
Council of Europe: report on jails. 2 million people serving alternatives to arrest. 118 thousand convicts freed during lockdown

As of 31st January 2019, there were approximately 2 million people in Europe who were serving alternatives to arrest (electronic monitoring, community service, house arrest ...). That is 7.9% more than in 2018, a figure shown by the new Space II, the annual survey commissioned by the Council of Europe to the University of Lausanne and published today. It is a source of satisfaction for the Council of Europe, which for some time now has been calling "its member states to use jails as a last resort and apply punishments other than the deprivation of liberty as often as they can", to better "promote the offenders' social rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, prevent overcrowding, improve the way jails work, and promote an effective, humane treatment of convicts". A second report, published today, gives instead a picture of the state of "convicts in Europe during the pandemic" and investigates the impact of the measures taken as a consequence of Covid-19 on correctional populations in Europe as of 15th April 2020. Twenty prison administrations out of 43 have freed convicts to reduce the spreading of Covid-19, using measures such as amnesty, early or temporary release, or alternative punishments. 118 thousand convicts seem to have been freed in Europe in the last few months. All this did not solve the problem of overcrowded jails that still afflicts some countries (Turkey, Romania, Greece, Hungary, Cyprus, Italy, France, Serbia, Czech Republic and Austria).

Valentina Bombelli