THE DEVELOPMENT OF EX-PRISONERS' INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET - DEPILM

GRUNDTVIG LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

DEPILM project Synopsis

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DEPILM project Synopsis

A précis of the DEPILM report

This paper gives a précis of the full data of the DEPILM report containing an overview of the penitentiary and the employment and social rehabilitation systems in prisons as well as best practise cases concerning social reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners in the focus countries.

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For more info visit: **http://www.sidmc.org/depilm/en/**

1. Preface

The idea for undertaking the DEPILM project[1] originated from the deliberations of the Hungarian, the Czech and the Lithuanian partners representing NGOs with experience over the subject of reintegration of socially excluded persons. However the decisive role was played at a meeting of Danguole Boguseviciene, Director of SDMC with Anders Carlberg, co-founder of Fryshuset of Sweden where it was confirmed that the philosophy of Fryshuset could perfectly coincide with the aspirations of the DEPLIM concept.

This above gospel is elaborated in the book "The Generations Gap – a threat to democracy" by Anders Carlberg wherefrom we derived the following quotations:

"When we have worked with criminal gangs from the suburbs: skinheads, Neonazis and other marginalised youths, one of our chief tasks was always to find a common "play surface", an area where one can meet in discussion on equal terms, as equals. … We want to be friends in the sense that we treat our young people with the same respect we treat one another. We seek to be adult in that we attempt to think over who we ourselves are and what we have ourselves experienced, and then we use our processed experience to tell others about the path behind the thicket."

"The Danish Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard in his "Till Eftertanke" (*For Consideration)* has formulated better than most people the requirement of us who which to call ourselves "adult"."

[1] The Development Of Ex-Prisoners' Integration Into The Labour Market - DEPILM Grundtvig Learning Partnership project of the EU LLP, project no. 2010-1-LT1-GRU06-02831 3

If I want to succeed
in leading a person to a fixed goal
I must first find that person
where he is and
and start just there.

A person who cannot do this
is deceiving himself
when he believes he can
help others.

To help somebody
I must, it is true, know
more than he does,
but, above all,
know what he knows.

If I cannot do that,
it doesn't help that I
can do, and know, more.

If I yet must need show how much I can do
this is because I am vain
and proud
and wish really to be admired by the other
rather than to help him.

All real helpfulness
starts with humbleness towards
the one I would help.
And hence I must see
that helping
is not wishing to master
but wishing to serve.

If I cannot do this
I cannot help another, either.

(translation by Anders Carlberg)

"You most often find the solution in the areas where the problems themselves are. Not by chance have the Exit and Easy street (programmes of Fryshuset) succeeded where the authorities have failed. The secret of their success is in finding leadership among those who earlier represented the problem."

Quotations from the book: "The Generations Gap – a threat to democracy" by Anders Carlberg

2. Introduction

The integration of ex prisoners is depended upon the society, family, social care and other factors of which the aspect of employment is usually one of critical elements.

The issue of ex-prisoners adaptation was overlooked for a long time both by governmental structures and the society. The understanding that ex-prisoners is a specifically vulnerable social group, in need of attention and therefore should not only be supervised and controlled but also socialised and integrated into the society is a relatively new concept

The aim of this brochure is to give an outline of the findings of the DEPILM project, with particular focus to the means of systematic and comprehensive attention to the needs of the people released from penal institutions (ex-prisoners) for supporting their re-entry into the labour market, reducing their social exclusion, and improving their social integration.

Ex-prisoners usually have significantly more mental and health problems compared to general population because of harsh living conditions, economical disadvantages and high rate of substance abuse, including alcohol and drugs.

The crime and prison population statistics in the participating EU states varies greatly so do the laws and the policies. Individuals often leave prison lacking skills and resources to find a job and place of residence. Consequently, they immediately risk returning to crime thus causing negative effect on the rest of society.

Penal institutions are responsible for reintegration process during the time of imprisonment. However, “after the exit” the challenge is transmitted upon the society – policy makers, employers, trade unions, large number of voluntary sector organisations, and also on private members of society that play an active role in reintegration of former prisoners.

Upon leaving a penal institution - usually with no job, with enormous debts which arised in the period before their imprisonment, no accommodation, no proper education, ties with relatives are broken - a person becomes a burden on society for objective and subjective reasons. The adaptation of such individuals is a requirement for their integration. The successful adaptation is achieved by combined efforts of many factors including the media, the society, governmental institutions and NGOs.. The aim of adaptation provides that the person who already served a sentence should theoretically return to society having the same status he/she had before the sentence was judged.

