VALMOPRIS

Validation and motivation for non-formal and informal learning in prison

Intellectual Output 1:
Study and Policy Recommendations

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Study and Policy Recommendations

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I. Introduction

This report has been developed as part of the two-year VALMOPRIS project, a Key Action 2 European partnership project funded by Erasmus+ and led by New College Lanarkshire (UK).   The project was set up to investigate the potential benefits of validating non-formal and informal learning (VINFL) within prisons. Competence development and VINFL are growing fields within European policy. However, there is very limited evidence to demonstrate current validation practices within prison settings.

i. The partnership

In response, the VALMOPRIS partnership was set up. The partnership includes professionals and organisations from seven European partner countries: Scotland, Romania, France, the Netherlands, Latvia, Austria, and Germany.

Five of seven European partners are involved in the design, delivery, and management of non-formal and informal education within prisons and criminal justice settings. Two of the partners are educational and validation specialists.

Country	Partner Institution	Expertise
Scotland, UK	New College Lanarkshire	Work in conjunction with the Scottish Prison Service to deliver learning and skills in seven Scottish prisons. They deliver core skills in the context of broader and creative learning opportunities as well as vocational delivery within the prisons.
France	Euro-CIDES	Work with local authorities and the Ministry of Education to evaluate needs and organise training activities for low-skilled workers. They also monitor and advise the Ministry of Education about the impact and opportunities presented by European research.
Latvia	Biedrïba EPPEA	A not-for-profit NGO focused on the professional development of those involved in educational delivery in Latvia. They seek to promote innovative offender prevention strategies and improve educational provision in prisons.
Netherlands	Changes & Chances	A network organisation who deliver arts-based educational programmes for those at risk of entering into, or being released from, the criminal justice system. Their work focuses on rehabilitation, preventing criminal behaviours and recidivism. They have previous experience of developing a validation tool for the outcomes of informal learning.
Romania	Centrul Educativ Buzias	A medium-type security rehabilitation centre under the aegis of the Romanian National Administration of Prisons – their focus is on providing rehabilitation for young offenders through educational values and moving towards social inclusion.
Austria	Die Berater	Focused on adult education, vocational training and human resources development, including new media – with further education and training as the core element of the business. They specialise in staff development and education programmes.

Germany	blinc eG	The blended-learning institutions' cooperative specialise in networking and knowledge exchange. Experienced in the development of training concepts and courses, blinc eG also developed the REVEAL network, responsible for the creation of the LEVEL 5 validation procedure for non-formal and informal learning.

ii.   The project

Our study set out to develop a systemic approach towards the validation of non-formal and informal learning within prison contexts, and to explore the potential impact of this approach. We consider these to be the first steps in a process of working towards the development of a clear rationale and strategy for mainstreaming VINFL within the prison sector.

iii.   Aims and Reader Groups

The aim of this empirical research is to evaluate the development and implementation of non-formal and informal learning activities in prison and the validation of associated learning; measuring the impact on learner motivation.

This report is designed to achieve the following objectives:
1. To **analyse the need** for informal learning and VINFL in prison;

2. To assess the **implementation** of informal learning and VINFL in prison (with a focus on KC51: 'Learning to Learn');

3. To assess the **impact** of informal learning and VINFL in prison (with a focus on KC5: 'Learning to Learn').

This research will lead to a set of guidelines and recommendations for justice departments, governing bodies, education providers and practitioners; those involved in the organisation and delivery of non-formal and informal learning activities in prisons and related contexts. The outputs of the project will be particularly relevant for those who have an interest in the instruments and potential of VINFL.

iv.   Research Questions

The key research questions are:
o   What is the current practice in prison environments in terms of non-formal and informal learning?

o   Does involvement in non-formal and informal learning benefit prison learners and help them to engage in learning (learn to learn)?

o   What are the barriers and potential benefits of engagement in non-formal and informal learning for prison-based learners?

o   Is the validation of non-formal and informal learning important in strengthening engagement in learning over the longer term?

o   Do teaching staff benefit from training in the validation of non-formal and informal learning?

v.   Overview of Project Research Methodology

The research findings will be based on a multi-methodological approach. This approach encompasses four key elements:

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1 Key Competence 5 from the European Inventory of Key Competences (2006)

Element 1 | **Desk-based research** summarising the current situation regarding non-formal and informal learning in Europe, including details gathered from:

o   An initial critical review of theory, policy and practice, including existing reports and studies – to determine the state of the art, gaps in data, and to inform research design.

Element 2 | A **needs analysis** of non-formal and informal learning and VINFL in prison, taking account of the main benefits and constraints. These research findings include content derived from:

o   An 'audit' of practices and initiatives in partner countries, including: the nature of prison systems; arrangements for prison education in the partner country; recent study and policy recommendations at national level; elements of promising practice in non-formal & informal learning in prisons and community justice settings.

o   An initial survey to prison workers and educators across Europe – to understand and identify the potential of VINFL within prison; and to identify the types of competence-oriented informal learning activities in prison.

o   A socio-ecological study, completed by those prison learners, practitioners and stakeholders involved in the VALMOPRIS pilot learning activities[2] – designed to ascertain the constraints and potential of VINFL in prison settings. The socio-ecological model focuses on the inter-relationships between individuals and the social, physical and policy environments.

Element 3 | An assessment of the **design and development process** of non-formal and informal learning initiatives in the prisons, incorporating:

o   Informal findings gathered from 30 VALMOPRIS pilot learning activities which were delivered in partner countries – involving 5 countries, 15 pilots, more than 15 practitioners, and over 90 learners.

o   Analysis of an evaluative questionnaire based on the design of pilot activities, associated competence frameworks, evaluation strategies, reasoning and rating activities.

Element 4 | An assessment of the **impact** of non-formal and informal learning and its validation on learner motivation, involving findings from the following research activities:

o   A case-study approach involving the delivery of thirty pilot activities with 90 prison learners across 5 European partner countries

o   An assessment interview utilising the socio-ecological method – concerning the implementation of VINFL from the perspective of the learner, the trainer, and a stakeholder involved at each piloting site. This was designed to measure the perceived purpose of the activity, assessing expectations, key success factors and perceived barriers relating to motivation.

o   Before and after evaluations utilising the LEVEL5 validation methodology. Practitioners worked with learners to measure progress with competence development across the full sample of learners involved. This approach systematically addresses the issue of "learning to

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[2] Outlined in greater depth in our companion documents **IO2: VALMOPRIS Competence-oriented learning implementation contexts** and **IO4: A Guidebook for Validation**

learn" (as the developed competence) and "learner motivation" (as the human impact) and one other competence.

The data from assessments and questionnaires was subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis, using non-parametric statistical methods, and the findings include descriptive indicators.

Resulting from this research, a series of recommendations have been drawn. These are designed to contribute to the broad developments in validation and competence-oriented learning, and to inform policy and practice, specifically within prison learning contexts.

II.   Desk-based research

i.   Introduction

Within European policy, the fundamental right to education *and* training for all is preserved through a range of conventions and recommendations[3]. The European Commission have sought to bring cohesion and embed quality within provision – this includes their policy on lifelong learning, of which adult learning is an integral element. The Commission work with 32 countries on the implementation of the *Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning* (European Council, 2011), which outlines the importance of widening access and increasing participation, in a bid to improve employability, enhance social inclusion, foster active citizenship and support personal development.

The *Europe 2020* goals seek to enable adults – "in particular the low-skilled and older workers – to improve their ability to adapt to changes in the labour market and society" and increase their "creativity and innovative capacit[ies]" (ibid.). UNESCO's Rethinking Education Communication (2015) further highlighted the importance of education and training to European economies, namely in the development of '21st century' skills and open and flexible learning opportunities. The *European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning* (2006) identifies the key competences individuals require including transversal competences designed to support lifelong learning.

These drivers extend into European prison sectors, where policy and practice is expected to keep pace. Accordingly, within EU justice policy, access to education is a primary condition of detention. In the *Basic principles for the Treatment of Prisoners* (1990), *Education in Prison* (1990), and *European Prison Rules* (2006), the Council of Europe outlines that imprisoned persons are entitled to the same forms and standards of adult education as those living in communities outwith prison walls.

At time of print, the most recent statistics show that the prison population across European penal institutions reached 1,600,324 persons (SPACE I, 2014). That prison population is extremely diverse. The vast range of needs – variations in gender, age, educational level, sentence length along with complex issues such as additional support needs, physical and mental illness, substance misuse – require a heterogeneous approach to educational planning and delivery.

As such, prison education, in the broader sense of the phrase, must take many forms. Often, prison education can include an augmented programme of formal education, vocational training, psychological interventions, life or basic skills, non-formal learning and informal learning opportunities. Indeed, Costelloe (2014) outlines that

> policy makers and providers should remind themselves of the distinction between education and training, appreciate that they are not somehow interchangeable, and ensure that they are providing prisoners with the opportunity to avail of both ventures (2).

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[3] For further information, see: Protocol no.1 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms: Article 2 (1952); 4th International UNESCO Conference on Adult Education (1985); Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: Article 14 (2000).

Such breadth of provision is cumulatively designed to address criminogenic needs and help imprisoned peoples to cope with life inside and outside prison, whilst improving chances of rehabilitation and desistance.

As Costelloe (ibid.) explains, educational provision is key to rehabilitative strategies. Furthermore, informal and non-formal learning are important elements of this delivery. This study will explore the benefits of this type of learning and its validation for a diverse learning population with complex requirements.

ii.   **Challenges within prison learning**

Multifarious challenges persist within prison educational environments, not least in the biographies of prison learners.   Mental health problems are widespread within the European prison population. The World Health Organisation report on prevalence studies across Europe that show that between 10 and 15% of the prison populace suffer from long-term and severe mental health illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and autism disorders (Durcan & Zwemstra, 2014).   The numbers tend to be higher when taking account of less acute mental health problems. The Bromley Briefings (UK), for example, suggest that: 49% of female and 23% of male prisoners were deemed as suffering from anxiety and depression (Prison Reform Trust, 2016).

Comorbidity and addiction issues can further compound this challenge; another factor within prisons which further marks prisoners as a potentially complex learner group. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA, 2012) include statistics on the 'lifetime prevalence of illicit drug use among prisoners in European countries' which shows that high percentages of prisoners engage or have engaged in the use of illicit drugs. The report suggests that the scale of this problem varies across European countries, with the Netherlands and United Kingdom facing the most acute challenges with almost 80% of prisoners using drugs.

There is evidence that the problem of drugs and addiction issues does not always stop at the gates of the prison. The EMCDDA report that prisons can result in initiation into drug use or 'switching' between drugs to substances which are more available, or those which are less easy to monitor or detect. Furthermore, for those who do abstain, withdrawal symptoms and drug management strategies can interfere with a prisoner's potential to engage in meaningful and regular learning. These can, in turn, negatively impact on focus, motivation, and retention.

Ronco et al (2011) further outline that poor social conditions such as unemployment, unstable accommodation, poverty and familial instability often correlate with a low level of educational attainment. Documented figures vary on the educational level of imprisoned peoples across Europe; however, the trends consistently show that attainment and engagement is statistically lower within prison populations:

- It is estimated that only 3-5% of the prison population across Europe would be qualified to undertake higher education (Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013).
- In Ireland around 53% of prisoners had attained the lowest level on the National Qualifications Framework (Morgan & Kett, 2003, cited in ibid.).

