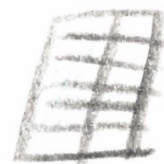


A toolkit for frame reflective advocacy



Frame reflective advocacy for and with children who have a parent in conflict with the law: maximising impact while working to protect child well-being.



COPE

Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network funded by the EU connecting 118 members and affiliates across 37 countries in Europe and beyond, working for and with children who have a parent in prison, helping to forge child-rights-based societies and justice systems. Members include non-governmental organisations, child rights defenders, prison service representatives, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, academics and other stakeholders alongside a staff team based in Paris. COPE works to ensure the protection of the rights and needs of children affected by parental imprisonment by developing and promoting integrated solution-focused approaches, as well as awareness raising. The network seeks to give children impacted by parental imprisonment a voice and get them onto policy agendas; particular efforts are made to ensure outreach to Roma children who have a parent in prison, children in alternative care impacted by parental incarceration, and foreign national children who have a parent in prison – all groups who have been historically marginalised. COPE's work focuses on child safeguarding and multisectoral support systems for justice and social care intersecting with health and education; helping to mitigate violence for children (associated with a parent's violent arrest, but also with bullying at school, the hostile prison setting, and the stigma and discrimination that are so rampant in children's lives). It aims to roll out child protection policies among COPE members across Europe, while promoting children's dignity, resilience and active participation in society. Significantly, it shares good practice between its members across Europe, thus benefiting more children on a broader level.



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This toolkit

This toolkit has been designed as part of an EU Framework Partnership Operating Grant (2018-2021) to support advocacy bodies and individuals seeking to protect and improve the lives of children who have a parent in conflict with the law through awareness raising among all stakeholders of the specific needs of this group of children and the establishment of local, national and regional support systems to help meet these needs.

This toolkit will aim to do the following:

- **Outline how to carry out advocacy that is impactful while protecting children.**
- **Present a series of ideas and tools for more meaningful advocacy on behalf of children who have a parent in conflict with the law that can be replicated for other groups of children in vulnerable situations.**

Our vision

We imagine a world where...

...receives support when needed and is guaranteed fair, unbiased treatment, protection of their rights, and equal opportunities regardless of their parent's legal status.

...every child who has a parent in conflict with the law...

We aim to...

...ease the burden of a parent's imprisonment on a child while promoting a shift in culture whereby **the rights, participation and empowerment** of all children are inherent in society, including those of children with imprisoned parents.

This toolkit can help you plan and carry out advocacy for this group of children.

Advocacy work is about...



1. Giving children impacted by parental imprisonment a **voice** to actively participate in defining the problems and designing the solutions.

2. Using **data responsibly** to protect children and avoid any further stigma when building evidence on why they need support, what needs to change for them to better access support and how that change can come about.

3. **Shifting paradigms and perspectives** to promote positive change in society towards greater social justice and equality.

4. **Communicating** about children in ways that foster their **resilience and agency**.

Contents

Chapter 1: Frame reflective advocacy

Introduction.....	3
Numbers.....	4
Background to advocacy.....	6
Ten key messages.....	9

Chapter 2: Preparing your messages

What resonates best?.....	12
Preparing your messages.....	13
Can you organise a workshop?.....	14
Frames.....	15

Chapter 3: Getting the ball rolling

Where to start?.....	24
How is policy made.....	25
How to influence policy makers.....	25
Campaigning.....	28
Media and communications.....	29
International policy frameworks.....	29
Models of advocacy.....	30

Chapter 1

Frame reflective advocacy

What is it?

What does it involve?

Introduction

An increasing number of advocacy coalitions, charities, academics, activists and civil society organisations are turning their attention to further refining the ways in which they **frame messages** for and about children, how using sensitive, child-friendly language devoid of stigma or judgement can better protect children. One particular “no-go zone” for children impacted by parental imprisonment is any reference to intergenerational crime — “the apple doesn’t fall too far from the tree”— whereby children are seen as being at high risk of becoming criminals themselves. This type of frame or message has been shown to have adverse effects on children’s well-being, encouraging them to conceal the parent’s imprisonment, mask their emotions, prevaricate to peers, bottle up emotional stress. **Language and messaging can be used to foster agency in children:** rather than couching them as passive victims, creating and perpetuating victimhood, effective messaging should frame children as active participants shaping the course of their lives. This is relevant for all groups of vulnerable and marginalised children.

Greater awareness, information and data, coupled with major human rights instruments, better equips advocacy on behalf of this group of children to effect change. The frame reflective tools that are articulated in this toolkit can make advocacy even more far-reaching and adaptable to a variety of contexts, as it enhances understanding of the cross-sectoral spheres involved in advocacy and policymaking processes for children affected by parental incarceration. It thus provides **a model for a more fully integrated policy advocacy approach** for children impacted by parental imprisonment as well as those facing other vulnerabilities.

Numbers

How many children are impacted by parental imprisonment in Europe?

In Europe (EU 27 + UK) COPE estimates that approximately 720,000 children are separated from a parent in prison on any given day.



720,000

COPE was able to extrapolate this figure by multiplying the total number of male and female prisoners¹ in EU 27 + UK (as of 2021) by the average "parenting rate" of 1.3.²



2.1
million

2.1 million is what this figure rises to **when all Council of Europe countries are included**. The total number of children affected throughout a year is likely even higher again, given that the total number of people committed to prison throughout the course of a year is usually higher than the average daily population.

¹ Total prison population extracted from Aebi, M. F., Cocco, E., Molnar, L. & Tiago, M. M., (2022). *SPACE I – 2021 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Prison populations*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Table 7.

