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European Social Fund project No 9.1.2.0/16/I/001
"Integration of ex-prisoners into society and the labour market"

Study on the orientation of the enforcement of custodial sentences
towards increasing the employability of convicts and the orientation
of the labour market towards the integration of ex-prisoners

SUMMARY

Contractor:



Riga, 2022

According to the contract concluded on 3 November 2021 between Ernst & Young Baltic SIA and Ieslodzījuma vietu pārvalde (IeVP), Ernst & Young Baltic SIA is conducting a study on the orientation of the execution of custodial sentences towards increasing the employability level of convicts and the orientation of the labour market towards the integration of ex-prisoners.

The study is implemented within the framework of the European Social Fund co-financed project "Integration of ex-prisoners into society and the labour market" No.9.1.2.0/16/I/001, which aims to facilitate the integration of prisoners and ex-prisoners into society and their participation in the labour market.

Objectives of the study:

1. To investigate the orientation of prisons towards labour market integration of ex-prisoners by assessing the challenges related to labour market integration of ex-prisoners, as well as to investigate foreign experience in developing labour skills for prisoners in prisons;
2. To provide a detailed assessment of the extent to which the enforcement of custodial sentences in Latvia is oriented towards raising the employability level of prisoners and preparing them for integration into the labour market after release from imprisonment. To provide practically applicable guidelines for IeVP aimed at achieving the objective of the highest possible proportion of former prisoners entering the labour market as soon as possible after serving their sentences;
3. provide a detailed assessment of how the labour market is oriented towards the integration of ex-prisoners (political economy, legal framework, employers, etc.). Based on the assessment, provide practically applicable guidelines for the IeVP as a coordinator in the development and strengthening of a multisectoral support system aimed at preparing prisoners for integration into the labour market;
4. To study foreign experience in the development of soft skills (transferable skills) for offenders in prisons, ensuring a successful transition to the workforce. Based on the findings of the study, to provide practically applicable guidelines for the IeVP on the methodology of developing and improving work skills in prisons, taking into account the specificities of Latvian prisons and legal framework.

in resocialisation programme measures, increasing the remuneration of employed prisoners.

Tasks: To improve the motivation of prisoners by assessing the possibility and, in case of positive results, introducing a policy of granting scholarships or benefits to prisoners for participation in the activities of the re-socialisation programme, to increase the remuneration of employed prisoners.

6. Improving cooperation between public authorities.

Objective: To improve the cooperation and information exchange process between public authorities (i.e. leVP, NVA, VPD, social services, etc.) and to foster cooperation with non-governmental organisations in order to obtain data to better identify the needs of prisoners and to provide comprehensive and individually tailored support to ex-prisoners. As regards the responsible authority for the establishment and maintenance of such a database or common data system, the objective (to facilitate work with prisoners, to improve the quality of information) can be achieved independently of who manages the database, it would depend on several factors such as the availability of data, existing material and technical support, etc. and should therefore be addressed in the framework of a separate discussion and analysis.

Tasks: Improvement of information acquisition, storage and exchange processes between state institutions (i.e. the leVP, NVA, VPD, social services, etc.) to ease the administrative burden and staff time when interviewing prisoners and carrying out other activities.

As a result of the study, we believe that the successful integration of ex-prisoners into society and the labour market could be significantly improved by supplementing and improving the current internal working arrangements and the opportunities offered to prisoners, taking into account the stated policy goals and objectives.

The study included a questionnaire survey of prisoners, interviews with former prisoners, discussions with the responsible state institutions and businesses employing prisoners, an analysis of practices in Lithuania, the Kingdom of Sweden, the United Kingdom and other countries, and other tasks.

In general, the study concluded that a wide range of educational and other re-socialisation programmes are available to prisoners in prisons, as well as the possibility for prisoners to work for a merchant and to attend career counselling provided by State Employment Agency (NVA), which can be seen as a positive factor for the integration of ex-prisoners into society and the labour market.

However, the analysis of foreign experiences and the interviews and focus groups have identified a number of lessons and areas for improvement in order to increase the effectiveness of the measures provided for the integration of ex-prisoners, the most relevant of which are described in this summary.

