
Germany: Caritas renews website that helps children of prison inmates in Germany

The new multilingual service of Caritas, aimed at children of prison inmates in Germany, is online from this week. It replaces a previous service, since the Covid-19 restrictions have made it harder for detained parents to meet their children in prison. Prison visits are often prohibited during the pandemic, contacts with prisoners are extremely limited, and it is increasingly valuable and rare for the children involved to be informed about the lives of their detained parents. Some 100,000 children in Germany have a parent behind bars. In 2014, Caritas Germany and the Federal Catholic Association for Prisoner Assistance launched the website <http://besuch-im-gefaengnis.de> with the aim of informing children about life in prison. Psychological games and tutorials prepared children to meet their parents. But since 2020, due to the pandemic, visits from relatives are mainly held remotely, if the facility allows, but a video call can never replace a live visit. "If a parent is in custody, children are often upset, anxious, or may feel ashamed, and the pandemic only intensifies these feelings. A visit to mum and dad in prison hurts at the time of the coronavirus pandemic, because a protective screen often prevents any direct personal contact. Many children and young people have questions they cannot ask anyone in their family environment", said Fr. Peter Holzer, chaplain at the Bruchsal prison. The website has been fully renewed, with services in the languages most spoken in German prisons: English, French, Turkish, Arabic, and Russian.

Gigliola Alfaro