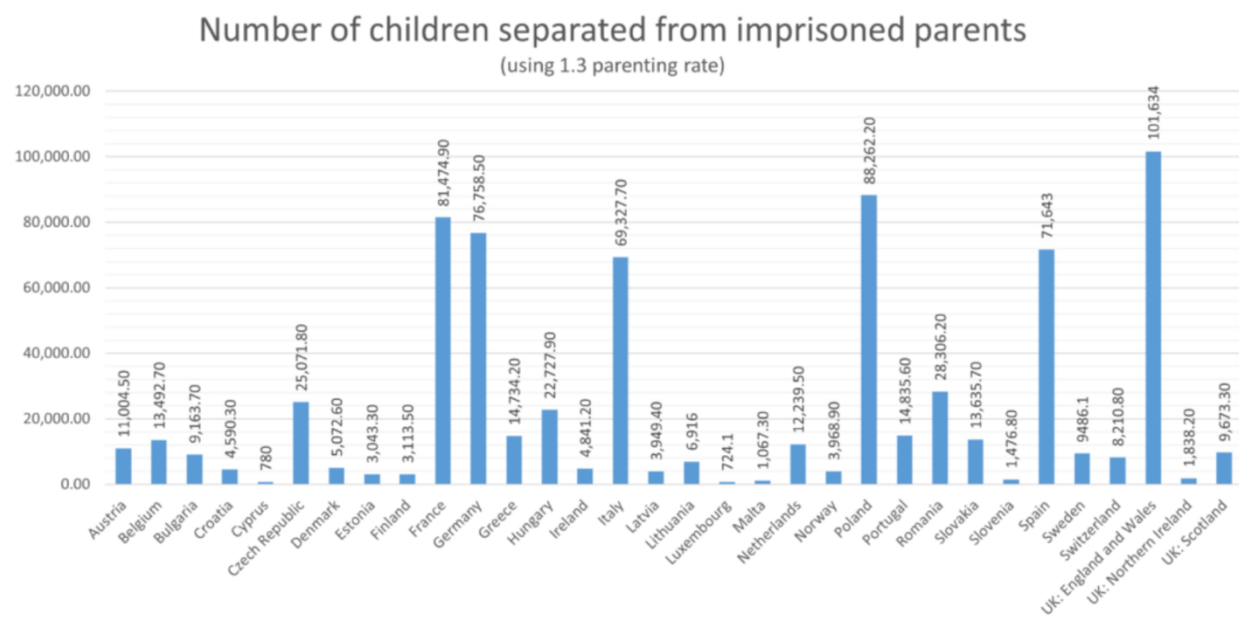
² 1.3 parenting rate: extrapolation based on Chaumpeaur, P., et al. (2002), *L'Histoire familiale des hommes détenus*, Paris : INSEE. The study found a parenting rate of 1.3 among male prisoners in France.

When advocating on behalf of children impacted by parental imprisonment it is important to stress that the data available is **estimated** and that **accurate and responsible** data collection is required.

Accurate data on children with imprisoned parents allows governments, charities and NGOs to target their efforts and resources where they are needed most. This group of children have been considered widely invisible in the eyes of the systems designed to protect them. Attaining accurate data allows advocacy work to point to a **real, identifiable population** that requires support.

Collecting data accurately and responsibly is highlighted in Article 52 of the **Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5** of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents.

Up-to-date statistics on prison populations across Europe can be found on [COPE's website](#), with data from the Council of Europe SPACE reports.



Source: COPE [website](#), children separated from parents in prison, 2021.

Background to advocacy

It has taken some time for children with imprisoned parents to be recognised as a group of children facing specific vulnerabilities in their own right.

The issue of children with imprisoned parents has not always been recognised as an issue in and of itself. In fact, this group of children were *exponentially* invisible—15 years ago, they did not even appear on UNICEF's lists of invisible children.³ For years, the words 'child' and 'prison' immediately brought to mind children in conflict with the law, or the estimated 980 infants co-residing with mothers in prisons in Europe—not the estimated **2.1 million children separated from their parent in prison in the 47 Council of Europe countries**.⁴ Today the current Council of Europe and European Union Child Rights Strategies explicitly recognise that children with imprisoned parents are one of society's most vulnerable and marginalised groups of children, requiring protection against exclusion and discrimination.⁵ It has taken a while for decision makers to better understand the world of children separated from a parent in prison and what this experience can be like.



³ UNICEF. (2006). *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*. United Nations Children's Fund, New York.

⁴ Figures based on calculations made by Children of Prisoners Europe, from an extrapolation of a 1999 INSEE study to prison population figures supplied by the International Centre for Prison Studies. For more information see: Ayre, L., Philbrick, K., & Lynn, H., Eds. (2014). *Children of Imprisoned Parents: European Perspectives on Good Practice*, 2nd ed., p.15.

⁵ European Commission. (2021). *EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child*. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en#documents; Council of Europe (2022). *Council of Europe Strategy for the rights of the child (2022 – 2027): Children's Rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation*. Available online: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?objectid=0900001680a5a064

Impact on advocacy and how it has evolved



The evolution and development of the issue and acknowledgement of the existence of children with imprisoned parents as a group in and of itself, as rights-holders with specific needs, has impacted the evolution of advocacy strategies. In the latter part of the previous century, when awareness of this group of children was limited in scope, advocacy proved challenging and had a more militant tone. Civil society organisations often exhorted prison services, justice ministries and other relevant decision makers to recognise the importance of supporting children separated from a parent who was imprisoned.

Growing recognition of children's rights: riding the momentum

The growing recognition of children's best interests and their rights to family life in Europe — with an **EU child rights strategy framework** put into motion in 2006, the 2009 **Lisbon Treaty** marking the first explicit commitment to protect and promote the rights of the child in European Union internal and external actions, and the **2011 EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child** linking the European Union's commitment to the rights of the child to 'a coherent approach across all relevant EU actions using the Treaties, the **Charter and the UNCRC** as a common basis for all EU action regarding children',— brought children in general higher up policy agendas.

