O1/A1 Current Knowledge and State of the Art

- **Qualitative Survey: partners and prison systems**
- **Mixed Method Survey: to all European colleagues and external stakeholders**
- **Qualitative Survey: Desk Research and State of the Art**
- **Interim reporting**

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Intellectual Output 1

This first intellectual output will span the entire project. The Study and Policy Recommendations will be the 'hub' of all research and recommendations generated throughout the VALMOPRIS project. As such, this document will remain a work in progress until September 2017 before finalisation and publication in order to retain final editing decisions over the document as a whole.

Nevertheless, IO1 will be broken into six interim phases where **working drafts** can be presented at the following dates:

A1 – Current Knowledge & State of the Art (April 2016)
A2 – Methodology Paper (Sept 2016)
A3 – Results of before & after study on learner motivation (April 2017)
A4 – Results of a socio-ecological study on implementing validation (April 2017)
A5 – Summary of recommendations for policy and decision makers (Aug 2017)
A6 – Editing and publication of report (Sept 2017)

* Please note that, at the first interim reporting date, this intellectual output is on schedule.

Reporting on Current Knowledge and State of the Art

1. Qualitative Survey – partners and prison systems

In order to gather up-to-date information regarding the prison systems in each of the five delivery-based partner countries, a qualitative survey/research template will be created by the lead partner for reflection, research and completion by those partners. That survey will collect information on trends within the prison sector, prison education, population statistics and details on the estate, examples of good practice **(see reporting appendix IO1/A1).**

It should prove an effective and interesting precursor to the study-based research findings and recommendations, providing the necessary organisational and contextual information.

2. Mixed Method Survey: to all European colleagues and external stakeholders

Purpose

The survey will employ a version of the **stratified random sampling approach,** primarily to target prison teachers and a range of other stakeholders working within the prison service, across different European countries. The intention is to represent each of the European partner countries and their opinions on the role and perceived potential of VINFL in prisons. This approach would allow us to evaluate findings from sub-groups if regional or professional variations emerged.

In order to gain a broader 'on the ground' perspective a wider survey will be created both as an online Survey Monkey and as a PDF exercise to address access difficulties within prison environments and maximise engagement **(see reporting appendix IO1/A1).** The survey will be released for 4 months with reminders reissued on a monthly basis to potential participants in order to maximise returns.

This survey will include a range of key areas including biographical information, awareness gathering on topics around non-formal and informal learning as well as its validation.

The main focus of the survey will be to gather information about the types of non-formal and informal learning opportunities that currently exist within the prison sectors across Europe. There is also a concerted attempt to gather information on the types of learning competence that are most appropriate and necessary within a prison learning environment. This information will be supported by information brought by teachers in C1 as provided by templates completed for the pilot activities.

This content will, of course, feed into the content included within the 'State of the Art', but it will also provide valuable input into the development of the prison-specific competence framework required for completion in IO2.

We also considered it to be beneficial to include questions effectively pertaining to a SWOT analysis of applying VINFL methodologies within prison environments to ensure that these are effectively considered in the creation of further intellectual output content, particularly those that focus on the practical application of VINFL practices.

Survey Design

The survey was tested using a convenience sample in the first instance in order to allow us to minimise errors and confusion before wider distribution. Given the survey was in English, we also wanted to ensure that the language of the survey was accessible and the methodology adopted for each question was appropriate.

Following the convenience sample, the survey was honed to include a blend of 15 qualitative and quantitative questions. Four general approaches were adopted:

- Demographics questions were included to help us analyse the background of research respondents and measure/rationalise geographical differences

- A range of multiple choice questions were designed to allow us to gather vital information about the type and scale of non-formal and informal learning activities being carried out within prisons and the way in which these activities are currently validated. An 'other' option was included in these questions supported by open-ended 'specification' questions to allow space for potentially valuable nuance and variation.

- A ranking approach was adopted in order to allow us to gather information about the importance of competences and skills development. This will be a key element in both the design of the LEVEL 5 validation tool for use within prison contexts and the pilot activities where the LEVEL 5 validation approach will be applied.

- Debriefing questions were included at the end of the survey in order to offer greater autonomy to the respondent as well as an opportunity to include contact details. This links

with the dissemination strategy, whereby reach and legacy are vital for the value of the project.

Dissemination

The distribution list would include professionals in all partner countries, including a range of stakeholders – teaching and training professionals, prison managers, education managers, policy makers and activists.

This is intended to reach a wider audience through partners' distribution networks and a range of dissemination channels, including EPEA, EPALE, PET.

* At the time of reporting, 97 surveys have been completed by independent professionals from across Europe and working in a range of prison-related fields. We had hoped for a greater return, but this level of response does present a broader and deeper level of insight. Partners will consider whether a further smaller scale survey is required at a later date with more incisive questions required to feed in to potential gaps in research.

3. Qualitative Survey: Desk Research and State of the Art

As an adjunct to the partners and prison systems research template, all partners will include content to provide an incisive summary of recent study and policy recommendations within their respective countries around the policy surrounding non-formal and informal learning as well as its delivery. It will also seek to gain national and international contexts on the theory and practice of validating informally gained competences. Finally, we will seek to gain information about any currently existing practices or policy which would support the application of VINFL processes within prison. This information is intended to allow for the drawing of comparisons, and to provide insights into areas of good practice and working alternatives to current practice.

Existing reports and studies of informal and non-formal learning will be consulted in the research and should be reported for documentation. Interviews and conversations will take place with Ministries and National Prison services as well as professionals working within relevant fields and reporting will be reported qualitatively.

The data provided relating to non-formal and informal learning will not and cannot claim to be complete or empirically-grounded research but instead to represent and reflect the research and estimations of experts working within prison and offender learning contexts.

Information will be collated, analysed, compared and edited where possible and will constitute an effective 'state of the art', although differences in policy priority necessarily leads to some variation within the national reporting.

The desk research will be modelled on the research mapping document and will provide:

- a contextual status report for each national prison system, including trends[1]
- information regarding existing arrangements for education delivery including opportunities in informal learning
- examples of good practice in the provision of non-formal and informal learning
- a national and international picture of the 'state of the art' in validation methodologies

4. Interim reporting

It is intended that at the end of the first stage of reporting, Sept 2015 - Aug 2016, an interim report completed by the output leader will be complete and provided as evidence at reporting 31 October 2016. Alongside this there will be evidence of the following content:

1. Current Knowledge - State of the Art: A working document
2. Survey and Template Designs
3. Returned Submissions
4. Summary Analyses

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[1] Note: only five of the partner countries work within prison contexts