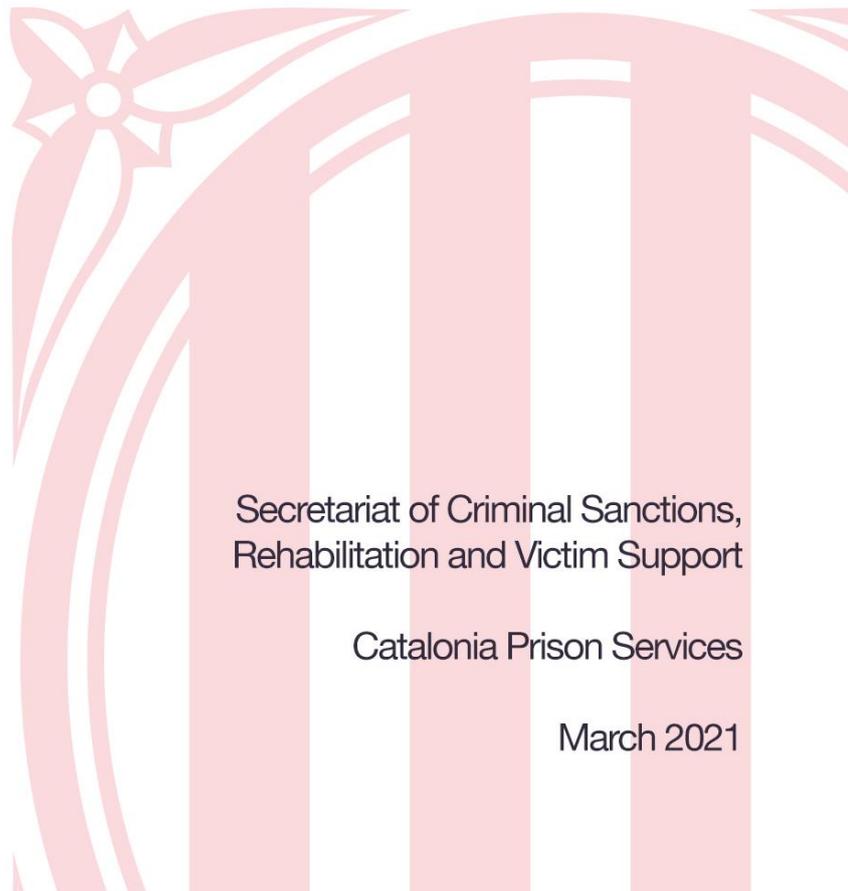




Generalitat de Catalunya  
Departament de Justícia  
**Secretaria de Mesures Penals,  
Reinserció i Atenció a la Víctima**

## **The Parental Responsibility Group at Catalonia's Brians 2 Prison Centre**



Secretariat of Criminal Sanctions,  
Rehabilitation and Victim Support

Catalonia Prison Services

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## **A brief account of the Parental Responsibility Group at Catalonia's Brians 2 Prison Centre**



In 2016, Brians 2 Prison Centre created its Participation Plan with the aim of carrying out an integrated intervention programme throughout the centre that could generate a social dynamic and coexistence environment as similar as possible (in terms of rules, values, habits and ways of interaction) to any normalized social group within a legal and security framework. This Participation Plan contemplates the creation of Management Groups as a participation mechanism.

The Educational Management Group and Parental Responsibility (GGERP in Catalan) began through the conjunction of several synergies in 2017: responding imprisoned parents' demands, the concern of many professionals and the participatory experience in the [Family Relations Expert Group](#)<sup>1</sup> of the [European Organisation of prisons and correctional services](#)<sup>2</sup>. The most important aspects of this group are its community work method and its transversal composition as it involves all kinds of prison's workers: from officers, artistic monitors, social workers, librarians, social educators, teachers, partnerships and *also* inmates' parents, which are the most important for us.

The aim of the GGERP group is to carry out participatory and practical experiences that facilitate people who serve a custodial sentence to continue with their parenting role through greater frequency and quality within the security framework as that of a prison. During these years, the collaboration of social entities and educational, leisure, health, family, social services and organisms that safeguard the rights of children and young people, has allowed us to build a participatory network that shares the common goal of preserving and guaranteeing the well-being and future of the families and children of prisoners.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.europris.org/file/expert-group-family-relations-good-practice-collection/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.europris.org](http://www.europris.org) is an organization focused on the study and knowledge of European prison systems and whose task is to collect conclusions and recommendations emanating from the working documents prepared by different groups of experts in order to promote the key ideas among the various prison administrations and the various European bodies

Promoting the family role as a reintegration agent with a participatory role in the penitentiary system, added to the functions they have been developing, is a turning point in the Catalan penitentiary system. This new participatory role must be followed by measures to improve and promote the relationship and transparency of the prison's administration with families. These measures should be incorporated in a [Strategic Plan for Families](#)<sup>3</sup> that could include improvements in care and protection of relatives through actions in the basic pillars of the system: information and communication with families, equipment and communication department, the positive parenting programs and professional training.

