

WORKING IN SMALL SCALE DETENTION HOUSES IN EUROPE

# EUROPEAN GUIDELINES ON RELATIONAL SECURITY IN SMALL- SCALE FORMS OF DETENTION

*(November 30, 2023)*



# SECURING THE CONTEXT THROUGH HUMAN INTERACTION

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

WISH-EU stands for “Working In Small-Scale Detention Houses in Europe”. This European project aims at supporting the implementation of small-scale community-integrated detention houses and facilities in Europe.

Such detention houses enable the implementation of fundamental rights and facilitate the creation of a constructive ecosystem for incarcerated people and staff. The increased use of detention houses in several European countries shows that policymakers recognize the value of small-scale houses. See the [online European map created by Prison Insider](#) on many different examples of small-scale detention houses in Europe.

The WISH-EU project, funded by the European Commission, has supported several activities. First, **gather and disseminate knowledge** on specific topics related to small-scale detention houses and about relational security. Short reports have been written about each visit to each facility. Second, **creating new knowledge** through exchanges between practitioners, policymakers, researchers and people with lived experience in different European countries. Third, based on this newly gained knowledge, it contributed to the **development of European Rules on the Ecosystem of Small-Scale Detention Facilities and the European Guidelines on Relational Security**.

These European guidelines on relational security were created between 2022 and 2024 within the WISH-EU project. The guidelines have been created in cooperation with six partners from four different countries; Belgium, France, Portugal and The Netherlands and further developed during 10 learning labs. During these learning lab sessions, nine topics have been discussed through online exchanges in which over 100 persons were invited from around 20 different European countries. These learning lab sessions were recorded on video and an article has been written about each topic by an expert. All videos, reports and articles can be found on the [WISH-EU website](#) or can be found on the [YouTube channel of the WISH-EU project](#).

De Huizen	Belgium	<a href="http://www.dehuizen.be">www.dehuizen.be</a>
FARAPEJ	France	<a href="http://www.farapej.fr">www.farapej.fr</a>
Prison Insider	Portugal	<a href="http://www.prison-insider.com">www.prison-insider.com</a>
Restorative Justice Netherlands	Países Baixos	<a href="http://www.restorativejustice.nl">www.restorativejustice.nl</a>
RESHAPE	Portugal	<a href="http://www.reshape.org">www.reshape.org</a>
RESCALED	Belgium	<a href="http://www.rescaled.org">www.rescaled.org</a>

**WISH-EU:** [WWW.WISH-EU.EU](http://WWW.WISH-EU.EU)

## I. Goal

These guidelines are a first step towards a standardized view of working in a small-scale detention house based on relational security in modern detention settings. Every detention house, every region, every national country is invited to transpose these guidelines into a form that best suits local practices.

The goal of “the European Guidelines on working with relational security in small-scale forms of detention” is to develop a shared perspective on working in detention houses, therefore we have invited penitentiary training academies in Europe to share their training material for staff that will work in a small-scale form of detention. Our findings regarding these training materials are also shared in this document. The aim of growing the knowledge and network about detention houses is to create a supportive ecosystem for people in detention houses that is dependent on the culture that people create together. The essence of the success of small-scale forms of detention is that; staff can have an eye for the individual; allowing staff to offer a tailor-made approach for each individual in the institution by establishing safety and promoting optimal development. These guidelines are based on scientific knowledge and at the same time very practical through providing examples of best practices in Europe. The examples used illustrate how working in a small-scale detention house based on relational security can work in practice.



## II. Target group

The main target group for these guidelines on working with relational practices in small-scale forms of detention are the **practitioners** who work or plan to work in a small-scale form of detention. This includes all staff working in small-scale detention houses, remand centers, halfway houses, including the management, but also the ones that are working on a daily basis with the people living in these houses. The aim of these guidelines for practitioners is that they will have a better understanding of what relational security entails and what it can be in practice.

Another important target group are the **penitentiary training academies** in Europe. The aim of these guidelines for training academies is that there is a common understanding on relational security when working in a small-scale form of detention. And that based on this common understanding, more country-specific training will be developed in cooperation with the penitentiary training academies in the future.

The information is also relevant for **European and national policymakers** and (local) governments with regards to the importance of building healthy ecosystems for practitioners, meaning creating small-scale forms of detention, instead of large scale prisons. For this we refer to the European Rules on Detention Houses, also created as part of the WISH-EU project. These can be found on the [WISH-EU website](#).

We aim to support practitioners in Europe with these guidelines on working with relational security in small-scale forms of detention by:

- Sharing concrete knowledge about the concept of relational security
- Sharing best practices of relational security in small-scale forms of detention
- Strengthening the network of practitioners working in small-scale detention facilities



### III. Impact

Long-term solutions with (social) impact on a European level can be established at this level through mainstreaming ideas about relational security.

A European approach (macro level) to ecological sustainability can offer concrete tools to support countries or regions that want to make a positive impact on the (living) environment with their small-scale forms of detention. After all, European ambitions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals provide guidelines for organizations and ministries to improve their impact on the (in)direct living environment.

A sustainable detention house contributes to safeguarding its working method and ensuring impact in the long term. At the local and regional level (micro level), this means an adaptive working method that includes local and reciprocal collaborations and solutions. Local parties often have the best insight into problems and structural solutions that have a positive impact on the living environment around the relevant detention facility. Maintaining contact with and staying involved with society generally has positive effects on the recovery and future prospects of people in detention.

