



Children with imprisoned parents: Collecting data with a purpose





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.

Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE)

contact@networkcope.eu

<http://childrenofprisoners.eu/>

© Children of Prisoners Europe 2023

Children of Prisoners Europe is a non-profit organisation registered in France under French Association law 1901.

SIRET: 437 527 013 00019



This document has been produced with the financial support of the Citizens, Rights, Equality and Values Programme of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of Children of Prisoners Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Contents

[I. Perspectives on data collection in 2023](#)

[Advances made in Latvia](#)

[Advances made in Slovakia](#)

[II. Young children co-residing with primary carers in prison in the EU](#)

[III. Data collection on children separated from a parent in prison in EU member States](#)

[IV. A look at some data collection methodologies and statistics in the EU](#)

[V. Conclusion](#)

I. Perspectives on data collection in 2023

COPE's ongoing work on its Data with a Purpose initiative advanced further knowledge on existing and future methods of data collection for prisoners upon entry in 2023, as did its continued partnership with the EU-funded network of EU member State prison services, EuroPris. The initiative is in line with COPE's longstanding efforts to obtain more robust data on children affected by parental incarceration at the European level. This involves both quantitative and qualitative data collection—determining how many children are impacted, who they are, where they are and what kind of supports they need, as well as promoting a deontological code of ethics for data collection. The latter entails constantly questioning the purpose of data collection and ensuring that the process of data collection itself protects children and does not further stigmatise them. This methodology enables prison services to be involved with prisoners as parents from the point of entry and onset of their sentence. It allows for systems to be set up for anonymised data collection to take place upon entry and helps ease prisoners' eventual fears of children being taken into care by the State or placed in foster homes. This type of data collection can help foster mutual trust, with the understanding that data has a purpose, involves the prisoner-parent, and is in the best interests of the child. It can also contribute to what was previously called "dynamic security" and what COPE now prefers to call "relational security". The strategy is part of COPE's constant striving to promote 'point of entry' data collection methodology to be implemented at the national level across European Union member States, with a view to developing thorough and accurate data that is comparable throughout the region.

Efforts on COPE's Data with a Purpose initiative were carried out across the European Union in 2023 but with particular emphasis on Latvia and Slovakia, with the aim of strengthening knowledge and partnerships in those countries.

These efforts built on Data with a Purpose in Lithuania in 2021 and 2022. In addition to a conference, workshop and roundtable on parental imprisonment organised by the Lithuanian

Prison Service in response to COPE outreach, the initiative also provided an impetus for the prison service to launch a national study of imprisoned parents and a series of recommendations that included data collection on children with a parent in prison upon initial entry assessment:

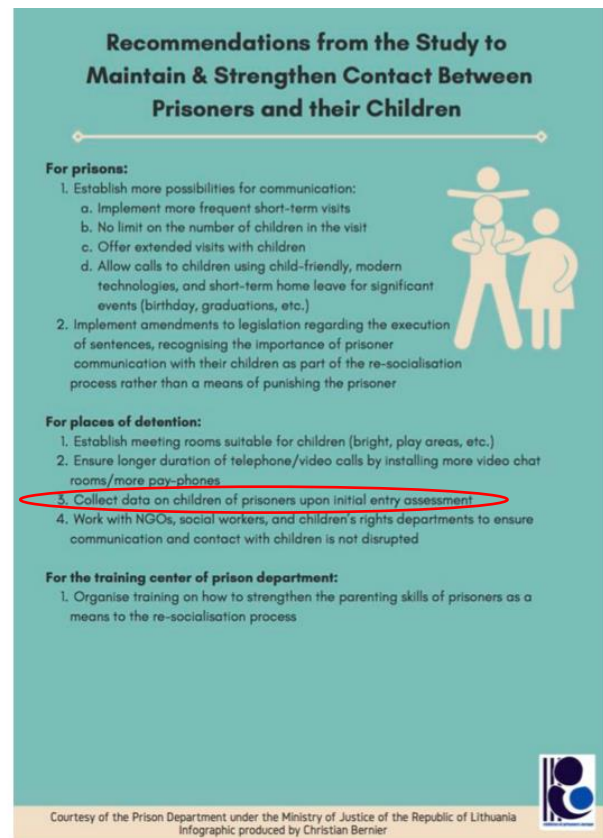
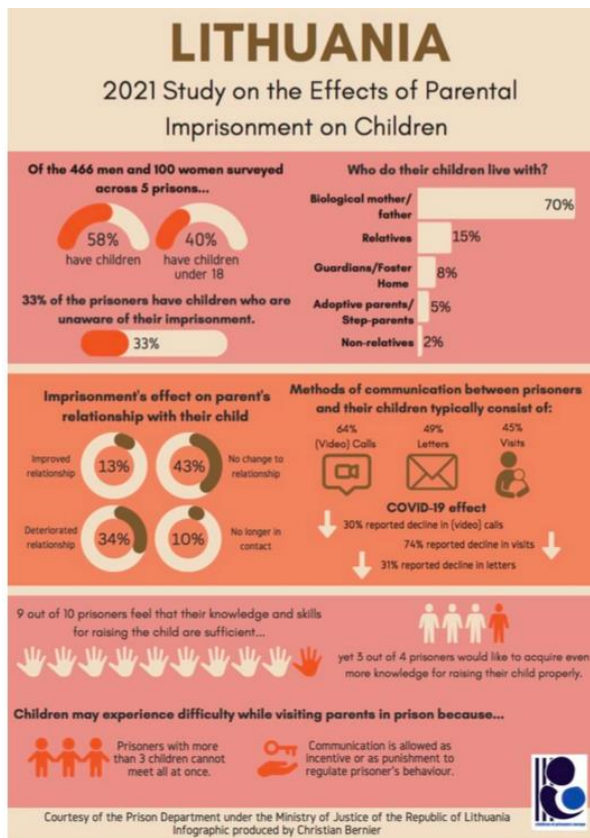


