

Probation House Pisek - Czech Republic

Introduction



Probation House Pisek is located in the town of Pisek, a town in the South Bohemian Region of the Czech Republic, and is operated by the Probation and Mediation Service (PMS). The facility was established in November 2022 with financial support from Norwegian grants 2014-2021. It is the first of its kind in the Czech Republic and was an important milestone in the country's rehabilitation approach. It is a residential resocialization program for individuals, giving incarcerated people the opportunity to rehabilitate and make a positive contribution to society. Residents, also called "clients," must

complete the six-month program, as determined by the court during their probationary period of parole. This fixed duration ensures a focused approach to rehabilitation and social reintegration. There are plans to open more probation houses in the Czech Republic, including one specifically for women.

Scale

Probation House Pisek is a small-scale facility that can accommodate up to sixteen clients.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiated
- Community-integrated

Differentiation

Target group:

Probation house Pisek provides housing for adult men on parole who require assistance and guidance as they transition from prison back into society. The program is specifically tailored for individuals who are motivated to work on themselves and to reintegrate themselves back into society. It serves as an immediate follow-up to parole, meaning it is intended for men who are newly paroled and not for those who have served their entire sentence and are exiting prison on a "fixed exit."

The primary target group consists of men with higher risk of reoffending outside the prison system. These men are in greater need of the comprehensive services of Pisek Probation House, which ensures that these individuals receive the essential help they need to successfully reintegrate into society.

Judges, who specialize in conditional release, are responsible for sending individuals to Probation House Pisek. A conditional release can be granted with or without supervision, and those with a conditional release under supervision may fulfill part of their requirements at the probation house. While clients can express their interest in the program, they cannot independently decide to enter; the final decision rests with the judge.

The staff in the facility cannot select its residents but can provide recommendations to the judges through probation officers who are submitting a comprehensive report on parole readiness. These recommendations are considered, and the judge makes the final decision. However, Probation House Pisek receives interest from about 50 percent more people than it can accommodate. Despite this high demand, the facility does not always operate at full capacity due to insufficient referrals from judges.

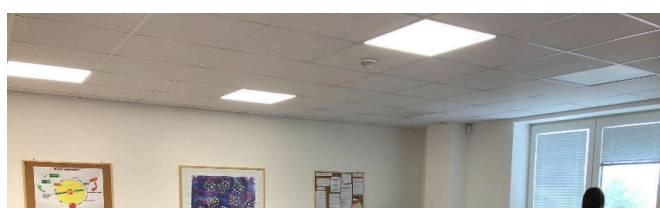
Forms of security:

The security of Probation House Pisek is primarily based on relational security measures, supplemented by static and procedural security protocols. Regarding relational security, staff focus on building personal relationships with clients through one-on-one conversations, encouraging openness and trust. For example, during the Yellow Ribbon Run, small groups of clients and staff participate together. Staff is always present in the facility. There are two key workers conducting risk and needs assessments and developing personalized plans for each client. They assign clients based on staff specialties to ensure customized support. Three instructors provide practical guidance on cooking, cleaning and social skills and accompany clients to job interviews. For security reasons, a doorkeeper is present on weekends and at night.

A few static security measures are still visible at Probation House Pisek. The facility is surrounded by a fence to prevent unauthorized entries from local residents. Clients can enter by pressing a bell and are free to leave the premises. Cameras have been installed in hallways, outdoor areas and storage areas, which are monitored from a service area.

As for procedural security, clients must stay in the facility from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., although exceptions are made for those with night jobs. Regular drug and alcohol testing is conducted to ensure compliance with the rules. Alcohol and drugs are not allowed, but incidents do occur. According to internal rules, support is offered for a client who admits substance or alcohol use issues.

Activities:



The program at Probation House Pisek emphasizes autonomy, clients are encouraged to take responsibility for their daily lives. This includes managing their schedules, cooking, laundry and cleaning, which promotes independence. Clients are supported in finding employment and housing. The program uses structured methodology to support clients in setting meaningful life goals and demands their personal commitment, using a phased approach over six months.

In the first phase, the adjustment phase (one month), clients' needs and risks are assessed and a personal plan is developed. The next four months, the fulfilling phase, focus on addressing key issues such as debt, work and family relationships, with the goal that clients actively work on these issues during their stay. In the final phase, the transitional phase (one month), clients may leave the facility four times for three-day visits to their place of residence in preparation for reintegration.

