



ANTIGONE

PER I DIRITTI E LE GARANZIE NEL SISTEMA PENALE

MINOR PROSPECTIVES

Antigone's 7th Report on Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Detention Centers

Press kit

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We say this with concern: these are lesser perspectives that we see today than two years ago, when we published our previous report on juvenile justice in Italy. Lesser perspectives for the system, which is giving up meeting with fullness those inspiring principles on which it was built and which made juvenile justice in our country become a model at the European level; lesser perspectives for the operators, some of whom do an extraordinary job outside and inside prisons and find themselves with increasingly blunt and ineffective tools; and, above all, lesser perspectives for the boys and girls, who find themselves around more bars - physical and metaphorical - and less hope regarding their future. This Seventh Antigone Report on Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Correctional Institutions is the result, as always, of our analysis and elaboration and direct observation of juvenile detention facilities. Over the past months we have visited Italian juvenile detention centers and some communities that house minors in the penal area. The report also consists of videos and images, as we entered the facilities equipped with video cameras. To physically enter juvenile prisons is to become aware of the spaces, to talk to the operators, to perceive the internal climate. It is a knowledge of the system that only direct observation can give and that we want to give back here.

Attached to the Report is "Traverse," our podcast on juvenile justice made by Rebecca Zagarella.

We would like to thank the Department of Juvenile and Community Justice for granting us the opportunity to visit juvenile detention centers also with the use of video cameras. Thanks are also due to all the Antigone observers who carried out the visits. Finally, our work would not be possible without the support of Legance - Avvocati Associati, the Eight per thousand of the Waldensian Church, the "Compagnia di San Paolo" Foundation, the "Haiku Lugano" Foundation, the "Con il Sud" Foundation and the CRT Foundation.

THE BACKWARD STEPS OF THE SO-CALLED CAIVANO DECREE. THE NUMBER OF PRISONERS JUVENILES IS GROWING AND WILL CONTINUE TO GROW

The so-called Caivano Decree has introduced a series of measures that are having and will continue to have destructive effects on the juvenile justice system, both in terms of increased recourse to detention and in terms of the quality of recovery paths for the young offender. The extension of the possibilities for the application of accompaniment following flagrante delicto and pre-trial detention disrupts the structure of the 1988 Code of Juvenile Procedure and is already leading to a surge in admissions to juvenile detention centers. The increase in sentences and the possibility of ordering pre-trial detention particularly for minor drug-related offenses - paragraph 5 of the Article 73,

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which constitutes by far the main actor in our criminal justice system – will continue to result in a large influx of young people in prison even during the pre-trial phase. Instead of intervening in drug addiction services and education in schools, we are going to toughen up an offending figure that will lead to more arrests of minors who consume even mild psychotropic substances and are often only occasionally involved with dealing.

PUNISHING TO EDUCATE: A SHORT-SIGHTED AND HARMFUL POLICY

Antigone's Seventh Report on Juvenile Justice and Juvenile Correctional Institutions highlights the risks of setting aside a fine Italian history of de-institutionalizing boys and girls. A story that has been a boast within the European Union. "Punish to educate" is a losing policy. It is illusory, as well as socially harmful, to pursue the goals included in this slogan that is so fashionable today in prisons and even in schools. A slogan that has become an active policy. Juvenile criminal justice did not deserve the regulatory involutions present in the so-called Caivano Decree Law that takes us back a few decades in the legal history of our country. Starting in 1988, with the entry into force of the new Code of Criminal Procedure, Italy had chosen another path, that of the best interests of the child.

THE ANTI-PEDAGOGICAL IDEA OF 'FORCED' JUVENILE REEDUCATION

The introduction of the "juvenile's reeducation path" twists the idea of individual assessment aimed at the juvenile's best interest proper to juvenile justice. Its proposition is in fact mandatory in the cases provided for, and refusal on the part of the juvenile or failure to follow the path goes to determine the impossibility of access to probation. Unlike the latter, however, the reeducation path mandatorily requires the youth to perform socially useful work or other activities free of charge, thus preventing the magistrate's case-by-case assessment with respect to how it is best for him or her to spend his or her time (where study plays a privileged role given the age of the target subjects).