Fig. 1 Findings and recommendations from Lithuanian Prison Service study

Outreach included a COPE snapshot survey on data collection upon entry and children’s needs:

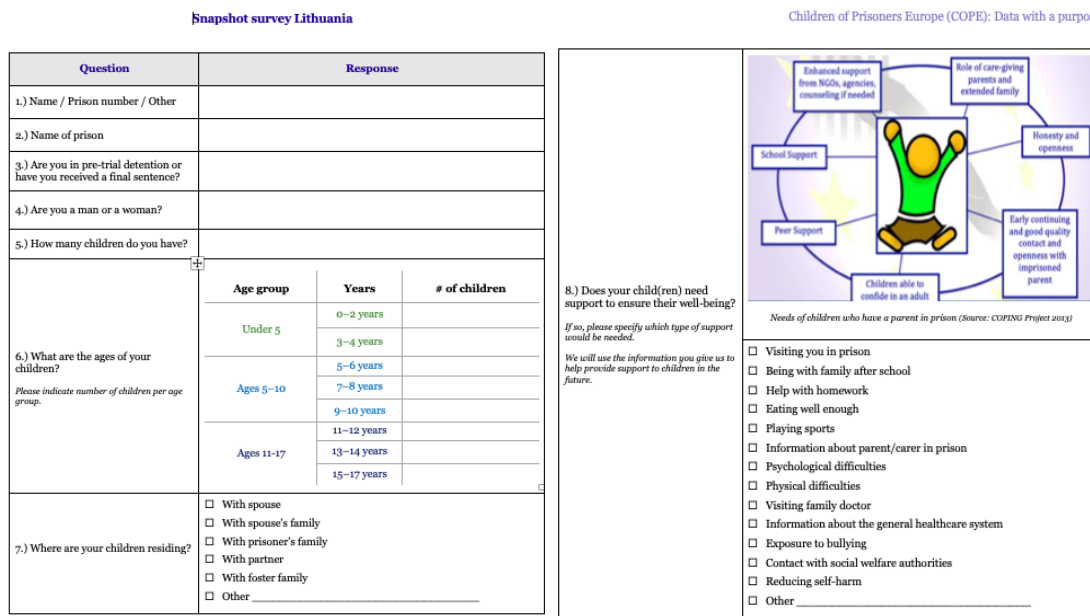


Fig. 2 Data with a purpose

Advances made in Latvia

The response of the Latvian Prison Service, some six months after receiving COPE's initial Data with a Purpose outreach, was the organisation of a hybrid two-day high-profile conference on 10 and 11 October 2023, entitled *Family – Law – Prevention* and revolving around the organisation of Family Day events in prisons. Some 35 individuals participated online on Day 1 and 42 on Day 2; and 124 individuals were physically present at the conference venue in Riga both days. COPE gave a keynote speech on zoom, emphasising the need to continue to collaborate to better protect the rights and welfare of children with a parent in prison, and to work to collect more robust data on children impacted by parental imprisonment in Latvia. Currently COPE estimates that there are 4,138 children separated from a parent in prison in Latvia on a given day (2022 data), an increase compared to 3,949 children in 2021. These data sets are based on COPE extrapolations of data from *SPACE I – 2022 – Council of Europe Annual*

Penal Statistics.¹ The extrapolations in turn are based on Champsaur, P., et al's 2002 study, *L'Histoire familiale des hommes détenus*, Paris: INSEE. The study, drawing on a 1999 national census carried out in France that included 1,700 male detainees and examined their family situation, established a parenting rate of 1.3 offspring per prisoner among male prisoners in France. In addition to the total number of children separated from a parent in prison in Latvia in 2022 — 4,138 — nine young children were co-residing with their mothers in prison; children can remain with their imprisoned mothers until age 4. This brings the total number of infants and children impacted by a parent's imprisonment in Latvia in 2022 to 4,147.²

Advances made in Slovakia

In response to COPE's outreach in April 2023, motivated in part by a recent change in directorship of the Slovak Prison Service with the nomination of an individual who has a reputation as a reformist, the Slovak Prison Service responded with an update on data collection and on recent activities implemented on behalf of children with a parent in prison.³