- The Bromley Briefings provide UK statistics which show that 47% of prisoners have no qualifications. Only slightly less, at 42%, of male prisoners were permanently excluded from school; this compares to 30% of women and 52% of young offenders (op. cit., 2016).
- In the Netherlands, research shows that 27% of early school leavers were suspected of a crime, compared to 7% of non-school leavers (Dutch Ministry of Education, 2010, cited in Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero, 2013).
- Nordic statistics paint a brighter picture of the connection between low educational attainment and criminal behaviour, showing that "between seven and sixteen per cent of the prisoners in the Nordic countries have not completed compulsory school." (Education in Nordic Prisons: 11)

Research further suggests that a disengagement from education in childhood and early adolescence and subsequently low levels of educational attainment are predictive of criminality (Loeber, 1991, cited Porporino, 1992). In order to bridge the gap left by any lack of initial education, such findings have guided policy towards a focus on key skills and competence development, with an eye on 'social capital', to align with work contexts and improve employability in a bid to prevent reoffending. For example, the *European Prison Rules* (2006, paragraph 28.2) outline that priority should be given to "prisoners with literacy and numeracy needs, and those who lack basic or vocational education." Recent findings, however, indicate that the participation in these educational pathways is low, reaching a mere 25% in the majority of European countries (Costelloe et al., 2012 in Torlone & Vryonides, 2016). Lack of engagement is commonly attributed to the lack of motivation and historically negative perceptions of education. Fostering motivation is, therefore, an area requiring significant attention and one that current basic skills provision is, perhaps, failing to meet.

In some systems, 'on the job' training is embedded within the work activities of the prisoner. At times, this work is accredited. However, the manual and repetitive nature of much prison work means that learning opportunities are further curtailed. Costelloe et al (ibid.) further cite that only around a third of European countries provide vocational education in all their prisons. In many countries provision is more irregular, with over a third of countries providing vocational education in less than 50% of their prisons. The lack of a unified prison education policy, not only across Europe, but across different prisons in the same country can be caused by a number of factors, such as: funding provided for 'one-off' initiatives, differing resource or capacity limitations, over-population, regular competitive tendering, scheduling challenges, and staffing shortfalls. These challenges are compounded by resource barriers such as 'digital exclusion' – limited access to ICT equipment and no access to internet – which make it difficult to effectively support learners to develop '21st century skills' to prepare them for 21st century employment.

There are other institutional factors which further inhibit all forms of learning and education. Short-term sentences are still fairly common across Europe which limits deep engagement and a consistent approach to delivery. Such sentences, as well as prisoner transfers, can be particularly difficult to manage as they can limit continuity of educational progression and delivery (particularly where variations in service provision exist). Perceptions within prison establishments and the wider community can also be an inhibiting factor in the provision and promotion of prison education and learning. For example, on an institutional level, negative opinions of education can undermine the validity of learning over other forms of prison activity which can, in turn, negatively impact upon access to delivery. At times, educational providers have to work to counteract such perceptions and

to overcome subsequent financial or resource constraints in order to ensure wide-ranging educational opportunities.

On this front, the practical challenges are particularly great but the benefits particularly notable. Desistance theory – the permanent or eventual cessation from crime, following potential occurrences of re-offending – relies on the potential to secure long-term change in how the prisoner views themselves, how others' view them, as well as what they perceive their place in society to be (McNeill and Schinkel, 2016). However, Costelloe & Warner (2014) suggest that the perception of imprisoned peoples as 'offenders' is still pervasive throughout Europe, which is counterproductive and damaging, in that it increases negative stereotyping and attitudes which are unnecessarily punitive. The Prisoner Learning Alliance (2015) quotes one female prisoner who outlined the problem:

> Women here are gaining certificates in education, but then I see them come back to prison again and again. There is obviously something missing. They are not being helped to make use of the education they got in here when they are outside.

The reality is that convictions and time spent in prison can have a detrimental impact on employment prospects, particularly in the first two years after release and for those serving longer sentences (Brunton-Smith & Hopkins, 2014). Furthermore, negative perceptions are likely to be damaging to an individual's sense of self-efficacy and limit their ability to perceive a place for themselves within society.

Research further suggests that the prison environment itself is inherently problematic as it damages social bonds and a prisoner's sense of social responsibility (Liebling and Maruna, 2005). Costelloe and Warner (2008) echo these findings in their discussion of prison education, when they cite the importance of ensuring positive perceptions from those working within the prison sector. They believe that to view the imprisoned person primarily as an offender risks the perception that they are unlikely or unable to change. Alternatively, it "can lead to a concentration on 'programmes' that claim to 'address offending behaviours', to the neglect of learning that facilitates personal development in a wider and deeper sense." (Costelloe, 2014: 178). Instead Costelloe and Warner call for a 'penal welfare' mode of thinking which perceives "the person in prison as a citizen or member of society" (175). This call reflects the European policy document, *Education in Prison* (1990) which further underlines the importance of involving the outside community.

iii.　　The place of formal, non-formal and informal learning

Broadly speaking, prison education has two key primary benefits. These are neatly laid out by Chalatsis (2016) as "a means to bring benefits to both prisoners since they gain skills and competences which will facilitate their re-integration into society" and also "to society as a whole since it reduces the social costs of crime"[4]. Yet, there are many forms of education which can bring wide-ranging and

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4 It is widely accepted that spending on education within prisons is a cost-effective approach to sentence management strategies. The RAND Corporation released US research findings which illustrated that prisoners who engaged in prison education were 43% less likely to reoffend (Davis et al, 2013). Given the cost of a prison sentence far outstrips the cost of

variable benefits for learners. This study will focus on non-formal and informal education and learning; however, the terms can be subject to some overlap. Therefore, a brief introduction to the terms is first necessary.

Formal learning enjoys a relatively consistent understanding. Spanning from initial to higher education, it presumes the precedence of an organised curriculum, prescribed learning, a focus on outcomes, an award or credit, and a teacher. The focus on the achievement of formal qualifications fares well against prison reporting structures and measures, allowing prison governance to report education in the context of measurable outcomes. In this respect, formal education clearly has an important role to play in prison education and learning. Accreditation and attainment can undoubtedly foster a sense of achievement for the learner and provide tangible evidence to employers and stakeholders, both within and outside the prison, of progression and commitment to change and personal development.

McNeill (2009) outlines that this kind of tangible evidence or 'human capital' – in the form of enhanced skills, qualifications, or retraining – is required to gain access to further educational opportunity or employment. McNeill cites these personal resources alongside a learner's personal motivation and 'social capital' – namely one's ability to interact within social networks – as the key factors to support and encourage desistance. This perception aligns closely to the belief that education is one of the cornerstones of effective rehabilitation and desistance (see Sapouna, Bisset & Conlong, 2011; Laub & Sampson, 1993).

However, Costelloe and Warner (2014) warn against prison systems focusing on 'bureaucratic attitudes'. These 'attitudes' involve an economic analysis of educational provision, which they believe focuses on "making the measurable important, rather than making the important measurable" (180). This hints at the important developmental possibilities offered by non-formal and informal learning, which can be highly significant and often more appropriate to overcome the barriers and address the needs of adult learners – namely in improving the social capital and motivation outlined by McNeill. On the whole, prison systems appear to recognise the potential of non-formal and informal learning with over 55% of European countries reporting that they provided opportunities for non-formal learning in all prisons (Costelloe et al, 2012: 35). However, the outcomes of this learning are much more difficult to capture and are not seemingly routinely measured within European prisons – the challenge comes, as Costelloe and Warner suggest, when trying to measure the importance of this learning development and demonstrate the value of that learning when compared to formal accreditation.

So how do we define non-formal and informal learning?[5] The central tenets – the idea of the learner engaging in practical activity, as part of a broader learning society, and being a co-creator of knowledge – find their roots in the writings of Dewey (1916; 1925; 1938); and later by Knowles (1970;

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educational provision within prison, overall there is likely to be a positive social and economic return on investment in education.

5 Smith (1999) outlines the difference between education and learning neatly. He defines education as the process of 'setting out to foster environments for learning'. Learning, by contrast, is an output – the 'product or thing'. Livingstone adds that 'education' is 'characterised by the presence of a teacher, someone presumed to have greater knowledge, and a learner or learners presumed to have lesser knowledge to be instructed or led by said teacher.' (203/4)

1973), Freire (1972), Scribner & Cole (1973), and Coombs & Ahmed (1974). By extension, lifelong learning and informal learning found their introduction into policy dialogue in 1972 through Faure's call for learning "how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life – learn to be" (UNESCO, 1972: iv). The concepts of non-formal and informal learning gained further traction throughout the 1990s, with a wealth of research outlining the nature, importance and benefits of informal learning: Heath & McLaughlin (1993); Smith (1994); Bentley (1998); Marsick & Watkins (1990); McGiveney (1999); Livingstone (2006); Coffield (2000); Eraut (2000); Schugurensky (2000).

The terms non-formal and informal can overlap and are more difficult to outline definitively. However, informal learning is generally regarded to take account of developing attitudes, values, skills and knowledge derived from daily experience; that which takes place outside a dedicated learning environment. Although some informal learning could include that which results from flexible and informal delivery within informal settings (Coombs, Prosser & Ahmed, 1973; McGivney, 1999).

Non-formal learning is generally accepted to derive from organised activity, again outwith the established formal system, but with flexibility and responsiveness being key features within its organisation and methodological approach. This type of education seeks to support identifiable learning clientele with clear learning objectives and purpose, to address particular needs (Coombs, Prosser & Ahmed, 1973; Simkins, 1977; Livingstone, 1990; Fordham, 1993). Non-formal learning activities tend to be short-term, voluntary, primarily conversation-driven, and non-credential based – all demonstrating a level of self-determination on the part of the learner (Livingstone, 1990; Jeffs and Smith, 1990; Merriam et al, 2007).

iv. Current practice in prison environments in terms of non-formal and informal learning

There is limited research available on current delivery within prison education. There appears, however, to be no consistent or unified approach to the organisation of non-formal and informal learning opportunities within prison. Nevertheless, our research shows that a wide variety of non-formal and informal learning opportunities exist within and across European prisons (more information can be found in our later survey analysis). Perhaps most notably, the non-traditional teaching approaches in art and culture, make this learning particularly effective in supporting the personal and educational development of prisoners. Examples of arts sessions, projects, visiting art groups, theatre workshops, and prison publications appear to be commonplace within prison learning provision. Research suggests that such cultural programmes can specifically help to develop self-confidence and encourage motivation to engage in future learning (Tett et al, 2012; Bamford & Skipper, 2007). These types of learning activities can help foster critical thinking, improving communication and decision-making, through unconventional visual and aural methods. Furthermore, these opportunities can be powerful tools for social inclusion – enhancing self-expression, confidence, motivation and social skills. The Arts Alliance Evidence Library cites numerous examples of positive practice and its positive outcomes (artsevidence.org.uk).

Prison libraries are also a key aspect of provision, although variations in quality and access do still exist within prison systems and between countries. Opportunities for informal and non-formal learning

exist within the library: access to reading schemes, discussion groups, forums and visiting speakers are areas of promising practice. In many countries, university groups work in partnership with prisons and education providers to help learners engage with the wider world and alternative possibilities for their futures.

Furthermore, sport and fitness has long been seen as a way to help prisoners cope with their environment and improve their physical and mental wellbeing. Wide-ranging examples can be found of unaccredited sports classes and groups, where the delivery is targeted or tailored to meet the needs of a wide variety of learners. Similarly, there are also opportunities for outdoor education, workshops or projects (some of which are aligned to employment) aimed at developing the wellbeing of learners through practices such as horticulture or construction and which develop team-working and problem-solving capacities.

A range of other non-formal and informal provisions such as religious education and meeting groups, psychological and intervention programmes, cookery and life skills also exist in order to address the particular needs of imprisoned peoples.

v. Practical role and benefits of non-formal and informal-learning in prison

Such broad-based learning provision draws from policy statements which outline that education and learning should be aimed at the 'whole person' (Education in Prison, 1990) and "the full development of the human personality" (UN, Munoz, 2009: 7). A Prisoner Learning Alliance briefing (ob. cit., 2015) further outlines the vital importance of such non-formal and informal learning, stating that:

> [t]here is clear evidence, including from employers, that prisoners need to develop personal strengths and attributes which are not necessarily delivered by accredited qualifications. Education opportunities that develop these skills and mindsets, should be seen as being of equal or even greater value than formal accredited qualifications.

