

Open Prison Jiřice - Czech Republic

Introduction



Open prison Jiřice is a low-security prison based in Jiřice, a small municipality in the Czech Republic. The facility is located on the grounds of the high- and medium-security Jiřice Prison. Open prison Jiřice falls under the jurisdiction of The Prison Service of the Czech Republic and was established in 2017 as a pilot project. The main goal of the facility is to create the best possible circumstances for facilitating comprehensive resocialization and eventual reintegration of people in

detention. By doing this, the program aims to reduce criminal behaviour in the future. The open prison also offers a unique project for its residents, namely the first obedience training for guide dogs.

Scale

The maximum capacity of Open prison Jiřice is 32 people. The residents are divided into four separate houses, and ideally, eight people live in each house. Each group lives together as a family and is considered a "simulator for life after release." Since the residents are divided into four separate houses of up to 12 people, this facility can be described as a small-scale facility.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

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

Differentiation

Target group:

Open Prison Jiřice is a facility for adult males who may be placed in a low-security prison. They are at the end of their sentences and have six to 18 months left before release. Furthermore, there are other conditions the person must meet. Firstly, the person in detention should be in a state of medical fitness, enabling them to actively engage in both work activities and the specified activities of the treatment programme. Additionally, a high level of motivation is essential. This motivation includes several aspects, including the seamless continuation of their sentence within the open prison, active participation in the

treatment program, the pursuit of employment and the pursuit of a non-criminal lifestyle after their release. Lastly, each person must admit and acknowledge the crimes for which they have been convicted. This admission of guilt is a fundamental condition of eligibility.

On the other hand, open prison Jiřice also has contraindications. These include testing positive for the presence of narcotics, psychotropic substances, or alcohol. Another contraindication is not having undergone disciplinary confinement in a locked room for more than 28 days, except during specific treatment programs, or having faced all-day confinement for up to twenty days.

Forms of security:

Although the open prison Jiřice is on the grounds of a high-security prison, they have different security measures. Compared to closed prison Jiřice, open prison Jiřice has a different entrance and no security checks when entering the facility. But when returning to the facility (from the community), the residents have to undergo a security check at the main prison. Open prison Jiřice combines relational, static and procedural security measures, with relational security being the basis of their approach.

Relational security refers to creating a client-therapist relationship by doing intensive and individual work with residents. This relationship is based on mutual trust and is achieved by being supportive and guiding as a staff member. The residents can approach the staff whenever they want and the staff will try to help them immediately, without the need of formal requests. The staff members are all educators and not prison guards.



In terms of static security, the building is equipped with a CCTV monitoring system. Rather than deterring escape attempts, the surrounding wall is intended to prevent unauthorized access from external individuals. Throughout the operational period of the open prison, there have been no reported incidents of resident-initiated assaults. In the event of an emergency, a toll-free emergency phone line is available, connecting to the main prison facility. This phone line is accessible for both staff and residents. Urine tests may be performed in case of suspicion or as a random check. If the tests are positive, blood tests are ordered, which take place in the regular prison.

As for (strip) searches, if they take place, they are done in the regular prison, no searches are conducted by Open prison Jiřice staff.

Procedural security in the facility refers to a set of measures. Residents are free to walk around inside the facility. However mutual visits between the houses are only possible with the consent of the tutor and those who live there. After ten p.m., residents must be in their houses. The welfare of the people in detention is checked every two hours by an educator and there are two daily censuses in the prison. In addition, various documents and policies play a role in procedural security, such as Internal Rules for Convicts of Jiřice Prison ("Open Prison"), Organizational Measures of the Head of the Open Prison, Internal Security Policy, etc.

Activities:



Residents at Open Prison Jiřice are in charge of their own schedule, which means the facility offers many activities and residents can choose how they fill out their schedule. However, this varies from person to person. Some residents need more guidance in completing their weekly schedule than others. Residents usually work outside the open prison. These residents have paid work and this pay pays for their stay in the open prison. Some residents work within the open prison, such as taking care of the (vegetable) garden and animals (dogs, rabbits, lamas, peacocks, etc.), doing chores in the houses, etc. Organized activities within the facility include running groups, community service, involvement in educational and therapeutic programmes, cooking etc.