— Data collection

Data on children is collected and entered into a Prison Electronic Information System during an admission interview with a prisoner as part of point of entry procedures. Preliminary interviews are carried out by staff of the administrative department, inquiring about the number of children, their names and their ages. A follow-up session by social workers provides each prisoner with both verbal information and an information leaflet highlighting the prisoner's obligations towards his or her children. The data gathered is based mainly on self-reporting and is updated by a pedagogical or social worker over the course of pre-trial

¹ Aebi, M. F., Cocco, E., Molnar, L. & Tiago, M. M., (2022). *SPACE I – 2022 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics*

² Data on the number of young children co-residing with primary carers in prison in 2022 sourced from *SPACE I – 2022 – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics: Children living with their mothers inside penal institutions*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Table 2.3. No comparison with comparable data is possible as Latvia did not provide statistics on the number of young children co-residing with their mothers in *SPACE I - 2021*.

³ Personal email exchange between COPE Director Liz Ayre and Lt.-Col. Petra Tankovičová, Head of the Director General's Office, General Directorate of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard, 4 May 2023.

detention and the prison sentence, in the case of exercising the right to telephone, visit, etc., and also when verifying the child's birth certificate.

According to the Slovak Prison Service, a new data collection methodology is currently being put into place, set to launch in 2024, based on linking the information system of the Prison Service to the State's registry of natural persons. With the launch of this new agency information system, basic data on prisoners' children, which the State has recorded in the registry of natural persons (the child's first and last name and his/her birth number), will be automatically downloaded during the point of entry interview. The prison service maintains that the new information system will simplify and streamline procedures and will enable the development of regular statistical reports on data. The current methodology for statistically processing data on children of imprisoned parents registered in the information system, they maintain, is complex and time-consuming. COPE advocacy will aim to highlight certain potential data protection issues based on GDPR.

— ***Recent initiatives on behalf of children with a parent in prison in Slovakia***

COPE learned that the Corps of Prison and Court Guard recently implemented several important activities towards children of incarcerated parents. The Slovak Republic prison strategy 2022–2030, approved 26 May 2023, includes plans for adapting the visits schedules in each prison establishment to enable visits for children and their imprisoned parents that do not coincide with mandatory school hours. The strategy also envisages piloting longer visits between eligible prisoners and their minor children (e.g., on the child's birthday) in premises that allow for shared activities to strengthen the parental relationship. Although the latter is not rights based, but merit based, these initiatives represent significant change for children.

In addition, the Act on Pre-trial Detention no. 221/2006 Coll. as amended introduced a new type of visit for pre-trial detainees with minor children, to complement existing visits to defendants. The enhanced scheme entitles defendants not only to the standard two-hour visit (which may be divided into two one-hour visits), but also to an additional hour of video calls (video conversation via Skype) with their minor children.

In Ilava and Nitra-Chrenová prisons, within the framework of the EU-funded Chance for Re-Entry Project, the Slovak Prison Service implemented a "Family Day" in April / May 2022. The event involved a group of prisoners who were preparing for release and their children and took place in an informal setting. Refreshments and gifts that the parents had handcrafted for their children were distributed.

And in a significant step forward, the Slovak Republic prison strategy 2022-2030 foresees the construction of a prison wing at Nápravnovýchovní ústav Nitra for imprisoned mothers with children. Currently young children are not authorised to remain with their imprisoned primary carers in Slovakia. Young children will be allowed to remain with their imprisoned mothers until the age of 3.

II. Young children co-residing with primary carers in prison in the EU

The 2019 UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, which included a chapter on children living in places of detention with their parents co-drafted by COPE, made significant inroads in terms of reliable data collection, both quantitative and qualitative. Among COPE's contributions to the UN Global Study's efforts to compile data on infants co-residing with primary caregivers in prison were the results of a 2017 COPE questionnaire that the Council of Europe sent to its 47 member States. This resulted in preliminary data on the number of infants across Europe co-residing with their parent in prison, as well as inventorying of age limits in various countries. The publication of data on age limits in European Union member State countries by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) as part of a [2017 report on migrant detention](#)⁴ enabled COPE to triangulate these results with those obtained from the Council of Europe questionnaire and member State responses in terms of the number and age limits of

⁴ European legal and policy framework on immigration detention of children, Fundamental Rights Agency, 22 June 2017

children who live in penal institutions with their mother. A new indicator was introduced into the systematic data gathering by the Council of Europe in its *SPACE I – Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics* report for 2020: whether young children are allowed to live with their mother inside penal establishment, the number of infants and until what age can they co-reside with the parent (Table 2.3). Data provided from SPACE I reports for the past three years now enables COPE to highlight more accurately the number of young children living with their parent in prison, although not all member States provide the relevant data. To complete missing data in the SPACE I Table 2.3— Germany needs to provide data from all 16 Länder and data on Germany has not been included in the table since its inauguration in 2020, for example — COPE has provided data from 2017, based on a Council for Penological Cooperation/COPE questionnaire sent to Council of Europe members in February of that year. Responses were provided by member States in March and April 2017. Although the data is limited in that it is captured at an earlier date than data for the SPACE I report, the table below gives a very rough idea of the relative number of young children involved.