### IV. Definitions

#### A. Relational security

*"Relational security can be defined in a practical conceptualization; outlining a way of working that guides staff in how to establish a safe and therapeutic environment in secure facilities"*  
(Souverein et al. 2023, p. 1).

Relational security implies a perspective on security and an approach towards justice-involved people that goes beyond seeing them solely as "risks to be managed". Instead, they are recognized as individuals in a developmental process, acknowledging their strengths, abilities and challenges (Souverein, 2023). In essence, relational security is about securing the context through human interaction.

The larger the facility, the more it will have to rely on protocols and standardized processes. The smaller the scale, the more room there is for staff to connect and get to know people and rely on their skills to create a safe environment. This is an important starting point for relational security and a tailor-made approach. At the same time, this way of working will be demanding for employees because it requires far more skills than 'simply' falling back on standard rules and protocols. It demands much more flexibility from employees and organizations, more knowledge of the individual, more autonomy and responsibility and making choices in the moment.

## B. Dynamic security versus relational security

*“In research and practice the terms relational security and dynamic security are often used interchangeably. It seems, however, that these terms have different origins. Relational security emerged in the forensic mental health literature; whereas dynamic security originated in prison settings” (Souverein et al. 2023, p. 11).*

In practice there is little difference between relational security and dynamic security, as both heavily rely on the importance of building relationships of trust. However, it is not coincidentally that relational security was coined in the mental health literature, whereas dynamic security was created within prison settings. In fact, the main difference is in the intention of applying security measures. In relational security, the intention is not to use static forms of security. Whereas with dynamic security, the term itself explains the intention; a dynamic between static and relational forms of security. As defined in the European prison regulations

*“The security which is provided by physical barriers and other technical means shall be complemented by the dynamic security provided by an alert staff who knows the prisoners who are under their control” (Rule 51.2 of the European Prison Rules).*

Most likely in a large scale prison context, relational security without static security will never be possible, therefore in that setting dynamic security makes sense. However, in a small-scale setting, like small-scale forms of detention, relationships can be the core of the 'security', or better put, building trusting relationships to ensure a safe environment for everyone, both staff and habitants.

*“In essence, relational security is about securing the context through human interaction”.*

## C. A detention house

A detention house is based on three pillars; small-scale, differentiation and community-integration. The detention houses do come however in many shapes and sizes. What small-scale detention facilities have in common is that they create a constructive atmosphere and focus on an individualized approach. The concept of a detention house is formulated by the European movement RESCALED, however, small-scale forms of detention have existed for decades already all over Europe, which can be seen later on in the report.

With detention houses, we mean all forms of detention which are small-scale, differentiated and integrated into the community. This might include in some cases small-scale prisons, as a report written by WayBack includes interesting small-scale prisons that are also differentiated and community-integrated. Although small-scale forms of detention include halfway houses and pre-trial

detention centers, the specific term 'detention house' refers to each form of deprivation of liberty that replaces a large-scale prison. A detention house should always be used as a replacement of prison, and never an addition to the prison system, which would be net-widening, something we do not strive towards.

## 2. RELATIONAL SECURITY

### I. Background

These guidelines are a first step towards formulating principles about relational security on a European level for working in small-scale forms of detention. So far each country in Europe has developed basic training modules for staff that will work in large scale prisons. However working in a large scale prison requires a very different skill set from staff than working in a small-scale detention house. Currently, not every country has specific training for people working in small-scale settings, and if they do, it is often not standardized. We want to support and inspire staff and penitentiary training academies with these guidelines into providing standardized training modules for staff working in a small-scale form of detention, with the aim to make the transition in the near future from large scale prisons to small-scale detention houses.

### II. Scope

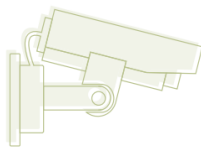
These Guidelines outline a practical framework (with its theoretical basis) on relational security and examples of good practices to guide practitioners and policy makers in the justice sector. We consider this document to be a 'conversation starter' meaning that it is a work in progress that can be adapted when new insights occur.

Depriving someone of their liberty is a measure of last resort, also known as the ultima ratio principle. This measure can be imposed on persons who have come into contact with the justice system and is carried out in various forms of detention facilities, such as a prison, a detention house, a closed residential facility, etc. Both international legislation (e.g., the European Prison Rules) and scientific research show that it is very important that these facilities provide a safe place for both the people in detention and other people involved in the operation of the facility. In addition, places where a person is deprived of liberty must be able to meet the needs of people in detention, address criminogenic risks and build on strengths and protective factors. To achieve this, a safe environment is crucial, although challenging.

In these guidelines we recognize three distinct, but interrelated security measures: static security, procedural security and relational security:

- Static security includes elements from the static design and construction of a facility (such as fences and locks) and the equipment available to staff for environmental control (such as alarms and cameras).

- Procedural security refers to the policies and protocols institutions implement to regulate and oversee possessions, communication, movement and visits. This includes protocols and tools for managing risks and crises, as well as policies and procedures for service quality and governance.
- Relational security definitions emphasize the ability of staff to ensure security by understanding the context of each individual, translating that understanding into appropriate actions, and emphasizing the quality of relationships between staff and people in incarceration.