BOYS TREATED LIKE PARCELS

The introduction of the possibility for the director of the juvenile detention center to promote the transfer of the youth to an adult prison succumbs to the easy temptation of providing a tool of ready resolution of the problem to the institution that is even momentarily faced with a young inmate who is difficult to manage, which of course happens not infrequently in the prison context. However, the resolution is based on neutralizing the problem rather than genuinely taking care of it, to the detriment of the young person's journey, which will be seriously compromised with the transition to the adult prison model. Thus the boys are treated as parcel post. These are the most difficult detained boys to deal with, often unaccompanied foreign minors with behavioral disorders, substance addiction problems, psychotropic drugs and/alcohol,

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loneliness, violence suffered during migration routes. Boys with extremely tiring experiences behind them, lacking affective references and little awareness of what is happening to them, who can express their malaise through disturbing behaviours. It then happens that the boy enters prison on the charge of a single crime and collects many others (outrage and resistance to a public official, damage, brawling, rioting), in a vicious circle that if not interrupted by listening and support will only lead to festering situations and make these young people lose all hope. They are continuously transferred from a juvenile detention center to another, making it impossible for them to be properly taken care of. And when they turn 18, some directors get rid of them for good by sending them to the adult system, the one that in the first forty-five days of 2024 has already accumulated 20 suicides. Parcels and not kids in need of care, help, love.

"FROM OTHER CRIMINALS YOU CAN ONLY LEARN DELINQUENCY" (Baby Gang).

The stories we have collected of the boys and girls who end up in juvenile penal institutions explain how recidivism rates are extremely high, especially when the boys, upon turning 18, are catapulted into adult prisons, interrupting a path of educational intake. A huge detriment to the boy and to the safety of the country.

THE FIRST NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF THE CAIVANO DECREE

In early 2024 there are about 500 inmates in Italian juvenile prisons. Such a figure has not been reached in over a decade. Admissions to juvenile detention center are rising sharply. If they were 835 in 2021, we had 1,143 in 2023, the highest figure in at least the past 15 years. There were 340 boys in a juvenile detention center on remand in January 2024, while there were 243 a year earlier, a clear sign of the effects of the Caivano Decree. The growth in attendance over the past 12 months is made up almost entirely of girls and boys on remand. Another effect of the decree is the significant growth in juvenile detention center admissions for violations of the narcotics law, with a 37.4 percent increase in just one year. The presence in juvenile detention centers today is mostly made up of underage boys and girls. The most represented age group is 16 and 17 years old, and in total minors are in the vast majority, almost 60 percent of those present. Two years ago the situation was exactly reversed. The increased possibility introduced by the Caivano Decree to transfer adult boys from juvenile detention centers to adult prisons is showing its effects, with enormous damage to the boys' future.

JUVENILE CRIME IS MORE OR LESS STABLE. NUMBERS UP FROM 2020 (COVID YEAR) BUT IDENTICAL TO 2015 NUMBERS

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Data provided by Istat and the Ministry of the Interior regarding juveniles arrested and/or investigated during the period 2010-2022, show a peak in 2015, a total of 32,566 juveniles being reported (the highest number recorded so far). From 2015, on the other hand, there is a steady decrease until 2019, while the lowest number of reports in the period under review was reached in 2020 with 25,088 reports, a decrease mainly due to the restrictions imposed to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, after a downward trend in previous years, there was a slight increase from 2020 (28,954 reports) while 2022 saw a considerable increase in reports, with 32,522 minors reported, almost matching the peak reached in 2015.

32,522 REPORTS WITH ABOUT 3 MILLION CHILDREN AGED 14-18 YEARS OLD

The number of referrals to the criminal justice authorities of juveniles, compared to the total number of under-18s residing in Italy, is roughly equal to one referral for every 100 children and youths. Given that the criminal caseload of a boy who goes to a juvenile detention center includes at least two reports this number becomes even more rarefied. In the case of adults it becomes one report for every thirty.

THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS TOWARD MINORS IS CONSTANT OVER TIME. GEOGRAPHY CHANGES, HOWEVER. NORTHWEST'S RECORD WITH ABOUT 10,000 REPORTS

The Northwest regions (Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta) have the highest number of reports. The trend is characterised by an increasing trend over the long period under review. The two-year period 2021-2022 presents the peaks of the entire time series, with 9,849 reports in 2021 and 10,486 in 2022. The figures are similar to those of 2015 and are up from 2020, which, however, was the year of lockdown and the lowest number of crimes in decades even among adults. In the Northeast geographic area (Emilia- Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, and Veneto), the trend in juvenile crime is almost superimposable to that of the Northwest regions, albeit on a smaller order of magnitude: an upward trend is also shown here in the two-year period 2021-2022.

THE CONTAINED NUMBERS IN THE CENTER OF ITALY AND THE DECREASE IN THE ISLANDS AND IN THE SOUTH WHERE THERE ARE BETWEEN 2015 AND 2022 AS MANY AS 2 THOUSAND FEWER CRIME REPORTS

In the regions of the Center (Lazio, Marche, Toscana and Umbria) there has been a slight increase in recent years while in the regions of the South (Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise and Puglia) there has been a significant decrease. About 6 thousand reports in the center of Italy, about 5 thousand in the south (it was about 7 thousand in 2015) and about 3 thousand in the islands.

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A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS IN THE COST OF LIVING IN THE NORTH THAT IS UNBEARABLE FOR THOSE LIVING ON THE EDGE OF WELFARE

The rising cost of living, as well as the privatisation of certain public services - much more so in the North than in the South - prevents certain segments of the population from accessing a number of services that are fundamental to everyday life, to which those same people had access instead in years past; therefore, the difficulty or impossibility of using certain services leads to those who can afford them instead being seen as "privileged" in society, who have the opportunity to live in more affluent conditions despite not having merit. This sense of frustration, especially in urban areas where there has been a crisis in the welfare system in recent years, fosters the emergence of deviant behavior, which is fueled by the awareness of having less than others without any real underlying reason.

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS LEFT ALONE AND "MARANZA"

To these must then be added factors determined by the historical context: for example, it has emerged that from 2021 onward there has been an increase in reports of fights, injuries or beatings involving minors, with a steady rise in foreign minors involved in this type of crime. The absence of educational activities aimed at unaccompanied foreign minors has fueled an uneasiness that in some cases explodes into illicit conduct, especially predatory conduct. This is accompanied by the phenomenon of the so-called "maranza," a recently introduced term used, as the Accademia della Crusca explains, "to identify a certain type of boys (less frequently girls) who share the same clothing styles (e.g., designer clothes, mostly counterfeit), the same musical tastes (such as trap), and a sometimes crude or vulgar language and attitude". These elements can and should be taken into account, but in the context of a broader assessment that investigates juvenile distress by looking at the family, economic, and social conditions of the very young who enter criminal circuits.

496 JUVENILES AND YOUNG ADULTS ARE DETAINED IN 17 JUVENILE PENAL INSTITUTIONS. 13 GIRLS. 254 FOREIGNERS

As of January 15, 2024, there were 496 juveniles and young adults held in our country's 17 juvenile penal institutions. There were 13 women, 2.6 percent of those present, and 254 foreigners, 51.2 percent of those present, thus more than half. The institution with the highest attendance was Beccaria in Milan, with 69 boys; those with the fewest were Quartucciu in Sardinia, with 8 boys present, and Pontremoli in Tuscany, Italy's only all-female juvenile detention center, with 8 girls. The other 5 girls present were distributed between Naples and Rome.

NEVER THIS MANY SINCE 2012, YET IN 2015 THE NUMBER OF CRIMES WAS THE SAME

For the second year in a row, average daily attendance is growing. However, the growth in 2022 (382 average attendance, 62 more than the year before) had a somewhat

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different meaning. We were coming from the Covid-19 pandemic that had resulted in a significant drop in attendance, and the growth may simply have represented a return to "normalcy." With the growth recorded during 2023 (425 attendees on average, 53 more) we exceeded the numbers of previous years, and as we have seen, we reached close to 500 attendees in January 2024.