The European study, Innovative Learning Models in Prison (2016) points to the primary role of prison education in enhancing motivation, acting as a bridge to widen access to opportunities beyond the prison:

> The role of prison education in the rehabilitation process of prisoners has been considered of major importance. Prison education offers prisoners the opportunity to engage in useful activities while imprisoned, constitutes a pathway towards secondary and post-secondary mainstream education, improves their employment prospects after release, contributes to their smooth and permanent re-entry to society so that they become active in their local economies and societies, facilitates the process of their personal development and transformation and enhances their prospects of developing the motivation, autonomy and responsibility to gain control over their lives after their release. (Torlone & Vryonides, 2016: 4)

The aforementioned activities in the previous section correlate with such statements. Yet, whilst motivation can be seen as an important output of engagement in non-formal and informal learning,

motivation is also an important *precursor* to engagement with such education and learning. In line with this thinking Costelloe (cited in Eikeland et al, 2009) cites two key motivational factors for prisoners:

1. "push factors" – including improved employment prospects, to make their family proud, or to help with progression and court cases
2. "pull factors" – including the need to alleviate boredom, for self-development and personal achievement

'Pull factors' connect closely with the concept of intrinsic motivation and are often associated with the potential benefits of non-formal and informal learning. Oudeyer et al (2008) explain that intrinsic motivation is 'rewarded' internally – that is, you do something because you derive enjoyment from it; your interest leads to a level of personal engagement. Intrinsic motivators are also aligned with a sense of accomplishment or fulfilment in increasing one's 'mastery' of an activity and when a learner understands the relevance of an action within the world and one's own life. Middleton (1995), refers also to secondary intrinsic factors for academic motivation – when the learner perceives the learning to be stimulating (providing challenge or piquing their curiosity) or when they have personal control over their learning (freedom of choice, within their abilities). They argue that, if a learning activity is a blend of interesting, stimulating and/or controllable, then a learner is much more likely to engage in the activity in the future.

It is clear where non-formal and informal learning in prisons can meet this motivational need. Due to their unaccredited nature, non-formal and informal learning opportunities can be more flexible in design and thus more effectively tailored to meet the individual needs of learners. Furthermore, non-traditional approaches to teaching and learning can be adapted to the interests of learners, enhancing the 'pull' factor of education. The stimulation afforded by personalised learning can thus help learners to overcome initial barriers, and improve negative conceptions for disadvantaged, reluctant or inexperienced learners.

The collaborative approach (commonly associated within non-formal learning) can be of particular motivational benefit to learners. This is explored within 'Situated Learning', a concept developed by Lave and Wenger (1990). This encompasses the idea that learners will gain more from active participation in a learning experience rather than the passive absorption of information and speaks to Confucius: "involve me and I will understand". There is also much to be gained from the inherently social aspect to much of this learning – allowing for a kind of collective learning to naturally evolve, where the group share concerns, passions and a common purpose. In educational theory, this is referred to as communities of practice (ibid.) which suggests that participants can learn more holistically – developing personally or professionally, from and within the group. In these circumstances, the progress of more experienced peers can support and encourage newer learners, more resistant learners, or those with a low self-concept, into fuller participation.

The cooperative and dialogic nature of such learning can also lead to an improved degree of critical thinking, which responds to the philosophies of Freire and Mezirow. Their visions of adult education were predicated on transformative experiences with a focus on developing learners' capacity for change through greater self-awareness (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1990). Freire outlined his approach of 'Conscientization' whereby the process of learning can help learners to develop a critical awareness

– supporting them to uncover problems, define needs and perceive new possibilities. His concept of 'Praxis' (Friere, 1970) is the active *process* of continual reflection on our actions and their impact. These critical processes rely on a democratic approach to education and learning; a form of horizontal student-teacher dialogue often made impossible by the rigid structures of formal learning. This speaks to the belief that non-traditional learning processes can be employed to 'emancipate' by giving learners a sense of agency, in turn allowing them to make sense of their own lives and their roles within society throughout the learning process. Mezirow (2000) extends this proposition, exploring a kind of transformative learning which sees learners become more capable of positive and socially-inclusive change through active reflection.

These concepts are of particular relevance within prison education if the goal is ultimately to support desistance from crime. Group work and communality in non-formal and informal learning can also be vital for helping learners to develop improved communicative and participatory competences. Furthermore, non-formal learning, in particular, often allows for prison learners to engage, not only in the learning process with peers, but also with outside visitors or groups, affording learners the opportunity to enjoy potentially inspiring and positive interactions. These types of interaction can further help to foster improved social skills and can allow for prosocial modelling that has the potential to inspire a sense of direction in learners, through the demonstration and reinforcement of positive social behaviours. These prosocial behaviours and identities are considered to be an important prerequisite for desistance (Maruna, 2001; McNeill et al, 2012).

Costelloe & Langelid echo and advance these statements, suggesting that prison education should go "beyond accreditation", calling for it to be "informal, meaningful, and achievable"; and for prison educators to guard against being "overly prescriptive and unrealistic" in order to remain inclusive (2001: 58). They call for prison education and learning to go beyond basic skills development in literacy and numeracy, towards the development of the full range of key competences required for rehabilitation and successful reintegration to society.

These opinions are also reflected in policy, with the establishment of the European Key Competence Framework aligned to lifelong and adult learning (European Council, 2006). The need for such a framework was first introduced in the Lisbon Council (2000). In Lisbon, member states asserted their strategic goal – that Europe should "become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (European Council, 2000, cited in Hoskins & Fredrikkson, 2008). The later competence framework of 2006, was to enable member states to progress towards shared goals, taking account of member states' devolved decision-making and provision (Hoskins & Fredrikkson, 2008). In this framework, there is a move towards the development or learner 'acquisition' of transversal key competences, such as learning to learn, a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, and communication – aimed at supporting the individual in a knowledge-based society.

Chisholm (2005) explains that a competence means the ability to apply knowledge, know-how and skills in a stable/recurring or changing situation. Two elements are crucial: applying what one knows and can do to a specific task or problem, and being able to transfer this ability between different situations" (cited ibid., 2008: 12). Indeed, a broad aspect of the rehabilitative agenda within justice

policy is also focused on the development of the capabilities and competences required to support former prisoners to reintegrate into society through structured activity.

Such competence development lends itself to more flexible and non-traditional learning approaches as it can take account of the learners' individual and varied starting points as well as their individual development. However, this learning is more effective when a learner can understand and express their needs and aspirations. Learners are not always able to articulate exactly *what* they would like to learn and *why*. Yet the 'what' and the 'why' only represents a first step in engagement with learning opportunities; an understanding of *how* we best learn is a primary feature of effective learning and competence development. Non-formal learning can also support learners to develop this knowledge.

Based on the seminal work of Kolb (1984), an understanding of learning styles or preferences are considered a key prerequisite for educators to facilitate effective learning and planning. The concept of learning styles outlines that every individual learner understands, expresses and remembers information in different ways. This thinking is also developed by Honey and Mumford (1982). They argue that four broad categories of learning style – the Activist, Theorist, Pragmatist, and Reflector – encompass the various methods of learning, processing, and understanding new information. They believe that each learner has a natural preference for one particular learning style, and in order to maximise one's own learning potential, Honey and Mumford argue that each learner should seek to understand their own preferred learning style and seek out appropriate opportunities to learn using that approach.

This ties in with one of the key competences within the European Framework: Learning to Learn. The Council Recommendations attached to the framework define 'Learning to learn' as:

> the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skill as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence. (European Council, 2006 - annex, 5).

Honey himself outlines that "Learning to learn is your most important capability since it provides the gateway to everything else you want to develop." (cited in Mobbs, 2006). Due to the heterogeneous and flexible nature of non-formal and informal learning, prison learners can be supported to target learning opportunities which better fit their own preferences, making learning easier and more enjoyable. Furthermore, by understanding strengths and weaknesses in their own learning styles, learners are more able to develop weaker areas, making them more 'versatile' and efficacious, ultimately enhancing their motivation and agency. The next section will focus on how competences such as 'learning to learn' can be 'captured' and validated, allowing learners to benefit fully from their own competence development.

vi.   The validation of non-formal and informal learning

Competence development and an understanding of learning preferences is predicated on a learner's awareness that a process of learning is taking place.   Agency refers to an agent's ability to exert an internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966); the belief in one's own ability to influence life events and their outcomes. By extension, in learning, agency outlines a learner's capacity to pursue learning goals or future objectives. As such, a learner's agency and capacity to engage in self-directed learning and development is likely to require the identification and development of personal strengths and weaknesses, supporting them to follow goal-oriented actions.

In his discussion of non-formal learning, Eraut (2000) introduces us to the notions of implicit, reactive and deliberative learning:
- Implicit learning: suggests that the learner has no intention to learn and no awareness of what is being learned.
- Reactive learning: is learning that happens relatively spontaneously.   A learner is aware of their own learning, but the learning itself is perhaps not intentional.
- Deliberative learning: time is set aside for the purpose of learning with the clear intention of specific learning outcomes.

Eraut's typology is interesting when considered in relation to non-formal learning. With these distinctions, Eraut suggest that outcomes from deliberative non-formal learning can be revealed, measured, applied and transferred across settings.

If competence development and learning from non-formal modes is to be measured and purposeful for learners, then the goal of prison teachers and professionals must be to increase that learner's awareness of the outcomes of that learning; to foster intentionality and to help support learners to engage in future deliberative learning.   This process can only be the result of prolonged commitment to helping the learner understand the learning process and its outcomes through a process of reflection, review and validation; the ultimate goal to foster agency and a readiness to pursue and engage in "emergent" and "planned" learning opportunities (Smith, 1998, 2009).

A raft of recent European policy documents outline the practice, role and importance of validating transversal competences or broad-based skills derived from engagement in non-formal and informal learning: European Commission, 2012; Cedefop, 2015; Werquin, 2010; Yang, 2016.

In 2004, a set of common principles were adopted by the European Council for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2004). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the European Commission have developed an inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning, which reports comprehensively on European developments in the field. The European Council further resolved in 2008 that 'lifelong guidance' strategies were required to enable learners "at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their life paths in learning, work and other settings" (European Commission, 2008)[6]. In

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6 Official Journal European Union (2011/C 372/01) - Resolution 3. The Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 21 November 2008

2009, Cedefop called for open methodologies and instruments to identify, assess and recognise non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This demonstrates significant progress for the promotion of the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) encompasses the processes of identifying, documenting, assessing, and accrediting all learning – including knowledge, skills, and competences gained from a range of different settings. These settings might include work, family, leisure contexts, as well as the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities. **Recognition** is a stage in this process, which Werquin explains involves a series of "steps of increasing formalisation" (Werquin, 2010: 8), including identification and documentation (which involves personal reflection, perhaps with guidance) and the establishment of acquired knowledge and competences (through a wide range of assessment options). **Validation** involves endorsing that "certain standards or requirements have been met", which necessitates the involvement of a third party (8). The final optional stage involves **certification** which would require an accredited awarding body. Werquin outlines that "when the record is a certified qualification and based on a standard approved by all stakeholders, its benefits are likely to be even stronger." (55).