Working to bridge the policy gap



Within this context, recognition of the best interests and the right to family life of children separated from a parent in prison in Europe also evolved, most significantly with the **2011 UN Day of General Discussion on Children with Imprisoned Parents** and the 2018 adoption of the Council of Europe Recommendation **CM/Rec(2018)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States** concerning children with imprisoned

parents, highlighting their rights and needs. The evolution of policy initiatives to protect children's best interests and safeguard their right to family life based on human rights instruments and treaties was lagging however. National criminal justice policies and legislation in EU member states generally did not — and many still do not — incorporate a child rights perspective when a parent is imprisoned; most government policies for children do not address the rights and needs of children with imprisoned parents. The result has been a considerable policy gap.

A win-win paradigm

A significant evolution in advocacy for children with imprisoned parents has been civil society's changing relationship to prisons and prison services on a European level, largely through partnerships with EuroPris, a network of EU Member State prison services, and its designated expert group on children with imprisoned parents. COPE and prison services have grown increasingly aware of their **common interests and goals**, based on a win-win 'dynamic security' paradigm. According to this paradigm, founded on the premise of enhancing communication and understanding of prisoners and their needs while evaluating the risks they may pose, children 'win' through enhanced contact with the imprisoned parents when in their best interests. Prisons and society in turn 'win' by securing a calmer prison atmosphere, greater well-being among the prison population and, as demonstrated by several studies, albeit rather limited ones in terms of methodology, a reduced rate of recidivism among some prisoners who maintain contact with children and families.⁶ In short, the benefits for both **NGOs and prison services of working hand in hand** on behalf of children with a parent in conflict with the law have been clearly demonstrated. This is a seminal aspect of any advocacy approach.

In the following pages of this document are many tools, approaches and methods to put into practice when advocating on behalf of children with parents in conflict with the law.

⁶ See for example Carlson & Cervera, 1992; Acevedo & Bakken, 2001; Bales & Mears, 2008; Holt & Miller, 1972.

10 key messages

1

Avoid stigmatising children further with advocacy that uses reductionist statements. Involve children when developing messages.

2

Incorporate the voices of children and young people for maximum resonance. Include snapshots and case studies illustrating real-life experiences.

3

Gear your advocacy so that it fosters agency and empowerment, not victimhood.

4

Focus on the big picture of the positive change that you wish to generate in the world. This creates clarity of focus throughout your organisation by means of a shared objective and purpose.

5

Highlight the significance of holistic action and its benefits for children with a parent in prison, as well as for siblings, grand-parents, wider family, society.

**6**

Emphasise the quality of relationships, in particular how the parent in prison can be a valuable support for children.

**7**

Identify the frame or angle that will resonate best with a decision-maker and get that on their agenda. Then fine-tune to raise children's issues on the agenda.

**8**

Ensure that decision makers are clear about the purpose of action.

**9**

Identify a champion within the given field or sector who can reinforce your advocacy and offer peer-to-peer advice.

**10**

Ensure that you emphasise that action should be tailored to each child and regularly reviewed.

Chapter 2

Preparing your messages

How can we shift ways of thinking?

What resonates best?

Look at the messages you are using to communicate about children with imprisoned parents. How are you identifying, representing and giving legitimacy to the issue of children with a parent in prison and their support needs? Are you **framing** children as passive victims, doomed to a intergenerational cycle of crime? Or are they being depicted as having agency, lending their voice in decision making? The latter is **supportive, protective, dynamic and proactive**, as opposed to focusing on deficits and vulnerabilities, which reinforces helplessness.

When developing messages and advocacy tools, choose a frame that **protects children**, one that does not instrumentalise or objectify them or use them as a means to an end — e.g., breaking the cycle of crime, reducing costs associated with incarceration for taxpayers.

Choose a frame that highlights children as rights-holders, and emphasise what supports them in their healthy development. If you are not involving children directly when developing your advocacy messages, try to imagine that there is a young person with a parent in prison in the room listening as you read the message out loud. How would they feel?

Preparing your messages

Instead of appealing for government action by saying this:

“Seven out of ten children with a parent in prison will go on to commit a crime themselves in the future; one out of four children are likely to experience mental health difficulties. They are more vulnerable to emotional problems associated with shame, stigma and isolation. Parental imprisonment puts children at risk. Please help break this cycle of crime.”

Could you reframe your message in this way?

“In addition to being separated from a primary caregiver, children who have a parent in prison are vulnerable to stigma and isolation. Parental imprisonment is a recognised adverse childhood experience that puts children at risk of mental health difficulties, particularly if support is not available.”

Or, better, in this way?

“Children who have a parent in prison are often faced with a series of challenges in addition to being separated from their primary caregiver. Parental imprisonment is a recognised adverse childhood experience that can put children at risk if they do not receive the right support. A trusted adult can help nurture their purpose, direction and holistic development, while providing opportunities to explore the meaning of the parent's imprisonment for them. Please help to provide this support.”

Another strategic tack is to aim to mainstream the issue:

“Children with a parent in prison, like other marginalised children, are often at greater risk of discrimination, stigma, social exclusion and increased poverty and can suffer instability, disruption of the parent-child bond, a breakdown of family ties, violence and bullying. Children experience the various stages of the judicial process as bystanders, although they are directly impacted by the actions taken during each stage of the judicial process.”

Can you organise a workshop?

Consider organising a workshop to explore how you are communicating the complex and challenging issue of children with imprisoned parents. Reflect on how this group of children and their specific needs and issues might best be communicated in light of the change that you are seeking to implement.

For networks working on behalf of this group of children, look at the messages that members across the network are using to communicate about children. Are members targeting different agendas and using frames that compete with those of others, potentially diluting the impact of the network's overall advocacy? Use the workshop to examine this and explore how contending frames might be 're-framed' for maximum impact in future. Workshops such as these can help foster a **network's overall cohesion**, strengthen advocacy expertise and allow the network members to work together more effectively to further challenge public attitudes and better resonate with decision makers.