Table 1. Children living with primary carers in EU member State prisons

EU Member State	Are infants authorised to stay with their primary carer in penal institutions?	How many infants are living with their mothers in penal institutions?	Up to what age can they co-reside with their primary carers in penal institutions?
AUSTRIA	Yes	7	3 years
BELGIUM	Yes	5 ⁵	3 years
BULGARIA	Yes	3 ⁶	1 year
CROATIA	Yes	0	3 years Prisoners who give birth in prison may request to keep the child until age 3, with consent of the Center for Social Welfare. Exceptionally, the child may stay until the mother is released if she has less than six months to serve.
CYPRUS	Yes	0	2 years
CZECH REP	Yes	12	3 years

⁵ Data from 2021. Source: <https://www.rtf.be/article/anna-vit-en-prison-avec-sa-maman-detenu-a-la-prison-de-berkendael-10730053>

⁶ Data from 2017. Source: COPE network, 2018, based on Council for Penological Co-operation/COPE questionnaire sent to Council of Europe members on 07.02.17; responses March/April 2017.

DENMARK	Yes	0	3 years
ESTONIA	Yes	1	3 years
FINLAND	Yes	4	3 years
FRANCE	Yes	21	no maximum age, most infants under age 1
GERMANY	Yes	77 ⁷	3 years or 6 years
GREECE	Yes	7	3 years
HUNGARY	Yes	3	1 year
IRELAND	Yes	0	1 year
ITALY	Yes	15	6 years
LATVIA	Yes	9	4 years
LITHUANIA	Yes	0	3 years
LUXEMBOURG	Yes	1	no age limit
MALTA	Yes	1	1 year
NETHERLANDS	Yes	1	9 months / 4 years Infants co-residing with mothers in high security prisons can stay until 9 months of age. In penal establishments with restricted security, until age 4 years unless the father/next of kin available. The child's best interests are assessed in both cases.
POLAND	Yes	46 ⁸	3 years
PORTUGAL	Yes	16	3 years or 5 years Art. 7, para. g) of Law 115/ 2009 of 12 October: prisoners may live with a child until age 3 or age 5, with the authorisation of the other holder of parental responsibility.
ROMANIA	Yes	2 ⁹	1 year
SLOVAKIA	Currently not possible. The prison strategy 2022-2030 includes plans for a prison wing at Nápravnovýchovní ústav Nitra for imprisoned mothers with children.	0	0
SLOVENIA	Yes	1	1-2 years
SPAIN	Yes	68	3 years
SWEDEN	Yes	20 ¹⁰	no maximum age, most infants under age 1

Source: SPACE 2022, Children of Prisoners Europe website, accessed 28.11.23. https://childrenofprisoners.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2019-Data-collection-report_final.pdf, except where specified, for Belgium.

⁷ Data from 2017. Source: COPE network, 2018, based on Council for Penological Cooperation/COPE questionnaire sent to Council of Europe members on 07.02.17; responses March/April 2017.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

III. Data collection on children separated from a parent in prison in EU member States

There has been since 2010 a general tendency toward decline in the overall European prison population. The trend, however, appears to have bottomed out.

The 2020 COVID pandemic saw a drop in incarcerations due to lockdowns and a slowdown in court activity. In 2021, the number of incarcerations picked up. New measures to enforce short-term sentences in several EU countries also fed into the increase.

There is a need for finer measurement tools. Ways in which data is collected vary from member State to member State, hindering the collection and analysis of accurate comparative data. Many data collection reports provide data on stock prison populations, at a given point in time, and not flow populations—skewing the actual number of incarcerations over the course of a year and by definition, the number of children impacted by the incarceration of a parent annually. Short-term sentences can have a major impact on children.

In addition, a large number of non-nationals are detained in European prisons. Many migrants and asylum seekers, however, are detained in centres that are not part of the prison system. They don't appear in prison statistics and any children affected by the detention of their parents — whether they are held with their parents in detention centres or living on the streets as undocumented minors — likewise won't appear in the statistics.

For the reasons listed above, there is a need for a more rigorous approach to quantify the number of children affected by parental incarceration in the EU.

With the aim of exploring a joint European research project, COPE has reached to Prof. Marcelo F. Aebi, a renowned prison data expert and a primary author of the Council of Europe's Annual Penal Statistics (*SPACE I* and *SPACE II*); and to Prof. Rodrigo Jesús Carcedo González of the

University of Salamanca, a COPE member who is conducting a nationwide research project in Spain on the effects of parental incarceration on children.

Separately, on the migrant issue, COPE has been working with PICUM, an NGO focusing on migrant issues, toward bridging the knowledge gap between parental detention in the prison system and detention in migrant centers and how children are being affected.