To define standards, and assure they are met, the validation of non-formal and informal learning relies on competence-based assessment. This involves the formation of clearly specified outcomes which allow learners and stakeholders to make objective judgements about knowledge and abilities against clearly defined, quality-assured standards. Yang outlines that:

> [l]earner progress is certified on the basis of demonstrated achievement of these outcomes. Assessment is not based on time spent in formal educational settings. A competence-based system is generally considered superior to traditional forms because it is so transparent, and because it delivers what is described. Performance criteria are clearly defined, such that the assessor can describe a candidate as having unambiguously achieved (or not yet achieved) them. (2016: 44)

The validation of non-formal and informal learning (VINFL), therefore, could help prison learners communicate and 'make tangible' the value of their skills and competences developed across all their learning – to themselves, prison stakeholders, employers and formal education establishments beyond the prison. Cedefop's 2014 Inventory outlined four key benefits for the recognition and validation of skills and competences:

1. to help individuals to reflect on and become conscious of their actual capabilities (knowledge, skills and competence);
2. to help the unemployed and other disadvantaged groups – for example low skilled adults and migrants – to develop their careers and increase their employability prospects;
3. to provide users with a means of making visible and marketing their skills and competences;
4. to map needs for further training, considering the importance of matching the individuals' competences with labour market needs.

(Cedefop, 2014: 41/42)

As Werquin states "the process of recognising non-formal and informal learning is an excellent learning process in itself" (2010: 48). The flexibility to follow a process of recognition and validation without requiring the achievement of a particular standard for accreditation can help learners to develop, whilst

identifying weaknesses, and strengths, supporting the processes of self-reflection, learning styles and personal development planning.

This progressive vision of learning, founded on the recognition and validation of progress, is further likely to develop a learner's sense of self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) posited that an enhanced self-efficacy can lead to improved motivation and engagement. Self-efficacy refers to one's belief in their capability to attain progress or achieve a certain level of performance. An improvement in self-efficacy can therefore result in changed behaviours – approaching goals, tasks or challenges in a more positive and proactive way – and is, therefore, particularly valuable in areas of self-development such as learning and motivation. Furthermore, Bandura's concept of *reciprocal determinism* (1978) places great importance on the notions that people derive an understanding of themselves from those in their environment; and that environmental factors and internal cognitions, or self-concept, can have a strong influence on elected behaviours. One can surmise therefore, that where the processes are in place to demonstrate the positive and affirming perceptions of teachers, prison workers and peers, then a prisoner is much more likely to engage in further and deliberative learning opportunities.

The psycho-social benefits of enhanced learner engagement that can result from the validation processes can allow prison teachers and professionals to attribute significance to the multitude of unaccredited learning opportunities and even the most marginal gains made in terms of competence development. In highlighting their importance, we ultimately seek to support and foster engagement into lifelong learning. For learners engaging in non-formal and informal learning and its validation, it has the potential to legitimise personal experience, and to open them up to new interests and new learning opportunities. Effectively, it "mobilises the individual as the central actor" (Werquin, 2010: 51), encouraging them towards an improved self-image and self-belief, through an acknowledgement of their own progress and decision-making. This is a potential path towards the reduction of disparities in learning outcomes which can affect disadvantaged prison learners.

vii.   Conclusion

Research has shown that opportunities for prison learners to engage in non-formal and informal learning opportunities do exist within prisons. Though provision is not equal across Europe, important examples are exemplified throughout the whole of the prison: in prison libraries, one-off or ongoing workshops, within core provision (through art or sports classes, for example) or psychological 'interventions' – to name but a few. Furthermore, European policy foregrounds the importance of non-formal and informal learning within adult and prison education. Policy papers and protocols, such as the *Renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning* (2011) and *Education in Prison* (1990) highlight the importance of full and varied educational provision. Furthermore, the benefits of validating non-formal and informal learning – outlined by important organisations, the likes of OECD and UNESCO – are well-documented, particularly for their ability to help learners develop a more positive and efficacious self-image. A great deal of work from the European Commission and Cedefop has gone into making clear recommendations and providing the frameworks for the validation of competence development as a result of engagement in non-formal and informal learning.

In addition, there is wide-ranging academic research outlining the importance of education – in all its forms – in stimulating the engagement and motivation of (potential) prison learners. Influenced by the thinking and theories of Friere and Bandura, non-formal learning can be particularly effective, insofar as it can provide supported experiences, where the efficacy of a professional facilitator can guide and model, helping learners towards future self-directed learning within a learning environment characterised by positivity, flexibility, and choice. These opportunities in prison can have multiple benefits: it can open the door to new horizons, increase self-confidence, provide a creative and fun space for positive social interactions, improve mental and physical wellbeing, and allow learners to develop key transversal competences.

Researchers and academics (including Maruna (2001), McNeill (2009, 2016), and Sapouna, Bisset & Conlong (2011)) suggest that educational engagement and attainment can result in the potential for a prisoner to move towards future desistance from crime. Moreover, research from Bamford & Skipper (2007) and Tett et al (2012), shows that engagement in non-formal and informal learning can specifically help to develop confidence and encourage a prisoner's motivation to engage in future learning.

Indeed, some research, commissioned by the Prisoner Learning Alliance (2015) and Torlone & Vryonides (2016) suggests that the type of competence development derived from non-formal and informal learning can be *more* beneficial to learners than engagement in formal learning as they can better help to develop personal strengths and prosocial behaviours which, in turn, develop improved efficacy, provide pathways to further learning, and increase employability.

Despite all this, many barriers to the uptake of non-formal and informal learning still exist. Within educational provision, more emphasis remains on the development of basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, and on measurable outcomes – made easier by assessment-driven formal learning. Furthermore, prison learners often attend sporadically or on a short-term basis; they can be moved or their engagement can be limited by lack of resource and lack of consistency across and within prison systems (see Costelloe & Langelid, 2011). The resounding message is that greater consistency and investment is required in order to further increase engagement. In addition, Hawley, Murphy, Souto-Otero (2013) among others, outline the many personal, environmental and institutional factors which can act to limit engagement in education. Costelloe & Warner (2014) have shown us that persisting attitudes which focus on punishment as opposed to rehabilitation can have a further negative impact on learner engagement.

Finally, whilst key policy documents such as those by the European Council, demonstrate that there has been clear policy progress in the field of VINFL and a developing awareness of validation on European and National-policy levels, there is a lack of clear and consistent guidelines, approaches and practical developments at local and national levels.

In response, the 2012 Council Recommendation called for a more systematic approach across Europe, with a key objective set for 2018, outlining that all EU member states make national arrangements for validation, including the potential for non-formal and informal learning to be identified and documented; and assessed and certified, where appropriate.

The focus to make good on policy recommendations is now in the hands of national and local governance, as well as service providers. Policy clearly outlines that prison education must be equal to that available in the community (*European Prison Rules, 2006*); so there exists an opportunity to support prison learners, through their engagement and validation, to develop a more positive and efficacious self. But the focus must be on growing awareness and supporting professionals working in and around prisons to make the most of the work we do. A joined-up approach – validating a prisoner's engagement and the developments they make across the whole of their time in prison – could be a powerful reminder, not only to prisoners themselves, but also to those outwith the prison walls (employers, educators, communities, families) that time spent in prison can be productive and genuinely rehabilitative.

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III.   Needs Analysis

i.   Introduction

Due to the limitations of research in the area of non-formal and informal learning validation in prisons, the **VALMOPRIS project** undertook an audit of practices and activity within prison education – both in the partner countries and beyond – in order to ascertain the *need* for and benefit of validation processes within prison.

This research took the following forms:

i.   A partner-led 'audit' of practices and initiatives in partner countries, including: the nature of prison systems; arrangements for prison education in the partner country; recent study and policy recommendations at a national level; elements of good practice pertaining to informal and non-formal learning in prisons and community justice settings

ii.   An initial survey to prison workers and educators across Europe – to understand and identify the potential of VINFL within prison; and to identify the types of competence-oriented informal learning activities in prison

iii.   A socio-ecological study, completed by those prison learners, practitioners and stakeholders involved in the pilot learning activities[7] – designed to ascertain the support, constraints, and potential of VINFL in prison settings. The socio-ecological model focuses on the inter-relationships between individuals and the social, physical and policy environments.

This research was carried out to pre-test intuitions (such as the perceived importance of VINFL in prisons amongst different stakeholders) and to garner key information which would help us tailor the validation tool and implementation contexts to the needs of relevant stakeholders. More specifically, it speaks to the perceived need and potential of VINFL in European prisons and the key competences that prison teachers believe can be most valuably developed through VINFL in a prison-setting. As such, it provided the basis for identifying the range of competence-oriented informal learning activities that were carried out in prisons to pilot our validation approach.

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[7] Outlined in greater depth in our companion documents **IO2: VALMOPRIS Competence-oriented learning implementation contexts** and **IO4: A Guidebook for Validation**

ii. **Audit of practices and initiatives in partner countries: summary analysis**

Country	Prison System: Key facts and trends	Prison Educational provision	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (within and outwith prison)
Scotland	- 15 institutions (capacity of 8,512) - 7929 prisoners (143 per 100,000) - Incarcerations - rise and fall Of the fifteen prisons, thirteen are public sector prisons, with specialist provision for young offenders, female offenders and those moving to open conditions. SPS are moving towards the creation of community custody units to strengthen the focus on community integration and intensive family support. In 2013/14, 13% of those sentenced by courts were given a custodial sentence. Those on remand have risen by a total of 3.4% since 2000 (National Records of Scotland). Recidivism is also a major cause for concern across the UK as a whole with over 45% of adults being reconvicted within a year of being	The SPS Learning, Skills and Employability strategy (2016) centres around the mantra Unlocking Potential and Transforming Lives. The strategy asserts that every prisoner in their care should have "the opportunity to engage in creative and flexible learning that unlocks [their] potential and inspires change and builds individual strength". It seeks to achieve this through an education provision which develops key skills and literacies through a mix of classroom teaching, vocational training and a wide range of participatory creative and cultural activities, in a blend of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities. Following the Learning and Skills review of 2014, key priorities include: - An improvement of SPS governance and local management structures, including the introduction of learning and skills panels within each establishment. - An increased focus on coordination and integration which will see the SPS adopt a 'whole-prison approach' to engagement and learning activities.	Academic, vocational, creative, peer-led and informal learning opportunities are available in Scottish prisons. However, a strong focus remains on formalised classroom-based delivery and accreditation via formal qualification; learning providers have a primary responsibility to the development of literacy and numeracy. There is a validation system within Scotland. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is defined as: *"the process for recognising learning that has its source in experience and/or previous formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts"* (RPL Toolkit, Cameron & Cavanagh, SCQF). This validation model aims to provide guidance/frameworks for measuring **prior** formal, non-formal and informal learning. This accepts that knowledge and skills can be gained through: - family life (home-making, caring, domestic organisation) - work (paid or unpaid) - community, voluntary or leisure activities - key experiences and events in life. There are also training providers in the UK, such as ASDAN, which offer certification for non-traditional curricula "that explicitly grow skills for learning, skills for employment and skills for life" (www.asdan.org.uk). These are available in registered centres and delivered in some prisons.

released. The cost of this reoffending is estimated to cost the taxpayer between £9.5 and £13 million per year (Prisoners' Education Trust).

The 2017 'New Generation Contract' aims to respond to the 'learner's voice' and align to the wide-ranging needs of individual learners.

As yet, the validation of non-formal and informal learning does not play any formal part in teacher training. There is no apparent evidence of attempts to combine validation processes with non-formal and informal learning within prisons.

