



Romania: Intimacy behind bars - between law and lived practice

Introduction

Romania is considered one of the countries with the most progressive practices in the area of prisoners' affective rights in Europe. The system of so-called „intimate visits“ in particular has attracted international attention. But how does this model work in practice - and what can other countries learn from it?

Legal framework for affectivity

The Romanian prison system recognizes affective relationships as part of the rehabilitation process. Law no. 254/2013 regulates, among other things, the right to intimate visits with spouses or long-term partners. These visits are subject to conditions: good conduct, participation in educational or reintegration programs and a proven partnership relationship.

In practice, this means that an unsupervised visit may take place once every two to three months in a specially designated room under suitable conditions. Marriages in prison are also possible - combined with a 48-hour stay in the intimate room.

Emotional stability through social ties




Studies and experience reports show that regular contact with family members, especially through personal encounters, strengthens the mental stability of prisoners. Maintaining family ties reduces the risk of recidivism and promotes social reintegration. For partners outside the prison walls, this contact also provides important emotional support and protection from isolation and stigmatization.

Numerous programs - e.g. „Me and my child“, „Steps to the family“ or holiday activities with relatives - supplement the legal foundations with educational support. Workshops in which children and parents spend time together, playing, painting and learning are particularly impressive. This helps to maintain and strengthen bonds despite separation.

Affectivity as a reward and motivation

In Romania, affective well-being is also part of an incentive system: good behavior, cooperation and participation in programs are rewarded with visits or temporary releases (up to 30 days per year). These rewards not only motivate compliance with the rules, but also demonstrate the social importance of relationships in the resocialization process.


Criticism and challenges



Despite the progress made, there are also challenges in Romania. The facilities and quality of intimate spaces vary, and the stigma towards prisoners remains present in society. There are also ongoing discussions about the balance between security and intimacy. It is therefore important to continuously develop, evaluate and legally protect the services on offer.

Conclusion

Romania shows that affective relationships in the prison system can be legally secured and practically realized - without increasing security risks. The model offers important impulses for other European countries, particularly through the systematic inclusion of families as a resource in the reintegration process. Affectivity is not seen here as a minor matter, but as a human right and rehabilitation factor.



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result**

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'The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein'



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