

## **Hippo Belgian Cases**

### **Andy**

Andy is a prisoner in a long term prison. Before his detention, his life wasn't easy. He had a difficult home situation and his family had financial issues. He started a communication at a university. But he couldn't complete his education because of financial reasons and became a taxi driver.

In his early twenties, Andy was convicted for a long sentence and came to the Central Prison of Leuven. This prison has a wide scale of education and formation. Andy considered this as a second chance and completed a lot of different courses (f.e. computercourses, accountancy, languages,...). He also works in prison as a bookbinder and is a dedicated member of the prisons theater group.

Two years ago, he came to the coordinator of prison education and said he wanted to take his educational activities to a higher level. He would like to finish his communication studies in prison. The education coordinator contacted the school and invited the head of the departement to prison. After a conversation, the university agreed to have Andy as a student. The head of the departement screened Andy on his competences, motivation and prior learning. He took in account all of the certificates Andy already received (in the first part of his education, and in prison). We arranged an adjusted curriculum for Andy, which wasn't easy because the school doesn't have a programme for distance learning. Based on this certificates, Andy got dispensation of some parts of the curriculum. Some parts of the curriculum aren't possible to follow while Andy is in prison. The classes that require group work or field work, are postponed until after his release.

Andy is considered as a normal student. He gets the same study material and exams as regular students. His only limitation is that he lives in prison. It's a closed prison, so he can't attempt classes or take exams in university. He studies by distance learning and takes his exams in prison, under supervision of the coordinator of prison education. When the exams are oral, the teacher comes to prison or we videotape the exam. There is a very good cooperation between the prison and the teachers: they send course information and answer to questions that Andy has. Last schoolyear, he succeeded in all the exams he took. Now he is attending his second year.

### **Mustapha**

Mustapha is a long sentenced prisoner, who didn't have an upper secondary diploma. Before his incarceration, he didn't have a permanent job. But sometimes he took temporary jobs in the construction area. But he wasn't educated for this. He planned to search for a permanent job in construction after release.

Three years ago, we started with a construction education in the Central Prison of Leuven. Mustapha was an inmate here, and subscribed him for this education. After a thorough screening, Mustapha was one of the 15 inmates that could start this education. He was selected because he had a perspective to release, but he had at least 2 years remaining sentence, he was highly motivated and showed the intention to work in construction after release.

Mustapha started the education in september 2008. It is a fulltime education of two years, taught by a centre of adult education. When the students complete the education successfully, they acquire an official certificate. It's a theoretical and practical education, that contains brick laying, encasing, steel braiding, plastering and laying floors. In june

2010, Mustapha graduated and received the certificate of 'Polyvalent construction worker'.

There is a cooperation with the construction sector. They subsidized the material costs and also engaged to facilitate the search of the graduated inmate for a job. They spread their curricula vitae to all the construction firms in Flanders. They also did this for Mustapha, and because of this he was invited for an interview. With his diploma and motivation, he could convince this construction firm to hire him. In february 2010, Mustapha was released and started to work.

## **Pascal**

Pascal is the owner of a luna park and travels from fair to fair. He is a part of a gipsy family and never had a proper education. He was very good in his job and the luna park was successfull, but he had a problem... He couldn't read or write, and therefore he got problems with the administration of his firm. He also didn't have the official board documents for his car and transport of his luna park, and lacked a drivers licence. For all this offences, he was convicted to a prison sentence.

All his problems have the same cause: his lack of ability to read and write. In the remand prison of Leuven Hulp, we motivated him to take a literacy course. In this course, he learned to read and write. And it turned out that he had a lot of talent and sense of language. Pascal learned that he had competences. He started to like reading and writing, and for the first time in his life, he could correspond with his son. He also started to write poems.

After 1.5 years, Pascal was transferred from the remand prison to the Central Prison of Leuven. Here he had a conversation with the educational coordinator (which is the same person as in his former prison, so she knew Pascals history) about his study pathway. Together they decided that it is very important that he wouldn't lose the literacy skills that he learned in the remand prison. Pascal felt the need to keep practicing his reading and writing. So he took a class 'Dutch for native speakers', for native Dutch speakers who experience problems with writing.

In a following study guidance conversation, Pascals lack of computerskills were discussed. He never worked with a computer. Computers were a complete mystery to him. Therefore he was always depending on other people for the accountance of his luna park. The education coordinator redirected Pascal towards an initiation course in computer skills. Pascall completed this course successfully.

In january 2011, Pascal was released. With the computer and literacy skills he acquired during his detention, he now has more competences to run his luna park successfully and professionally. Hopefully he will stay out of trouble now.