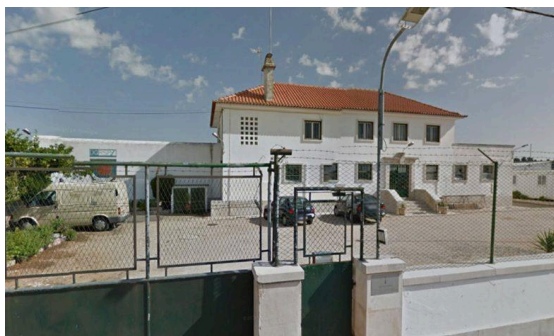


Torres Novas Prison Establishment - Portugal

Introduction



Torres Novas Prison Establishment (from now on "Torres Novas Prison") is a prison in Torres Novas, located in a municipality in the Santarém district, central in Portugal. The facility falls under the supervision of the General Directorate of Rehabilitation and Prison Services (from now on "DGRSP"). The establishment of the DGRSP reflected a broader framework of progressive development and reform in the country's penal system

during the 20th century. The creation of DGRSP was driven by the mission to improve social support for people in detention and promote their successful reintegration into society. Torres Novas prison is the only prison with an exclusively open regime in Portugal; other prisons with open regimes also have closed regimes. Torres Novas Prison is housed in the former Comarcã Prison and became an independent facility in 1995. In the past year, the facility has had a lot of local media attention due to the launch of a new pilot project implementing vertical gardens at the facility.

Scale

Torres Novas Prison has room for 40 residents and is fully occupied on average. This number falls just above the recommended scale of 30.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

The Torres Novas prison targets adult men in the final phase of their prison sentence. To qualify for placement in an "open regime" (regime aberto no exterior), individuals must have served a quarter of their sentence, hold a successful exit permit and have no pending proceedings involving pre-trial detention.

Importantly, eligibility for the open regime does not depend on the length of the sentence, but rather on meeting these specific criteria.

The placement process is overseen by the DGRSP and is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the person's behavior, progress and risk assessment during their incarceration. Factors such as the person's behavior during incarceration, participation in rehabilitation programs and perceived risk to society are taken into account. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, focusing on each individual's unique circumstances and rehabilitation progress, and are consistent with Portugal's commitment to balancing reintegration with public safety.

Forms of security:



Security at Torres Novas prison, according to Portuguese levels, is described as medium. The smaller-scale nature of the facility and the exclusive open regime, unlike other Portuguese prisons, provide strong relational security. The facility focuses on mutual respect, and not creating fear. This is seen as crucial for residents as they work toward reintegration into society. The environment fosters closer relationships between staff and residents, which helps resolve conflicts more effectively. While large prisons treat individuals as numbers, this facility focuses on personal interactions and calls residents by name. In an open regime, it is easier for security staff to maintain control because any misconduct results in a transfer (back) to a closed regime. However, when staff move from working in a closed regime to an open one, they feel they need time and the appropriate training to adjust to the different modes of operation, especially with the focus on relational security.

Static security measures are still visible within this facility. The building itself gives the impression of a prison because of the fences, several cameras and the cells. Staff wear uniforms and residents may be subject to urine tests or privileges may be revoked for misconduct.

Procedural security follows the same prison rules as large-scale prisons, but this open regime allows residents to go to work, albeit with limited community movement. Prison regulations may not be fully adapted to the unique



needs of this regime. Nevertheless, the Torres Novas Prison facility strives to balance security with rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

Activities:



Since Torres Novas Prison follows general Portuguese prison regulations, the opportunities for various activities within the community are limited. Residents' schedules at the facility vary during the week, with a focus primarily on work commitments. In the mornings, all residents leave the facility to work in the community, a crucial step toward successful reintegration after release. They are remunerated the same as their colleagues who are not in detention. The local government actively supports this initiative by providing employment opportunities for the residents. While participation in external work is encouraged, it is not mandatory. The municipality and businesses arrange transportation for residents to the workplace.