On the other hand, the specialized scientific literature states that the separation of children as a result of parental incarceration has immediate effects on children and teenagers, such as: guilt, shame, social stigma, loss of financial support, declining school performance, weakening of ties with their parents, taking responsibility for care ([Young carers](#)<sup>4</sup>). These are deprived children due to the absence of one or both parents and the exercise of the parental role who have special needs that must be attended and that often go unnoticed, both in social and prison policies and in society itself, disregarding that the care and protection of these children and teenagers is a guarantee for the future society.

Faced with this finding, there are European Penitentiary Systems where the regulatory and security legal framework has designed and developed Strategic Plans for Families that involve each area of the judicial system: from detention and beyond the ultimate freedom to preserve children's rights and their families.

Faced with the complexity and awareness of its limitations, in 2017 the GGERP planned many goals which have been developed over the years:

1. *Visualize* children of prisoners' reality.
2. Provide and manage *didactic materials* for family visiting rooms.
3. Promote *family activities inside the prison centre and outside* of it through special permits.

The Parenting Group *arranges family outings* with imprisoned parents who can spend some hours with their children outside of prison, in a friendly atmosphere.

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<sup>3</sup> See the presentation: *Experiències amb famílies a l'àmbit europeu: Good Practice Collection* // Presentation document of the Intervention Framework Group Program with families

<http://ceife.gencat.cat/ca/formacio/gestcon/cop/ambit-penal/trebsocials/13j-trebsocials-2018/>

<sup>4</sup> [me-we.eu](http://me-we.eu)



*Didactic materials for family visiting rooms.*



*Picture of E. Fontarnau  
Family activities inside prison (September 2018).*



*Picture of E. Fontarnau  
Family activities outside prison. Casa Anita Children Bookseller's backyard.  
Parents can spend some hours with their children in an enabling environment (July, August 2019).*



*Picture of E. Fontarnau  
Family activities inside prison (March 2019).*



*Futbolnet Program of the Football Club Barcelona Foundation.  
First, Parents are trained by monitors of the Foundation and later on we arrange family meetings were held and parents lead the games with their children under the supervision of instructors from the Foundation (July 2019).*

4. *Creating network with partnerships and adhesion in platforms and bodies in Catalonia which defend the human rights of children.*