68.5 PERCENT ARE IN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER WITHOUT A FINAL CONVICTION. GROWTH IN ADMISSIONS OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS IS MADE UP ALMOST ENTIRELY OF GIRLS AND BOYS ON REMAND

As of mid-January, there were 156 definitives, a year earlier 142, similar numbers then, while those on remand rose from 243 to 340. The growth in admissions over the past 12 months is thus made up almost entirely of girls and boys on remand.

JUVENILES INCARCERATED IN DETENTION CENTERS ARE 57.7 PERCENT OF THOSE PRESENT

The presence in juvenile detention centers today is made up mostly of underage boys and girls. It should be remembered that in juvenile detention centers there can also be boys (between 18 and 25 years old) who committed the crime as juveniles and came of age later. The most represented group is 16- and 17-year-olds. In total, juveniles are 57.7 percent, of those present, especially among girls (61.5 percent) and foreigners (64.2 percent). The latter are therefore very young.

As of January 15, 2023, minors were 50.1%, but in the past there have long been more boys and girls of age, who were 58.5% on January 15, 2022, and 57.6% as of January 15, 2020.

9 INSTITUTIONS IN THE SOUTH OF WHICH 4 ARE IN SICILY

Nearly half of minors in juvenile detention centers, to be precise 48.8 percent of those present, are detained in Sicily, Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata and Campania. In fact, 9 of the 17 juvenile detention centers in operation in Italy are located in these regions, and therefore the phenomenon of juvenile detention immediately appears, to a significant extent, to have the south as its protagonist, at least as far as Italian boys are concerned, who now account for roughly half of those present.

FOREIGNERS ARE GIVEN FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

Analysis of the numbers for foreign girls and boys allows us to note what we have been saying for a long time: the system works better for those who are upstream more guaranteed and can rely on external social and family networks. Regardless of the severity of the crime, as we move towards more restraining measures, the over-representation of foreign minors grows compared to Italian minors, for whom we find easier access to pathways that should avoid the restrictions typical of the penal system. As of December 31, 2023, of the 496 inmates in juvenile detention centers, 269 were foreigners, as much as 54.2 percent of the total. Among them, 75.5 percent were

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in pre-trial detention, compared to 57.7 percent of Italians, while 24.5 percent had a final sentence.

THE OVERREPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN YOUTHS

There were 557 admissions of foreign youths to prison in 2023, accounting for 48.7 percent of the total 1,143 admissions to juvenile detention centers. The clear over-representation of foreign youths in A criminal institute is partially mitigated if we look at communities. During 2023, community admissions of foreign boys accounted for 38.7 percent of total admissions. Almost 60 percent of them were related to the application of a precautionary measure. Only 12.4 percent had entered with a probation measure, compared to more than 18 percent of the same figure regarding Italian boys and girls.

LITTLE PUT ON PROBATION, TOO MUCH CUSTODY IN PRISON

If we focus on a particularly open and successful measure that has increasingly characterised the juvenile justice system over the years, we see that there were 6,592 probation measures adopted during the year 2023, of which 1,320 – only 20 percent of the total – involved foreign boys and girls. On the other hand, if we look at the pre-trial measures applied during the same year, we see that only 28.4 percent of the less afflictive measures of home detention and prescriptions involved young foreigners, who are more likely recipients of pre-trial detention.

THE MOST COME FROM NORTH AFRICA

Regarding the geographic origin of the foreign youths, the largest presence is represented by youths from North Africa (particularly Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt), who accounted for 76.8 percent of the total entries of foreigners into juvenile detention centers and 61.9 percent of the total entries of foreigners into communities.

