



CO-LOCATED PRISON POPULATIONS

SUMMARY BY THE EUROPRIS REAL ESTATE EXPERT GROUP

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper, produced by the EuroPris Real Estate Expert Group, offers a rapid search of co-located prison populations of Juveniles and Women to inform the commencement of an initial scoping exercise ahead of the progression of the new research paper of the University of Applied Science in Vienna – Secure Architectural Prison Design for Juveniles and Women (SAPJW). It contains valuable information for prison services in Europe, which might also consider implementing co-located prison populations, especially in times of overcrowding.

The University of Applied Science in Vienna has been commissioned by the Austrian Ministry of Justice to develop a structural and organisational recommendation guideline for prisons, focusing on the needs of female and juvenile prisoners in the prison system in Austria. This was following the conclusion of their recent work on the [Efficient, Secure and Structural Detention Design of Prisons \(ESSDDP\)](#), also commissioned by the above.

This report also contains the contribution of EuroPris: The chair of the EuroPris Real Estate Expert Group was interviewed and contributed due to his role to this previous research project by presenting the [EuroPris Designing for Rehabilitation report \(2019\)](#) highlighting needs in the area of prison design in Europe, and sharing best practice examples of different countries. This ESSDDP research project concluded at its official launch in Vienna in October 2024 with the participation of the EuroPris Real Estate Expert Group representative and other EuroPris members.

2. BACKGROUND

The current situation in the Austrian prison system in regard to this study can be described as follows: Excluding the four prisons for the execution of measures, there are currently 24 correctional centres in Austria, 14 of which offer at least one women's section.

There is also one penal institution for women. Male juveniles and male adults subject to juvenile detention are currently housed in the Gerasdorf Special Centre in Austria. These juveniles are expected to be relocated to the new Münnichplatz special detention centre for juveniles in early 2025. There are also six court detention centres with their own juvenile section, where pre-trial detention and shorter prison sentences are carried out. There are also detention centres in other court prisons, albeit without a designated juvenile section.

The Project Secure Architectural Prison Design for Juveniles and Women (SAPJW) aims to develop a structural and organisational recommendation guideline for prisons, focusing on the needs of female and juvenile inmates in the prison system. This project is supported and funded by KIRAS, the Austrian Security Research Programme, which supports national research projects whose results contribute to the security of all members of society. The current phase focuses on critical infrastructures. KIRAS is owned by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance, and projects are managed by the Austrian Research Promotion Agency. The interdisciplinary project team is made up of the two departments of Architecture - Green Building and Risk and Security Management at the University of Applied Science Campus Vienna and the Institute for the Sociology of Law and Crime at the University of Innsbruck.

Using this interdisciplinary approach of criminal sociology, law and architecture, measures are being developed to improve the organisation of detention for women and young people. Care is taken to ensure that women are not restricted to socially traditional roles in the context of employment but are encouraged to make self-determined decisions.

Young people are also to be supported in their development into self-determined and responsible adults. Standardised structural framework conditions that are coordinated with the needs of all user groups and are economically and ecologically sustainable should help to achieve these prison objectives.

Women and juveniles are marginalised groups in the prison system and therefore require special consideration and support with regard to reintegration. The focus here is on specific gender-sensitive and socio-psychological as well as pedagogical aspects, and supportive structural and technical framework conditions.

As women and young people make up only a small proportion of the total prison population in Europe, they face particular challenges. Orientation towards the male prison system leads to over-adaptation. This has an impact on the organisation of imprisonment, in particular, training and employment opportunities. Not least for this reason, the access of these vulnerable groups to suitable leisure activities, work, schooling and further education is often severely restricted.

Due to their age, juveniles are a minority within the prison system and require special protection and increased attention. A lack of meaningful employment opportunities has a particularly serious impact on them. To promote their personal development, they need adequate work, training and leisure activities.

3. QUESTION

The SAPJW project will examine architectural detention design for juveniles and women in prisons, with a particular emphasis on correctional facilities that house men, women, and juveniles (under 18) in separate sections. These mixed facilities present unique structural and organisational challenges compared to institutions designed exclusively for women or juveniles, which typically offer more tailored environments.

At the beginning of the project, research was conducted to determine if there are facilities in Europe which co-locate and focus on both women and juveniles under 18. Therefore, EuroPris was asked for assistance.