Frames

Below are three frames that have been identified as relevant to advocacy on behalf of children with parents in conflict with the law.⁷

➔ VICTIM FRAME

Here the child is viewed as more acted upon than acting; as more or less an 'innocent' victim of circumstances (or of their parent's alleged actions), essentially passive and helpless. They are therefore in need of rescue and help. In a worst-case scenario, children as victims are depicted as being at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system (CJS) themselves. The main policy goal in this frame is to alleviate manifest consequences of a parent's imprisonment on children (e.g. poverty, loss of parental care, risk of becoming involved in the CJS themselves). This goal is most often reached through bureaucratic tools of social and family protection systems (e.g., means-tested subsidies) and penitentiary and criminal justice systems (inflexible schemas for prison visits and family contacts).

⁷ COPE Workshop on Framing, facilitated by Paul Stubbs and Anka Kekez, Zagreb 2016

➔ INSTRUMENTAL FRAME

Here the child is seen as an instrument of public policy which should be more efficient and effective. In particular, through targeted investments in children, the cycle of deprivation can and should be broken – both in the interests of children and in the interests of wider society. Investments in regular contacts of imprisoned parents with their children and partners and in the counselling and family support services will help government to reduce recidivism and break what is referred to as "intergenerational offending", which in turn should result in reduced public spending. In short, the child is a means to an end.

➔ HOLISTIC FRAME

This frame seeks to be child-centred, suggesting that the point of public policy should be that interlinked cross-agency services meet the child's needs, offer support and foster resilience. This is essentially a **human rights frame** that evokes for active engagement and cooperation of not only penitentiary, criminal justice and social protection systems, but also educational, welfare and voluntary sectors. Aiming to **foster healthy development, self-esteem and self-confidence in children**, the policy that is inspired by this frame relies on training of prison staff and child-friendly visit arrangements and rooms as well as capacity-building of children and their imprisoned parents through provision of information, counselling, educational and community-based services. This frame highlights the **agency of children**, depicts them as **rights holders** and is **protective** of children. **See Table 1.**

FRAME ANALYSIS: CHILDREN WITH IMPRISONED PARENTS			
FRAME	VICTIM	INSTRUMENTAL	HOLISTIC
CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN	Vulnerable (invisible) children with courtesy stigma, children at risk	Children at risk but also potential mediators of parent's resettlement and rehabilitation	Minors with a right to an emotional and continuing bond with their imprisoned parent
POLICY GOAL	Alleviate manifest consequences on children of parent's incarceration (e.g. poverty, loss of full parental care, juvenile delinquency)	Break the cycle of crime (reduce re-offending and break trans-generational offending) as well as reduce public spending.	Foster child's healthy development and meeting children's multiple needs in home, prison, school and social environments.
POLICY DOMAINS	What Are Policy Domains Relevant for Each Frame?		

Table 1.
Source: COPE Workshop on Framing, facilitated by Paul Stubbs and Anka Kekez, Zagreb 2016

FRAME ANALYSIS: CHILDREN WITH IMPRISONED PARENTS			
FRAME	VICTIM	INSTRUMENTAL	HOLISTIC
POLICY GOAL	Alleviate manifest consequences on children of parent's incarceration.	Break the cycle of crime and reduce public spending.	Foster child's healthy development and meeting children's multiple needs
POLICY DOMAINS	Social and family protection systems, penitentiary and criminal justice systems.	Mental health and fiscal policies, penitentiary and criminal justice systems.	Penitentiary and criminal justice systems, educational, welfare, family and children's policies.
POLICY TOOLS	Means-tested subsidies, family care and supervision orders, inflexible schemas for prison visits and family contacts.	Counselling, mentoring, information, regular family visits, support services and capacity building after the imprisonment.	Training of staff, child friendly visits arrangements & rooms, information, counseling, education & community-based services, working groups.

Table 2.
Source: COPE Workshop on Framing, facilitated by Paul Stubbs and Anka Kekez, Zagreb 2016

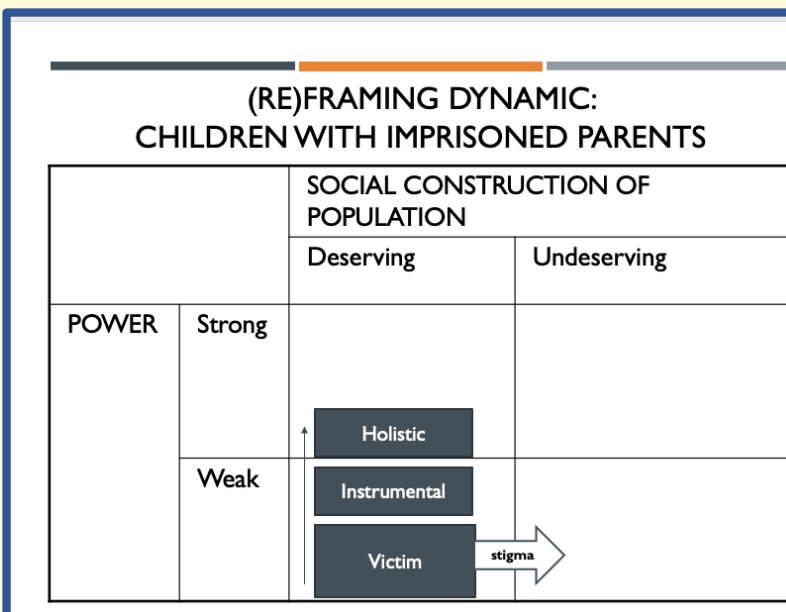


Table 3.
Source: COPE Workshop on Framing, facilitated by Paul Stubbs and Anka Kekez, Zagreb 2016

Questions to ask in relation to frames



Who are the key stakeholders that this frame appeals to? Which frame are they most likely to positively respond to?

What are the common messages or stories which are associated with this frame?