FROM FIRST RECEPTION CENTERS FOREIGNERS COME OUT PENALIZED

Looking now at First Reception Centers, we then see that of the 852 admissions in 2023, as many as 407 involved foreign boys, or 47.8 percent, almost half of the total. Looking at the discharge orders from the CPAs, we see that 25.6 percent of the boys who came out with a permanency order were foreigners, while 41.3 percent of the boys placed in the community and as many as 66.7 percent of the boys sent to juvenile detention center on remand were foreigners. As mentioned, as the measure becomes more restraining, the percentage of foreigners rises.

FOREIGNERS IN PRISON ARE MORE THAN 50%, ARE YOUNGER AND COMMIT LESS SERIOUS CRIMES THAN ITALIANS

As of January 15, 2024, there were 254 foreign boys and girls in juvenile detention centers, 51.2% of those. Foreign boys are from Tunisia (12.3%), Morocco (10.6%) and Egypt (10.4%). Girls, on the other hand, are mainly from Bosnia and Herzegovina

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(23.3%), Serbia (10%) and Croatia (8.3%). Foreigners are on average younger than Italians, 64.2% minors compared to 50.8% of Italians. They are more often in pre-trial detention (75.6% vs. 61.2% of Italians) and generally commit less serious crimes: 63.9% are detained for property crimes vs. 47.2% of Italians.

13 GIRLS DETAINED, UP LIKE THE REST OF THE ADMISSIONS

Throughout Italy there were 13 (including 8 juveniles) girls detained as of January 15 (including 8 in Italy's only exclusively female detention center, that of Pontremoli), the majority (10 out of 13) foreigners. In addition to Pontremoli, the girls are housed in female sections of the Rome and Nisida. A total of 60 girls entered juvenile detention center in 2023, 5.2 percent of admissions. Of them, 36 were foreigners, 60 percent of the total.

MORE THAN ONE IN TWO CRIMES IS AGAINST PROPERTY. NOTABLE GROWTH IN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER ADMISSIONS FOR NARCOTICS VIOLATIONS

Crimes against the person account for 22.7 percent of all crimes against persons entering in juvenile detention centers. The most frequent category of crimes are crimes against property, accounting for 55.2 percent of the total crimes against all those who entered criminal institutes during 2023, 63.9 percent when looking only at foreigners, and even 70.2 percent when looking only at women. Among property crimes, the most recurrent is robbery, which weighs 30.5 percent of the total crimes charged against all those who entered in a juvenile detention center during the year, followed by theft with 15.1 percent. This is similar to the figure recorded at the end of 2023.

Crimes against public safety (10.6 percent of the total) basically coincide with narcotics law violations, accounting for 10.2 percent of the total crimes charged to those who entered in a criminal institute 2023, and 14.5 percent when looking at Italians alone. These numbers, when looking at admissions in 2022, were 6.9 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively. In fact, if one compares the crimes charged to people who entered in a juvenile detention center during 2022 with those who entered in 2023, the greatest growth is precisely for drug law violations, which increased by 37.4 percent in a single year.

PUT ON PROBATION: AN EXPONENTIAL INCREASE OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS

At the end of 2023, 18.8 percent of youths in Ussm's care were on probation. The institution of probation has seen a sharp increase in its use over the years. Between 1992 and 2022, grants of this measure increased steadily from 788 to 4,553. Of the total number of measures, the percentage of successful outcomes in 2022 was around 85 percent, in line with past years. The high success rate recorded shows that, in most cases, young people who receive trust and support through structured pathways are then able to return this trust by successfully passing the test they are subjected to.

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FIRST SENTENCES TO SUBSTITUTE PUNISHMENTS INTRODUCED BY CARTABIA REFORM

The Cartabia Reform of the criminal justice process repealed the little-used substitute penalties, introducing in their place the new substitute sentences. Within a year of their enactment, substituted punishments have also begun to see their first applications in the juvenile field, with four boys in Ussm's care during 2023.

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES, ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION AND SECURITY MEASURES

In 2023, the Ussm had 661 boys and girls in their charge for noncustodial pre-trial measures (prescriptions and home confinement); 590 for alternative measures to detention (probation to social services, home detention and semi-release); and 108 boys for security measures (probation or community placement).