To support the initial scoping exercise, the EuroPris Real Estate Expert Group were asked the following questions during Spring 2025:

“The composition of the Austrian prison estate currently incorporates a number of prison facilities which house co-located populations of prisoners (men, women and juveniles). As part of a broader piece of work, reviewing the approach to the detention of women and juveniles, we would be grateful if you could identify the existence of any prisons within your own prison estates which house different co-located populations (men, women and juveniles (under 18). Ideally, the response should include:

- *Name and location of the Facility*
- *An explanation of the co-located categories of men, women and juveniles housed at the facility (including age categories), and*
- *The indicative population housed within each category at that facility”*

4. RESPONSES

4.1 CATALONIA

There are a number of co-located populations within the Catalonian prison system. Offenders under the age of 18 belong to the Juvenile Justice system, not to the prison system and are located in specific educational centres if mandatory.

There is one specific facility that holds young adults 18-21. The design emphasises functionality, integration with the environment, and the promotion of social, educational, cultural, sports, and environmental development for young prisoners.

Catalonia's prison service has a total of 7.600 prisoners, of which 553 are women (402 closed, 111 open regime) and 354 are young men between 18-21 years.

Catalonia is working on building a new only women's facility to substitute the actual women's centre that is outdated and located in the middle of the city of Barcelona. This new facility will have the capacity for 500 female prisoners and will be designed with a gender perspective, taking into account the specific needs of women deprived of liberty, such as their condition as victims of gender-based violence or as mothers with children under the age of three (limit legal age in Catalonia for children to stay with their mother inside prison).

4.2 CROATIA

Women and juveniles (under 18) are generally housed separately in Croatia. The exception occurs in pre-trial detention, where they may be held in the same facility but remain in separate sections.

Sentenced female prisoners are primarily housed in the penitentiary facility in Požega, with small numbers temporarily placed in a diagnostic centre, hospital, or regional prisons.

Juvenile sentenced offenders under 18 are housed in two dedicated correctional institutions in Turopolje for male juveniles, and in Požega for female juveniles.

To ensure a better geographical dissemination for female imprisonment and improved accommodation conditions, there are plans to build a women's wing within a new penitentiary facility in Ličko-senjska County. This initiative aims to provide improved accessibility and support for female inmates.

4.3 DENMARK

As a general rule, men, women and young persons are housed separately at different institutions in Denmark, however, there are some co-located populations.

Women are generally detained and serve their sentences in a women's prison (Jyderup Prison). The prison has 143 places (58 are detention places, 45 are open places, and 40 are closed places) and receives women from all over the country. However, there are also female prisoners in Ringe Prison, which is a closed prison for prisoners sentenced to deportation. The female prisoners are placed here in a special section and are thus shielded from the other prisoners. Ringe Prison has a total of 141 places, of which 15 are reserved for women.

Given the limited number of places in Jyderup Prison, the geographical conditions and the processing of the detainees' cases, it is often necessary to place women in detention centres all over the country while they are detained and awaiting final judgment. In addition, it is possible to serve shorter sentences of up to 6 months in custody, if, among other things, family circumstances and the principle of proximity speak for this. Finally, it may be necessary to place female prisoners in a prison with a higher security class than Jyderup Prison and Ringe Prison. In all of the above cases, efforts are made to shield the women as much as possible from the male prisoners.

Young people are generally placed in secure institutions under the municipalities. In special cases, they can be placed in a dedicated department in Søbysøgård Prison, where they are shielded from the other detainees. Søbysøgård Prison has a total capacity of 181 places, divided into 139 open and 42 closed places.

A single department in open and closed regimes, respectively, functions as juvenile departments with space for five and seven inmates aged 15-17 years. Furthermore, it happens that young people are placed in some of the detention centres for a shorter period, where the young offenders are shielded as much as possible from the other prisoners.

4.4 FRANCE

In France, 59 out of 186 prisons, i.e. about 30% of prisons, accommodate women and/or minors in penitentiary centres that also accommodate men.

The penal population of women prisoners on March 1, 2025, is 2817 persons, or about 3.4% of the total penal population. Among the mixed prisons, 45 accommodate women for a total of 2128 places, or about 84% of the total number of places for women. 3 prisons are exclusively open to women. These units are of disparate size, but apart from the Fleury-Mérogis penitentiary centre, the average size is about 30 places. These are mainly remand prison places, either for remand prisoners or people sentenced to a sentence of less than 2 years.

The criminal population of minors (boys and girls) on March 1, 2025, is 824 persons, or about 1% of the total penal population. Among the mixed prisons, 40 accommodate juveniles (39 for boys and 4 for girls), for a total of 744 places, or about 67% of the total number of places for minors. 6 establishments specifically accommodate minors, boys and girls.