What are the positive and negative effects of this policy frame in terms of desirable outcomes for children?

Key takeaways

- It is important to know **to whom you are speaking and what they are interested in**. Consider carefully what messages you want them to receive and remember to ask if they are comfortable with the language you are using.
- Tailor the message to **produce win-win situations and protect children**.
- The more open-minded stakeholders are in the various sectors, the easier it is to be holistic. Some systems are so closed that you must begin at the victim level, then work your way up. Consider using frames that lead to some kind of **evolution**, i.e., use the instrumental frame to open a door, then once inside, you can shift the focus to the holistic frame.
- Look at both the **short-term and the long-term**. Where does this lead? Can we make progress in getting the agenda to shift? What stage comes after that? See page 25 for information on the process of policy development.

- With regards to the instrumental and victim frames, consider the question of morality vs. strategic advantage. Beware of the seduction of success. Organisations grow and can lose their soul, a tightrope that all NGOs walk!
- Beware of strategies when agencies are competing for the same funding: do not allow your morals or standards to drop to meet contract demands.

In addition to how messages frame children, attention also needs to be paid to how the issue of parental incarceration itself is framed. Advocacy often draws on a variety of issue frames, from children's rights, needs and welfare; to social inclusion for affected families; to the rights of the imprisoned parent; to promoting the parent's rehabilitation, reducing recidivism and crime and cutting public spending. As it journeys across sectors and through a wealth of policy spheres, the issue takes on different meanings and is subject to a variety of interpretations.

Consider the need for **constant reflection and review**.

Think holistically, act instrumentally, remember the ethics.



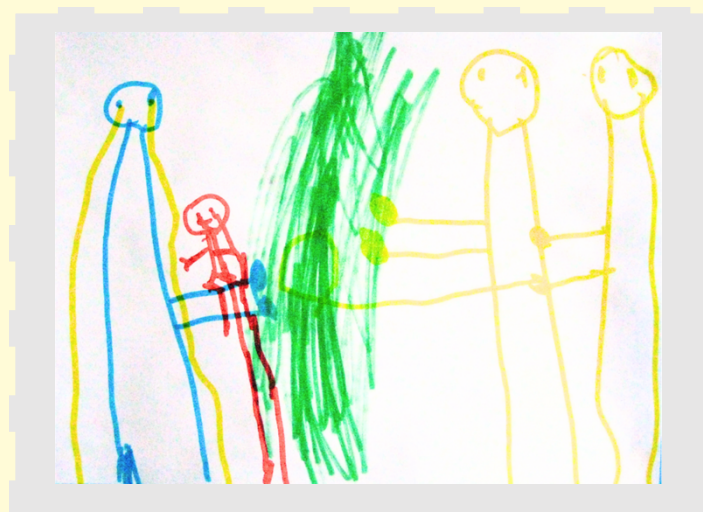
ADVOCACY TIP ⇒⇒

Nothing about me, without me: child participation

Let children lead the way, ensuring that their voices are incorporated into advocacy; that they are involved at all stages of advocacy and research; and that they are receiving benefits and acknowledgment in return for their participation. Storytelling can foster better understanding of children's experiences and needs. This can be done by incorporating children's words or drawings into advocacy work – allowing children to steer and inform policies across the law enforcement and criminal justice spectrum that better protect their rights and well-being.

Example: Here are two testimonies of children and young people who have witnessed the arrest of one or both parents within the family home.

1. Drawing by a 3-year-old boy in Italy. The blue mum crying yellow, the red child in the arms of the mum, the green dad drawn and then erased, two yellow policemen with outstretched arms taking dad.



2. Here is what one young boy said after police arrested his dad at home at 3 o'clock one morning:

A: They shone a light through my window.

Q: Were they outside? Shining the light in?

A: Yeah, in the back garden.

Q: What were the police like? Can you remember?

A: Not really. They had guns.

Q: How did that feel?

A: Frightening. They had walkie-talkies.

Q: Can you remember what happened when they came?

A: Yeah, he took my phone off me.

Q: And how did they come into the house?

A: They busted in, they smashed the door.

Q: How did that make you feel?

A: Sad.

Q: When the police were there, did they speak to you at all?

A: Yeah... They said that I have an attitude.

Q: How did that make you feel?

A: Angry.

Q: Did you understand why they were there? Did anybody explain?

A: No....They searched our room. They messed my room up and they broke my chair.

Q: How did that feel?

A: I was sad. That was a new chair.

Q: And what do you think about the police now?

A: think they're horrible.

Q: What do you think when you see them outside in the street?

A: It makes me feel sad.

This sample is powerful and efficient in that it indicates the types of changes that are being sought. To help preserve children's dignity, they are suggesting that police don't enter with force; avoid handcuffing their mum and dad in front of them – take them into a different room; engage with them in a kinder way; show more respect for their belongings (e.g., not taking away their phone or breaking their chair).

ADVOCACY TIP ⇒

Getting it right for every child

Each child, and their given situation, is unique. Children with imprisoned parents are a **heterogenous** group. An overall objective for children and young people experiencing parental imprisonment is to **be listened to by a trusted adult** who engages with the child about the meaning that the parent's imprisonment has for them.

Messages used in advocacy should avoid creating the impression that the parent's incarceration defines the child's life. As one young girl put it:

“ I don't want people assuming that everything's awful because of mum. I may be feeling upset because the dog died! I hate it when my teachers — everything is referenced about mum being in prison and it isn't about that. ”⁸



⁸ Winston Churchill Fellow Sarah Beresford describing one young person's testimony as a participant in her project on child impact statements in JUSTICE with prison philanthropist Edwina Grosvenor. The London Podcast Company. June 6 2022. Available at: <https://onesmallthing.org.uk/listen>

Chapter 3

Getting the ball rolling

Where to start?