STATIC SECURITY



PROCEDURAL SECURITY



RELATIONAL SECURITY

In conventional detention settings, there is usually a strong emphasis on control, with a strong reliance on set procedural and static security measures, although there are differences between different jurisdictions. In addition, while in detention, individuals may be subjected to additional coercive and aggressive measures, such as solitary confinement or static constraint (Souverein, 2023).

This emphasis on control leads to isolation from society, limited opportunities for education and work, minimal interaction with family and peers, deprivation of autonomy and limited freedom of movement. However, all of these aspects are essential for human development, prevention of recidivism and successful re-entry into society (Souverein, 2023; Butts, Bazemore & Meroe, 2010). In addition, these measures can have an effect on mental health. They can be traumatizing, reduce motivation for reintegration into society, and, especially when combined with negative past experiences, impair people's neurological, cognitive, and social development (Souverein, 2023). Researchers speak of post-incarceration syndrome (PICS), a syndrome similar to post-traumatic stress disorder. However, it has three core features, including institutionalized personality traits due to incarceration; the socio-sensory deprivation syndrome and temporal and social alienation (Liem & Kunst, 2013).

This approach to ensuring security can also have negative effects on staff. Staff who work in an environment with strong levels of control and coercion experience emotions such as uneasiness, fear, anxiety and guilt. This can lead to mental exhaustion due to the psychological strain (Souverein,

2023; Haugom, Ruud & Hynnekleiv, 2019). These negative effects on staff can affect interactions between staff and people in detention. For example, it can lead to the disruption of constructive relationships between people in detention and staff (Souverein, 2023; Roy et al., 2021; Bryson et al, 2017). On the one hand, over-reliance on physical and procedural security can result in a state of hyper-vigilance among staff within the institution, with greater restriction increasing the risk of new incidents (Armytage & Ogloff, 2017). This phenomenon is also described in the literature as the 'aggression-coercion cycle' (Souverein, 2023). On the other hand, it may affect the ability to adequately understand and address the needs of people in detention (Esaki et al., 2013), which may have implications for the reintegration trajectory of those in detention.

These guidelines are introducing a security framework based on relational security. We suggest shifting the emphasis from a heavy reliance on static and procedural security to relying primarily on relational security, with the ability to be supported by other security measures if necessary.

### **III. European and international principles**

#### **A. What is relational security within the security framework?**

The security framework is a systemic model. This also means that relational security cannot exist without support of static- and procedural security measures. We propose that relational security should be the core of the security framework, meaning that:

- Static- and procedural measures should never be purely in place for the convenience or to cover for ineffectiveness of staff.
- To guarantee safety staff foremost rely on relational security and secondary seek support from other security measures.
- These measures should at all-time reflect the principles of relational security and be deployed as little as possible at the expense of relational security.

Relational security is not just a methodology, but a vision of security that is reflected in the facility in several ways. It is a way of looking at individuals who have committed criminal acts in which you do not see these people merely as "risks to be managed". Instead, it acknowledges them as capable of reintegrating into society, valuing their strengths and abilities, and providing room for learning from their mistakes (Souverein, 2023, p. 110).

## B. Legal framework Relational security

Even though the concept of relational security is relatively new, an international legal framework already provides a base for working within the criminal justice sector based on relational security. Human rights instruments refer to these forms of security and form an important basis to implement this way of working in practice.

### United Nations

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The United Nations also have issued rights on security. Already in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights attention is paid to the security of persons. Later more specific rules for people in detention have followed. The right to security of the person is guaranteed by Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this article, it is combined with the right to life and liberty. In full, the article reads, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person" (1948).

- Nelson Mandela Rules

"The treatment of persons sentenced to imprisonment shall have as its purpose, so far as the length of the sentence permits, to establish in them the will to lead law-abiding and self-supporting lives after their release and to fit them to do so. The treatment shall be such as will encourage their self-respect and develop their sense of responsibility" (Rule 91 of the Nelson Mandela Rules).

- Handbook on dynamic security and prison intelligence

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime describes dynamic security by referencing theory, practice and management of democratic therapeutic communities (TCs) in prisons using clinical examples and case studies. The contributors explore the complexity of working in TCs and the powerful emotional impact generated by the therapy process in the forensic setting (UNODC, 2015).

### European Prison Rules (EPR) - Council Of Europe

"The security which is provided by static barriers and other technical means shall be complemented by the dynamic security provided by an alert staff who knows the prisoners who are under their control" (Rule 51.2 of the European Prison Rules).

## Prison Officers 21

"Developed by sectoral representatives (prison administrations, trade unions, VET and research organisations) and representatives of correctional private and public sector members, the PO 21\_ European Prison Officers for the 21st Century project aimed to:

- Develop a strategic approach to sectorial skills development through the creation of a partnership for the sustainable cooperation between prison administrations and correctional academies, trade unions, and other sectoral representatives;
- Identify existing and emerging skills needs for prison officers, also feeding this intelligence into the European skills panorama;
- Strengthen the exchange of knowledge and practice between education and training institutions and correctional sector actors;
- Promote relevant sectoral qualifications and support agreement for their recognition;
- Build mutual trust, facilitating cross-border certification and therefore easing professional mobility in corrections, and increasing recognition of qualifications at European level;
- Adapt vocational education and training provisions to skills needs, focusing both on prison officer job specific skills as well as on key competences;
- Promote qualification standards for work-based learning (range of knowledge, skills and competence that is to be achieved through weblearning or learning on-the-job);
- Plan the progressive roll-out of project deliverables leading to systemic impact in the form of constant adaptation of VET provision to skill needs, based on sustained partnerships between providers and key labour market stakeholders at the appropriate level ("feedback loops")" (Prison officers 21, 2021).

