to be able to spend more time with our parents in prison and not be locked down in a room.
13. We have always wanted to visit our family members in prison, always all the time.

## *Part 4: Creative pages*

If you would like to draw or write something after reading the above text and looking at the images, this space is for you.





