

Casa Betania - Italy

Introduction



APG Houses Italy

Casa Betania is a detention house in Rimini, Italy. This facility is part of the APG association, also known as "Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII." The international APG association was founded by Father Orest Benzi. It is a religious organization focused on the practical and constant commitment to fight

marginalization and poverty. Their idea is to connect their lives with those living in poverty or oppression and live with them 24 hours a day. They have opened several houses with different goals and some of these houses focus on people in detention.

Casa Betania was founded in 1973 and at that time it was the first house from the APG association to receive people coming out of prison. Since then, many other houses have opened and people can stay in these houses even during their sentences. Casa Betania is unique because people in detention live with other people, such as people who have already served their sentences or people with mental disabilities. There is a protocol that authorizes APG to manage the houses according to national legislation.

Central to Casa Betania is the CEC model, which stands for "Educating Community with People Sentenced to Prison." This project revolves around the certainty of being punished, but more importantly of recovery.

Scale

Casa Betania has space for 25 people, which makes it a small-scale facility.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

Casa Betania's target group is adult men who have recently begun serving a prison sentence. Criteria for placement are based on the type of crime, length of sentence and person's consent. Individuals previously convicted of violent crimes against minors or vulnerable persons are not welcome at Casa Betania. Residents can stay up to three years, with the possibility of extended social assistance.

The placement procedure consists of first the expression of interest by the person concerned, then court approval. While waiting for a decision, the person is placed in prison. After court approval, there is an assessment process by the APG association. If these steps are all taken, this may lead to admission to Casa Betania.

Forms of security:

All houses of detention of the APG associations have the same type of security. Security in Casa Bethania is mainly based on relational security. This refers to individual trust and responsibility on the one hand and group organization and decision-making on the other. The facility does not use static security measures. One person on the staff is responsible for security and urine or blood tests can be performed only exceptionally. Regarding procedural security, all residents can move freely in Casa Bethania and depending on their level of autonomy, they can also move in the community (day and night). Residents have a key to the house and are never confined to their own rooms. What is remarkable about the staff is that they are all men.

Activities

Casa Betania's methodology is based on the CEC method. Specifically, the entire program focuses on educating people in detention through three phases. The first phase focuses on reflecting on one's experience, including reworking one's anger and valorizing one's capabilities. The second phase focuses on job training and professionalization. The final phase consists of experimenting with increasing freedom, autonomy and return to society. The duration of each phase depends on the type of crime the person has committed and their personality traits. Different volunteers are used in each phase; they are seen as "real-life teachers". The religious aspect of the APG association is reflected in the daily operation. There is a time of prayer and thanksgiving before every meal.

During these different phases, residents have the opportunity to participate in different activities. They can do paid work, volunteer, play sports or attend reintegration programs such as tutoring, mediation and lectures

on judicial topics. During their stay, there is no obligation to work, but they must be involved in some activity. Residents generally have enough time for leisure activities such as reading, individual reflection, and watching television. Residents can cook for themselves or as a group activity. Contact with their families depends on the plan imposed by the sentence and how willing the families are to cooperate in the rapprochement process. They may not receive visits from other people.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Casa Betania is located in Rimini, the capital city of the Province of Rimini, in Italy. Rimini stretches along the Adriatic Sea and has one of the most notable seaside resorts in Europe. Rimini has about 149 211 inhabitants (2023).¹ Both local and global tourism incomes are an important part of the city's economic structure. Casa Betania is located in the suburbs of Rimini but is still part of the community, surrounded by supermarkets, bars, houses and other buildings. The house is easily accessible by public transport.

First impression of a visitor: "It didn't look like a place to serve a prison sentence".

Casa Betania exclusively has shared rooms, leaving no room for private spaces for its residents. The facility consists of shared bedrooms, shared bathrooms, a visitor's room, a kitchen, and a living room. Casa Betania tries to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The fact that there are no static security measures present already contributes great value here.

Interaction with the community:

The coexistence of people in detention with volunteers and people with intellectual disabilities creates more interaction between residents and the broader community. Those living in Casa Betania have the possibility to work in the community. The local community contributes through volunteer work and donations. Interaction is further promoted through the organization of community events such as shared meals, religious celebrations and sports activities. The religious character of the detention house is reflected by its collaboration with the Catholic Church and certain parishes.

Casa Betania

Founded: 1973

Capacity: 25

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Rimini (Italy)

Nature of interaction: Visited by Reshape (27/04/2023)

¹Rimini (Rimini, Emilia-Romagna, Italy) - population statistics, charts, map, location, weather and web information. (2023). *City Population*. Retrieved August 28th, 2023, from https://www.citypopulation.de/en/italy/emiliaromagna/rimini/099014__rimini/

Publicity/ read more

- About Casa Betania at the official website of the APG-association (Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII) (in Italian):

Casa Betania (n.d.). *Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII*. Retrieved August 28th, 2023, from <https://www.apg23.org/it/casabetania/>

- About the CEC-method at the official website of the APG-association (Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII) (in Italian):

Comunità Educante con i Carcerati. (n.d.). *Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII*. Retrieved August 28th, 2023, from https://www.apg23.org/it/carcere_comunita_educante/

- About the CEC-method in Italy at the official website of the APG-association (Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII) (in Italian):

CEC (Comunità Educanti con i Carcerati) in Italia (n.d.). *Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII*. Retrieved August 28th, 2023, from https://www.apg23.org/it/carcere_realta_cec/