## European Penitentiary Training Academy

In 2010, the European Penitentiary Training Academy Network (EPTA) was established by the leaders of European Penitentiary Staff Training Academies. Its primary purpose is to establish a framework that facilitates the exchange of training methodologies and content throughout Europe. EPTA is committed to fostering collaboration that improves the initial and ongoing training of correctional staff while raising awareness about the vital role played by these professionals in prison and probation settings.



Since its establishment with 11 founding members in 2010, the network has grown substantially to 36 members from the Council of Europe region. EPTA holds an annual gathering in one of its partner countries, during which two days are devoted to deliberating the most recent advancements in the field of corrections. In the intervals between these yearly gatherings, members actively participate in bilateral information sharing and organize reciprocal visits, fostering direct exchanges of knowledge and experiences (EPTA, n.d.).

#### **IV. Conceptualization of relational security**

In a study of a small-scale detention facility for juveniles in the Netherlands, the concept of 'relational security' was further developed using three distinct, but interrelated, security elements (Souverein, 2023). While visiting several small-scale detention facilities within Europe, for both adults and juveniles, the use of relational security was observed as well and the three elements were regularly expressed in different ways. Thus, in these guidelines, we rely on the three elements as formulated in the research of Souverein (2023). The interaction between these three elements reinforces the sense of relational security within the facility. These three elements are:

- A. staff's basic attitude directed towards connection with and attunement to each individual
- B. constructive alliance between staff and people
- C. Staff is physically present and available in time and space for face-to-face contact

##### **A. Basic attitude staff**

The first element of relational security, staff's basic attitude, centers on the connection between staff and individuals in detention, and the way one tailors that connection to each individual and their context. It is about how staff are present in the workplace and interact with the individuals. Here, the staff's interest in the individual plays an important role. In this way, on the one hand, one can gain knowledge and insights about each individual and thus see things from their perspective and logic. On the other hand, this allows the staff to adapt the way one deals with the individual to the needs and strengths of this individual. "The professional accepts each individual as they are, gives them the space to be themselves, and shows genuine interest in getting to know them beyond their crime and file" (Souverein, 2023).

Accepting personal boundaries is also an important component in creating positive connections between staff and individuals. For example, staff should not force contact and relationships and should give the individual space to be able to separate if necessary. However, given the detention environment, it also remains important that staff also set clear personal boundaries and, if their own boundaries are being or are at risk of being exceeded, they indicate this to each individual. However, personal boundaries depend on the staff member. In order not to create confusion or a sense of injustice, it is important that staff recognize these differences and take the time to explain them if they set a particular boundary. Unlike other forms of security, in relational security, personal norms and values come even more to the forefront. This also ensures that there must be general clarity when rules are strict and which boundaries are more flexible.

## **B. Constructive alliance**

The second element of relational security is a constructive collaboration between the staff and persons incarcerated, which is characterized by four aspects (Souverein, 2013):

1. Staff work with the individual in an open and transparent manner. Communicating WITH individuals in detention, instead of communicating ABOUT individuals in detention, is central. A case plan is always presented in collaboration with the individual (and their network) and in this way the perspective, goals, wishes and skills of the individual themselves form the core of the case plan. In addition, the policy and operation of the facility is also developed based on the input of the people staying there.
2. Within the context of relational security, the core idea of working with individuals is shifting from a highly risk-oriented approach to one that focuses more on individual strengths. This results in gaining autonomy and the opportunity to take responsibility, appropriate to his or her capabilities.
3. Behavioural change is rarely a linear process so each person must be given the opportunity to make mistakes so that they can learn from them. If rules or agreements are broken, the individual is involved in drawing up appropriate consequences. This allows for a moment of introspection on the part of the individual, on the one hand, and a consequence can be established that meets the needs of the individual, on the other. This trial-and-error way of working emphasizes recovery, understanding the root causes of the behaviour, and determining measures to avoid similar situations in the future.
4. The professional approach is advisory and motivational rather than repressive and authoritarian. Staff members position themselves as mentors, assisting each individual and providing support as needed.

## **C. Staff presence**

The last element refers to the physical presence of the staff. This includes staffing numbers, more specifically the ratio between the number of staff and the number of people in detention, and the time and space available for face-to-face interactions. Staff tries to spend most of their hours in communal areas, instead of closed office spaces. Their presence in the workplace makes them easier for individuals to approach. This promotes informal interactions, such as cooking together or playing games. These moments contribute significantly to cultivating positive relationships and a positive institutional environment (Soeverin, 2013).

### 3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The framework of relational security finds support in the literature on the working alliance and can be substantiated by two aligning theories: self-determination theory and social-ecological theory (Souverein, 2023). It also relates to positive criminology, restorative justice and humane approaches to crime and to the presence theory.