Unique in Open prison Jiřice is the possibility to participate in a guide-dogs initial obedience training. Chosen participants undertake an eight-month training period with the dogs to help foster a stronger connection between the dogs and humans. Following this, the dogs are returned to the guide dog school for advanced professional training. In addition, the facility is also involved in projects of external entities, such as the "Day with a Child" project, organized by Prison Fellowship International (PFI), which aims to strengthen contact with children. Another project is the "Building Bridges restorative project," organized by Prison Fellowship, which aims to bring together offenders and victims of unrelated crimes.



Residents can visit their family and friends during the weekends. They can choose to leave the facility at nine in the morning, at noon or three in the afternoon. Their social network is not directly involved in the program; it is more about facilitating mutual contact. If the resident has visitors, this visit takes place in the garden or classroom and two supervisors are present in the room. Most of the visits take place outside the facility.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Open Prison Jiřice is located on the property of the medium and high-security prison Jiřice. The open prison is located behind the village of Jiřice, in the middle of the forest. Jiřice is a small municipality in

the central Bohemian region of the Czech Republic. It has approximately 312 inhabitants (2023).¹ Because of its remote location and small village, the facility is not accessible by public transportation. The closest bus stop is about two kilometers away.

First impression of a visitor: "An open prison has a completely different feel than a regular prison. The environment is pleasant and you don't feel like you are in a prison. There is no barbed wire or other security, and there are animals right at the entrance that the inmates take care of".



The basis for Open Prison Jiřice was an architectural study by Andrea Seelich, but the design was significantly slimmed down. The entire facility was designed to resemble the home environment as much as possible. The open prison consists of four houses and an office building. Each house accommodates eight residents and has bedrooms for two, bathrooms for four, a living room and a kitchen for eight. The living room has a couch, television, table and chairs. The detention center also has a garden with a playground and a classroom. Since all rooms are shared, there are no private rooms available in the facility.

¹Population of municipalities of the Czech Republic. (January First 2023). Czech Statistical Office. Retrieved August 22nd, 2023, from <https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/191186757/1300722303.pdf/58801e7b-4f05-4470-908c-7295691d4dd2?version=1.3>

Interaction with the community:

Originally, the municipality was against implementing the open prison because of safety concerns for the residents of the community. However, after a public meeting and the opening of the prison, the relationship with the municipality changed significantly. A cooperation agreement was signed, stating that the residents from the open prison would perform volunteer work in the community, such as maintaining the green spaces. In addition, the mayor is a member of the prison director's advisory board, so she supports the open prison and welcomes the volunteer work the residents do for the village. The facility also creates jobs for people from the community. Finally, residents can move freely within the community throughout the day. However, the village does not provide any services to the residents of the facility. Because it is a small village, there are not a lot of relevant services available. For such services, residents visit the nearest town.

Open prison Jiřice

Founded: 2017

Capacity: 32

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Jiřice
(Czech Republic)

Nature of interaction: Visited
by the RESCALED movement
(01/03/2023 – 13/06/2024)

Publicity/ read more

- About open prisons in Czech Republic at the official website of the Ministry of Justice:

Otevřené věznice - Portál justice. (n.d.). *Prison Service of the Czech Republic*. Retrieved August 31st, 2023, from <https://justice.cz/web/msp/otevrene-veznice>

- About Open Prison Jiřice at the official website of the Prison Service of Czech Republic:

Věznice Jiřice. (n.d.). *Prison Service of the Czech Republic*. Retrieved August 31st, 2023, from <https://www.vscr.cz/organizacni-jednotky/veznice-jirice>

- About the success of Open Prison Jiřice (Prison Achievement Award 2022) at the official website of the Prison Service of Czech Republic:

Kawan, J. (2022, July 1). *Success of Jiřice Open Prison*. *Vězeňská Služba České Republiky*. Retrieved July 12th, 2024, from <https://www.vscr.cz/en/news/detail/success-of-jirice-open-prison>