Country	Prison System: Key facts and trends	Prison Educational provision	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (within and outwith prison)
France	• 188 institutions (capacity of 58,561) • 76,601 prisoners, with 66,678 in detention (99 per 100,000) • Incarcerations - rising France's institutions are specialised. For example, the maison centrale is reserved for prisoners undertaking long-term sentences, whereas the maison d'arrêt is reserved for short sentences and remand prisoners. In the centre de semi-liberté inmates are released for work outside of the prison or to attend training during working hours, but they have to come back to the prison. 27.2% of the prison population are on remand (over 20,000 prisoners).	The law on the future of the school, dated April 23, 2005 states that "[e]ducation should at least guarantee the acquisition of a common core of skills and knowledge that is essential to master to successfully complete education, continue training, build personal and professional future and have successful life in society." The pillars of the common core: • Master the French language • Practice a foreign language • Master the main elements of mathematics as well as scientific and technological culture • Control of usual information and communication technologies • Hold humanistic culture • Possess social and civic competences • Have autonomy and initiative The penal law, dated November 24, 2009 states:	With the support of the decentralized services of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the prison service of integration and probation (SPIP) in each prison are piloting a programme of activities for the public supported in detention: visual arts, music, workshop writing, theatre, sport. Access to these non-formal or informal learning activities also constitute the elements of an integration or reintegration of persons under a measure of justice. Examples of positive practice can be found at: http://gilc.psko.fr/ To our knowledge, professional actors and stakeholders have no obligation to work on transversal competences when teaching prisoners during their detention. For adults, we have the assessment tools to identify the academic skills of prisoners, but not to seize their transferable skills as well as informal abilities. Yet, we observe a **recent French approval** dated May 3**, 2012** which organizes the implementation of cultural projects to benefit people (adults / minors) under measure of justice. The protocol notes that access to culture is a fundamental right, as well as education and health, contributing to the

"Any convicted person is required to perform at least one of the activities offered to him by the director of the prison and the manager of probation and reintegration service if it has the purpose to rehabilitate and is suitable for their age, abilities and personality. If the convicted person does not control the fundamental teachings, the priority is the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic. When not mastered the French language, the activity is a priority in their learning. The learning could be organised if the convicted person also realises a work activity". (Article 27 – Chapter 3 – Section 2)

enhancement of self-esteem, mastery of fundamentals, to deepening the knowledge base and the acquisition of professional skills. This in turn contributes to the integration and prevention of delinquency and recidivism. However, there has been a lack of political will.

Any validation within prisons appears to be from local initiatives from group of teachers working in the same prison or regional unit of education in prison. We do not have knowledge on pre-existing research unfortunately.

Country	Prison System: Key facts and trends	Prison Educational provision	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (within and outwith prison)
Latvia	12 institutions (capacity of 7,970) 4,745 prisoners (239 per 100,000) - Incarcerations - falling There are three primary regimes in Latvian prisons: closed (divided in lower, medium and higher level); semi-closed (divided in lower and higher level); and open prisons for adults; also juvenile institutions. In closed prisons, as well as in remand prisons, prisoners are often	Latvian prison education planning policy is based on the following principles: - The principle of availability: all prisoners must be ensured with access to education, which consists of general education, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical activities, social and educational opportunities for access to information in libraries and information opportunities provided by modern communication technologies - The principle of separation: Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age	Latvian institutions have a healthy and robust approach to partnership working, with a number of key examples of promising practice in informal and non-formal learning in prison within prisons and community justice settings. These tend to focus on competence development, such as communication skills, life skills, teamwork. These are aimed at supporting access into lifelong learning and improving socialization and family ties. In principle, a national system for validating non-formal and informal learning in general education and vocational and higher education has been set up. This system aims to provide diplomas certifying acquired knowledge and skills through non-formal and informal learning. Previously, validation had a sectoral focus due to the lack of a national system of

kept in cells for 23 hours a day, only being allowed to leave the cell for a one hour's exercise a day. The Council of Europe Committee for Prevention of Torture has heavily criticized the Latvian prison system for shortcomings with regard to health-care of prisoners, lack of independent investigation into cases of ill-treatment, absence of a long-term strategy to tackle inter-prisoner violence, a stringent regime and lack of activities for prisoners, in particular life-sentenced prisoners.

On a positive note, during the last years, particular attention has been paid to the establishment of re-socialisation systems in prisons, and in 2013 the government finally accepted the Cabinet of Ministers' regulation n. 191 on the Procedure of the Implementation of Prisoners' re-socialization. It is now necessary for every prisoner to have a re-socialisation plan.

groups outside of prisons. Prisoners must have as wide possibility to choose training subjects as possible.
- The principle of development
- The principle of continuity and succession
- The principle of re-socialization
- Prisoners training needs
- Partners (institutions)

It is protected by the following legislation: The Latvian Constitution, Education Law, General Education Law, Vocational Education Law, Latvian Penal Code, Procedure of Detention Law

The majority of adult educators acting within non-formal learning environments are self-taught professionals, and there are no officially consolidated policies for the evaluation of adult education. In recent years, much progress has been made to develop a framework for the evaluation of adult educators.

validation. Now, the national system has been developed and the legislative framework for validation in general education and vocational and higher education has been prepared.

Furthermore, EU LLL programme's project "Towards an Integrated System for Validation of non-formal and informal Learning: Initiating a national network of Cooperation and Information Exchange" (Val-Net) began in 2012, which involves a number of Latvian partners.

The inhabitants of Latvia have had the possibility to validate their professional competences obtained from non-formal education, and the State Service of Education Quality coordinates this process.

So we can say the process of validating non-formal and informal education has started in Latvia. However, to our knowledge VINFL is not being carried out in prisons.

Country	Prison System: Key facts and trends	Prison Educational provision	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (within and outwith prison)
Netherlands	• 77 institutions (capacity of 16,412)	Education in Dutch prisons consists mainly of basic skills training. In The Netherlands, the basic skills are literacy, oral language,	In the Netherlands, the system for validating non- and informal learning is well-developed. The Dutch Qualification Framework (NLQF) and the National Expertise centre (EVC)

- 11,603 prisoners, with 10,863 in detention (69 per 100,000)
- Incarcerations falling

DJI is responsible for juvenile institutions, forensic psychiatric clinics and centres for asylum-seekers in the country. With over 17,000 employees it is one of the largest Dutch organisations.

In recent years the number of prison cells has reduced as crime and prosecution rates fall. The average time spent in prison has also reduced from 112 to 93 days. Every year about 45,000 people spend some time in custody.

The ratio of prisoners per capita is one of the lowest rates in Europe. Yet, the reoffending rate in the first two years after release is 47.3%.

numeracy and digital skills. The level can be compared to that achieved by the end of primary education on or below level 1.

Professional and non-professional prison teachers work with 'normal', but independently adjusted, programmes for basic skills, not specifically developed for education in prisons.

In recent years, there have been large budgets cuts. There are no more art classes in prisons and there are plans to close down the prison libraries.

are two government-commissioned institutions who give guidelines, watch the quality of learning programmes and certificates and work in close dialogue with the different sectors and branches, such as the metal and cleaning branches and the healthcare sector. These are the sectors where former prisoners most often find work.

However, VINFL is not yet part of the usual training for teachers. In the last years some schools for Vocational Training send their teachers to special VINL courses delivered, for example, Edexcel/Pearson. This way they want to ensure that the teacher can have a more complete overview of all of their learners' skills and knowledge.

There have been a number of European projects involving Dutch partners considering the need and potential benefits of VINL. The EQUAL project (ESF-Equal 'Art Work(s) in the Tertiary sector' 2004 – 2008') and the European (Grundtvig) project PEETA (Personal Effectiveness and Employability Through the Arts) 2010-2012, focused on the delivery of artistic workshops (theatre, music, dance, musical theatre) in prisons and to other disadvantaged groups, such as drug addicts. The participants were told that they were also learning employability skills. The vast majority of participants were stimulated by learning useful skills while having fun doing artistic work. They reported increased competences.

Country	Prison System: Key facts and trends	Prison Educational provision	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (within and outwith prison)
Romania	- 45 institutions (capacity of 27,496) - 28,393 prisoners (144 per 100,000)	The Romanian educational intervention objectives: - To develop responsible, autonomous and independent	Romania has adopted the resolution 2006/C168/01, regarding the recognition of the value of informal and non-formal learning for young people. There has been a great deal of research into informal learning and its importance. This has been further

- Incarcerations - rise and fall

The National Administration of Penitentiaries is a public service responsible for the enforcement of detention regimes and for rehabilitation, intervention and social reintegration in order to safeguard the community, public order and national security.

The National Administration of Penitentiaries enforces penalties and measures to ensure that the Government's justice strategy is upheld, including: respect for the fundamental human rights of the person in custody; sustained effort for social reintegration of persons in custody; and the maintenance of a professional ethic.

behaviour, in addition to social competences and abilities
- To enrich general knowledge
- The development of good hygiene and self-housing skills
- To gain manual qualifications through occupational therapy and the development of a positive attitude towards work
- A focus on the young offender's personality: for behaviour and attitude restructuring
- Educational programmes are developed daily by educators, on obligatory and optional modules.

One-third of the schooled prisoners participate in courses within Second Chance – a special programme for those who have outgrown the age of schooling for compulsory general education.

In terms of good practice: From Zero to Zorro used auto-mechanics in the development of generic skills, such as discipline, team work, as well as specific skills, such as technical skills. And the Meridianos Photo Workshop project, included the technical resources necessary for editing, photo printing, and video recording; facilitating new skills and competences.

developed within EU projects that promotes the use of CV Europass and Youth pass. A blog around informal and non-formal learning for teachers has been developed: http://iteach.ro/pg/blog/mariana.patrichi/read/32476/educatia-formala-nonformala-si-informala

A lot of research has also been developed in prison regarding the staff and prisoners' needs. During an EU projects (European Partnership for an Inclusive Society – ESF, 2010-2012) a Study of Best Practices in Europe for assisting young offenders has been developed. Within this Study the validation System used in Spain has been described and as a project follow-up, the Romanian Prison System adapted this "validation" tool for the Romanian prisons.

Validation of informal learning in prison:
- a credit system is used for each activity, such as: educational programmes, leisure programmes etc. (e.g. specific programmes, such as psychological intervention programmes will receive 30 credits, general programmes, such as health education will receive 25 credits)
- standards regarding the programme/activity accreditation (approval) were developed by National Administration of Penitentiary
- criteria for skills evaluation were established

This credit system is also used at national level in the Romanian Prison System, more as a motivational tool (the participants will receive some benefits) and less as a validation or certification tool.

Country	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (outwith prison)
Austria	Austria has a longstanding tradition of formal education with a strong emphasis on its widespread dual vocational training system which still has a very good reputation (similar to Germany) Vocational education remains an important pillar of the Austrian education system: In 2012, 76% of students who were enrolled in upper secondary education participated in pre-vocational or vocational programmes, the second highest percentage in the OECD (cf. OECD, 2014). The validation of competences that have been acquired in non-formal and informal learning is a relatively new concept in Austria. At this moment, there is no provision for VINFL within the national education system. Thus, a recent OECD review of vocational education and training explicitly recommended the institution of a joint advisory body in Austria to improve the recognition of prior formal and informal learning (cf. Musset et al., 2013, p. 36). Over the last couple of years, several approaches for the validation of non-formally/informally acquired skills and competences have been developed with the aim of facilitating vocational re-orientation (c.f. paragraph 1.3). However, these instruments are standalone solutions and not embedded into an integrated political strategy. There is little national / legal activity concerning validation of learning outcomes from informal or non-formal learning, apart from a mention in the Austrian Strategy for lifelong learning (which has officially been published in 2011), the establishment of a coordination point for the NQF and several pilot projects for validation. Furthermore, the Austrian federal ministry of Education and Women's Affairs has recently launched a public consultation on the issue of validation of non-formal and informal learning. Although several formats for formative competence assessment exist and are being used by various institutions in the spheres of adult learning, lifelong guidance and vocational orientation, there is currently no formal process or system in place for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences (particularly not in higher education). There is no streamlined strategy or process in place and the relevance of validation of competences and learning outcomes is relatively low in education and employment. Although various institutions offer formative formats for competence assessment, we could only identify one profession that fully embraces the concept of validation of non-formal and informal learning and that is the profession of adult educators (including managerial positions, teaching, counselling and librarianship). Overall, the political discussions as well as the educational system are strongly focused on certificates.