#### I. Working alliance

Theories regarding the therapeutic or working alliance support the framework of relational security (Souverein, 2023). It refers to the nature and strength of the relationship between the professional and the client (Horvath, 2001). Within the justice context, however, the work alliance is more commonly referred to. Bordin (1979) describes the working alliance as an active collaboration between client and supervisor. In this collaboration, both carry a responsibility. The working alliance focuses on three key aspects that can influence each other. First, client and counsellor must agree on the goal of the change. Second, there must be agreement on the activities that are set by both client and counsellor in function of achieving the set goals. Finally, the quality of the interpersonal relationship between client and counsellor is a key element. This refers, among other things, to the sense of connection, trust and mutual commitment between the two parties.

In judicial settings, this working alliance is also very important. Building a constructive and collaborative relationship between client and counsellor can help promote positive behaviours in inmates and prevent recidivism. If there is a good working alliance between different clients and staff members it can contribute to relational safety in a detention facility (Souverein, 2023).

#### II. Socio-ecological model

The conceptualization of relational safety fits within the framework of the socio-ecological model (Souverein, 2023). This theoretical model identifies complex environmental and personal factors that influence individual behaviour. It deals with the interaction of individual, relationship, community and societal factors. These theories recognize the importance of individuals' strengths and positive development (Sallis, Owen & Fisher; 2008). As a result, it contrasts with the dominant risk-based models, such as the risk-need-responsivity theory (Souverein, 2023). An important socio-ecological theory is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model. For example, Johns et al. (2014) states: "a social-ecological perspective decenters the individual as the source of the offending problem, seeing them in terms of the relationships, interactions and processes that define and influence their everyday lives and experience. This perspective recognises the importance of regular,

deep interactions, meaningful to the person – and that new interactions can effectively alter development (or the direction of development) and therefore influence outcomes such as behaviors” (Souverein, 2023, p. 105). The "Five Cs of Positive Youth Development" from Richard M. Lerner (2005) also provides support for the conceptualization of relational security (Souverein, 2023). Unlike the other theories, this one focuses on young people. It focuses on the elements essential to promoting healthy and positive development (Johns, Williams & Haines, 2017; Lerner et al., 2005).

These five C's are (Lerner et al., 2005):

1. **Competence:** This refers to a person's sense of mastery and the development of their skills and abilities. It involves their ability to effectively navigate various life challenges and tasks, such as academic success, problem-solving, and personal skills development.
2. **Confidence:** Confidence relates to a young person's self-esteem and self-efficacy. It encompasses their belief in their own abilities and their capacity to tackle challenges.
3. **Connection:** Connection emphasizes the importance of positive relationships and connections with peers, adults, and the community. Healthy social bonds and support networks play a significant role in a person's development. These connections offer emotional and social support, as well as a sense of belonging and identity.
4. **Character:** Character involves the development of moral and ethical values, as well as a sense of responsibility and integrity. It encompasses qualities such as empathy, respect for others, and a commitment to doing what is right. Building strong character helps people make ethical decisions and contribute positively to society.
5. **Caring:** This fifth C underscores the importance of encouraging young people to develop a sense of caring for others and a broader concern for their community and the world. It involves fostering empathy, a sense of social responsibility, and a willingness to give back and help others.

### **III. Self-determination Theory**

Deci & Ryan's (2012; Souverein, 2023) self-determination theory also provides a framework for conceptualizing relational security. Deci & Ryan argue that people's intrinsic motivation depends on three basic natural needs, namely competence, autonomy and relatedness. Firstly, autonomy refers to the desire for independence and the freedom to make choices aligned with personal values and interests. When individuals feel autonomous, they are more motivated and engaged because their actions stem from their own volition rather than external pressures. Secondly, competence involves the need to feel effective and capable in activities that matter to them. It's about experiencing a sense of mastery and skill development. When people feel competent, they're more likely to tackle

challenges, persist, and seek growth opportunities. Lastly, relatedness encompasses the need for meaningful connections and belongingness. It's about forming authentic relationships and feeling connected within social contexts. When individuals have a sense of relatedness, they are more engaged socially, seek connections, and experience a sense of support and community. When these needs are met, they foster motivation for behaviour change, mental well-being and resilience (Deci & Ryan, 2012; van der Helm et al., 2018). However, within the correctional context, there is an involuntary nature that often includes limited autonomy. This undermines the needs of people in detention resulting in a decrease in motivation for behavioural change (van der Helm et al., 2018; Souverein, 2023).

#### **IV. Restorative Justice**

The guidelines also fit within the restorative justice movement. Restorative justice is an umbrella concept, but the definition used by the European Forum for Restorative Justice (n.d.) is: "Restorative justice is an approach of addressing harm or the risk of harm through engaging all those affected in coming to a common understanding and agreement on how the harm or wrongdoing can be repaired and justice achieved". It is often also related to the concept of Ubuntu that is used in South Africa and other neighboring countries meaning "I am, because we are", pointing at the interconnectedness of all people (Schoeman, 2021).

Using restorative justice in a prison context can be seen along four different layers of restoration: self-restoration, restoration with their family members or network, restoration with their victim(s) and restoration with society. The family members (and broader network) of people in detention form an explicit group within restorative detention (Wolthuis et al., 2019, p. 125-126).