There are signs that the European Commission intends to launch a call in 2024 for proposals on data collection in the context of child rights. Gaining a better picture of the number and sociological background of children affected by parental detention could be a candidate for EU-funded research.

In the interim, as COPE learns more about data collection and the various methodologies being used (see following section), it is becoming apparent that COPE's parenting rate of 1.3 is a relatively conservative one. And with data on young children co-residing with parents now an indicator in SPACE I report, we can provide a look both at the number of children separated from a parent in prison as well as that of children living in prison with a parent. See Table 2.

Table 2. Children impacted by the incarceration of a parent in EU (2022)

EU Member State	Total population of the country (Jan. 2022)	Total prison population (stock, including pre-detention)	Number of children separated from a parent in prison ¹¹	Number of infants co-residing with primary carer in prison
AUSTRIA	9 066 710	8 474	11 016	7
BELGIUM	11 668 278	10 960	14 248	5 ¹²
BULGARIA	6 844 597	6 386	8 302	3 ¹³
CROATIA	4 059 286	3 905	5 077	0
CYPRUS	1 223 387	808	1 050	0
CZECH REP	10 736 784	18 748	24 372	12
DENMARK	5 834 950	4 114	5 348	0
ESTONIA	1 321 910	2 181	2 835	1
FINLAND	5 554 960	2 776	3 609	4
FRANCE	65 584 518	69 964	90 953	21
GERMANY	83 883 596	56 294	73 182	77 ¹⁴
GREECE	10 316 637	10 952	14 238	7
HUNGARY	9 606 259	18 619	24 205	3
IRELAND	5 020 199	3 835	4 986	0
ITALY	60 262 770	54 372	70 684	15
LATVIA	1 848 837	3 183	4 138	9
LITHUANIA	2 661 708	5 086	6 612	0
LUXEMBOURG	642 371	630	819	1
MALTA	444 033	613	797	1
NETHERLANDS	17 211 447	9 256	12 033	1
POLAND	37 739 785	71 874	93 436	46 ¹⁵
PORTUGAL	10 140 570	11 588	15 064	16
ROMANIA	19 031 335	23 010	29 913	2 ¹⁶
SLOVAKIA	5 460 193	10 185	13 241	0
SLOVENIA	2 078 034	1 380	1 794	1
SPAIN	46 719 142	55 095	71 624	68
SWEDEN	10 218 971	7 776	10 109	20 ¹⁷

Source: SPACE I Report - 2022, Council of Europe, Children of Prisoners Europe website, accessed 28.11.23. https://childrenofprisoners.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/2019-Data-collection-report_final.pdf, except where specified (for Belgium).

¹¹ Extrapolation based on a 2002 study, *L'Histoire familiale des hommes détenus*, Paris: INSEE. The study, drawing on a 1999 national census in France that included 1,700 male detainees and established a parenting rate of 1.3 offspring per prisoner among male prisoners in France.

¹² Data from 2021. Source: <https://www.rtb.be/article/anna-vit-en-prison-avec-sa-maman-detenu-a-la-prison-de-berkendael-10730053>

¹³ Data from 2017. Source: COPE network, 2018, based on Council for Penological Co-operation/COPE questionnaire sent to Council of Europe members on 07.02.17; responses March/April 2017.

¹⁴ Ibid.

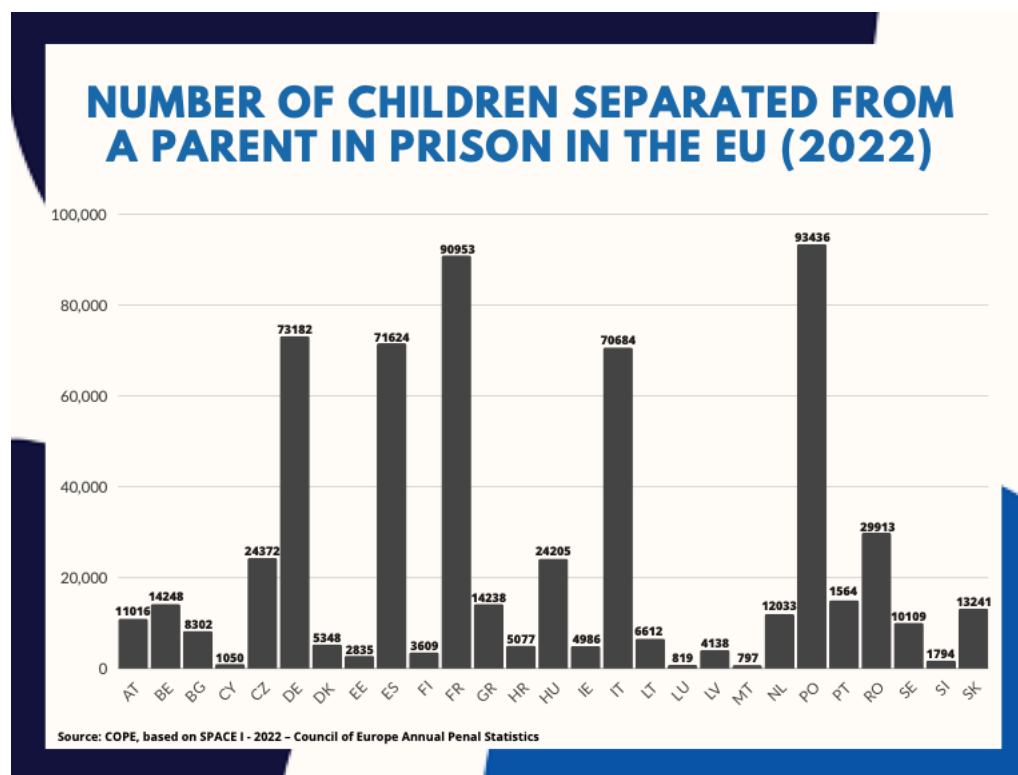
¹⁵ Source: SPACE I Report - 2021, Council of Europe.