Country	Validation of informal learning (VINFL) – Practices & Strategy (outwith prison)
Germany	In Germany, there is no national strategy for the validation of informal and non-formal learning (VINFL); in fact a legal framework or standardised system for such issue does not exist at national level. Also, the regulatory provisions dealing with the recognition of cross-cutting or specialised competences are extremely rare. In general, it is possible to state that the issue is considered less important than the recognition of formal learning and that the two kinds of validation are legally not on an equal footing. Similarly, also at the policy and practice level, the issue is perceived as less important than the validation of formal learning. Looking at admission procedures, training and study programmes, as well as certification in formal education (at upper secondary level and in higher education), there is little use of the competences acquired in informal and non-formal education settings. One tool that it is worth mentioning for assessing informal and non-formal learning outcomes is the admission to final examinations under Section 45 (2) of the Vocational Training Act (BBiG), better known as the "Externen-Prüfung" (examination for external candidates, i.e. those not involved in a formal vocational training programme). If candidates are able to furnish evidence that they have been employed in the occupation for an appropriate duration, they can be admitted to a final examination for a recognised occupation requiring formal training without having attended such training. Most of the approaches to validate informal and non-formal learning are adopted below the political (regulative) level. VINFL is characterised by a variety of approaches at national, regional and local level without any overall framework and these generally aim to represent a precondition for a "further" recognition connected to entitlements. In recent years, with the support of public funds, there have been several approaches, both at national and regional level for several different target groups. Here a selection of relevant examples: • **Career choice pass** (Berufswahlpass): an instrument for career orientation used in schools. • **Thematic study group competence diagnosis** (Facharbeitskreis Kompetenzfeststellung): approaches to improve the integration of migrants in the labour market. • **Competence certificate for voluntary work** (Kompetenznachweis Ehrenamt): certificate to document knowledge, skills and competences acquired in voluntary settings. • **Competence balance for vocational returnees** (Kompetenzbilanz für Berufsrück-kehrerInnen): tool to document knowledge, skills and competences developed during parental leave. • **Competence certificate culture** (Kompetenznachweis Kultur): certificate to document knowledge, skills and competences acquired while participating in cultural events. • **Competence panorama for migrants** (Kompetenzenpanorama für Migrantinnen & Mi-granten): portfolio of competences to improve the process of integration. • **Qualipass** (Qualipass in Baden-Württemberg): tool for assessing certain activities of students outside school supported by coaches.

Survey Distribution

The survey employed a version of the **stratified random sampling approach,** primarily to target prison teachers (also a range of other stakeholders working within the prison service) in different European countries. The intention was 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.

The survey was also emailed to and posted on specialist prison education forums and websites such as: EPEA, Prisoners' Education Trust, EPALE. This was designed to increase the sample size and to allow for input from stakeholders in other European countries.

Given the parameters of our sample group, we acknowledged certain potential barriers to completion – primarily within prison settings, where there is often limited or no access to internet and digital technologies.   To mitigate this problem as much as possible, the survey was produced in both online and off-line versions and circulated to partners. The survey was released for 4 months and reminders were reissued to potential participants in order to maximise returns.

Overview of 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 LEVEL5 validation tool for use within prison contexts and the pilot activities where the LEVEL5 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.

Survey Analysis

Distribution - Demographic Analysis

As highlighted above, countries from across Europe responded to the survey, with the greatest return coming from the UK[8].

70 respondents (81%) reported country of origin:

- UK (40) – 43%
- Netherlands (9) – (10%)
- France (8) – (9%)
- Romania (4) – (4%)
- Spain (4) – (4%)
- Germany (1) – (1%)
- Norway (1) – (1%)
- Turkey (1) – (1%)
- Malta (1) – (1%)

As expected, respondents from partner countries constituted the majority of returns, particularly those partners who are delivering the pilot teaching activities. The geographical spread of respondents is useful as it demonstrates fairly widespread interest in the role and potential of non-formal and informal learning within the prison sector.

Of those who responded to the question of employment, almost 75% (66) reported working within the prison education sector – either as teachers or education managers. The remaining respondents work within prisons, either as governors, managers, officers or as affiliated service providers. In total, 83% of 87 respondents reported that they work in direct contact with prisoners.

96% of 77 respondents answered affirmatively when asked the question 'Are you aware of the concepts of non-formal and informal learning?' Of the same number of respondents, 80% consider themselves directly involved in the delivery of non-formal and informal learning. This research demonstrates the prevalence of non-formal and informal learning within the prison sector and underlines the importance of this study.

Prisoners' engagement in non-formal and informal learning

On the issue of prisoners' engagement in non-formal and informal learning, 84% (69) of those who responded believed that prisoners were keen, happy or willing to engage in the non-formal or informal learning opportunities that are provided within prison settings. Interestingly, respondents noted a wide range of areas within the prison where opportunities for non-formal or informal learning exist and affirmative responses were generally high. Of the options provided, the most commonly cited avenue for engagement in non-formal or informal learning was education where 91% of those who responded (70) acknowledged the potential for such activities.

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8 The survey had a total of 93 respondents. This falls short of the target figure of 150. Whilst 93 respondents does give a clear sense that there is an interest in the potential for non-formal and informal learning to improve motivation, a larger respondent group with a broader geographical spread would be likely to provide more definitive evidence.

54 respondents (71%) cited the gym and visiting projects as avenues for prisoners to access non-formal and informal learning opportunities. 63% (44) of those surveyed believed these opportunities exist within work parties and 56% (39) within the prison kitchens.
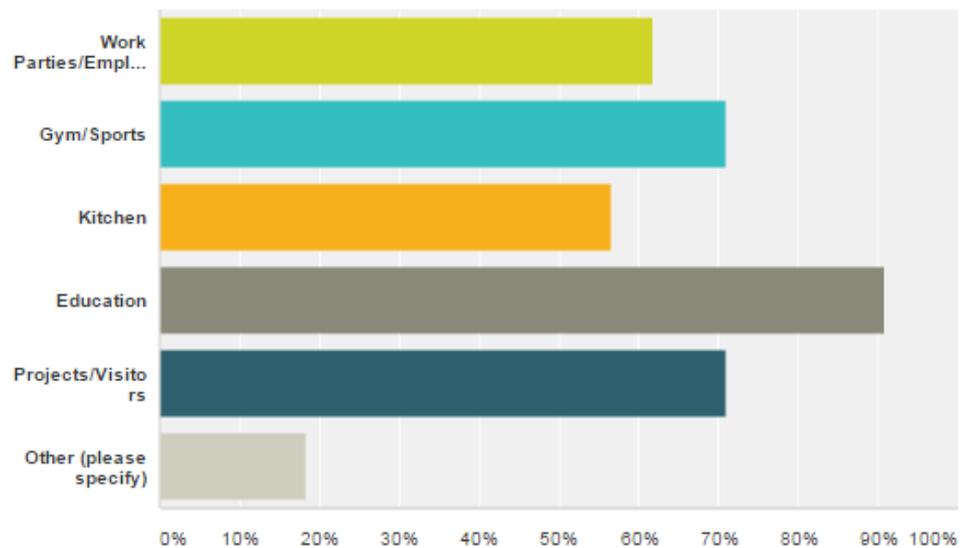
The importance of non-formal and informal learning environments within prisons

These figures would suggest that non-formal and informal learning is deeply embedded within much of the work carried out in prisons. Qualitative responses also add credence to this finding suggesting that VINFL would support the work being carried out across prisons and education departments: with one submission outlining that "we use non-formal and informal learning in all activities". In addition to the options listed, respondents highlighted a range of other areas where opportunities to engage in non-formal and informal learning were embedded.

These generally diverged into three key areas:
The first, could be summated as the everyday life of the prison and the prisoners: where non-formal and informal learning such as halls/residential blocks, recreation areas, multi-faith centres, health centre, family contact and visits were cited as providing opportunities for non-formal and informal learning.

The second opportunities are more commonly associated with additional education provision such as learner forums, peer mentoring, book groups and discussion/debate/conversation groups.

Thirdly, opportunities for non-formal and informal education seem to arise from prisoner progression pathways – such as case management meetings and programme/intervention.

This variety, characterised as "every contact as an opportunity to learn" by one respondent, encapsulates the importance of this study and its aim to offer a means of recognising and validating the personal progression made by prisoners in their time within prison.

57 (61%) respondents provided further detail about opportunities and the types of learning where a consistent and formalised approach to VINFL would be beneficial:

> there is in fact no end to non-formal and informal learning activities - being made aware of them as having learning potential is a different matter altogether.

When citing specific opportunities respondents included social projects; one-off workshops; external education programmes; language classes; listening schemes; health promotions; life skills classes such as healthy eating, cooking or money management; soccer teams coached by prison officers; visiting specialists; creative art workshops, including art, video and theatre production; youth work; projects fostering community integration; or work with external agencies. In relation to project work carried out in partnership with outside agencies, one respondent outlines that

> the prisoners I work with seem to get a huge amount from opportunities to work within non-usual structures with individuals and organisations that come in to offer something different. This is when exciting moments of informal learning occur.

Despite the apparent importance of these opportunities, when asked if non-formal and informal learning is properly considered and valued, the results would suggest that more awareness-raising is required. Of 64 respondents, 41% believed that the potential of non-formal and informal learning is not properly recognised by those working within the prison sector. Furthermore, 15% of 65 respondents believed that it was not properly recognised or valued by prisoners themselves.

This hypothesis is supported by the fact that 32 (49%) respondents outlined that there existed a lack of understanding from learners and stakeholders and 29 (44%) suggested that a lack of value represented a distinct challenge to the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Whilst this concern is by no means universally true of all respondents, it does represent the need for a carefully considered approach to VINFL. In addition, practical difficulties were also noted, with half of respondents confirming that lack of training and capacity were also likely to present challenges to the validation process.

Competences

The survey provided a wealth of information pertaining to the perceived competences acquired by prisoners as a result of their engagement in non-formal and informal learning opportunities. In direct relation to the aforementioned activities, a range of extra benefits were provided as qualitative responses. These include:

- Problem-solving skills
- Actualisation
- Anger management and aggression regulation
- Empathy, attitudes and an acceptance of difference
- Increased confidence and self-efficacy
- Development of Literacy and language skills and learning strategies
- Work ethics and professional skills
- Improvements in health and wellbeing – diet and weight management, hygiene, smoking cessation
- Improved socialisation – fostering cooperation, interpersonal and team-working skills

These benefits and activities can be mapped directly against the European Framework of Key Competences[9] and can be validated through the use of the LEVEL 5 system which focuses on a blend of social, personal and organisational competences acquired through engagement in non-formal and informal learning activities.

One response highlighted the importance of collaborative engagement, giving rise to a "vital exchange of knowledge, skills and understanding between prisoners". Another explained that:

> working in teams to solve problems is something that takes place during almost every activity, for example students making face masks must work alternatively to lay the plaster onto one another's face. This practice is a tangible demonstration of trust, co-operation and endurance whilst developing ideas and technical skills. This task is a good example of learning emotionally, spiritually and academically.

Given that the LEVEL5 validation system is designed to assess cognitive, activity-related and affective outcomes, it can provide the infrastructure to allow those working within prison to undertake process-oriented assessment and evidence both competence developments and learning outcomes in a visual way for learners and stakeholders alike.

Respondents were asked to rank the five most important **competences** in relation to their day-to-day work with prisoners.[10] Ten competences achieved a score of ten or more. This score was assigned as a result of a number of votes and the weighting of a 1-5 ranking. Communication skills were ranked as the most important at 14 (with 51 votes); problem solving (39), self-reflection (38), learning to learn (38), autonomy (34), and flexibility (24) were all given an equal weighting of 13. Creativity (34), critical thinking and team-working (33) were scored at 12; conflict management (25) at 11; and planning and organising one's own learning competence (14) at 10.