#### **V. Positive criminology**

Focussing on positive aspects and not only on security is what people need. This thinking forms the basis of what is known as positive criminology. In a landscape where criminology has become inundated with discussions of "law and order," "the punitive turn," and "the exception state," the introduction of positive criminology offers a refreshing, innovative, and imaginative approach. Positive criminology encourages us to delve into the possibilities of building safe communities based on principles of interdependence, community and cooperation (Schuilenburg, van Steden & Oude Breuil, 2014).

## VI. Presence theory

The presence theory was developed by Andries Baart. Presence practice starts with attentively opening up to the other person in the network of their relationships. This makes it possible (often gradually) to understand what is at stake for the other person and which help is appropriate (and which is not). The other person feels seen and recognised. That alone can be experienced as beneficial care. Based on what is understood in the relationship, the presence worker deploys elements of his or her broad palette of (professional) knowledge that seem helpful here and now. The perspective (which is not the same as 'the question') of the other person always remains the guiding principle (Baart, 2001; Baart, 2002). In such environments, presence practitioners strive to affirm the fundamental dignity of those with whom they come into contact, without regard to whether or not their lives are successful. At the same time, they activate opportunities for individual development ("becoming who you are"). They remain vigilant of processes that can easily lead to social (self-)exclusion, deviance and disrespect, while striving to cultivate avenues for involvement in social networks that provide personal validation (Baart, 2002, p. 4). Presence theory is empirically based and linked to care ethics. This is a moral theory that takes as its starting point that every society and every person depends on care from others for their survival. Inevitable vulnerability, dependence and interconnectedness are central concepts. Presence also has a political-ethical thrust, in the sense that it is critical of the (soundness of the) social order (Beurskens, van der Linde & Baart, 2018; Baart & den Bakker, 2019).

## 4. BEST PRACTICES

These guidelines are not only based on theoretical knowledge. Interactions between people are dynamic, which is why research has also been conducted into best practices. This report shares examples of how relational security is expressed in practice to make relational security more tangible in the setting of a small-scale detention house.

For more information about the best practices go to the website of the WISH-EU project: [www.wish-eu.eu](http://www.wish-eu.eu).







## NETHERLANDS

### I. Small-scale youth facility (KVJJ), Amsterdam:

Facility is managed by: Level

Target group: **youngsters**

Amsterdam has a small-scale facility for young people that committed an offense. It is located in a neighborhood where also families with children live. Souverein (2023) researched the presence of relational security within KVJJ. After several interviews with staff, youth and parents within the small-scale youth facility, they concluded that relational security contributes to safety in several ways in this facility.

Through their **physical presence**, staff contribute to safety by proactively preventing potential conflicts and, if necessary, defusing them. This sense of relational security not only deepens staff's understanding and perception of the young people's needs, allowing them to respond effectively, but also contributes to the **young people's self-awareness** of their vulnerabilities and strengths. Granting young people a certain **degree of autonomy** while **consistently encouraging them to take responsibility** promotes a sense of responsibility in them. They therefore feel a greater obligation to contribute to a safe environment and are more motivated to take that responsibility.

Relational security allows staff to interact effectively with young people in a way that is both **constructive and respectful**. Those involved – staff, young people and parents – have noted that relational security significantly reduces the risk of negative group dynamics among young people or of the deliberate spread of deviant behaviour by certain members within these groups).

Finally, relational security promotes crucial developmental skills such as **autonomy** and cultivates **positive identities** through nurturing positive relationships. Successful implementation of relational security not only ensures the safety of staff and young people within the facility, but also provides

a framework to help young individuals build safe relationships with their families and community, thereby promoting positive development.

### More specific about trainings for staff

The competence of pedagogical staff and janitors in the KFJJ is essential. The pedagogical staff and janitors give shape to the agreements that apply within this facility. When recruiting and selecting new staff members, special attention is therefore given to the (wanting to) understand and have affinity with the presence approach, having connection with the young people, cultural diversity within the team, authentic behaviour and vision on detention. MBO level is a minimum requirement for the pedagogical staff, as well as a willingness to take a HBO course or obtaining an officially recognized certificate of experience (or Recognition of Prior Acquired Competencies).<sup>1</sup> Janitors do not need an MBO certificate. During recruitment and selection, the level of education is important but not leading: the ability to work relationally is considered.

## II. De Spetse Hoeve, Veelerveen

Facility is managed by: Ter Wille Foundation

Target group: adult men with addiction problems

The Spetse Hoeve is officially a mental health facility rather than a detention center. The approach within De Spetse Hoeve is focused on creating a safe and respectful environment for its residents using the application of relational security. Their main priority is **nurturing positive relationships** between staff and residents, cultivating an **atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding**. Staff actively invest in building rapport with residents and ensure that everyone is **treated with dignity and empathy**.

Regular group discussions are held to **promote open communication** and provide residents with a **platform to express their thoughts and emotions**. To give residents as much **autonomy** as possible, residents themselves **participate in discussions** and **make rules together** when problems arise within the institution. In doing so, the institution tries to give residents **as much responsibility as possible**, with the goal of **creating a family atmosphere**. This not only **strengthens residents' sense of belonging**, but also serves as a means to identify and **address any concerns** or issues within the

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<sup>1</sup>MBO and HBO are terms used in the Netherlands to refer to different levels of education. HBO refers to higher education; and MBO refers to intermediate vocational education, qualification level 4 of middle management education..

facility. The person-centered approach recognizes each resident's vulnerabilities and unique challenges, and the dedicated staff works diligently to meet these individual needs.