- ▶ Determining the individual needs of prisoners.

Identifying the needs of prisoners plays an important role in the whole process of re-socialisation of a prisoner, because by accurately identifying the individual needs of prisoners, it is possible to develop a re-socialisation plan where the prisoner is only involved in programmes that are relevant to them, and no resources are wasted involving the prisoner in programmes that would potentially not outweigh the work invested in relation to the impact of the programme on the prisoner's reintegration.

The analysis of foreign practices showed that in all the countries examined, great attention is paid to identifying the individual needs of each prisoner in order to develop a resocialisation plan tailored to each prisoner, including a focus on future integration into the labour market (e.g. information on the prisoner's experience, interests, etc.), which is used to find the most appropriate occupation in prison. The main objective is that each prison is aware of the needs of each prisoner and is able to design a regime that is adapted to the individual needs of each prisoner.

In Sweden, for example, the prison sets specific goals for each prisoner to achieve before the end of his or her sentence, in addition to tailor-made guidelines for activities to be carried out during imprisonment in order to successfully find a suitable vacancy and conclude an employment contract.

In addition, it is worth noting that an essential element for the successful integration of a prisoner is his/her physical and emotional health, which is a major consideration in the United Kingdom and Sweden when determining the individual needs of a prisoner. Accordingly, early identification of health problems and work to address these health problems is important in assessing the needs of the prisoner.

Accurately identifying prisoners' needs would also help to avoid situations such as those identified during the interviews, where prisoners, for example as a result of counselling provided by the NVA, are offered activities in which they are unable to participate due to health reasons.

Further, with regard to Latvian practice, the study analysed the RVN instrument, which was found to be an effective tool for determining the level of risk of a prisoner. During the analysis of the new version of the RVN no analysis was made of how the new wording of the RVN instrument relates to the drafting of a resocialisation plan in prisons.

The analysis of the NVA recommendations shows that the methodological recommendations developed by the NVA for working with prisoners are generally assessed positively and can provide assistance to NVA staff in communicating with prisoners, however, the NVA methodological recommendations do not focus directly on identifying the individual needs of prisoners- the methodological recommendations focus more on working with different types of prisoners than on their personal needs, such as the prisoners' capabilities in terms of health status, access to different resources (e.g. computer or internet) and other aspects.

In addition, in order to achieve the best possible results, we recommend that the NVA carry out counselling at the beginning of the prison term, identifying the prisoner's background and determining which educational programmes they can be involved in, and repeat counselling at the end of the sentence, starting about 6 months before release.

other non-formal education activities or activities according to interests (e.g. sports).

Tasks: To expand the range of educational programmes (by adding programmes that respond to current labour market trends i.e. computer skills), to provide additional theoretical and practical classes aimed at improving personal and work skills, to increase the number of prisoners employed in prisons.

3. Provision of adequate prison infrastructure.

Objective: To improve the infrastructure of prisons, including by improving the conditions for prisoners, providing the necessary infrastructure for the effective provision of educational programmes, improving the condition of premises available for employment, creating the infrastructure and conditions to motivate businesses to employ prisoners in prisons.

Tasks: Improving the infrastructure of prisons and the conditions in which prisoners are held.

4. Addressing health and psycho-emotional problems.

Objective: To promote the provision of support to prisoners aimed at improving their psycho-emotional state and health, including the fight against addictions, thus removing additional barriers to prisoners' participation in resocialisation measures. As the fight against addictions is a long-term process, such activities should already be addressed when the prisoner is released from prison.

Tasks: Expanding measures to identify health and psycho-emotional problems, assess them, provide timely and comprehensive assistance, including psychological assistance, combat relapse, etc. This recommendation focuses mainly on improving existing programmes to make them more accessible and effective.