In the afternoons, residents have the option to work within the facility, such as in the vertical gardens, although this is also not obligatory. Prison staff strive to find educational and recreational activities. One notable initiative is the vertical gardens project in collaboration with upfarming Portugal, which aims to promote social inclusion for people in detention. Residents participate in building and maintaining these gardens, receive training in sustainable agriculture, and help improve the nutritional quality of the meals produced in the prison kitchen. Although the project has concluded, the city hall has committed to funding it for the upcoming year, with hopes for sustainable continuation. The prison works together with a chef who is training residents on how to cook with these vegetables.

For leisure activities, the prison offers various educational and cultural activities, such as a reading club, theater, music, radio programs, and dance. Residents have organized puppet shows, which have helped some overcome shyness. Residents have access to gaming computers in their cells, providing entertainment during free time, and the facility also has a library. Communication with the outside world is facilitated through scheduled calls and visits.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Torres Novas Prison is located in the city of Torres Novas, which has about 34 111 inhabitants (2021). Even though the facility is part of the domain of a prison, it is still located among several residential buildings. The facility is within walking distance of the city center and there is a market 200 meters away. Torres Novas Prison is accessible by public transport.

First impression of a visitor: "During the visit, you could sense that the staff is doing everything possible to create a different climate where relational security and reintegration are paramount, but that the architecture of the building and the Portuguese prison rules can be an obstacle to this way of working".

As the Torres Novas prison is located in the former Comarcã Prison building, typical prison elements are visible in the building in various ways and no homely elements are present. It is housed in one building, consisting of two wings, the main wing and the former women's wing. The residents do not have individual bedrooms but sleep in dormitories. In addition, there are shared bathrooms, living room, kitchen and a visitors' room. There is also a common outdoor area where the vertical gardens are located.

Interaction with the community:

Although Torres Novas prison adheres to general Portuguese prison rules, there are unique opportunities for residents to participate in activities and work within the community. Although residents can not move freely in the community, there is an initiative in partnership with Upfarming allows residents to grow vegetables in a vertical garden within the facility. This project not only helps fight poverty by donating vegetables to the Red Cross for distribution to vulnerable families but also promotes social responsibility among residents. Applications are underway to implement the Upfarming project in two larger prisons, including facilities for women and children, though scalability remains a concern.

The DGRSP is keen to develop more projects to integrate the facility into the community, working with stakeholders such as the municipality, business owners and organizations such as Upfarming. Initially, two people from the prison participated in a community project (working in the community), but due to its success, the number has increased to nine.

Torres Novas Prison

Founded: 1995

Capacity: 40

Security level: Medium

Nearest city/town: Torres Novas (Portugal)

Nature of interaction: Visited by RESHAPE and RESCALED (31/05/2023 and 12-04-2024)

In addition, the prison offers various educational and cultural activities, in which some projects culminate in large community exhibitions and debates that involve both community members and residents. Other projects, such as theater performances, bring residents to local schools.

Publicity/ read more

- About Torres Novas Prison Establishment at the official website of the General Directorate for Rehabilitation and Prison Services in Portugal:

Estabelecimento Prisional de Torres Novas. (n.d.). *DGRSP*. Retrieved October 16th, 2023, from <https://dgrsp.justica.gov.pt/Justi%C3%A7a-de-adultos/penas-e-medidas-privativas-de-liberdade/Estabelecimentos-prisionais/%C3%81rea-territorial-alargada-do-tribunal-de-execu%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-penas-de-%C3%89vora/Estabelecimento-Prisional-de-Torres-Novas>

- About the implementation of the vertical garden at the official website of the Government of the Portuguese Republic:

Ministra da Justiça inaugura horta vertical do Estabelecimento Prisional de Torres Novas. (n.d.). *Government of the Portuguese Republic*. Retrieved October 16th, 2023, from <https://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/gc23/comunicacao/noticia?i=ministra-da-justica-inaugura-horta-vertical-do-estabelecimento-prisional-de-torres-novas->

- Youtube video about the vertical garden in the Torres Novas Prison Establishment:

Agrotonomy. (2023, April 30). *Vertical farming in a Portuguese prison. Project by @upfarming32 #verticalfarming #prison #portugal* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved October 16th, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw6b1A3dnLQ>