¹⁶ Data from 2017. Source: COPE network, 2018, based on Council for Penological Co-operation/COPE questionnaire sent to Council of Europe members on 07.02.17; responses March/April 2017.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Here is another way of viewing the data provided above on children separated from a parent in prison:

Fig. 3.



Enriching data collection on cross-cutting issues

For COPE, when considering the question of children with imprisoned parents, there are cross-cutting issues that need to be taken into account, such as children living in institutions with an incarcerated parent, juvenile detainees who also have children and children with parents in prison from minority groups such as Roma, indigenous peoples or foreign nationals. In the Czech Republic, for example, it was found that 6.7 % (n=963) of children in institutions were reported to have a parent in prison.¹⁸ A greater focus on these cross-cutting issues is necessary for future data collection, given the dearth of data in these areas and the need to provide support for children and young people impacted by parental incarceration who are in institutions, separated from their child due to lack of facilities (e.g., juvenile detainees with infant children) or facing other challenges to maintaining contact.

¹⁸ Based on a 2017 survey by Lumos.

New area of data:

research on number of children present during arrest of parents in the Netherlands

Very little is known about the number of children who witness the arrest of a parent, a figure not systematically registered by law enforcement agencies. Attaining reliable data is important to bolster advocacy with police forces, aiming to ultimately mitigate violence that children often are exposed to during the arrest of a parent.

A report carried out in the province of Flevoland, the Netherlands, considered the number of children registered as present during a parent's arrest.¹⁹ Children were present during 19% of the arrests registered (n=468 of a total 4,690 arrests). This is likely to be considerably lower than the actual figure, given that it is not mandatory for police forces to record this data. However, it is still a valuable indicator as to how many children witness the arrest of a parent.

These findings are strengthened by a large-scale study also in the Netherlands (Dutch Prison Project)²⁰ where a survey was sent to 1,748 male detainees. The survey questions included: 1) *where were you arrested (at home/on the street/at other people's homes/at work/other place)?* and 2) *who was there when you were arrested? Own children (yes/no)*. Some 681 of survey respondents were fathers, 30% of whom were arrested at home (n=206). Of those arrested at home, 34% (n=69) reported that their children were present. These findings suggest that when fathers are arrested at home, children will be present during one in three arrests. This figure is likely to increase if children of parents who were arrested *but not detained* are considered.

It is important to consider the gender dimension here – this figure is also likely to be significantly higher if children of arrested mothers are considered. When looking at data collection more broadly, it has been suggested that fathers tend to under-report the presence

19 Van der Zaag (2017) cited in Reef, J., Orms Church, N. (2019) Care for children when parents are arrested. Best practices from home and abroad – Research report under the 2016 call, Police and Science programme. *Politie & Wetenschap*

²⁰ Dirkzwager, A., et al. (2018). Cohort Profile: the Prison Project—a Study of Criminal Behavior and Life Circumstances Before, During, and After Imprisonment in the Netherlands. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*, 4(1), 120–135. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40865-017-0077-2>

of their children²¹ and are less likely than mothers to partake in studies concerning family relationships.²² Imprisoned mothers tend to be the primary caregivers of children more so than imprisoned fathers.²³ Children of imprisoned fathers often remain in the same household and many are looked after by the same caregivers as prior to their father's incarceration.²⁴ While still highly disruptive, this relative stability for the children of imprisoned fathers may be a contributing factor as to why men are less likely to self-report; imprisoned mothers may sooner participate in studies and self-report about their children out of a sense of urgency and concern over their well-being. Data to support this hypothesis is lacking. The gendered tendencies of imprisoned mothers and fathers to engage with surveys and data collection efforts is relevant to consider when promoting accurate data collection methodologies.

IV. A look at some data collection methodologies and statistics in the EU

As more is learned about some of the methodologies being used for data collection (following on from the entry on Slovakia above) and the various parenting rates that have been established for people in detention from country to country, COPE's extrapolated data can be compared with that from other sources. The following information and data from 2019 and 2020 have been provided by a data matrix produced by the EuroPris Expert Group on Children of Prisoners, in which COPE participated. This [EuroPris data matrix](#)²⁵ was updated for some countries in 2022.