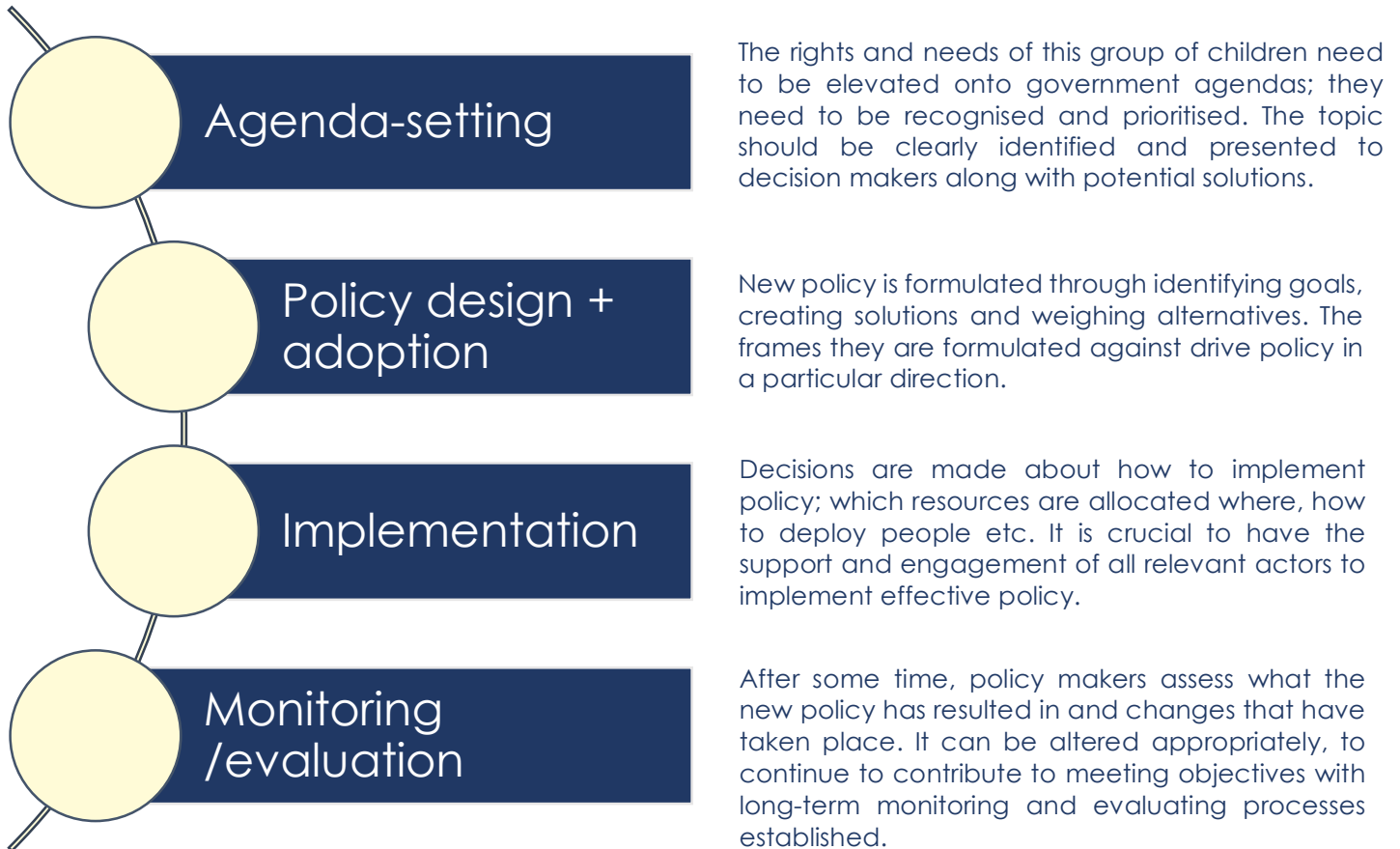
Advocacy for children with a parent in conflict with the law operates within a complex context involving a **multitude of agencies across child welfare, community, public and criminal justice sectors** from the police to the courts, the prison establishment, social services and schools. **These varied contexts are often contingent upon those who define policy agendas and their scope.** Where to start when it comes to engendering meaningful and protective change?



Where to start?

Whom to influence? How to do so? When to do so? Creating change across child welfare, community, public and criminal justice sectors requires frame reflective advocacy and lobbying at **every stage of the policy development process.** What are these stages?

How is policy made?



How to influence policy makers?

‘Organization is the mobilization of bias’, according to Schattschneider, who claimed that ‘some issues are organized into politics while others are organized out’.⁹ For bias to exist, **people must care**. They have to pay attention to an issue, it has to be considered; only then will it have the opportunity to be placed on a government agenda. **Agenda-setting strategies** are about getting the issue talked about, about getting policy makers to sit up and take

⁹ Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The Semisovereign People*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. The Dryden Press, p.71.

note. These strategies are particularly salient on the domestic level, where the media and public opinion play key roles in agenda-setting.

Issue framing, which is at the core of agenda-setting,¹⁰ is one such strategy for drawing attention to a cause in the policymaking process, the various angles of the issue strategically tailor-defined and targeted to those specific institutions, or 'venues', seen as most receptive to this given angle.¹¹ Policy makers frequently are inundated with information and cannot readily assimilate multiple information streams. Agenda-setting prioritises action and draws attention to certain problems rather than others',¹² with frames providing 'mental shortcuts'.¹³

TIP: What mental shortcuts will work best within your context?

*What are you trying to change? Try getting your foot in the decision maker's door by highlighting an instrumental frame such as **maintaining child-parent contact when a parent is in prison to help reduce recidivism**, then once you're in, **work to raise the holistic frame that protects children to the top of the agenda.***

Key takeaways

- ➔ Be **clear** with your messages.
- ➔ Map out a **long-term plan** for the policy that you want to influence.
- ➔ Understand your own strengths and weaknesses – in what areas can you be most **impactful**?