Given competences are scored so consistently, a narrowing of competences will prove difficult. However, five key competences are consistently ranked in the top three when we
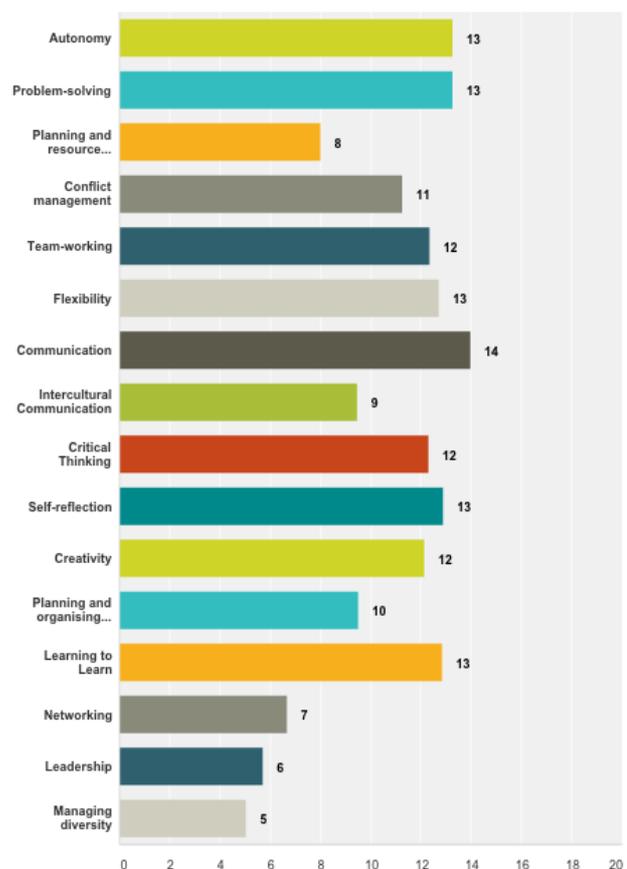
9 The Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006
http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=URISERV:c11090&from=EN
10 An abridged list of 16 was adapted and provided from the LEVEL 5 methodology. All received a scoring, suggesting that the competences highlighted from our initial research are, in fact, pertinent to the prison sector and prisoners.

consider the number of votes and the regularity of a high ranking.

Communication skills are the most highly regarded competence with 40 respondents (61%) ranking it in the top three. **Problem-solving skills** were selected in the top three 23 times (35%), followed by **self-reflection** at 21 (32%), and finally, **autonomy** and **learning to learn** (31%) each had 20 top three selections. According to rankings, **creativity** and **team-work** also represent important competence developments for prisoners, each with 28 selections respectively (43% of total respondents).

The survey also set out to ascertain what the **key benefits** of non-formal and informal learning might be for prisoners. Participants were asked to rank the proposed benefits and, like the competences, all benefits received a ranking, which were very closely aligned[11].

However, when considering total votes, three core benefits were weighted much more highly: **improved self-esteem** (51/77%), **improved communication skills** (46/70%) and **increased motivation** (44/67%). Increased engagement, a broadening of horizons and improved self-direction were also highly ranked. Considering the close alignment of these areas with motivation – this should certainly be considered one of the key drivers for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Recommendations for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

The survey sought information regarding the current validation practices adopted within prison environments for non-formal and informal educational arrangements – multiple selections were possible. Just over two thirds of those taking the survey responded to this question. 16% (10 respondents) highlighted that no validation methodology was in place. By contrast, only 13% (8) used a process of certification.

The most common method of evaluation was observation, with 56% (35) of respondents confirming that they use this methodology, explaining that it was used in conjunction with other methodologies, particularly self-assessment. Peer assessment returned no results whatsoever. Some respondents also provided qualitative reasoning for the affirmative benefits that a validation system could provide:

> Validation should be encouraged because prisoners have found it [informal learning] to be inspiring and engaging and it is a great way of getting prisoners to have a taste of what learning means and that learning does not always have to have a "negative" connotation.

> It's important to certify what has been done (number of hours, issues covered, skills acquired...)

However, it also raises some points of importance which our project will need to take into account:

> It would be much more desirable to convince governments and prison services of the value of this kind of 'extracurricular' learning, so that space and time is allocated in prisons to carry on with these key learning areas, without having to officially assess them and turn them into statistics.

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11 Scores ranged from 7.10 to 11.41, a variance of only 4.31.

> …deep, radical learning experiences can have a wide range of outcomes
> that may not always be able to be articulated at the time of evaluation.

Whilst the LEVEL5 system provides a demonstration of learning and competence development through the certification system, it is primarily designed to demonstrate to the prisoner the personal 'distance-travelled' as a result of engagement in a non-formal or informal learning activity. It does not offer statistical evidence and results are not graded. Furthermore, it is hoped that the motivation engendered through the process of engagement and validation will be the type of long-term and subtle outcome that our second respondent refers to.

According to our research, formalised validation processes for non-formal and informal learning barely exist within prisons, at present. As reasoning, a significant number of respondents cited a lack of training for staff, capacity issues and a lack of understanding and value amongst learners and stakeholders as potential obstacles validating informal learning. This problem is well-encapsulated by one respondent who outlined that:

> Non-formal education generates, by definition, a space question…
> Through cultural activities, often unknown by detainees, educators help
> them regain motivation and emotions. These projects are also an
> opportunity to rediscover people from civil society and thus re-establish
> a link with the outside world. People who engage in non-formal education
> rarely have the opportunity to exchange their experiences, achievements
> and doubts. Often they are faced with incomprehension or devaluation of
> their work within prison – considering that what they do as pure
> entertainment, without being planned or projected, not valuing it as a real
> education and/or faced with the lack of space and time for activities,
> recycling or permanent training or multi-disciplinary coordination with
> other professionals in the centres. Managers of prison should care greatly
> about this learning system and training his/her professionals.

This research provides a clear rationale for the piloting and development of an existing and well-established validation system within the prison sector. This project has the potential to increase understanding among stakeholders of the validation process and demonstrate clearly the value of this learning and competence development though a process of planning, self-reflection, evidence and certification. As such, the project sees the dissemination of good practice through a competence framework, practice guidebook and train-the-trainer utility which responds to the needs of the prison sector as vital. This would allow teachers and prison staff to measure progress and milestones in a more structured and consistent way and utilise non-formal and informal learning opportunities more effectively within the rehabilitative process.

iv. VALMOPRIS project - A socio-ecological study comparing inter-relationships between individuals and the social, physical and policy environments: summary analysis

Introduction

This report is a comparative analysis measuring motivation to learn in prison across the five levels of the socio-ecological model (using quantitative and qualitative analysis). This socio-ecological research has been undertaken in five countries: Scotland, Romania, France, Latvia and Netherlands within the framework of the VALMOPRIS project. The 'research unit of analysis' are prisoners detained in prisons and centres from these countries.

Individual

Interpersonal

Organisational

Community

Societal/Public Policy
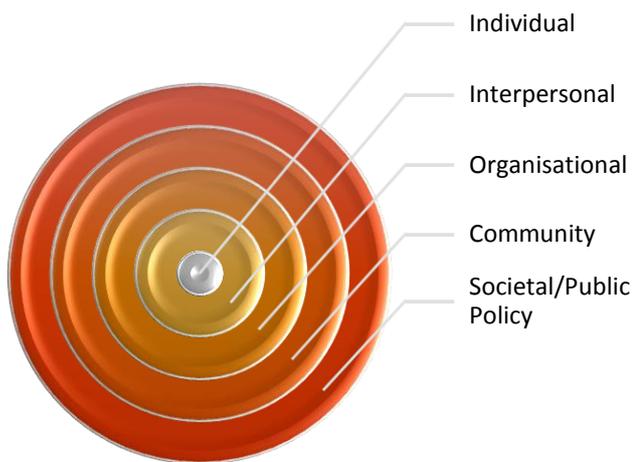
The socio-ecological approach to a study of VINFL considers whether informal learning in prison should focus not only on intrapersonal behavioural factors but also on the multiple-level factors that influence the specific behaviour in question. The socio-ecological model thus focuses on the inter-relationships between individuals and the social, physical and policy environments. This approach is more likely to sustain the implementation of VINFL in prison over time than any single intervention.

Individual
The first level identifies biological and personal history factors that play a role - some of these factors are age, education, substance use, or history of abuse. Strategies at this level are often designed to impact upon attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

Interpersonal Dimension
The second level examines close relationships that may affect the individual's ability to learn – closest social circle-peers, teaching staff, prison staff and family members. All may influence their behaviour and contribute to their range of experience.

Organisational Dimension
The third level looks at the organisational context within which the interventions take place. In the context of our project this means the organisational and contractual arrangements in place governing education, the way in which the prison is run, and the priority accorded to education etc.

Community Dimension
The fourth level explores the environment in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify the characteristics of these settings that influence, positively or otherwise, the uptake of learning. In this case, the community dimension means the community of the prison, though this can encompass services from the wider community delivered inside the prison (e.g. health care, employment advice, education etc.).

Societal/Public policy

The fifth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate in which learning (in prison) is encouraged or inhibited. These factors include social and cultural norms and the importance attached to education. Other larger societal factors include the health, economic, educational and social policies that help to maintain economic or social inequalities between groups in society.

Strategies across the model will include (framework of the case-study developed by each partner):

- Targeting individuals with a specific focus on protective individual factors, aiming to reduce individual risk factors
- Targeting relationships by focusing on peer-related and teacher-learner messages in order to clarify the importance and impact of VINFL in prison settings
- Targeting organisational/institutional internal policy that will develop the framework for VINFL in prison
- Work with other institutions, in order to promote VINFL and to involve the community in developing VINFL in prison settings
- The development of a national strategy in order to promote VINFL in prison

Research design

Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires administered to the prisoners and prison staff (including stakeholders).

The questionnaire is articulated in five dimensions, resembling the research objectives shown before. The five dimensions are structured in two sections:
- Section 1: designed for the prisoners. This section is also structured in two parts: one is addressed to the interviewer (collecting data, such as age of the prisoner, gender etc.) and the second one is addressed directly to the prisoner referring to the personal and interpersonal dimension.
- Section 2: designed for teachers and stakeholders, referring to the organisational, community and policy dimension

Data analysis was performed in several steps: firstly, preliminary data quality control procedures were applied, such as mean analysis. Then univariate analysis (tables, graphics) was performed to have a general overview of questions' trend. Thirdly, a Statistical Significance (T-Test), was performed for the personal and interpersonal dimensions in order to indicate whether or not any 'real' difference between two groups of prisoners (youth and adults) exists. We could not conduct a quantitative analysis (such as T Test or Mann-Witheny Test) for staff working in prison and stakeholders due to the reduced number of respondents and/or incomplete answers to the questionnaires. Therefore, we used a qualitative analysis. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software.

Sample

The questionnaire was administered to:
- the prisoners detained in prisons and detention centres from Scotland, Romania, France and Latvia; and those within criminal justice settings in the Netherlands.

- the prison staff working with these prisoners and stakeholders (prison director, head of prison departments: educative department, social department, surveillance department, school) from Scotland, Romania, France, Netherlands and Latvia

The first layer of the research sample is made up of 61 prisoners, the majority of them coming from Scotland (17 prisoners, 27.7%) and Romania (17 prisoners, 27.7%).

Tab. 1 – Distribution of the prisoners by Country.