²¹ Ibid.

²² An observation from prison-based researchers from within the COPE network, working with imprisoned mothers and fathers.

²³ Baldwin, L (2017) *Tainted Love; The Impact of Prison on Maternal Identity and Emotion*, *Prison Service Journal*, Issue 233, p.2.

²⁴ Beresford, S., Earle, J., Loucks, N., & Pinkman, A. (2020). 'What About Me?' The Impact on Children when Mothers Are Involved in the Criminal Justice System. In *Mothering from the Inside* (pp. 67-83). Emerald Publishing Limited, citing Corston, J. (2007) *The Corston Report: A Report by Baroness Jean Corston of a Review of Women with Particular Vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System*, London: Home Office.

²⁵ See: <https://www.europris.org/data-collection/>

Austria

According to the EuroPris data matrix, data collection is carried out within the electronic system EVM and based on self-reporting from prisoners. The number and age of children and their caregivers are entered into the system in a text file under the social data. During a preliminary interview by social or psychological services or other services as part of prison entry procedures, prisoners are asked about their personal data. The data is fed into the EVM (Austrian electronic system of prisoner data) and later updated by social workers. The individual data for each prisoner is a text file and cannot be extracted from the system (yet). The total number of children impacted is therefore not yet available.

Belgium

According to the EuroPris data collection matrix, there is no systematic collection of data on children in Belgium. It is technically feasible to collect data (in the computer programme for each prisoner) but there are no instructions to do so and no oversight. According to one estimate, 17,000 children in Belgium are affected by a parent's imprisonment (based on 10,300 prisoners). COPE highlights that this yields a prisoner-parent rate of $n=1.7$ children per prisoner.

Cyprus

According to the EuroPris data matrix, the Cyprus Prison Service does collect information on children during admission procedures. Specially trained staff conduct semi-structured interviews with prisoners upon entry, inquiring about the number of children and their ages, the primary caregiver, the existence of any disabilities or special needs. Data is updated at various moments, including at Christmas and Easter (the prison service gives presents to all children up to age 18 during prison-based events); prior to any approval for home leave after the first one-third of the sentence has been executed; before a prisoner is transferred to the open prison; and during the interview for the use of electronic monitoring. The number of children reflects the number of children who visit the prison – the total number is an estimate

based on the gifts the prison purchases for the children. Number of children for 2019: approximately 670; (average number of prisoners 715). Number of children for 2020: approximately 630; (average number of prisoners 677), yielding a prisoner-parent rate of $n=1.07$ offspring per prisoner.

Germany

According to the EuroPris data matrix, an estimated 100,000 children are affected by the imprisonment of a parent in Germany and represent a largely unknown at-risk group. Thirteen of the 16 Länder in Germany use the IT procedure “BASIS-Web” . This accounting and billing system in the prison system is a cross-Länder project for IT support of correctional facilities. It provides a basis for data backups, evaluation and central data maintenance. Information on the number of children and their age is collected as part of “Maintenance obligations”. Information on the primary caregiver is not collected. The statistical usability also remains questionable. Knowledge of these data serves the reintegration of the prisoner and the “achievement of the objectives of the correctional system” as required by the Data Protection Act. The data is collected during admission procedures, usually by prison staff through structured interviews. The data is generally based on self-reporting; there is no matching of data with third parties. Data is updated by the prison staff when there is a change of prison, prior to preparation for release and afterwards as part of probation procedures.

Greece

The Greek Prison Service is establishing a new data collection system to enable the collection of much more detailed information. COPE and other stakeholders have been invited to send indicators for the new system. The Greek Ministry of Citizen Protection gave an update at a COPE Roundtable organised on 10 November 2023. According to current data collected by the prisons, there is a total of 10,454 prisoners, with approximately 3,970 parents —3,812 of which

are men and 158 women, with 6,677 children impacted by a parent's imprisonment. The data is described as approximate, as it is based on self-reporting.

How many visits? The number of children visiting their parent and the frequency of visits varies from prison to prison. Data depends on the size of the prison and the infrastructure in terms of suitable premises and the number of applications submitted. At Korydallos Prison, Sunday has been established as a children's visiting day. The duration of the visit is a minimum 30 minutes, and in practice longer than the time stipulated in the Penitentiary Code (if conditions permit). Visits can last up to one hour. Children may touch and cuddle their parents.

Hungary

Hungary collects information on the number, gender, age of children, and caregiver upon entry during an interview with administrative staff, according to the EuroPris data matrix. The data is collected and registered in the prison's electronic database / registry and updated by probation officers when preparing for hearings. Yet although Hungary gathers data on children, the data is stored in the prisoner's personal file for consultation by prison staff and social workers, as there is no full-scale elaborate registry system. The data therefore currently remains unsystematised.