¹⁰ Rochefort, and Cobb. (1994) *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

¹¹ Baumgartner, F. and Bryan, J. (1991) Agenda Dynamics and Policy Subsystems. *The Journal of Politics*, 53, 4, 1044-1074.

¹² Jones, B. D., & Baumgartner, F. R. (2005). *The politics of attention: How government prioritizes problems*. University of Chicago Press.

¹³ FrameWorks Institute (2002) *Framing Public Issues*, 1.

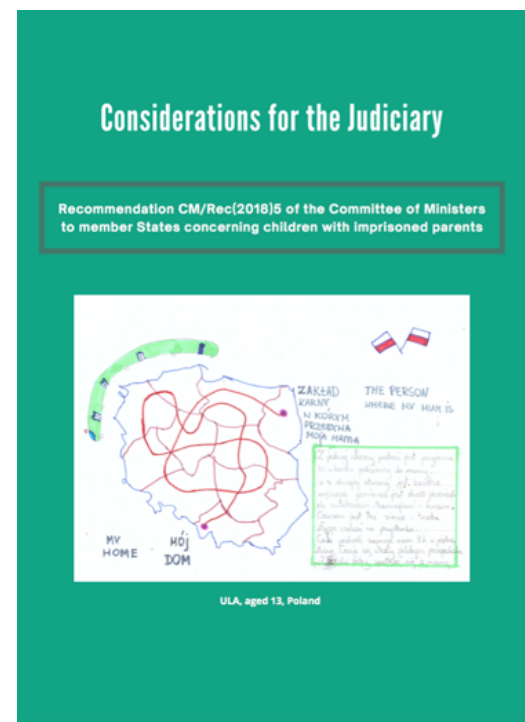
Campaigning

Consider launching a campaign to **focus your advocacy efforts** through organised action aimed at specific goals and targets. Campaigning can raise the visibility of this group of children, as well as your organisation, across a wider audience. It can also help when trying to foster key connections with potential partners.

How to campaign?

- ➔ Engage in targeted lobbying efforts with key individuals /organisations. Clearly define your audience in the planning stage.
- ➔ Promote your advocacy across social media platforms (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram).
- ➔ Be creative: use music, theatre, poetry, etc.
- ➔ Host talks, presentations, seminars, webinars.
- ➔ Appeal to case studies and/or personal stories, where appropriate.

Consider condensing your key advocacy points, goals, ideas for change and resources into one shorter document such as an 'advocacy pack'. A brief 'summary' document is more likely to grab your audience's attention, is less intimidating and time consuming to read, but will direct the reader to more substantial resources. COPE's 'Advocacy Packs' can be used as a skeleton outline, and can found online [here](#).



Media and communications

Working with the media can be a powerful way of advocating on behalf of children with imprisoned parents, as well as **shifting the narrative** away from the framework of 'children as victims' to one that promotes children's agency and individuality. To do so well requires planning, clear communication and **collaboration** with media professionals. Find [COPE's Media toolkit](#) online to make the most of collaboration with media professionals.



International policy frameworks

Advocacy work on a local, national or international level will be supported and legitimised by referencing international policy frameworks that **enshrine children's rights**. Below are key treaties and instruments relevant to advocacy on behalf of children with imprisoned parents:

- © [1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.](#)
- © [2010 UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders \(the Bangkok Rules\).](#)
- © [2018 Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parent.](#)
- © [2022 – 2027 Council of Europe Strategy of the Rights of the Child.](#)
- © [2021 – 2025 EU Strategy of the Rights of the Child.](#)

Find more information on the history and function of each treaty, instrument and convention on [COPE's website](#).

Models of advocacy

The diversity existing across each country's cultural, political, social, economic and legal contexts requires tailored advocacy strategies on behalf of children with imprisoned parents. Below are two **models of advocacy** that can be remodelled and replicated across different regional contexts.