### III. House of Recovery, Almere

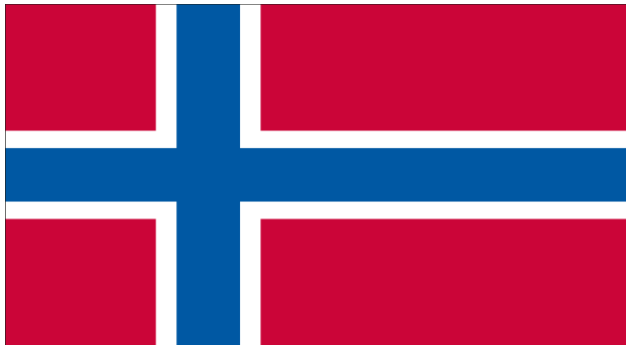
Facility is managed by: the Custodial Institutions Agency of The Netherlands

Target group: adult men

House of Recovery is characterized by the idea of relational security. They aim to create a safe environment through **the way people there live together** and through the **open forms of communication** and **involvement of the staff**. The staff sees the residents as "ordinary" people with their own stories and **treats them as people who deserve respect**. This is reflected in practice by maintaining an open relationship with the residents, sharing their hobbies and organizing activities together. The staff also does not wear uniforms to keep the dynamic with the residents as equal as possible.

#### More specific about trainings for staff

They receive training to perceive and engage with the residents with an eye on relational security.



## NORWAY

### IV. Nordre Vestfold prison, Horten unit, Horten

Facility is managed by: the Norwegian penitentiary administration

Target group: Adult men

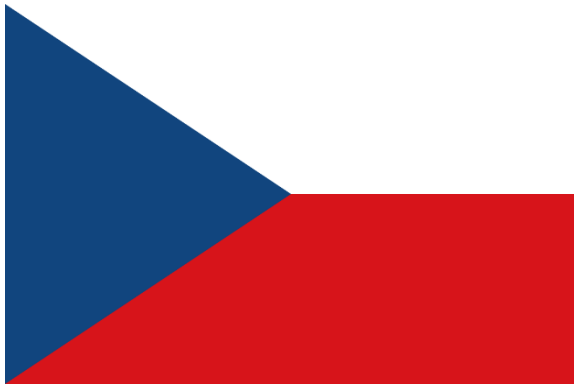
The Horten unit at Nordre Vestfold Prison is a prison unit with a high level of security. Despite the high security level, relational safety plays an important role in the institution and this is visible through the safe and friendly atmosphere between staff and residents. This is partly due to the fact that **staff are always present and accessible**. Within the institution, many **doors are open** and **residents can move around freely**. In addition, **staff also participate in various informal activities** with residents, such as participating in yard golf tournaments, drinking coffee together, helping with work, etc.

## V. Lyderhorn halfway house, Bergen

Facility is managed by: the Norwegian penitentiary administration

Target group: Mixed-gender facility for adults

Lyderhorn halfway house is a detention facility with minimum security standards and operates on **the principle of normality**. With this principle, they aim to create a “typical” social atmosphere for their residents. Nevertheless, they have implemented security measures that focus mainly on relational safety. At Lyderhorn halfway house, this includes **promoting a positive relationship** between staff and residents. To achieve this, **staff must be attentive and well-trained**. Building trust and a strong focus on **transparent and effective communication** between staff and residents regarding established boundaries are considered essential components in creating a safe environment.



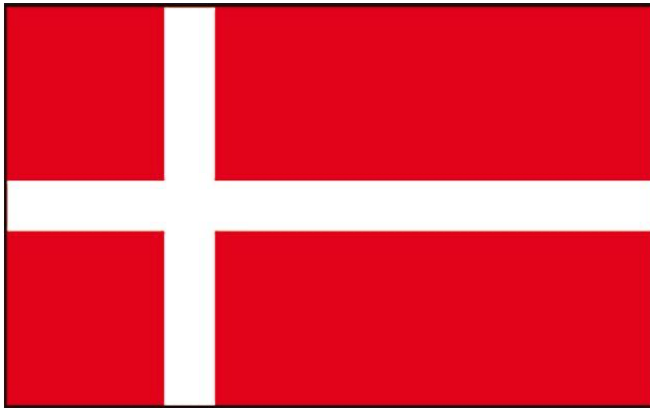
## CZECH REPUBLIC

### VI. Prison for women Řepy, Prague

Facility is managed by: the Prison service of the Czech Republic

Target group: Women from 20-70 years old

Řepy Women's Prison operates from an open regime with unique guidelines, in which relational security is central. **A sense of familiarity** characterizes the relationship between staff and residents, creating a strong bond between them. At the heart of this approach is an **open-door policy**, which means that staff are always easily accessible to residents. Residents therefore experience it as a **habit to approach the staff** to discuss their concerns, seek answers to questions, engage in informal conversation or go deeper into discussions.