Ireland

According to the EuroPris data matrix, data is collected on the prison director's committal interview completed on the Prison IT system within 24 hours of committal to the prison. Information is provided on a voluntary basis and since 2018, every prisoner upon point of entry is asked from a child protection standpoint: *"Have you any children under the age of 18? Have you any concerns for the child's safety?"* Data is updated through information provided to Sentence Management. Based on the information collected since June 2018, 3,209 committals declared 5,157 children, thus averaging **1.6 children per prisoner**. Multiplying this average with the total number of 4,253 prisoners (March 2021) would result in an estimated total of 6,834 children. [Source: EuroPris data matrix].

The Netherlands

According to Verhagen et al.,²⁶ there are an estimated 25,000 children in the Netherlands whose parents are imprisoned, primarily fathers. In terms of methodology, the researchers in the above-cited study contacted the Science Department of Correctional Services to assess available data, examining demographic and detention factors on a national scale. They learned that prisons sometimes register the children of imprisoned parents, but this information could not be accessed at a prison or national level. It would be too time-consuming to manually review each prisoner's file and, the researchers claimed that male prisoner-parents tend to under-report the existence of children. As follow up, the researchers therefore consulted Statistics Netherlands and studied their catalogue with non-public microdata on the Dutch population. The catalogue can be made available to researchers in the Netherlands under strict conditions and on a limited basis.

Romania

According to the EuroPris data matrix, it is technically impossible to extract the information separately for 2019/2020. Statistical data concerning the prisoner's children, collected from the IT application on 8 February 2021: male minors: 9,637; female minors: 8,756; male youngsters: 3,902; female youngsters: 3,315 (21.861 prisoners. Total number of children: 25,610 (1.2 children per prisoner).

For each prisoner, the number of children (disaggregated by age and sex) is recorded in the IT application PMSWeb (Prisoners Management System). The information is requested at point of entry and registered in the PMSWeb IT application, on the basis of self-reporting. Social workers conduct interviews to glean information on the prisoner's offspring, with the aim to identify the cases which require assistance. This data is not correlated with the data collected

²⁶ Verhagen-Braspenninx, A., Beijers, G., Janssen, J., & Claes, B. (2024). Incarcerated Fathers and Their Children in The Netherlands: Demographic and Detention Factors That Affect the Father–Child Relationship: A Secondary Analysis. *The Prison Journal*, 104(1), 110-130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00328855231212552>

during in-take procedures and recorded in the IT application. The information in the IT application is not updated during the sentence.

Slovakia

As mentioned in a previous section above, data collection is carried out through the prison electronic information system and information updated by a pedagogical or social worker. Data collection is not carried out during court proceedings, according to the EuroPris data matrix. According to the data matrix, the data provided by the Slovak Prison Service for 2019 indicated 19,080 children, based on 8,373 prisoners. For 2020, data indicated 18,858 children, based on 8,376 prisoners, yielding a prisoner-parent rate of $n = 2.3$ children per prisoner.

Sweden

Although the EuroPris data matrix highlights that Sweden does not have national statistics on the number of children with a parent in prison, Sweden does record if a prisoner has a child or is living with someone else's child, as well as the child's date of birth, primary caregiver, residence, whether the prisoner is the child's caregiver or legal guardian, and the notify social care if a child has specific issues. There is an area for prisoners' comments. The registry of information is updated continuously.

V. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in this report, COPE has been working to fill some of the system gaps in data collection through its strong partnership with EuroPris and participation in its Expert Group on Children of Prisoners (2019–2022), and through its ongoing Data with a Purpose outreach. COPE efforts to extrapolate data using the parenting rate for prisoners of 1.3 offspring per prisoner, established through a French national census and study of the family situation of male prisoners, have been key. The parenting rate is a conservative one, an important factor in ensuring that data is not inflated or exaggerated. Using this conservative rate, the total estimated number of children separated from a parent in prison in EU member States on a given day in 2022 was 613,685 children. As the availability of reliable indicators on numbers of children with a parent in prison grows — such as the parenting rates provided by prison services and researchers in the preceding section — COPE extrapolations can be compared and contrasted and data ultimately refined. If the parenting rate established by the Irish Prison Service — 1.6 offspring per prisoner — were used, for example, the number of children affected would increase to 755,302, while that of the Slovak Prison Service — 2.3 offspring per prisoner — would boost this figure to 1.1 million children. These figures would be higher if the number of prisoners admitted to prisons over the course of an entire year (flow) were used in calculations; the numbers also do not include the some 320 young children co-residing with their primary caregiver in prison, as per SPACE I 2022 and COPE data. Whatever the rate used or calculation made, the vast number of children impacted by a parent’s imprisonment in EU member State countries is a stark statistic indeed.

COPE would welcome a call from the European Commission for proposals on data collection in the context of child rights, coordinating all efforts with the Council of Europe prison statistics experts headed up by Marcel Aebi at the University of Lausanne. Such efforts would lead to new breakthroughs and more robust data on the number and sociological background of children affected by parental detention across the European Union.