



## Affectivity in the European prison system - principles, opportunities and challenges

### Introduction

The question of the importance of affectivity in the prison system is becoming increasingly relevant throughout Europe. This refers not only to the emotional well-being of prisoners, but also to the quality of their social relationships - especially with family members and partners. In the context of resocialization, relapse prevention and human rights, affectivity is a central aspect that has often been neglected to date.

### Affectivity as a human right and resocialization factor

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) protects the right to private and family life - a principle that also applies to prisoners. Nevertheless, there are major differences in its implementation within Europe. While some countries institutionally promote the possibility of visits, telephone calls and even intimate visits, in other systems such contact is heavily regulated or taboo.

Psychosocial studies show that functioning relationships during imprisonment contribute significantly to emotional stability. Those who are able to maintain their family relationships during imprisonment show a lower risk of recidivism and a greater willingness to reintegrate socially.

### Comparative analysis: Italy, Romania and Germany

In Romania, for example, so-called „intimate spaces“ are enshrined in law - prisoners are allowed unsupervised visits with partners every three months under certain conditions. This practice supports emotional bonds and rewards compliant behavior.

In Italy, on the other hand, there are only pilot projects in selected prisons (e.. Milan-Bollate). The social discourse is still strongly characterized by taboos. Although the Italian constitution recognizes the right to affectivity, concrete regulations are largely lacking.

With the concept of resocialization (Section 2 StVollzG), Germany pursues a holistic approach that also includes social relationships. Nevertheless, practical implementation varies greatly between the federal states. Initiatives such as „visitation without supervision“ or special family programs exist in certain areas, but are not established nationwide.

## Challenges and perspectives

Uniform European standards for the promotion of affective relationships in the prison system are still lacking. The balancing act between security interests and the right to intimacy is particularly challenging. At the same time, the need for trained staff who can deal with the issue professionally and in a culturally sensitive manner becomes clear.

This is precisely where the Erasmus+ project PSSARP comes in: It aims to create awareness, develop educational content for professionals and formulate political recommendations for action in order to promote more uniform standards for affective reintegration in the long term.

## Conclusion

Affectivity in the prison system is not a „soft“ issue, but a central element of successful resocialization. Europe faces the challenge of reconciling human rights, emotional needs and security - with promising approaches, but also a lot of catching up to do. Projects such as PSSARP make an innovative and practical contribution to this.

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