5. Improving prisoners' motivation.

Objective: To increase the motivation of prisoners to participate in resocialisation measures, including the possibility of introducing a policy of granting scholarships or benefits to prisoners for participation

- Improving cooperation with educational institutions and employers providing training or employment for prisoners in prisons, including assistance to prisoners facing difficulties in this process (responsible authority - leVP, educational institutions and employers);
- Assistance in the job search process in prison, involving representatives of the NVA and social entrepreneurship (responsible institution – leVP, NVA);
- Meetings with employers or introduction/extension of 'Career Days' (responsible institution - leVP);
- List of recommended activities for the prisoner and practical advice, processing of identity documents and other administrative issues. Practical assistance in the job search process prior to release from prison, providing information on institutions and organisations providing assistance in the job search process and in the fight against addictions (responsible institution - leVP);
- Extension of the content of the "Life School - 3" programme (e.g. budgeting, communication with employers, taxation, wages and wage levels, personal rights and obligations, paperwork, information on post-release support, etc.) and involvement of more prisoners in the programme (responsible institution - leVP);
- Introduction/expansion of a peer mentoring or "mentoring" programme (responsible authority – leVP, VPD);
- Extension of cooperation with families of prisoners, more involvement of families in support activities, provision of individual counselling by psychologists to as many prisoners as possible (responsible institution - leVP).

2. Education or training for a profession.

Objective: To increase the range of educational programmes, including non-formal education programmes, and to increase the number of prisoners employed in prisons. It is important to ensure the prisoner's behaviour is corrected from the start, offering education, work and

In order to identify the individual needs of prisoners, databases are being developed in other countries to collect information on prisoners from different institutions. In the United Kingdom, for example, there is a long-term aim to create a single digital prisoner record, supported by improvements in digital and technological infrastructure, bringing together information about the prisoner in one place, including even information about emotional state, addictions, general health, poor stress tolerance, etc..

- ▶ Cooperation between public authorities.

The study shows that several state institutions (e.g. NVA and leVP) are involved in the process of resocialisation of prisoners and that they gain valuable information about each prisoner, which can play an important role in the prisoner's involvement in various resocialisation activities.

However, the study did not provide information on the effective exchange of information and the use of this information in the work of the other institutions involved. For example, it would be valuable for the leVP to have access to the information and recommendations provided by the NVA staff in the framework of the consultations, which could be taken into account by the leVP in the process of developing a resocialisation plan. It is further concluded that the counselling carried out by the NVA staff provides valuable information on the psycho-emotional state, interests and other aspects of the prisoner, which is useful information for the work of the leVP.

Further, based on the psychological portrait and interests of the prisoners, it is possible for the NVA worker to identify which educational programmes or vocational fields would be suitable for the prisoner. However, NVA staff may have limited information on the prisoners' education, previous experience, personal circumstances and other aspects that would allow them to provide career advice and guidance, taking into account not only the prisoner's psychological portrait and interests, but also the lifelong learning aspect, labour market trends in certain regions of the country, etc.

If the NVA and other institutions involved had access to the information available to other institutions, this would not only improve the effectiveness of the potential resocialisation plan, but would also considerably facilitate the work of the institution concerned, enabling time with the prisoner to be used more efficiently, without the need for repeated enquiries about the prisoner's

basic knowledge (e.g. education and work experience (information obtained from the VSAA, Ministry of Education and Science, National Centre for Education)).

Accordingly, in order to facilitate the information exchange process and to enable the authorities to analyse the data efficiently, it is recommended that the information obtained through career counselling and/or other activities carried out by the authorities be compiled in a single system or database that is accessible to the staff of the leVP and other stakeholders and which also focuses on the individual needs of the prisoner. To improve cooperation between the different public institutions, the quality of available data on prisoners (e.g. education, work experience, etc.) and information exchange systems should be improved.

► Creation of a single database.

With reference to the previous point, the creation of a single or integrated database can be seen as an excellent example of facilitating the work of prison staff, since instead of having to contact the authorities involved, it is possible to obtain all the necessary and accurate information from the database. By obtaining true information, the prison staff would be able to draw up the most effective resocialisation plan possible.

The above is also borne out by foreign experience and the long-term vision of other countries, such as Sweden and Lithuania, where information is exchanged between different public authorities. In the United Kingdom, the long-term goal is to create a single digital prisoner record, supported by improvements in digital and technological infrastructure, bringing together information on prisoners in one place, including even information on emotional state, addictions, general health, poor stress tolerance, etc.

