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## **Prosecutors to Visit Innovative Criminal Justice Models in Germany and Portugal**

*US Prosecutors Take an Up-Close Look at Visionary International Approaches  
That Can Reduce Incarceration Rates and Save Lives*

**LOS ANGELES** – Over the next two weeks, more than 20 leading prosecutors from across the United States will participate in an international site visit to observe and learn from pioneering criminal justice models in Europe that have helped reduce incarceration and save lives through policies focused on restraint in charging, public health harm reduction strategies and decriminalization of drug use.

During the first leg of the learning trip, elected prosecutors will be in Berlin to study Germany’s charging and plea bargaining approaches, rates and length of incarceration, youth justice practices, and conditions of confinement. During the second week, prosecutors will be in Lisbon, Portugal to explore models of decriminalization and public health responses to drug use.

As part of the trip, prosecutors plan to visit courts; health and community service providers; tour prisons and treatment facilities; and meet with law enforcement leaders, judges, public health officials, international experts and individuals with experience in the criminal justice system. The visits are aimed at learning from the successes of international models and gathering ideas about how to decrease incarceration and improve criminal justice approaches in the United States.

“Elected prosecutors around the country are grappling with how to redefine justice and shrink the footprint of the justice system, while making communities safer and healthier. They are shifting away from punitive criminal justice responses to substance use and mental illness and embracing smart and proven public health solutions,” said **Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of [Fair and Just Prosecution](#)** (FJP), a national nonprofit that supports a network of newly elected prosecutors committed to new thinking and the funder and organizer of the trip. “The innovative models in Germany and Portugal offer more effective paths forward – pathways grounded in prevention, harm reduction, respect for human dignity and second chances.”

The United States’ incarceration rate is an international outlier. Despite having 5% of the world’s population, the U.S. has nearly 25% of the world’s prison population. Germany and Portugal offer powerful lessons on changing these paradigms.

After making a deliberate choice to reduce incarceration in recent decades, Germany now diverts almost all people away from prison. Germany’s system also treats kids like kids with a strong focus on rehabilitation

and places human dignity at the center of its correctional philosophy. Portugal similarly has embraced a different criminal justice starting point than the U.S. and decriminalized all drugs in 2001. This policy shift resulted in significant reductions in Portugal's drug-related death toll and produced other positive public health outcomes – and offers a dramatic rebuttal to the “War on Drugs” thinking that has permeated past justice system choices in the U.S.

“The evidence is clear that our country’s decades-long approach to incarceration is not working. We need to look for innovative solutions to deliver more sensible approaches – and a paradigm shift away from punitive responses – that our communities are demanding,” observed newly elected **Suffolk County (Boston) DA Rachael Rollins**, one of the elected leaders joining the trip.

“Among all criminal justice system actors, prosecutors are uniquely positioned to be able to take lessons learned from other countries’ approaches to incarceration and criminalization back to their communities,” said **District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine**, another elected leader participating in the visit. “The enormous power of prosecutors to exercise their discretion in ways that ensure outcomes that enhance public safety and reduce recidivism is unparalleled in the criminal justice system. My colleagues and I look forward to learning from countries that have successfully reduced mass incarceration, reintegrated previously incarcerated individuals back into society, and treated drug users and individuals struggling with mental illness with health services and supports that have a high degree of success.”

Elected leaders participating in the learning trip include: **Wesley Bell** (St. Louis County, Missouri), **Sherry Boston** (DeKalb County, Georgia), **Satana Deberry** (Durham County, North Carolina), **T.J. Donovan** (State of Vermont), **George Gascón** (San Francisco, California), **Eric Gonzalez** (Kings County, New York), **Mark Gonzalez** (Nueces County, Texas), **Christian Gossett** (Winnebago County, Wisconsin), **Andrea Harrington** (Berkshire County, Massachusetts), **Larry Krasner** (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), **Beth McCann** (Denver, Colorado), **Brian Middleton** (Fort Bend County, Texas), **Marilyn Mosby** (Baltimore City, Maryland), **Karl Racine** (District of Columbia), **Rachael Rollins** (Suffolk County, Massachusetts), **Dan Satterberg** (King County, Washington), **Carol Siemon** (Ingham County, Michigan) and **Andrew Warren** (Tampa, Florida).

The trip to **Germany** will include:

- Meetings with academics, lawyers, prosecutors and judges and visits to **diversion programs, service providers and court proceedings.**
- Discussions with **juvenile and young adult service providers and leaders** in Germany’s youth justice system.
- Visits to both **open and closed prisons**, to see Germany’s commitment to reentry services and conditions of confinement predicated on human dignity, while also learning about Germany’s very different starting point around rates and length of incarceration.
- A visit to the **House of the Wannsee Conference** to reflect on the role elected prosecutors can play in promoting courageous leadership in challenging times.

The trip to **Portugal** will include:

- Meetings with **public health officials**, drug policy leaders and the architect of Portugal’s decriminalization policy.
- Visits to **harm reduction service providers**, including a drop-in service center, an integrated treatment center, a street outreach team, a methadone van and a mobile safe consumption site.
- Meetings with police, prosecutors and the **Dissuasion Commission**, the civil panel which connects individuals to treatment instead of charging them with a crime.

For updates on the trip, please follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and check out our [“FJP On the Road” blog series](#).

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*Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit [www.fairandjustprosecution.org](http://www.fairandjustprosecution.org) or follow us on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](#).*