Convicted persons eventually exposed to the prison environment are stigmatized and attract negative feelings and often even disgust in the society. Most often ex-prisoners are being recognised because of their looks: tattoos, physical appearance, clothing, and behaviour such as language or likings.

Social exclusion of ex-prisoners is an expression of uneven distribution of civil rights (including economic, social, and cultural) among the society members. The main goal of state policy should be to properly implement, administer and supervise civil rights application in the society.

Most prisons operate in a way of management and control of offenders. This is causing marginalization and dysfunctional orientation in relation to normal societal rules, and generates many other serious needs that require extensive support.

It is therefore apparent that a complex, synergic intervention is needed with tasks ideally be divided between several professions and experts targeting a solution which could be based on a harmonic cooperation between the educators and the psychologists of the penal institutions, as well as other teachers, trainers, and workers of various organizations, including social workers, mentors and employment consultants.



Meeting of the DEPILM partners at Fryshuset Youth Centre, in Stockholm, Sweden May 10-13, 2011.

3. Penitentiary Systems

Criminal justice in Europe is diverse thus direct comparison between countries should be exercised with caution. Systems that could allow a comparable insight are yet to be developed. According to Eurostat, crime statistics on crime and criminal justice reflect the diversity of legal systems, police recording practices, reporting rates, and a range of other issues within European Union. As part of the work to harmonize and develop crime and criminal justice systems, EU Member States agreed to approximate the definitions of offences and the level of sanctions for certain type of offences. Furthermore, mutual recognition of decisions taken by national judges is set to become the cornerstone of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with a range of tools developed to facilitate practical cooperation across borders.

Lithuania

In Lithuania the system for financing and supporting institutional activities for ex-prisoners is the responsibility of the Prison department and its subsidiaries.

The mandate of these institutions is to help individuals to integrate into social life and to provide social support to current prisoners according to their competence. Upon release from prison the responsibility is passed on the Municipalities which however cannot fulfil this duty due to the absence of a structured specialized support system.

Generally the social assistance is provided with single payments addressing the current basic needs. Long term issues are not covered (common lodging-housing, charity diners, etc.). Employment services (establishment of subsidiary workplaces, public work, etc.) are provided to a limited number by territorial labour exchange. The activities of social reintegration are carried out by many NGOs.

Czech Republic

The basic legislation determines the following structure of the penitentiary and rehabilitation system that evolved in the Czech Republic

1. The Prison Service of the Ministry of Justice responsible for operating custodial and prison facilities secures the escort of prisoners and develops conditions for employment, education and requalification of convicts.
2. Probation and Mediation Service specialized on releasing prisoners (above all on those on conditional release) and on continuing care for them, in conjunction with social service providers and labour market offices and organizations.
3. Social Workers help people who have been socially excluded or who are experiencing crisis maintaining (young offenders, ex-prisoners) professional relationships with service users, acting as guides, advocates or critical friends.
4. Labour Office is a state agency to monitor and evaluate the situation in the labour market and is taking measures to influence demands and offers for jobs. It cooperates with public authorities (local, regional), social security bodies, public health authorities, employers and other stakeholders in the employment.

The above system is supplemented by the civil society (NGOs, volunteers, etc.) helping to overcome the existing considerable threats, like the overcrowdedness of prisons and the enormous indebtedness of most of ex-prisoners.

Cyprus

The prison in Cyprus incorporates the European Prison Rules and is consonant to the standards contained in the Council of Europe relevant instruments.

There are three sections:

1. The Closed Prison, where security measures are stricter.
2. The Open Prison, which includes the areas outside the walls but within the broader area of Prison, where detainees live, work and move and where security measures are more relaxed.
3. The Centre of Guidance and Out of Prison Employment, which includes specific areas for detainees who, during daytime, work outside Prison in the free society.

The aim of the Open Prison and the Centre of Guidance and Out of Prison Employment is to help the social rehabilitation and resettlement of detainees.

Every prisoner has the same right to participate in the various programs of work, physical exercise, vocational training, education, creative recreation, etc.

All prisoners are given the opportunity to work, as far as possible, in a type of work of their choosing. To this direction, fully equipped workshops are operated in the prison, where prisoners are encouraged, under the supervision, to improve the level of their vocational training by working as cooks, tailors, carpenters, electricians, bookbinders, barbers, gardeners, mechanics and also at the prison farm.

Hungary

According to legal definitions the Hungarian Prison Service is an armed law enforcement agency that carries out measures and sentences of imprisonment and criminal procedure enforcement measures and also executes confinements of fine defaulters. The Minister of Interior is responsible for the Prison Service and also controls the employment of inmates in the limited companies operated by the Prison Service

In compliance with the effective legal regulations the overall capacity of the establishments is lower than the accommodated number of the prisoners; therefore penal institutions are characterized by overcrowding (at present 139%).