They were built in the 2010s with the aim of improving the care of the public. In the current real estate programme, places for minors are being created in prisons for men (or even women) to improve the network of places for juveniles and to replace old and unsuitable accommodations for minors. While there are 60 places in each specialised establishment for minors, the size of the minors' accommodations in structures for adults is smaller, with an average of 20 places. These are strict individual cells. The supply of places for girls is very limited, which is related to the need.

In facilities prior to the 2000s, women's and minors' accommodations were generally located within buildings segmented between men and women. Currently, the women's and minors' accommodations are specific buildings.

4.5 ITALY

Italian law states that young people up to the age of 25 are to be held in institutions for minors.

Women are held in dedicated buildings that are often located on larger sites (Approximately 600 of the 2,600 women prisoners are housed in prisons only for women).

Mothers with children up to the age of 3 can live together in a women prison.

4.6 LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY

In Lower Saxony (Germany), women, men and juveniles are housed in dedicated institutions which are not co-located.

4.7 NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland prison system experienced a rapid expansion of the estate, to cope with a surge in the prison population during the 'Troubles' of the 1970's followed by a subsequent contraction of the estate as society normalised from the 1990s onwards.

The contraction of the estate and subsequent closure of some prisons resulted in the remaining prisons largely housing populations and categories of prisoners for which they were not originally designed. As a consequence, the subsequent co-location of different categories of prisoners is a feature within the three remaining prisons.

Two of the prisons (Maghaberry and Magilligan) house adult males (which between them house security categories A-D, including sentenced, remands and those detained for Northern Ireland-related terrorism). The other prison at Hydebank accommodates young people from the age of 18.

The site at Hydebank also houses the co-located female prison population. Young people between the ages of 10-17 are housed in a youth Justice facility, Woodlands, which is run by a sister organisation, the Youth Justice Agency.

In relation to Hydebank, Architecturally it is a 'Campus' layout with a good amount of external green space. The facility was originally built in 1978, but a number of refurbishments and additions have occurred since to provide a modern Learning & Skills facility, together with other work to provide a more welcoming environment and promote its status as a secure college. It also includes Murray House, an 'independent living' facility built outside of the prison. There are also plans to provide further domestic houses to support independent living (accommodating groups of 4-6 individuals) inside the prison.

At its most recent external inspection in 2024 (by HM Inspector of Prisons and Criminal Justice NI), Hydebank received top marks in all assessment categories – a first for a prison in Northern Ireland. Described by the Justice Minister as “a model of excellence and good practice, transforming lives.”

4.8 REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Juveniles are the responsibility of the Youth Justice Service in Ireland.

There are two female prisons, located at Limerick Prison and Mountjoy Prison.

The Limerick Female prison (dedicated separate building) is co-located on the same site as the male prison. The prison infrastructure is mostly segregated (Only key ancillary services are shared; food and laundry services are provided by the male prison to the females, and there is a common visitor access point for both prisons). Prisoners do not mix, and the prisons operate independently of each other.

The Dochás Centre (Known as the Mountjoy Female Prison) is co-located on the same campus as Mountjoy Prison (male prison), both share the same site in Dublin. All services are provided separately to the female prison, including General Healthcare, Mental Health, Regimes, Work training, Education, Exercise yards, kitchen and laundry, reception, etc.

5. CONCLUSION

This report by the EuroPris Real Estate Expert Group provides a foundation for understanding the current landscape of co-located prison populations in several European countries, specifically focusing on women and juveniles. The findings reveal that while full co-location remains rather uncommon, several EuroPris member jurisdictions do operate facilities where different categories of prisoners share a site or infrastructure, though typically in separate units.

While Catalonia is building a new dedicated women's facility focusing on gender-sensitive needs, Northern Ireland has co-located women and young adults at Hydebank in a campus-style environment for several years. In contrast, countries like Lower Saxony, Germany and Croatia maintain strict separation but are exploring new infrastructure options to better meet the needs of women and juveniles.

The responses collected underscore the diversity of approaches, shaped by national legal frameworks, infrastructure constraints, and the specific needs of these vulnerable groups. In times of prison overcrowding, this report can serve as a helpful resource for European prison services seeking to learn from each other's solutions and experiences.

The insights gained will support the University of Applied Sciences Vienna and the SAPJW project in developing structural and organisational guidelines that are not only gender- and age-sensitive, but also socially, economically, and operationally sustainable. Through the contributions of EuroPris, this initial scoping exercise serves as a valuable step toward designing inclusive prison environments that recognise the unique challenges faced by women and juveniles in custody.



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