

Bologna IPM - Italy

Introduction

The "Pietro Siciliani" Juvenile Prison (from now on "Bologna IPM") is located in the centre of Bologna and forms part of the broader Juvenile Justice Centre (CGM) for the Emilia-Romagna region, in North-Italy. The CGM is responsible for implementing judicial orders issued by juvenile courts and collaborates with regional and local authorities on prevention and rehabilitation policies. In addition to the facility, the complex includes a Centre for First Reception (CPA), a Juvenile Social Services Office, and a state-run residential community for minors under precautionary measures, where support is delivered through individualised, interdisciplinary approaches.

Situated in a lively urban area, the Bologna IPM benefits from long-established ties with the local community, particularly through partnerships with civil society organisations. These partnerships contribute to the reintegration of young people in conflict with the law and support educational and rehabilitative programmes. Particular attention is given to developing paths of attenuated custody, as foreseen in the national legal framework, to encourage gradual reintegration into society.

Scale

The official capacity of the Bologna IPM is 40.

RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

Differentiation

Target group:

Admission to juvenile detention facilities in Italy is based on age and legal responsibility, generally including those between 14 and 18 years, and in some cases extending to individuals up to 25. Placement in the IPM is typically reserved for those for whom less restrictive alternatives are not applicable. The most common offences among those held at Bologna IPM were theft (40%),

robbery (30%), and drug-related crimes, with an increase in offences against the person (21%). Around half of the residents were held under pre-trial detention measures.

At the time of the visit, the Bologna IPM was hosting 41 juveniles. Among them, 33 were of foreign nationality, and six were born in Italy to non-Italian parents. Fifteen residents were legally adults, including six individuals aged between 21 and 25. The facility also accommodated 16 unaccompanied foreign minors. The majority of the population came from North African countries, primarily Tunisia and Morocco.

Forms of security:

Security at Bologna IPM combines static, procedural, and relational elements. While physical controls and formal protocols are in place, staff aim to create a supportive environment based on trust and dialogue. The facility has traditionally adopted a less punitive approach than adult prisons. For example, the staff has historically worked without uniforms, and the facility itself was not built with high-security infrastructure in mind. However, since October 2024, new regulations have reinstated the use of uniforms for staff in juvenile detention settings, as a measure to reinforce institutional authority.

The Bologna IPM team includes a commander, four inspectors, three superintendents, and thirty-eight officers. They work alongside four pedagogical staff members and are supported by linguistic and cultural mediators, including an Arabic-speaking mediator and a language expert covering English, Spanish, and Arabic.

Activities:

Education in Bologna IPM is coordinated by the CPIA of Bologna. Around 15 young people attend literacy courses, while another 15 follow a middle school programme. A vocational high school course focused on hospitality and catering is also offered in partnership with the Scappi Institute of Castel San Pietro and the CPIA. Ten residents were enrolled in this course at the time of the visit.

Two residents were studying at university level through an agreement with the University of Bologna. These students are allowed to attend classes in person with special permission.

In addition to formal education, several professional training opportunities are available. Some residents take part in courses in catering, gardening, and construction, organised by the FOMAL organisation. Paid internships are also offered by Cefal through a regional partnership, allowing selected residents to work outside the facility under Article 21 of the Penitentiary Law. The Brigata del Pratello project, developed with FOMAL, further supports vocational skills development.

Inside the facility, a variety of activities are available. Sports are organised by the UISP association through the "Sport and Legality" project, which also brings local teams into the facility for matches. Theatre workshops are run by the Paolo Billi theatre company and involve a dedicated group of regular participants. Other ongoing activities include gardening, individual art therapy sessions, carpentry, and decoration workshops managed by the Bettina association. Additional recreational programmes are supported by volunteers from the U.V.A. Pass.A. association.

Visits with family members are allowed three times per week, in designated visiting rooms. Each session allows a maximum of four visitors per resident. When these rooms are not available, other spaces are temporarily adapted to host legal meetings. Residents also have access to remote communication, with 30 minutes per week allocated for both phone and video calls, granted upon verification of contact details.

Community-integration

Location and architecture:

The facility is located in the city centre, in one of Bologna's liveliest areas, and is therefore easily accessible and connected to the public transport network. The IPM is housed in a former 15th-century convent, making it very complex to start structural renovations that could help optimize the use of the spaces and make them more functional for activities. Following the restoration of the second detention floor, which has been unfit for use since 2012, the facility now consists of three floors.

The first and second floors both have rooms where school and training activities are carried out, two canteens, two social rooms on each floor and two sleeping areas, with rooms with a capacity for three or four juveniles each. Moreover, on each floor there are two rooms for medical isolation which should be used for overnight stays for new arrivals and persons suffering from contagious diseases. The first floor houses minors, while the second floor houses young adults. Minors are

placed among young adults in case of overcrowding or if they are particularly difficult to manage in proximity to other juveniles. Each room is equipped with a toilet, shower, television and essential furniture, recently replaced.

The ground floor is structured for administrative offices, two rooms for visits, a gymnasium, a professional kitchen (used for FOMAL - Brigata del Pratello courses), and an outdoor common area. There is a christian chapel, but no specific religious areas are set up for Muslim juveniles, who pray in their rooms.

In the outdoor common area there is a large sports field, a walking area and a green area for gardening courses. Outside, the boys from the carpentry course also built and decorated an area that can be used for outdoor visits during the summer.

Interaction with the community:

The Bologna IPM maintains strong connections with the local community through partnerships with educational institutions, training centres, and cultural associations. Schooling is delivered by the CPIA of Bologna, and the University of Bologna supports higher education through distance learning and occasional in-person attendance. Vocational training is coordinated with organisations such as FOMAL and Cefal. Sports activities bring in local teams, encouraging interaction between residents and the broader community. Theatre, art, and carpentry workshops are run in collaboration with local associations, and volunteers from U.V.A. Pass.A. regularly contribute to recreational programming. These initiatives reinforce the facilities commitment to gradual reintegration, maintaining a balance between custodial care and community engagement.

Bologna IPM

Founded: ?

Capacity: 40

Autonomy level: Restricted
level of autonomy

Nearest city: Bologna (Italy)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by Antigone
(December 2024)

Publicity/ read more

- Antigone's report on Italian juvenile prisons:

Antigone. (n.d.). *Istituti penali per minorenni*. Ragazzi Dentro. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.ragazzidentro.it/istituti/istituti-penali-per-minorenni/>

- Antigone's report on the Bologna juvenile prison (IPM):

Antigone. (n.d.). *Istituto penale per minorenni di Bologna*. Ragazzi Dentro. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.ragazzidentro.it/istituto/bologna/>