During the program, clients find work within two weeks, supported by partnerships with about a dozen local businesses in sectors such as gastronomy and housing. They also work with Housing First, a local NGO, to find permanent housing.

Clients enjoy a high degree of autonomy in their weekly schedules, with few restrictions. They are responsible for their tasks and time management and meet with a key worker at least twice a week to plan their activities. Each client must participate in at least one mandatory activity every week, including financial reintegration and community meetings. The community meetings, held in the living room, serve as supervisory meetings to discuss progress and challenges. Clients are expected to participate in various activities, including sports and volunteering, and to participate in weekend activities once a month. They are expected to cater for themselves by buying and cooking their own food. Also buying their own toiletries, clothes etc. Social support is available for those who are not yet employed.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

Probation House Pisek is situated in Pisek which is a small town in the of the . It has about 31,000 inhabitants. The town is known for the oldest bridge in the country. The historic town centre is well preserved and is protected by law as an urban monument zone. The city was granted a status of Safe city

by the Police. The facility itself is set in an industrial area, 2.5 kilometers from the center of Pisek. Due to its location, the facility provides two bicycles for residents to use.



Probation House Pisek is housed in a former civil defense building. It was renovated with consideration of the sustainability of the building by installing a solar system that generates electricity. The facility comprises one building with an outdoor space. Outside there are parking facilities, a smoking area and a CrossFit area for physical activities. It is a two-storey building. The facility has eight bedrooms, each accommodating two residents with beds, closets, a desk, a toilet and a sink. There are also two bathrooms, each with four

showers and two sinks, which are shared by eight people. A large kitchen is divided into four sections, each shared by two rooms, with color-coded appliances. A common living room with a billiard table provides relaxation and recreation areas. In addition, the facility has an administrative area, which is not accessible to clients unless accompanied by staff, a laundry room, and a visiting room.

The facility offers free Wi-Fi.

Interaction with the community:

Since the first moment when decision had been taken to start Probation House Pisek, the Probation and Mediation Service started to communicate with the municipality representatives. As part of the agreement with the mayor, PMS promised to hold two open meetings with the community before opening the facility. Shortly after the plans for opening the probation house were released, residents had organized a petition, because they were concerned about security in the town. However, through open dialogue and information sharing at meetings with the public, the probation house was able to effectively address these concerns. Insights from the court, local government representatives, and a person with lived experience (who was open to share his personal story) played a crucial role in this process. Over time, this approach helped the community understand and embrace the probation house.

Despite Probation House Pisek being located outside the community, interaction among residents does take place, and the work with clients is deeply integrated into the community through collaboration and

Probation House Pisek

Founded: 2022

Capacity: 16

Security level: Low

Nearest city/town: Pisek
(Czech Republic)

Nature of interaction: Visited
by the RESCALED movement
(13/06/2024)

meaningful involvement. They worked closely with the municipality and NGOs, improving relations with the community. As a part of agreements with the local municipality, the clients transformed a neglected area into a serene community space, which they now maintain

The probation house actively works with about ten local businesses to meet the community's demand for skilled workers in sectors such as gastronomy, construction industry and woodworking industry. They also collaborate with a nearby therapeutic community for women and children, where they perform support tasks and occasionally share communal dinners, promoting mutual support and integration.

Publicity/ read more

- About Probation House Pisek at the official website of the Probation and Mediation Service (PMS):
Šubrtová, T. (2023, September 22). Czech Probation and Mediation Service opens the first Halfway House - PMS - Probační a mediační služba. *PMS - Probační a mediační služba*. Retrieved July 14th, 2024, from <https://www.pmscr.cz/en/czech-probation-and-mediation-service-opens-the-first-halfway-house/>
- About Probation House Pisek at the official website of the EEA Norway Grants::
Jasaityte, K. (2023, November 2). *#ourstories: Life Beyond Bars & Punishments*. #OurStories: Life beyond bars & punishments | EEA Norway Grants. Retrieved July 14th, 2024, from <https://eeagrants.org/news/ourstories-life-beyond-bars-punishments>
- Video about Probation House Pisek shared by EEA Norway Grants:
EEANorwayGrants. (2023, November 8). *#OurStories: Helping ex-convicts in the Czech Republic return to normal life* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved July 14th, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAt4M5VNpmU>