The Prison Service Staff is dedicated to deliver the main objectives:

- maintaining secure custody and good order in our prisons
- caring for prisoners with humanity
- providing ample opportunity to personal development of the inmates - reducing recidivism
- and legal conformity during the period of incarceration.

Sweden

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for establishing prison policy, but has no authority to interfere in the daily work of the prisons and probation service centrally or regionally. This is, instead, the responsibility of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service.

The prisons have been allocated security classifications A to F. Classification is linked to a risk assessment, which is conducted for all prisoners. Class A prisons are equipped to deal with prisoners who pose the highest risk. At class F prisons, known as open prisons, the security level is very low.

According to the current Prison Treatment Act, the primary goal of the prison sentence is to promote the inmate's adjustment to the community as well as to counteract the detrimental effects of imprisonment.

Regular contact with the outside world is viewed as an important component in the treatment of the offender. Visits may take place unattended by a prison officer. Inmates are granted furloughs, or short - term leave, outside of the prison, on a regular basis. Practically all institutions have study facilities. The inmate can study subjects from compulsory basic school level and upper secondary school level. The inmate can also study at university through distance learning.

All inmates are obliged to participate in program activities. The programs include "conventional work", education, specialized rehabilitation or treatment programs, day releases for the pursuit of study or work outside the prison during normal business hours, internal service, that is, kitchen duties, building and general maintenance, and vocational training.

4. Employment of Ex-Prisoners

One of the relevant issues towards social integration of ex-prisoners is employment. The majority of them are in the most active age for employment, however, they have lost vocational skills and working capacities, as well as orientation on the labour market.

Employment programs will be helpful only to those former prisoners who took a conscious decision to refrain from criminal activity and therefore have already harnessed the motivation to end their criminal careers.

Adaptation of ex-prisoners into the labour market could start in the places of imprisonment, applying vocational guidance, training and special employment programmes and continue outside in practical employment terms.

Recruitment and workplace issues

Studies and surveys reveal the lack of trust and negative stereotypical attitudes regarding the candidates who are returning from the places of imprisonment.

The following open-ended argumentation may vindicate the main reservations and open the job horizon to ex prisoners:

1. Many persons are perfectly able to develop high professional achievements and are highly motivated.

2. The implementation of prison rehabilitation programs prepares people for re-entering labour market, helps to develop socialization skills and inspires psychological and behavioural changes.

3. The potential reaction of the employees and customers towards the recruitment of a former prisoner may be considered during the selection by involving the colleagues in the assessment and applying risk-reducing factors.

4. The employers may disclose the information about the presence of previously convicted persons to other workers of the organisation in the name of team confidence and openness. On the other hand, such a decision may lead to unnecessary tensions within the working team. Both sides may be considered for the sake of a transparent solutions, open working climate and democratic leadership.

5. Companies should rely on the standard principles and procedures when employing the persons with a recent criminal record. The recruitment process should be just for all the candidates with full respect for the principle of equal rights.

6. The management should make effort to facilitate a quick adaptation of the employed ex-prisoner by nominating an associate to act as a mentor in terms of representation, values and attitude.

Workplace Training

Education and lifelong learning is seen in Europe as an instrument for supporting the process of transition, especially for those individuals, who have difficulties in accessing learning, vocational education and training (VET).

In-the-prison VET programs are designed on the market supply and demand perspectives and typically provide intensive job placement services combined with ongoing monitoring to intervene and assist with problems that could jeopardize former prisoner's placement.

Workplace training for persons who left places of imprisonment is a complex issue which must be handled in professionalism by appropriate personnel who are equipped not only with professional and team leadership skills but also with some pedagogical competencies.

Group training could help to save time and organizational resources, however, it does have some significant drawbacks which may reduce the motivation of participants and the quality of learning. Properly structured mentoring programs could provide satisfactory results when integrating ex-prisoners into the labour market. In USA, UK and Hungary mentoring-based measures reduced drop-out numbers from ongoing rehabilitation programs. It was observed that around 60 percent of participants of mentoring programs received employment opportunities.

Group training, individual training or self-training methods are effective only to motivated personnel. A combined approach of group and individual training is recommended for the persons who re-enter labour market after leaving places of imprisonment. Group training is more applicable when hiring a larger group of employees. Group training can be combined with the development of pro-social skills.



