

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I will present you the different initiatives and the projects that we implemented in Belgium within the FEFI framework.

But first of all, I want to say that we are very glad that we were able to participate in the FEFI project and that this participation has had an added value for us. If one of the most important targets of the FEFI project was to get to know the specific needs and wishes of female inmates, the mission is already accomplished, even if the project is not finished yet and there is still some work to do concerning the evaluation and dissemination. We know that women in prison are an underrepresented group due to the small number and we also know that this group is different from the male inmates in several ways, their needs are different. The implementation of activities - and also educational measures - therefore is not that easy. Another important aim of the FEFI project was to promote of change processes towards a holistic learning environment, support, awareness and co-operation in services. The fact that all these services, but also the most important policy makers, are present today proves that also this goal is reached.

About the Belgian projects ...

As in every participation country we started in Belgium with administering the questionnaires that we developed during the first FEFI meeting in Germany. We used the questionnaire in every Belgian prison that has a wing for female inmates, in total we had 125 respondents. The response was very good and therefore we were able to gather lots of information. The results of the questionnaire were presented by my colleague this morning, so I will not go in too deep. Nevertheless it's important to speak about some of the results because they are the reason that finally we came to the choice and the implementation of the project Ladies on the move. The results showed us for instance that female inmates are - despite the existing programs - apparently not that interested in participating in the classical educational activities. They have different needs than male inmates, they often have a history of abuse, they have dependent children, they need courses that they see as relevant themselves, and they seem to be more interested in other activities like sports and working in prison. For us, one of the most important results was that quite a number of female inmates reported a lack of self-esteem. As a result of that, we made the conclusion that the inmates are often not aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, which indicates that they need help finding themselves before any form of education can take place. This also means that an individual approach is needed.

Bearing these important results in mind, the project Ladies on the move was created and implemented. In fact, it's a new way of offering education to female inmates, a way that, according to us, is more attractive to them. More attractive because sports was used as a medium of learning for the inmates and because a mixture of individual, division and group sessions was organised. Sports was thereby seen as a vehicle to reduce antisocial behaviour and to prevent social exclusion, sports helps communication and acting in a group. The impact of physical activities during detention is important because it leads to lower levels of stress and depression and to an increased feeling of wellbeing. We created Ladies on the move on a very short term, because of the deadlines within the FEFI project, and we implemented it, tailor made, in two Belgian prisons.

During the experimental program, five two hour sessions were conducted in the prisons of Brugge and Hasselt. We had 5 participants in Hasselt, 6 in Brugge. The participants were female inmates with sufficient language skills. The lessons consisted of a mixture of sports, classroom activities and individual feedback and support. Prior to every session, or during the session, the teacher met every participant individually. Every classroom session was followed by a sports session. Sports as a means of learning new skills was a success. The main goal was for the inmates to learn a number of basic skills and to make them stronger on the communicational level. What we saw was a positive interaction between the participation in physical activities and the development of some important competences.

It's clear that we were only able to develop and implement the project Ladies on the move because there was a very close co-operation between the partners that were involved. And then I mean the partners on a strategic level, the consortium Webros and the prison administration. But also the partners on the operational level, namely the Center for Basic Education that knows all about the competences that had to be acquired and De Rode Antraciet, the service that among others is active on the topic of social rehabilitation and sports. Moreover, these partners were chosen because they have the experience that is needed, because they are active in Belgian prisons for some time and because they already have some knowledge about the target group.

Of course the projects in Brugge and Hasselt were evaluated by the partners that were involved, but also by the female inmates who participated. This evaluation showed us mainly positive but also some negative points.

The positive points were:

- That the participants were very enthusiastic, to such an extent that most of them ask for a continuation of the project.
- That an individual approach was possible because the group of inmates that participated was rather small.
- That the immediate translation of theory into practice was seen as an added value, as well as the close contact between the teachers and the inmates.
- That the organisations who were involved reported a very good cooperation.
- That the involvement of the prison staff was important.

The negative points were that:

- There were some limitations, such as the increased population, budget limits and the different learning needs of the inmates.

As a general conclusion I can say that:

- Due to the FEFI project we learned a lot about the specific needs of female inmates, not only at an educational level.
- We implemented the project Ladies on the move in two prisons, and that it consists of a new and a very attractive way of offering education.
- The project was evaluated in a positive way, thanks to the participation of all the partners.
- The project Ladies on the move learned us that we have to think about the way education is organised in prisons at this moment and that maybe we have to look for alternatives, taking in to account other good practices.

Thank you for your attention.