MOST OF THE YOUTH IN USSM'S CARE ARE AWAITING A HEARING. BOYS AND GIRLS ON PROBATION FOLLOW.

As of Dec. 31, 2023, there were 14,245 boys and girls in the care of Juvenile Social Service Offices. Of these, the vast majority (62.7 percent) are juveniles for whom the execution of a measure has ended or a request from the Judicial Authority has already been processed, who are awaiting a hearing. They are followed by boys and girls on probation (18.8 percent) and juveniles in charge only for investigations and projects (9.5 percent). With much lower percentages, there are juveniles and young adults detained within a juvenile detention center (3.3 percent), those with a criminal measure - precautionary, alternative to detention, security or substitution - (2.9 percent) and those housed in a community for measures other than the previous ones (2.8 percent). Finally, only two boys in the care of the Ussm were housed in Primary Care Centers.

936 BOYS IN COMMUNITIES, SLIGHTLY LESS THAN TWICE AS MANY AS THOSE INCARCERATED IN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS. ONLY THREE PUBLIC COMMUNITIES

At the end of 2023, the residential communities on the national territory housed 936 minors or young adults subjected to criminal prosecution, just under twice the number of children in juvenile detention. The residential communities available for the reception of minors or young adults in the penal area are 628. They are communities that operate primarily in the field of civil justice. Only three of them are public.

LIFE IN PRIVATE COMMUNITIES

The network of private communities, which is a fundamental resource for the functioning of the system, is uneven in relation to the supply of activities and internal life, and has many critical issues. Many of these are rooted in the economic element, as

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the ministerial contribution is often insufficient to the necessary support and to adequately train staff. To work better than are those realities that can also count on the support of other lenders. Often the structures more articulated and able to guarantee a better offer select in a more stringent way the boys coming from the penal area, reserving the places rather than the civil area. This is even more evident in the case of unaccompanied foreign minors in need of specific support. During 2023, 1,621 community placements in criminal law were made. The vast majority of them (79.5%) are due to precautionary measures. Community placements within the framework of testing measures (15.8%) follow from a great distance.

YOU END UP IN THE COMMUNITY MAINLY WITH CRIMES AGAINST PROPERTY

The highest percentage of crimes involving community placement (50% in 2023) were crimes against property (mainly robbery, followed at a distance by theft). This is followed by crimes against the person (24.1%), in about half of cases of voluntary personal injury. The violation of the drug law concerned 12.5% of the total number of crimes for which there was entry into the community, while for the ill-treatment in the family the percentage was equal to 4% and for violence or resistance to public officials to 5.2%. Almost not perceptually detectable the association to criminals and the association of mafia type. Community placements involved young adults in 21% of the total. If we look at the entrances to the juvenile prisons, we see that these were young adults in 30.9% of cases. The lower incidence of minors entering prisons compared to communities shows that the system is aimed at seeking less restrictive measures for very young people.

THE COMMUNITY SYSTEM STRUGGLES TO INTEGRATE FOREIGNERS

If we make the same reasoning now looking at the component of foreign boys, we discover that it represents 38.7% of the entrances to the community, while it represents 48.7% of the entrances to prison. For them the opposite comment applies: the system struggles more to find alternative paths to detention.

THE SOLUTIONS PROPOSED. RESULTS OF A JOINT RESEARCH WITH THE SAO PAULO COMPANY FOUNDATION: GREATER INTEGRATION OF SERVICES, FOCUS ON REINTEGRATION AT THE END OF THE SENTENCE, STRENGTHENING LOW-THRESHOLD INTERVENTIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILDREN WITH ADDICTION PROBLEMS.

Between 2022 and 2023 we carried out, with the support of the "Compagnia di San Paolo" Foundation, a research on minors and young adults offenders in Piemonte and Liguria, to identify the fragility of the system, the challenges to which it is called to respond and possible innovative responses. The difficulties that emerge are common to many other territories: the system of private communities is neither sufficient nor always adequate to the needs; there is a lack of structured support for families during and after the punishment, the discomfort linked to addictions grows and mental

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health. Greater integration between services is essential, with particular attention being paid to the aim of punishment, a strengthening of low threshold interventions for mental health and addictions and a strengthening of private communities, in particular for unaccompanied foreign minors.

JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS SEEN BY ANTIGONE

During the last two years the members of the Observatory on Juvenile Justice of Antigone have visited all 17 Italian juvenile detention centers. The picture that emerges from this work of collective monitoring is that of a changed system, forced today to face new difficulties compared to the past.

MANY CLOSED AREAS FOR RENOVATION. THIS LEADS TO A DETERIORATION IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE OPEN SECTIONS

From a structural point of view, several Institutes have undergone restructuring in recent years. Some of them have led to the closure of entire sections and the consequent transfer of many children to other facilities. This has had a decisive impact on the balance of many juvenile detention center and, consequently, on the entire juvenile prison system. The yards are still open in Milan and Florence, while they should soon begin in Airola to remedy the dilapidated conditions of the Institute (humidity problems, presence of mold, visible pipes, hot water not always guaranteed). In Catania and Treviso, the juvenile detention center have been subject to reorganisation work following protests in recent months.

THE FIRST NON-EXISTENT OVERCROWDING HAS ARRIVED

For the first time in a long time, some juvenile detention centers have started to experience overcrowding. This is the case of the Institutes of Milan, Treviso, Turin, Potenza and Florence where, at the time of the Observatory's visit, the number of young people accommodated exceeded the regulatory capacity. In Turin the management was forced for a few days to prepare the mattresses on the ground. In Florence, the room usually used for sanitary isolation has been used as an overnight room. Due to the lack of space, the juvenile detention center in Nisida stopped hosting girls in prison, having to allocate all the rooms to male sections.

FORCED TRANSFERS TO THE SOUTH OF FOREIGNERS

In the two-year period just ended, several Institutes in central and southern Italy had to compensate for the lack of places in the Institutes in the north. In the choice of who to transfer, foreign children were almost always identified, in most cases unaccompanied foreign minors who, not having a family in the territory, could be uprooted more easily.

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This solution has inevitably caused many inconveniences, both for the children displaced and for the operators of the destination Institutes who have had to manage very complex situations. In order to draw attention to their cases and to be able to return to their territories, some of these young people have staged protests, which have led, in the most serious cases, to fires and damage to the environment. The only solution found for the children involved was the transfer to another penitentiary institute, continuing the journey around the juvenile detention centers of Italy.

DIFFICULT CASES AND COMPLEX MANAGEMENT

Operators have reported that in recent years there has been an increase in children suffering from psychological distress and behavioral disorders, often managed only with the administration of drug therapies. Most of the boys with psychological discomfort, behavioral disorders or problems related to the abuse of psychotropic drugs are of foreign origin. These are often unaccompanied foreign minors, in situations of great marginality. Cases of psychological discomfort, behavioural disorders and abuse of psychotropic drugs, frequently give rise to self-harming events. From the data collected in the last two years, repeated suicide attempts have been reported in the juvenile detention center of Cagliari, two in the one of Airola and one in the one of Catanzaro. Other events are also dictated by the desperate need to be heard. The big problem, reported by several voices, is the lack of reception communities throughout the country that welcome children with mental problems and/ or addictions.

TOO MANY DISCIPLINARY ISOLATIONS

Isolation for a teenager is devastating from a psycho-physical point of view. It should be prohibited by law. In some juvenile detention center it is used with great thrift and others with too much ease. In many cases, the occurrence of critical events has produced a change of climate within some Institutes. For example, in the two Campania juvenile detention centers (Nisida and Airola) the contraction of "open cell sociality" has been detected: the moments of sharing take place in common rooms locked from the outside. In some Institutes, there has been an increase in disciplinary sanctions: in Palermo in the course of 2023 about a hundred exclusion measures were imposed from joint activities. Fortunately in other institutions isolation is never disputed. Isolation must always be prohibited, even that in fact determined by the need to protect a prisoner from other children by virtue of the type of crime committed. In Palermo for too long a boy was in de facto isolation. Daily moments of social integration with the other boys must be created.

