

## **Main topics and best practices from the HIPPO Learning Partnership**

The Partnership has a holistic approach to prison education, ranging from policy and decision making to the transition to society and labour market at the offender's release. The Partnership has followed the inmate's flow through the educational system in prison and focused on how individual learning pathways may be possible within the limitations of existing systems and structures.

The penitentiary systems in European countries are different in many aspects due to the historical, social, political and economical realities. All countries seem to agree that education and training in prison are vital to prevent relapse but there are very different systems and practices.

The main topics and best practices from the study visits are listed below.

### **Bordeaux, FR, October 14-16, 2011**

#### **Policy and decision making, the importance of involving stakeholders**

It is important that decision makers are involved in projects related to prison education to ensure the sustainability of models and structures that are implemented. Decision makers should be involved already at the early stages of projects and/or experimentations.

To bring about new consideration of their self-esteem by inmates themselves, it is important to encourage all types of success (valorization of experiential learning –VAE–, certificates,...) by involving medias too.

Concerning individual needs of inmates to come to a significant increase of their knowledge, competences and/or abilities, all categories of professionals (teachers in prison, social workers, medical and prison staffs, management) must take part in decisions and plans from the very beginning considering that the 1<sup>st</sup> day of imprisonment is also the 1<sup>st</sup> one for a future benefit in reintegration.

### **Oslo, NO, February 24-26, 2010**

#### **Validation of prior learning**

The normality principle is important in the Norwegian penal system, meaning that the inmate is a normal citizen and should be treated as such, having the same rights and possibilities as citizens outside prison. As a consequence inmates have the right to have their non-formal and informal competences validated according to the system implemented in the education system. This will enable inmates to have a "flying start" towards a formal education; and by that be able to establish a more stable relation to the labour market after release.

## **Helsinki/Oulu, FI, May 19-21, 2010**

### **Individual sentence plans**

#### **Job based training**

The study visit had two parts organised in cooperation by the District prison of Southern Finland and Luovi Vocational Institute. In Finland there is a well established system for setting up individual plans for inmates and there is an electronic database where all individual plans can be found. If an inmate is transferred to another prison the individual plan will still be available in the database.

We got an introduction to the practice of developing individual plans/individual learning pathways for offenders in Finland, assessment of offenders' prior skills and competences and the challenges linked to the following up of individual plans.

The partnership discussed how to provide and organise vocational training on the-job-basis for offenders, and the best ways of combining theory and practice. The challenge is how to motivate and enable offenders to continue their training and obtain their goals.

## **Leuven, BE, October 21-22, 2010**

### **Facilitating learning in prison**

In Flanders, prison education is based on the principle of the "outside-model". Educational services from the outside come inside prison to offer education. A "strategic plan" guarantees the right of all prisoners to be provided with an integral assistance and provision of services. Detecting the educational needs of inmates is part of the educational system and an educational offer is gathered to cover the inmates' needs. The Flemish community provides sports, education and welfare to prisoners by cooperating with external organisations.

Efforts are done to motivate inmates to participate in education and training. Initiatives like an annual fair where inmates and educational providers and teachers can meet, individual counseling and a graduation ceremony seem to be working in the Central Prison of Leuven.

In Leuven Central detecting the educational needs of inmates is part of the educational system and an educational offer is gathered to cover the inmates' needs. The staff responsible for this is aware that it is important to be realistic about which educational offer that it is possible to offer inside prison.

**Berlin, DE, January 27-28, 2011**

**Strengthening of the cooperation between internal and external actors to improve prison education and reintegration**

In the Berlin penal system, there are currently efforts undertaken to sustainably improve prisoners' chances for reintegration after release. The pilot projects "Oasis" and "Passage" covering all prisons in Berlin substantially contribute to this process. One objective is to train prison staff and motivate them to take more active part in the release process. Another major concern is to strengthen the cooperation structures regarding the transition between prison and open society at the end of the sentence. This also implies the collaboration between different groups of prison staff. The Ministry of Justice is strongly involved in this work in order to root the cooperation and information structures in the administration and decision making bodies.

There are many professionals playing an important role for the preparation of release from prison, ranging from social workers and other prison staff to the probation services. Concerning opportunities to strengthen the motivation and sense of responsibility of prison officers and staff in prison workshops for active participation in these processes, several recommendations have been worked out. The recommendations focus on the need for cooperation between relevant actors and different professional groups inside prison, good communication structure and communication culture between different professional groups in prison, a feeling for responsibility for the whole process and a sustainable network with partners inside and outside prison.

**Luxembourg, Lux/Wittlich, DE, May 11-13, 2011**

**Reintegration of inmates in society and labour market  
Basic competence training and involvement of staff**

In Luxembourg, the Ministry of Justice funds an association which is responsible for the socio-professional reintegration of inmates. Defi-job has its office and workshop in the semi-open prison of Givenich. In order to implement its objectives, the non-profit association works closely with the psycho-social and educational services of the prison (SPSE).

The services meet weekly to discuss about the inmates who will be candidates for defi-job's activities. Once an inmate is selected by the prison service, defi-job interviews the candidate and defines his employability profile.

If the employability profile is low, Defi-job recruits the inmate to be trained to develop his working competences in Defi-job's workshop. If the employability is medium or high, defi-job acts as an interim enterprise and places the inmates in enterprises outside the prison.

During both processes, Defi-job's team ensures a social-professional follow-up of each inmate that is its employee and reports to the services of the prison. The objective is that Defi-job's employees will be engaged by the enterprise where they work as soon as they are released from prison.

For Wittlich juvenile prison the Ministry of Justice and Customer Care Rhineland Palatinate initiated an educational concept. The University of Mainz, Center of Lifelong Learning (ZWW) developed this concept together with the prison staff in 2010. This juvenile prison education concept (JPEC) is the theoretical background for changing processes in juvenile prison. One result is that all prison staff, not only teachers, need to be conscious of inmates educational needs. This applies for social skills as well as more tradition school based skills. An important change in the education offer for inmates are the 'competences training' workshops for inmates that develop inmates in social skills as well as in German languages, math and other needed skills for daily life. These workshops are realized by different prison staff and are evaluated by inmates and staff. This interdisciplinary work inside prison is a successful way of changing prison structures into a learning environment. On the other hand these 'competence trainings' are very motivating for inmates and supports their individual learning development.

In Wittlich the partnership was also introduced to the qualification of education consultants and vocational consultants, called 'transition manager' in prisons preparing in detail inmate's crossing from inside prison to outside society.

The partnership met inmates and had the occasion to discuss with them about their needs and visions.