

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten – Switzerland

Introduction

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten (VZK) is a correctional and therapeutic facility located near Reinach in the Canton of Basel-Stadt, Switzerland. Founded in 1987, the facility operates as part of the Justiz- und Sicherheitsdepartement Basel-Stadt JSD BS (Justice and Security department) and combines custodial enforcement with specialised forensic therapeutic support. VZK is situated in a calm and semi-rural environment, adjacent to an organic farm and green spaces, which contributes to a tranquil and therapeutic atmosphere for residents. The facility follows the ROS concept, introduced in 2018 in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, which structures reintegration through clear goals, regular evaluation, and a balance of care and security. VZK's mission is to promote everyday skills, personal responsibility, and social reintegration for residents in a supportive and open environment.

Scale

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten accommodates a total of twenty-five residents. Fourteen places are reserved for individuals under court-ordered therapeutic measures, while eleven places are for residents serving sentences. The facility can host a maximum of four women. Its small scale allows for close supervision and individualised follow-up.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten accommodates men and women with diverse backgrounds. The facility primarily serves individuals who are progressing out of more therapeutic or closed settings—such as secure forensic clinics or correctional facilities—once they are stabilised and ready for a more open, community-integrated environment. It offers a setting that aims to be close to normal life while still providing structured support and supervision.

Residents at VZK fall into three main categories. First, those placed under open inpatient enforcement procedures in accordance with Articles 59, 60, and 63 of the Swiss Criminal Code receive specialised therapeutic support tailored to their mental health needs and resocialisation goals. These measures represent VZK's most intensive and comprehensive form of intervention.

Second, some residents participate in external work arrangements, such as Arbeitsexternat (AEX). These positions are either part of the regular labour market (1st labour market) or specifically designed for people with disabilities or reduced work capacity (2nd labour market). Both types of placements provide meaningful work experience and promote structure, responsibility, and integration, while residents remain under the supervision and support of the facility.

Finally, others are placed under semi-detention (*Halbgefängenschaft*, HG), the main goal of which is to prevent the harmful effects of imprisonment. This regime allows individuals to work or study outside the facility while spending nights and free time at VZK. However, placement in HG requires an existing employment or study contract. This option is available for sentences of up to 12 months.

Movement and leave for all residents are gradually expanded based on individual reintegration plans. This begins with short periods within the property, progresses to limited external engagements, and eventually allows for longer periods outside, depending on each resident's progress. Coordination between the resident, the facility, and the executing authority ensures a consistent focus on both security and personal development.

Forms of security

Security at Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten is based primarily on dynamic and relational principles, supported by procedural measures with minimal static controls. The property is open and unfenced, reflecting the facility's focus on trust and supervision rather than strict containment.

The front door is operated by staff and is open between 06:00 and 22:00. In addition, access to and from the building is controlled: residents can only leave through the main door and must check out with the staff member on duty. Outside these hours (6:00 and 22:00), residents enter using a personal badge, and comeback times are monitored by video surveillance. Possession of a mobile phone is mandatory to enable contact and supervision. Staff may inspect devices when necessary, and residents are not permitted to delete data, which is especially important given that some residents have been convicted of sexual offences.

Daily observations by the Care and Security team are recorded in a facility-developed digital system and reviewed by a data analyst. This tool provides an overview of residents' progress and goal attainment, helping to prevent unnecessary extensions of stays and ensuring that reintegration goals remain on track.

The multidisciplinary team comprises seven Care and Security staff present around the clock (with alternating sleeping and waking duties), five psychiatric nurses, social workers who manage the cases, and a forensic scientist. Self-employed therapists join weekly for team exchange and therapeutic sessions with the clients. Each role contributes to balancing safety, care, and structured support for residents.

Activities

Each resident follows an individual reintegration plan, developed by the case manager and therapist. At the start of placement, movement is restricted to the facility, with internal work opportunities available in gardening, cooking, and household maintenance. Taking care of the animals (cats, goats, pigs) is also possible. These tasks help residents develop practical skills and a sense of responsibility within a structured environment.

As residents progress, their movement is gradually expanded. Initially, they may take short supervised walks around the property, followed by three to six hours of authorised leave per week. Over time, this can increase to six to twelve hours weekly, and once residents have secured external employment, they may be granted leave for up to forty-eight hours on weekends.

The facility does not run formal group programmes, as residents involved in external work or therapeutic measures follow individual schedules. Residents under therapeutic measures focus primarily on their personal development, working closely with staff to achieve the goals set in their reintegration plan.

Medical needs are addressed through collaboration with regular family doctors while therapeutic issues need to be taken with the forensic therapist. Visits from family and friends are permitted twice per week for two hours (only in common rooms), with prior notification, and residents are particularly encouraged to maintain family contact.

Community-integration

Location and architecture

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten is located in the canton of Basel-Stadt, near the town of Reinach. The facility occupies a tranquil, semi-rural setting adjacent to an organic farm with horses and other animals, which contributes to a calm and therapeutic environment.

The building has undergone complete renovation, with further refurbishment planned. The basement houses a large kitchen, while the ground floor is reserved for staff offices, registration, and monitoring functions. Residential areas are located on the first and second floors, comprising six apartments, each accommodating three to four residents. Each apartment features bedrooms, a shared living room, a kitchen, and a communal bathroom. In total, the facility offers seventeen single bedrooms—generally preferred for residents under therapeutic measures—and four double bedrooms for semi-detention residents. An eight-person apartment is reserved for women. Residents also have access to a smoking balcony, which is open at all times.

The grounds are open and unfenced, with a vegetable garden, a tool shed, and animals such as pigs and goats that residents help to care for.

Interaction with the community

The facility emphasises gradual reintegration into the community through employment, therapy, and everyday activities. As residents advance, they undertake shopping, medical appointments, and other daily tasks outside the facility with increasing independence. The surrounding environment is calm and semi-rural, supporting a therapeutic atmosphere and unobtrusive community contact.

Relations with neighbours are positive and discreet. There has been no notable public opposition, in part because the resident profile is not widely known. The facility's open character promotes day-to-day contact without drawing attention, and cooperation with nearby residents includes shared use of amenities such as an outdoor swimming pool. Community interaction is primarily achieved through residents' gradual participation in work, medical care, and everyday activities outside the facility.

Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten

Founded: 1987

Capacity: 25

Autonomy level: Medium
level of autonomy

Nearest city: Basel
(Switzerland)

Nature of interaction:
Visited by RESCALED
(11-04-25)

Publicity / Read more

- About Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten at the official website of the Kanton of Basel-Stadt: Kanton Basel-Stadt. (2025). *Vollzugszentrum Klosterfiechten*. Retrieved March 6th, 2025, from <https://www.bs.ch/jsd/bdm/justizvollzug/vollzugszentrum-klosterfiechten>