FOREIGNERS AND ITALIANS TOGETHER OR SEPARATED?

In some institutions the separation is clear. There is no form of integration in Palermo. Instead, they live well integrated in Caltanissetta. A few kilometers away two completely different models. The first does not propose the external social reality.

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QUALIFIED STAFF

To mitigate the factors of complexity described above, a competent prison staff intervenes and has a particular sensitivity, even if often under-staffed. Policemen who are often the pedagogical vanguard in the capacity for dialogue. There is a staff imbalance between institutions despite comparable numbers. For example in Caltanissetta there is suffering while in Palermo the numbers of educators are wider.

VIDEO CALLS

Fortunately, despite the end of the health emergency, all the juvenile detention centers have maintained the possibility of making video calls, a fundamental resource especially for foreign children. On the other hand, there are still too few institutes that provide for so-called prolonged talks in environments similar to domestic ones, as required by Legislative Decree No. 121/18.

LIFE WITHIN

Wandering around the juvenile detention centre of Italy you meet the many experiences made available to the children, you see the similarities and differences in the management of internal life, you perceive the shortcomings. The activation of educational pathways is essentially transversal in all institutions, although changes in user characteristics have led to new trends: literacy courses are increasing and middle school enrolments are reduced, as for example we were reported in Turin. On the other hand, it is essential to strengthen vocational training courses, which are totally absent in all Sicilian juvenile detention centers, for example. To make up for this lack, the individual Institutes try to make do with the activation of training courses funded by the Department that do not issue official certifications and are therefore difficult to spend once out. The opposite is the case at the juvenile detention center in Bologna, where in 2023 several young people attended a professional course in the catering sector and others a course in construction. To be enhanced is also the work for older boys, especially the external ex art. 21 of the penitentiary system, missing for example in Turin and Catania. The experience of the laboratory for the preparation of bakery products "Cotti in Fraganza", born in 2016 in the complex of the juvenile detention center of Palermo with the intention of providing an opportunity for social inclusion for detained children, should be replicated from several sides, who are called to take part in all entrepreneurial choices and who can continue to work in the laboratory even at the end of the prison sentence. The products "Cotti in Fraganza" are distributed throughout the country.

Important are the efforts aimed at integration, in particular between Italian and foreign children. In Caltanissetta, for example, where at the time of the visit half of the boys were Italian and half foreigners, there was a serene atmosphere and coexistence was not perceived at all as a problem. Where in other institutions it was even argued that it was not possible not to separate children on the basis of nationality.

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The fundamental figure of the cultural mediator is present with discontinuity on the Italian territory.

In Turin in 2023 there was a significant increase in service, which today sees a constant presence for two or three hours a day. In many other Institutes - for example in Rome, despite the high presence of foreign children - there is a clear need to increase service. Many cultural, recreational and sports activities are offered to children. Of particular value are those that provide contact with the surrounding world. In Bari, for example, there is the theatre workshop "Sala Prove" run by the Teatro di Bari and financed by the Department, which currently involves six young people and which provides performances open to the public outside.

In the juvenile detention center of Catania the project "Remare in libertà", activated by the Department together with the Italian Rowing Federation, allows two boys to regularly leave the Institute to carry out a rowing course. Unauthorised children can train in the gym inside the Institute with a rowing machine positioned in front of a screen that reproduces the sea. A similar project takes place in Palermo.

In addition to being directly involved in sporting activities, some of the guys from the juvenile detention center of Cagliari participate as spectators in the football matches of Cagliari, together with children and young people in vulnerable conditions.

A political workshop has been held in Nisida for some time, which involves a discussion on issues of social importance with the city, actors, singers, politicians, social workers. Also in Nisida, some young people are also involved in a Neapolitan street food laboratory, while in Palermo a culinary laboratory project associated with intercultural activities has recently been concluded: all the boys present in the Institute have learned to cook dishes from all over the world.

"Fammi vedere la luna" is also the first video game made in an Italian prison, in particular the juvenile detention center of Airola.