Presentation of the collected working material at the meeting in Larnaca, Cyprus

5. Good Practice Examples

There are no models of social aid or integration into the labour market that could unify all the resources that are available within the system and could control arising challenges. The burden however is undertaken by NGO's and other social organisations.

Lithuania NGO Support

In Lithuania the vocation of helping ex-prisoners to reintegrate into the society, defend their rights, and to promote the activity and skill improvement of prisoners through direct or indirect participation in specific projects is carried out mainly by **Caritas** Dioceses, the charity and culture society of Evangelical Lutheran parish **"Sandora",** Christian charity fund **"Samarija", Laikas** as well as other organizations represent the interests of its members.

Czech Republic NGO and projects

In Czech Republic the care to prepare convicts for release and to support them after the release of a prison rests by the Czech legislation with state bodies belonging to the imprisonment state system; external subjects - state officers (Labour offices, social workers); NGOs; Churches. In this respect:

a) The Association for Probation and Mediation in Justice supports constructive conflict resolution inside the community as a tool for crime prevention and control.
b) The Czech Helsinki Committee monitors legislative activities concerning human and civil rights.
c) Mosty (Bridges) is an NGO psychological centre, that also has a Job Club where ex-prisoners could use office devices to search a job
d) Česká katolická charita (Caritas), helping through health and social services.
e) Diakonie, providing social, health, educational and pastoral services
f) Armáda spásy (The Salvation Army), providing help to homeless, old and ill citizens and social disadvantages persons
g) Za branou (Behind the Gate), providing professional help to prisoners, people released from prison and their relatives, like advice in difficult social situations.
h) A Centre for Employment Support
i) Kongregace milosrdných sester sv. Karla Boromejského (Congregation of Mercy Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo), operating as an open prison by nuns – nurses assisting and supervising women prisoners to work as carers for sick and elderly and related activities.
j) New chance, Ostrava – an NGO for integration and resocialization of exprisoners, homeless people and some people leaving psychiatric hospital.

Sweden

In Sweden the following are bright examples:

a) "EXIT" is a nationwide Swedish organisation helping individuals to leave "white supremacy" environments towards a new social state, giving consultation and education to professionals who come in contact with these individuals (in schools, social services, police force etc. It also provides education and courses for teachers, social services, police and others that work in the field.

b) "The Fryshuset" foundation with the vision based on the conviction that encouragement, confidence, responsibility and understanding are necessary in order to enable young people to develop their innate abilities and find their way into society



During the meeting in Prague, Czech Republic, the partners had a chance to visit a unique place – Sisters of Charles de Boromeo Home For The Elderly, that has previously convicted female employees in its staff

Hungary

In Hungary several organisations and their projects are involved or related to the reintegration of former prisoners to the society and especially to the labour market. Some examples of good practice are:

a) Project „TOOLBOOK" - Handbook for employers who are willing to accept workers with special needs and backgrounds, e.g. ex-prisoners

b) Project „Park gardener training in Állampuszta Penal Institution"

c) „CHANGING PROGRAME" project - Increasing the chances of reintegration to the society and the labour market for released young former prisoners

d) RETEXTIL Project "Recycling domestic and industrial second-hand textiles" with the aim to promote an original know-how of recycling leftover textiles using solely human energy, thus enhancing the cooperation of groups and individuals

e) Project "Host Village Tarnabod - waste handling plant" provides long-term housing possibilities for homeless persons and families, in order to help their reintegration into the society. The project is run by the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service providing housing, employment and social services at the same time.

Cyprus

The most relevant and related activities for assisting former prisoners re-integration are:

a) Ministry of Justice: "Guide for Social induction and rehabilitation of the released from prison" which is expected to assist in the re-induction of the ex prisoners in the society.

b) Department of Prisons: Guides for the prisoners families "Keeping contact", "Preparation for release", and "Talking it with children".

c) Welfare Department/Family Counsellors, providing guidance and support of family members experiencing family violence.

d) Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for making the problem of domestic violence visible in the society, and run shelters for the protection of violence victims. e.g. Association for the Prevention of Family Violence, APANEMI - Centre of Information and support to women, and PIK - Cyprus Centre Equality Observatory.



„Retextil is a language where we can learn about the organic order in the world around us." – one of the best practices in Hungary: Retextil Foundation employing workers with special needs and from vulnerable social groups

For details of the best practice examples, please consult the DEPILM Methodology[2] on the project website: **http://www.sidmc.org/depilm/en/**

[2] The Development Of Ex-Prisoners' Integration Into The Labour Market – DEPILM Grundtvig Learning Partnerships - REPORT 2010 – 2012.