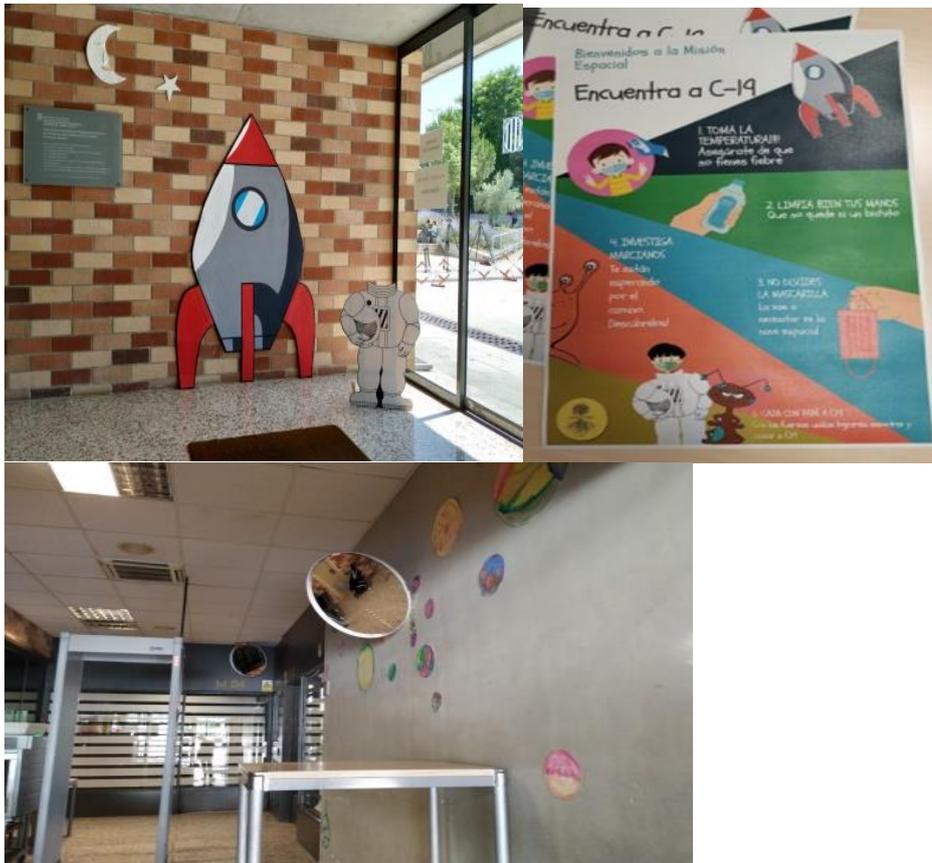


5. *Promote activities with parents through an artistic point of view.*
6. *Tutorial Program between imprisoned parents and their children's teachers in collaboration with the Víctor Català Adult School at Brians 2 Prison Centre.*

Facing the Covid\_19 emergency, the Parenting Group has taken several actions. In addition, Covid\_19 allowed the use of Tablet and Video calls, which opens a new range of online activities that although proximity was lost, other important aspects were gained, such as the contact between foreign inmates and their children who live outside our country. The activities carried out were:

*The Spacecraft Project* took place in June when family communications were re-established after more than three months of quarantine. The idea came as an initiative to stimulate the reception of children at the prison centre in a friendly and adapted way according to their needs. The proposal was a game in which children could assume new health measures added to the challenges already posed by known safety measures (queues, documentation, belongings, rackets, and gates, etc.,).

In order to make this process easier, it was guided with the best language for children: the game. The Spacecraft remained throughout the Prison Centre entrance itinerary until the Communications Department until December, when it was replaced by a Christmas decoration also based on the game.



- [Stop motion La Fuerza](#)<sup>5</sup> was led by the artistic instructors of the Parenting Group where parents sent messages to their children from an artistic perspective.



Stop motion La Fuerza

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7wVaicVmRw&t=45s>

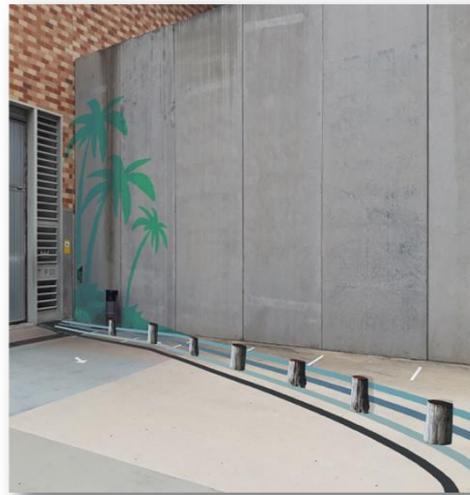
- *The Guess the Riddle Family Activity.* This activity started in summer 2020 to respond to the impossibility of carrying out the programming of face-to-face activities planned within the GGERP. This programming responds to the need to offer meeting spaces between parents and children to strengthen their links and their direct contact through their fraternal roles in a healthy and comfortable way.

The pandemic has restricted these meeting spaces, but has offered the possibility of exploring new communication skills and games through video calls and mobile devices. In the "Guess the Riddle" activity, imprisoned parents sent videos to their children challenging them to resolve different types of riddles. The children returned those videos with their replies, giving their parents the opportunity of seeing them in their own spaces and family environment (rooms, taking care of the house, etc.). The activity ended with a family video call. It has allowed keeping contact between foreign parents imprisoned with their children.



The objectives of the GGERP for this year, apart from consolidating all the activities that have been carried out in the last years, go through:

- Working together with the Ombudsperson for the rights of children to promote the implementation of Recommendation CM / Rec (2018).
- Introduce games with colours in the visits with a glass-screen.
- Improve, adapt and make nicer halls in the centre, according to the child's perspective to transform them in communication spaces.



- According to other European experiences, create a video that could explain and prepare the children who will know what the prison is like for the first time.
- Create safe spaces where parents could explain to their children, when they were prepared for it, the reasons why they are in prison in order to avoid telling lies. This is a usual request from prisoners and their partners. They also need to be professionally accompanied.

Barcelona, March 2021