Further, improved prison information systems, following the United Kingdom example, could also be set up with the aim of developing a prisoner re-socialisation plan, which would allow for the creation of a plan of work to be carried out and the monitoring of the prisoner's progress. It would be particularly important for this programme to be able to monitor the prisoner's progress, including if the prisoner were to return to prison again.

a website set up by the Prison Administration, where they can be purchased by anyone interested. KRIM:PROD deals with mechanical industry, wood and carpentry, assembly and packaging, plastics, laundry, graphics and printing, textiles and nature and environment. KRIM:PROD's production sites create jobs that broaden outlooks, strengthen self-confidence and open up new opportunities for a life without crime, and the activities are carried out, as in the industries and workshops, in the community, under the supervision of the industry and professional supervisors.

It should be noted that involving employees in economic activities while they are already in prison, such as giving prisoners the opportunity to create various items or to be involved in the operation of a restaurant where these services or goods are available to any member of the public and these activities generate income for the prison, also gives prisoners the opportunity to learn and work in a wider range of specialties (e.g. accounting, project management, etc., activities that are an integral part of the business).

Further, given that 52% of respondents are not employed in prison, cooperation with employers, including social enterprises, should be expanded to provide additional jobs in prisons.

► *Other insights and recommendations for developing new tools and improving existing activities.*

Accordingly, taking into account the insights and recommendations already described, together with the analysis carried out in the study report, the following policy objectives and targets have been set:

1. Provision of support programmes.

Objective: To expand the range of support programmes for prisoners in and outside prisons, ensuring that they are adapted to the needs of prisoners or ex-prisoners and to labour market trends.

Tasks:

- Identification of needs and better tailoring of support measures for prisoners, including taking into account the lifelong learning aspect (responsible institution - leVP);

Further, Lithuania and Sweden have introduced a resocialisation programme in half-way houses, where the prisoner is involved in an intensive pre-release programme with a to-do plan that sets out weekly tasks, occupation (work, education, training), planned family visits, routes to and from the half-way house, work, educational institutions, home, etc.

Accordingly, the study, analysing the above-mentioned instruments as well as other instruments indirectly influencing the level of motivation, concludes that the development of such activities not only contributes to a more successful integration of prisoners into society and the labour market, but also motivates them to engage in other resocialisation and educational programmes

► Improving practical lessons.

It has been concluded that, in addition to theoretical education, the acquisition of practical skills is essential, which would not only improve the skills of prisoners, but also improve their work skills and motivate them for further development.

Foreign experience provides a variety of valuable advice on how to involve prisoners in practical activities as an alternative, including outside the scope of educational programmes:

1. In the United Kingdom, prisoners with catering experience can work in prison canteens to further develop existing skills;
2. a number of charitable projects have been set up in the United Kingdom to give prisoners additional experience. For example, prisoners have the opportunity to work in *The Clink* restaurants, working in the kitchen and serving customers. *The Clink* is a charity that supports prisoners to work after release by training them in catering while they are in custody. Four public *Clink* restaurants are already operating in prisons across the United Kingdom.
3. In Sweden, KRIM:PROD is an important part of the activities undertaken by the Prison and Probation Service to prevent the risk of re-offending. It is an effective tool for ensuring the development of prisoners in the Swedish working environment by literally involving them in work while in prison - KRIM:PROD. In particular, several Swedish prisons have workshops where prisoners can work on different types of products, which are then sold on

Thus, by developing a single data system, the leVP would be able to:

- obtain information on the prisoner's education and work experience from the relevant state institutions that have access to this information (e.g. VSAA, Ministry of Education and Science, National Centre for Education);
- ensure the process of exchange of information with the NVA on the person's education prior to entering the place of detention, education completed in the place of detention, work experience prior to the imposition of a custodial sentence, work experience in the place of detention, educational programmes completed in the place of detention, personal characteristics or main behavioural disorders;
- it would be possible to exchange information in an electronic environment on the results of the services provided by the NVA, such as the results of career counselling, which would contribute to a timely, complete and comprehensive analysis of this information with a view to developing or improving resocialisation plans;
- access in electronic format to statistical information on the success of prisoners or the reasons for dropping out of educational programmes;
- access to general statistical information from the VSAA on the employment status and positions held by former prisoners.

