

Casa Madre della Riconciliazione - Italy

Introduction



APG Houses Italy

Casa Madre della Riconciliazione is both a detention facility and a farm in Saludecio, Italy. This facility operates within the framework of the APG Association, also known as the "Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII." This association was founded by Father Orest Benzi and has a worldwide

presence. It functions as a religious institution dedicated with heart and soul to the practical and unwavering mission of fighting marginalization and impoverishment. At the core of their philosophy is that they closely intertwined their lives with those living in poverty or oppression so that they can live side by side 24/7. Over time, they have established a series of homes, each with a unique purpose, some geared toward people in detention.

The APG Association's houses are unique in that they create an environment where people in detention live with a wide variety of individuals, including people who have served their sentences and those struggling with mental disabilities. Following the positive results of Casa Madre del Perdono, Casa Madre della Riconciliazione opened in 2011. The central concept revolves around offering people in detention an educational pathway in a home and family dimension. Casa Madre del Perdono is based on the CEC model, which stands for "Educating Community with People Sentenced to Prison." This project centers on recognizing the inevitability of punitive measures and emphasizing the importance of recovery. The management of these facilities in accordance with national regulations has been entrusted to the association APG.

Scale

Casa Madre della Riconciliazione can accommodate a maximum of 25 people. Therefore, it can be described as a small-scale facility.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- ☒ Small-scale
- ☒ Differentiated
- ☒ Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

The target group of Casa Madre della Riconciliazione consists of adult men who have recently been sentenced to prison. The selection criteria depend on the nature of the offense, the length of the sentence and the person's consent. People previously convicted of violent crimes against minors or vulnerable persons are not accepted at Casa Madre della Riconciliazione. Residents are given a stay of up to three years, with the possibility of extended social support.

The placement protocol, which is the same for the various APG detention houses, consists of an initial expression of interest from the person concerned, followed by court approval. During the decision phase, the person is temporarily placed in a correctional facility. After court approval, an assessment process of the APG association follows. Once these steps are completed, the way can be cleared for admission to Casa Madre della Riconciliazione.

Forms of security:

The security approach in all APG association houses is consistent. Casa Madre della Riconciliazione's security strategy focuses primarily on relational security, emphasizing both individual trust and responsibility and group organisation and decision-making. Unlike conventional static security measures, Casa Madre della Riconciliazione takes a more dynamic approach. Much emphasis is placed on maintaining relationships. One staff member oversees security issues, and the use of urine or blood tests is reserved for exceptional cases.

In terms of procedural security, Casa Madre della Riconciliazione advocates for an environment of unrestricted freedom of movement. All residents have the freedom to move around in the facility, and depending on their personal level of autonomy, they are even given the opportunity to move freely in the wider community (day and night). Each resident is given a key to the house and residents are never restricted to their own room. Mobile phones are allowed in the facility but their use is controlled. A notable aspect of Madre della Riconciliazione is the composition of the staff, which is exclusively male.



Activities:

Casa Madre della Riconciliazione uses the CEC-method as the basis of its approach. This method refers to ten pillars, for example, involvement of the external community, recovering helps recovering, involvement of families of origin, work, spirituality etc. The purpose of the CEC method is to educate people in detention through three phases. The first phase focuses on reflection, including the transformation of anger and the identification of personal strengths. Then the focus is on job training and professionalization in the next phase. To conclude the program, the final phase includes a gradual progression toward greater autonomy, reintegration into society and a greater sense of freedom. The duration of each phase is determined by both the nature of the offence and the intrinsic characteristics of the individual.

During these phases, volunteers work as "real-life teachers" with residents in specific phases of the program. The religious aspect of the APG-association is woven into daily activities, such as moments of prayer and thanksgiving before meals. Each detention house of the APG-association that relies on the CEC- method has a similar operation with a similar range of activities. This means that at Casa Madre della Riconciliazione residents also have the opportunity to participate in the following activities: paid work, volunteer tasks,



sports and active participation in reintegration initiatives such as tutoring, mediation and legal consultations. In addition, residents may take on responsibilities within the community, such as delivering or picking up from neighbouring homes or helping out at the farm. While active involvement in activities is encouraged, there is no mandatory work mandate.

The degree of contact residents maintain with their families depends on both the court-imposed plan and the family's willingness to participate in the reconciliation process. External visits by persons outside the facility are often subject to restrictions.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Casa Madre della Riconciliazione is based in Saludecio, in the province of Rimini in Italy. This town is located about 130 kilometers southeast

First impression of a visitor: "I was impressed by the fact that not all of the people in these houses were convicted individuals. There were also people with mental disabilities who are in the care of APG23 and supported by the individuals serving prison sentences".

of Bologna and has about 3086 inhabitants (2023).¹ The facility is situated within the community and is easily accessible.

All rooms in the facility are shared, so residents have no private spaces. Casa Madre della Riconciliazione consists of shared bedrooms, shared bathrooms, a visitor's room, a kitchen and a living room. Because this detention house is also a farm, typical elements of a farmhouse can also be found. Through the absence of static security measures and various decorations within the facility, Casa Madre della Riconciliazione creates a homely atmosphere.

Interaction with the community:

People in detention living together with volunteers and people with mental disabilities have the effect of promoting interaction between the residents and the community. In addition, Casa Madre della Riconciliazione is a farm that produces vegetables and delivers them to the community. Residents at the facility can also work within the community. Conversely, the community provides volunteers and donations for Casa Madre della Riconciliazione. Interaction also occurs by organizing community events, such as lunches, religious activities and sports. The religious nature of the facility leads to cooperation with the Catholic Church and some parishes.

Madre della Riconciliazione

Founded: 2011

Capacity: 25

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Saludecio
(Italy)

Nature of interaction: Visited by
Reshape (28/04/2023)

Publicity/ read more

- 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):

¹Saludecio (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/099015__saludecio/

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/