## DENMARK

### VII. Skejby, Århus

Facility is managed by: the Danish Prison and Probation Service

Target group: Mixed-gender facility for adults

Security in the Skejby halfway house is based on the principles of relational security, where **strong relationships, respect, transparent communication, trust and group activities** are integral to their working method. What sets the Skejby halfway house apart is the distinctive model, where individuals in the criminal justice system live together with those who are not (called plus and minus residents). This intentional mixing eliminates the "us" versus "them" dynamic between staff and residents, as well as those who voluntarily rent rooms. This extra "confusing dimension" contributes to the **unique and safe environment** at the Skejby. This approach aims to minimize the risk of recidivism.

#### More specific about trainings for staff

The staff is trained in the methodology of this facility, which is based on ADL training (training for ordinary daily living). This training is based on pedagogical and psychological specialized knowledge. Based on this training, the reintegration process is optimized and changes are created that are necessary to live a life without crime after a stay in prison. The staff consists mainly of social workers.



**IRELAND**

### **VIII. Shelton Abbey, Wicklow**

Facility is managed by: the Irish prison service

Target group: men aged nineteen years and older

Shelton Abbey is an open, low security prison in Ireland. It places a strong emphasis on relational security, and this core value is evident in the staff's dedication to **foster trust, transparency and a sense of community**. This becomes visible in practice by the interactions between residents and staff. **Conversations** in the hallways **flow freely** and show a **remarkable level of familiarity**. Residents and staff address each other by first name and do not wear uniforms. This creates an atmosphere characterized by **mutual recognition and respect**.





**FINLAND**

### IX. Vanaja Prison, Hämeenlinna

Facility is managed by: the Prison and Probation Service of Finland (RISE)

Target group: adult women

Vanaja Prison in Finland is considered one of the most open detention centers in the country, with minimal static and procedural security measures and a focus on relational security. This focus on relational security requires strong **personal commitment from each staff member** to create good relationships between the inmates and staff. It is described as almost **100% a matter of good relationships**. Since the facility functions as a community, it is necessary to **adapt to the local spirit**. The idea of relational safety is complemented by the requirement to follow some simple rules.



**FRANCE**

### X. Ferme Emmaüs Ker Madeleine, Saint-Gildas-des-Bois

Facility is managed by: the Emmaüs Movement

Target group: Adult men

The staff at Ferme Emmaüs Ker Madeleine focuses on creating a **safe and respectful environment** for all people within the facility. Moreover, they want to **build a strong bond with their residents**. To create this **trust-based atmosphere**, it is crucial that residents be sure they trust each other, that they can have **open conversations about any topic** and that they see the facility as a **safe space for self-expression**. Although violations of internal rules are infrequent, there is a range of consequences to address such occurrences. These consequences include warnings, summonses from the SPIP (Service Pénitentiaire d'Insertion et de Probation), reminders of obligations from a judge and the possibility of returning to a prison. However, each violation of the rules is assessed individually.



## BELGIUM

### XI. Detentiehuis Kortrijk, Kortrijk

Facility is managed by: the Federal Government Department of Justice

Target group: Male adults who have a sentence of less than three years

Central to relational security in the Detention House of Kortrijk is **human contact with the residents**, where **closeness and trust** are central. This is pursued through the use of "**detention counselors**". The detention counselors are responsible for supervision and guidance and they operate an **open-door policy**. They personally supervise each resident daily and must foster positive communication and relationships. Supervision and support are provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with special attention to potential problems and support at each stage of reintegration. Prompt action is taken if a resident experiences adjustment difficulties. **Staff also interact informally with residents** by participating in various activities, such as sports or other free time activities.



## LITHUANIA

### XII. Vilnius Halfway House, Vilnius

Facility is managed by: the Lithuanian prison system

Target group: a mixed-gender facility for people above sixteen years old

Vilnius Halfway House stands as one among the eight Halfway Houses operating in Lithuania. These facilities are integral to a range of initiatives funded by Norway Grants, aimed at assisting Lithuania's prison services and those of other nations. Vilnius Halfway House places a strong emphasis on dynamic security, a central element within the collaborative undertaking between Lithuania and Norway known as the "Development of Quality Based Lithuanian Correctional Service System." As part of this initiative, Norwegian partners spearhead **training programs** centered around **fostering dynamic interactions between staff and people in detention**, thereby introducing and enhancing this concept within the Lithuanian correctional system. The primary objective is to **cultivate positive relationships and foster respectful communication**.

#### More specific about trainings for staff

*"In a small unit where there are only 20 convicts, daily life is very tight. Employees and officials communicate directly with convicts on a daily basis. Communication training, group psychology and management, understanding the relationships between convicts, as they also communicate very closely with each other, establishing and following clear rules for group life, noticing disagreements among convicts, managing them."*

*- Lithuanian prison service, Competence development division (Norway Grant, 2023)*

Part of the project: Development of dynamic security model (Norway Grant, 2023):

- To reorganize the Lithuanian penitentiary staff professional training, education and competence building system:
- Development of a professional training institution model;
- Drafting of curriculum, course modules, descriptions and methodologies;
- Organization and realization of the training process;
- Establishment of practical training units in the correctional facilities;
- Shaping the image of the penitentiary system.

For more information about trainings in small-scale forms of detention in Lithuania, see this [link to the website of EPTA](#): European Penitentiary Training Academies.

If you want to read more about best practices within Europe and relational security, you can find more best practices and videos on the WISH-EU website: [www.wish-eu.eu](http://www.wish-eu.eu)

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