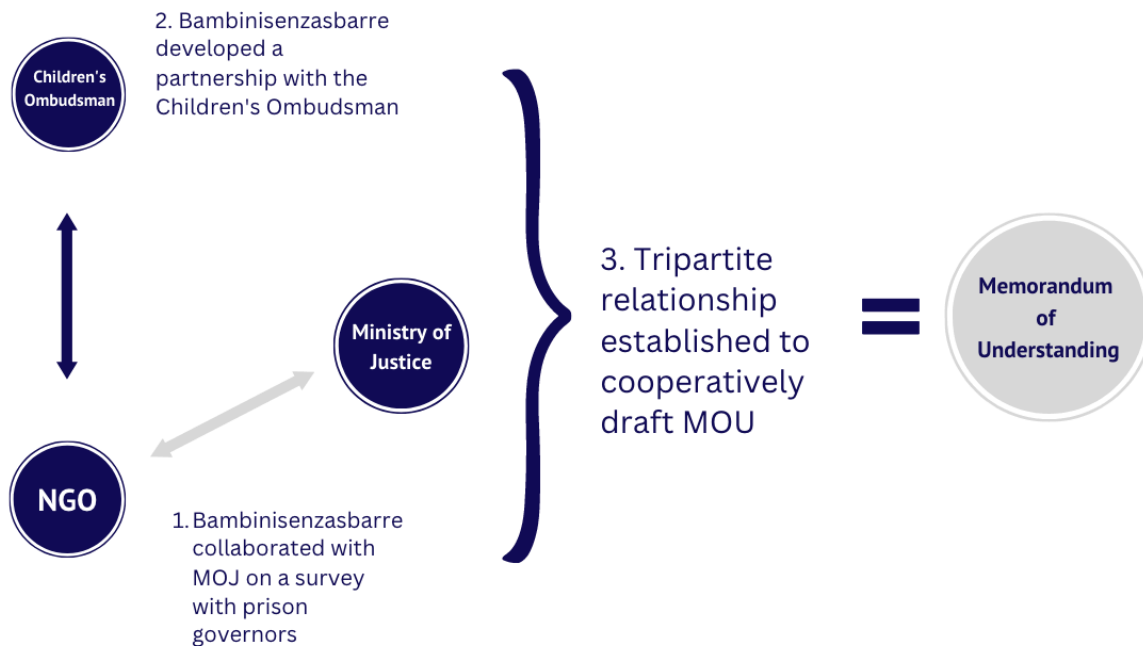
Example 1: Italian model

In 2014, Italian NGO and COPE member Bambinisenzasbarre obtained the signature of a '**Memorandum of Understanding**' – the result of a tripartite partnership developed between the **National Ombudsman for Childhood and Adolescence, the Ministry of Justice and Bambinisenzasbarre**. The 'Charter of Children with Imprisoned Parents', signed by all three parties on 21 March 2014, is valid for two years after which it is then renewed. Applicable in **all Italian prisons**, it outlines the procedures, agreed upon by all three parties, required to protect the rights of children to maintain contact with their imprisoned parent. This novel document, a significant milestone in Europe, is an example of what comprehensive advocacy and lobbying can achieve, through **partnerships** with national governments and institutions. The document laid the groundwork for the **Council of Europe's Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5**.

How did this advocacy model develop?

An early step was taken to ensure a base of good knowledge to bolster advocacy work: Bambinisenzasbarre approached the Italian Ministry of Justice to collaborate on a survey carried out with prison governors on the situation of children with imprisoned parents. Bambinisenzasbarre, along with the

Children's Ombudsman, then organised a meeting with the Ministry of Justice to formalise the tripartite partnership that led to the collaborative drafting of the Memorandum, with jurists present throughout the process. [Find here](#) an implementation guidance document that offers advice on how to use this model framework as a basis for advocacy in a different context.



Example 2: German model

A different model of advocacy developed in Germany that follows a more **horizontal and holistic structure**. Following her implication in the EuroPris Expert Group on children with imprisoned parents, Justina Dzienko (former psychologist at the Ministry of Justice in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) has been influential in raising awareness on the issue at the German national level, leading an **Expert Group of representatives of Germany's 16 Länder**, working towards a nationwide implementation of the **Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5**. This expert group was set up thanks to the

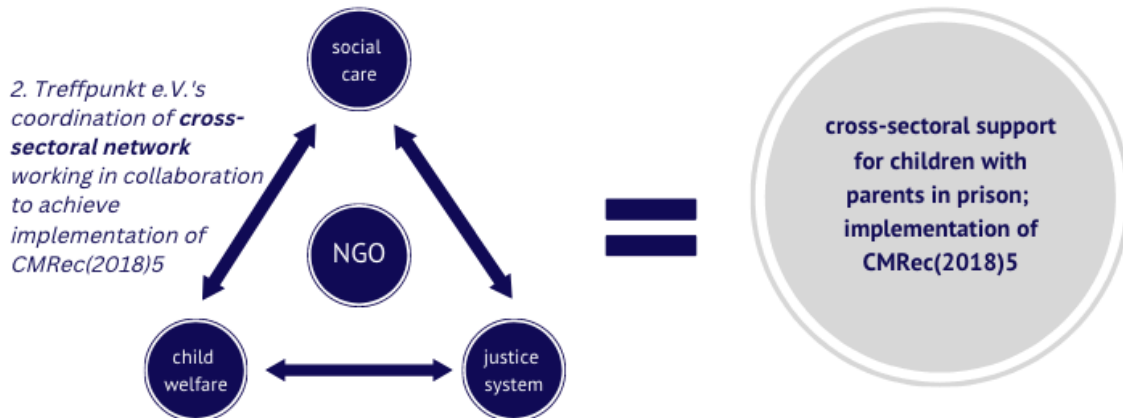
resolution of a Conference of Justice Ministers, in Thüringen 2018, where the Conference of Directors General of Prison Services were called upon to **examine CM/Rec(2018)5, describe best practice and submit implementation proposals**. This advocacy model marks a significant development in Europe: the impetus for change is driven by government representatives in the Ministries of Justice who are actively reaching to their peers in Children, Youth and Family as well as the Ministries responsible for Social Affairs, **promoting a cross-sectoral approach to action 'from the top'**.

What is the role of the NGO? How does this translate to action on the ground?

NGO and COPE member Treffpunkt e.V. have spearheaded and coordinated a nationwide network in Germany, *Kinder von Inhaftierten* (KvI—Children of Imprisoned Parents). With working groups present in six of the sixteen Länder of Germany, representatives from **across the justice system, the child welfare system and social care systems working in conjunction** to implement the goals of this network, which are based upon the **Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5**. Activities of an example working group include, *inter alia*: collection of current case numbers and needs, introduction of the role of 'family representatives' in Bavarian prison systems, creation of information material, development of training courses, continued cooperation between judiciary and youth welfare systems, and family-oriented resources and support. Treffpunkt e.V. continue to maintain this nationwide network through regular publication of newsletters, targeted public relations, the facilitation of advice and exchange across actors, the organisation of conferences and the creation of a database to map out existing resources that support families with a relative in prison.

German expert group of the Federal States (Länder)

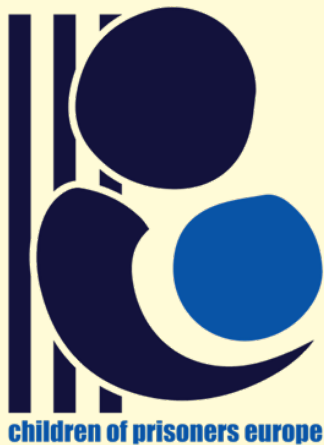
1. *Expert Group of representatives in Germany's 16 Länder calling upon the implementation of the CMRec(2018)5*



Find that champion. Change the narrative.

Good luck – and share your experiences:

contact@networkcope.eu



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