It should be noted that additional assessments need to be made on the risks associated with data protection and data security.

- Evaluation and assessment of the relevance of rehabilitation programmes (including education).

Notwithstanding the wide range of educational and other re-socialisation programmes on offer, there is a risk that these programmes may not provide the maximum possible benefit in the re-socialisation of prisoners if the content is outdated, of poor quality and not in line with current labour market trends and demand.

Currently, the Ministry of Education and Science carries out the evaluation of educational programmes. A good example is the practice in the United Kingdom, where both external, statutory checks and internal checks - by the

prison authorities themselves - are carried out in order to understand whether the programmes offered are appropriate.

During the interviews with ex-prisoners conducted as part of the project, some ex-prisoners acknowledged that although the programmes (both education and re-socialisation) had been valuable in their overall development, the quality of the programmes was not at the level required by employers, i.e. the employer had to re-train the prisoner.

Accordingly, if the evaluation of education and re-socialisation programmes were to follow the United Kingdom example, this would ensure a more thorough review of existing programmes and provide prisoners with high quality and up-to-date education programmes.

Thus, it is recommended that a formal process and criteria for the selection and evaluation of both education and re-socialisation programmes be developed to ensure that programmes are relevant to labour market trends, the individual needs of prisoners and to strengthen the lifelong learning aspect, for example by taking into account a person's previous experience and avoiding a situation where resources are wasted in providing programmes that do not achieve these objectives.

► Increasing motivation.

In general, ex-prisoners are positive about the support and programmes (both education and re-socialisation) offered in prison, but despite this finding, there are also aspects that could be improved, such as the motivation of prisoners.

If a prisoner is not motivated, this will serve as a major disincentive, whereas if prisoners are motivated, this will serve as a very important positive feature in the eyes of potential employers. This point has also been made in the focus groups. Further, if prisoners are not motivated (both motivation for work and motivation for behaviour change), then other resocialisation programmes are either not used or do not provide the maximum positive support, as motivation is an essential factor for the success of these activities.

Accordingly, the development of existing programmes and the introduction of new programmes are not sufficient to support the successful resocialisation of

prisoners if they do not engage in these programmes due to a lack of motivation or if they engage in them without the desire and inspiration to improve.

The United Kingdom has a number of instruments in place to motivate prisoners, such as a pay and incentive system whereby prisoners can receive less or more money depending on whether the prisoner refuses or engages in various resocialisation, training and employment programmes. In conversation with experts in the United Kingdom, this was highlighted as a successful motivational tool to encourage prisoners to engage in learning, work in prison, etc.

In addition to direct motivational tools (e.g. the above-mentioned payment system or the motivational programmes already available in prisons), the study also describes ways that can indirectly, through other benefits for prisoners, also contribute to increasing the motivational level of the prisoner, such as the introduction of career days organised in prisons in the United Kingdom, where employers have the opportunity to meet with potential employees in prison.

Such practices can not only encourage prisoners to be employed as soon as possible on leaving prison, but could also provide the prisoner with general information on the current labour market, labour market trends, qualifications in demand on the market and job skills. In this way, it is possible for the prisoner to identify areas in which they may be interested and/or need to learn more, thus giving the prisoner a "tangible" goal to strive for (employment in a specific vacancy), indirectly motivating prisoners to participate in the programmes offered in order to achieve this goal.

In addition, as an example of a successful practice, which also indirectly raises the level of motivation of prisoners, is the United Kingdom's Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL), where prisoners who have undergone a proper risk assessment have the opportunity to get out of their prison cells and into real jobs. This allows prisoners to build confidence and prove themselves to their employer, potentially gaining the opportunity to take up full-time employment upon release. It is also a powerful incentive to promote good behaviour in prison.