	Total	%
France	14	22.9
Romania	17	27.8
Latvia	7	11.4
Netherlands	6	9.8
Scotland	17	27.8
Total	61	100.0

The second layer of the research sample is made up of 36 prison staff members (and/or stakeholders), the majority of them coming from Scotland (13 staff, 33.1%) and France (10 staff, 27.7%)

Tab. 2 – Distribution of the stakeholders by Country.

	Total	%
France	10	27.7
Romania	5	13.8
Latvia	3	8.3
Netherlands	5	13.8
Scotland	13	33.1
Total	36	100.0

The prisoners were distributed in two groups: youth (age 16-26) – 48.4% and adults (age 27-55) – 39.0%. Age not declared – 12.5%.

Tab. 3 – Distribution of the prisoners by Age.

	Total	%
Youth (16-26)	31	48.4
Adults (27-55)	25	39.0
Age not declared	8	12.5
Total	64	100.0

The distribution of prisoners shows that the majority of the prisoners have not been convicted before (40.6%). There is a slight difference between this category (not-previously convicted) and those previously convicted (35.9%). A low percentage (1.5%) reported having undergone alternative measures to imprisonment.

Tab. 4 – Distribution of the prisoners by the criteria of conviction.

	Total	%
Convicted before	23	35.9
Not convicted before	26	40.6
Alternative measures to the imprisonment	1	1.5
No answer	14	21.8
Total	64	100.0

Responses show that the highest recidivism rate is reported in France (71.4%) and Scotland (70.5%). In Romania, no recidivists are included in this sample (100% non-recidivism), which is explained by the fact that the Romanian institution in focus is mostly for those entering into their first sentence.

Tab.5 – Recidivism or non-recidivism status of the prisoners by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Non-Recidivism	28.5	100.0	57.1	11.1	17.6
Recidivism	71.4	0.0	42.8	11.1	70.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* not all the respondents answered this item

Data Analysis

1. The personal dimension

The distribution of the educational status of the prisoners shows, on the whole, that the majority of the prisoners went to school, but not regularly: for example, France (78.5%). However, in Romania (58.8%) and Latvia (57.1%) did not go to school. Prisoners in the Netherlands and Scotland were most likely to attend school regularly: in the Netherlands (50.0%) and Scotland (47.0%).

Tab.6 – Did you attend school before entering the centre/prison? Distribution by Country of Prison Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes, regularly	14.2	11.7	0.0	50.0	47.0
Yes, but not regularly / I left when I was young	78.5	29.4	42.8	16.6	47.0
No	7.1	58.8	57.1	33.3	5.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Concerning discipline problems at school before entering into prison, the highest reported percentage is in Scotland (94.1%), Romania (76.4%) and Netherlands (66.6) and the lowest in France (42.8%) and Latvia (28.5%).

Tab.7 – Did you have discipline problems at school? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	42.8	76.4	28.5	66.6	94.1
No	57.1	23.5	71.4	33.3	5.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Our research also looked at the previous work experience of prisoners: the sample registers a high score regarding prisoners' involvement at some point in employment. In the Netherlands (100%) had been employed, Romania (94.1%), France (85.7%) and Scotland (82.3%). However, Latvian respondents reported a low score for this question (28.5%).

Tab.8 – Did you ever have a job before entering the centre/prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	85.7	94.1	28.5	100.0	82.3
No	14.2	5.8	71.4	0.0	17.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The last questions of this section deal with the general and key competences considered by the prisoners as the most important for their integration into society after release. Generally, across the sample, manual skills (building things or fixing them) are considered the most relevant (score: 33) and before communication skills (score: 21).

Tab.9 – What do you think are the three most important things someone in prison should learn in order to help them settle back into society? Distribution by Country of Prison. Score.

	Total	Country of prison				
		France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Manual skills (e.g., building or fixing things)	33	5	7	6	6	9
Creativity	13	5	1	2	2	3
Communication	21	6	6	1	0	8
Languages	7	1	5	1	0	0
Taking responsibility	10	2	2	0	0	6
Planning and arranging activities	12	4	0	2	3	3
Leadership	10	1	1	0	0	8
Managing money	13	0	4	2	3	4
Computer skills	10	3	5	2	0	0
Technological expertise	7	5	0	2	0	0
Interpersonal skills	5	0	1	1	1	2
Team working	7	0	5	0	1	1

2. The interpersonal dimension

This section of the survey is aimed at analysing the interpersonal dimensions of the prisoners concerning their motivation to learn. Before entering into the prison/centre, prisoners generally lived with their mother in Romania (score: 10), or with their partner in France (score: 7) and Scotland (score: 7).

Tab.10 – Before entering into the centre/prison, with whom did you live? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column score of "Yes" answers.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Your mother	7	10	3	1	6
Your father	6	9	3	0	2
Your brother(s) and/or sister(s)	2	5	3	0	2
Your grandparent(s)	1	0	0	0	1
Other relatives	0	6	0	0	0
Your boyfriend or girlfriend, wife or husband	7	3	3	3	7
Your child or children	5	1	0	3	2
Your friends	1	2	0	0	2
Alone	1	0	0	1	3

Regarding prisoners' beliefs about the importance of family influence in their life, the highest percentage is reported in Romania (58.8%) and Scotland (58.8 %) and the lowest one in France (28.5%) and in Latvia (14.2%).

Tab.11 – In your opinion, how much can a family influence someone's life choices? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Very much	28.5	58.8	14.2	50.0	58.8
Somewhat	7.1	23.5	28.5	50.0	29.4
Just a little	21.4	0	14.2	0	11.7
Not at all	42.8	17.6	42.8	0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Regarding prisoners' beliefs on the influence of friends on life choices, the highest percentage is shown for Romania (58.8%), Scotland (52.9%) and Netherlands (50.0%) and the lowest one for France (28.5%) and Latvia (14.2%).

Tab.12 – In your opinion, how much can a group of friends or peer group influence someone's life choices? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Very much	28.5	58.8	14.2	50.0	52.9
Somewhat	7.1	23.5	28.5	50.0	29.4
Just a little	21.4	0	14.2	0.0	17.6
Not at all	29.4	17.6	28.5	0.0	0.0
I cannot answer	7.1	0	14.2	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The last question of this section reflects the respondents' relationships with the teachers in prison, as it is perceived by the prisoners: the differences between countries are not very important. As a general conclusion, the perception is considered as satisfactory.

Tab.13 – How would you describe your relationship with your teachers during your stay in prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Satisfactory	78.5	88.2	85.7	83.3	94.11
Indifferent	7.1	11.7	14.2	0.0	5.8
Unsatisfactory	14.2	0.0	0.0	16.6	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A statistical T-test was used in order to study the statistical significance regarding the differences between youth (16-25) and adult (26-55) prisoners referring to the impact of personal and interpersonal factors.

Tab 14. "T test" for youth and adult prisoners referring to the individual and interpersonal factor

Variables	Age				t(59)	p
	16-25		>26			
	m1	σ	m2	σ		
Personal factor	22.50	3.885	24.78	2.847	-2.526	.014
Interpersonal factor	97.81	20.720	85.44	16.106	2.523	.014

The results are significant. There is a difference between youth and adults regarding the personal and interpersonal factors. The personal factor is more relevant for adult prisoners (m=24.78, p=.014), while the interpersonal factor is more relevant for the youth prisoners (m=97.81, p=.014).

The personal factor refers to different dimensions such as education, working place etc. Regarding the sample, 46% of adult prisoners went to school before entering into prison and 64% did not go to school previously, while the majority of young prisoners went to the school (68%), only 12% did not go to school at all. Adult prisoners are more aware about the importance of the learning process as a personal decision and they are more focused on achieving some personal 'acquisition', instead of being focused on interpersonal relations.

The interpersonal factor is focused on the environment and on the relations with the teachers and peers during the learning process. For young prisoners this period is influenced by others, therefore the educative factors, such as educators are very important for developing motivation to learn. The validation received from educational factors is very important at this stage for youth development and for developing the learning to learn competence.

3. The organisational dimension

Education in prison is considered by the staff as very important in Romania (60.0%), Netherlands (60.0%) and Scotland (53.8%) and as important in Latvia (66.6%) and France (60.0%).

Tab.15 – In your institution (prison), do you believe that the education is considered to be…? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Very Important	10.0	60.0	33.3	60.0	53.8
Important	60.0	20.0	66.6	40.0	38.4
Neutral	0.0	20.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
Unimportant	30.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Regarding the various components of education in prison – formal, informal and non-formal learning, developing key competences, finding different methods for motivating prisoners, adapting education to the prisoners' particularities and needs, ensuring that you meet the expectations and demands of those at an institutional level – there are not significant differences between countries, more than 50% considering all these aspects as very important.

Tab.16 – How important are the following aspects to your work in prisons in ensuring that you meet the expectations and demands of those at an institutional level? (aspects listed above) Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Education in prison	54.9	61.4	62.0	53.6	58.3

Informal and non-formal education in prison is considered as very important in all the countries with only a slight difference. Romania rates it most highly (score: 8.8), followed by Latvia (score: 8.6), Netherlands (score: 8.4), Scotland (score: 7.7) and France (score: 7.6).

Tab.17 – How important is informal and non-formal education to your work in prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
In/non-formal education in prison	7.6	8.8	8.6	8.4	7.7

The regulation or process for implementing educational programmes in prison is a very important factor relating to educational strategy. Most of the countries involved in this study (Romania, Latvia, Netherlands and Scotland) reported the existence of this regulation in prison, except France, where only 10% from the respondents are aware about such regulation in prison.

Tab.18 – In your institution, is there a specific regulation or process for implementing education programmes? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	10.0	80.0	100.0	80.0	92.3
No	90.0	20.0	0.0	20.0	7.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

4. The community dimension

The community dimension is a very important factor for prisoners' social reintegration, having an important role during the sentence (being in contact with the prisoners inside and outside the prison) and after the sentence (helping the prisoners to re-shape their role as active citizens).

Collaboration with the NGOs and with the community is considered as important in all the countries, in Romania being considered as vitally important (100%) while in Latvia and Netherlands it was considered less important (about 60%).

Tab.19 – In your institution, is collaboration with NGOs and other institutions from the community considered to be? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Important	70.0	100.0	66.6	60.0	84.6
Neutral	30.0	0.0	33.3	40.0	15.3
Unimportant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Regarding the number of educational programs delivered by NGOs in prisons, the highest mean is registered for Scotland (4.3) and Netherlands (3.8) and the lowest one for Romania (2.4).

Tab.20 – How many programmes are delivered by NGOs and institutions from the community, inside the prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Educative programmes delivered by NGOs inside the prison	2.7	2.4	2.6	3.8	4.3

Regarding the number of educational programmes delivered by NGOs outside the prisons, the highest mean is registered for Scotland (3.1) and the lowest one for Latvia (1.3).

Tab.21 – How many programmes are delivered by NGOs and institutions from the community, outside the prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Educative programmes delivered by NGO''s outside the prison	2.3	2.0	1.3	2.2	3.1

5. The societal/political dimension

The societal/political dimension provides the legislative context for developing the learning to learn competence and focusing on prisoners' needs. The majority of the respondents from all the countries involved in this study considered that "society does not consider the social reintegration of prisoners to be an important issue".

Tab.22 –Which perceptions best reflect the concept and reality of former prisoners' social reintegration? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Social reintegration is not necessary	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.6
Society does not consider the social reintegration of prisoners to be an important issue	70.0	60.0	66.6	20.0	69.2
Society rejects the idea of prisoners' social reintegration	30.0	40.0	33.3	0.0	23.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* not all the respondents answered this item

A very important factor that can facilitate prisoners' social reintegration is a clear strategy for former prisoners. Only Romania clearly reported the existence of a strategy (80%), while the respondents from the rest of the countries reported that they are either less aware or unaware about this kind of strategy in their country.

Tab.23 – Are you aware if there is there a strategy for former prisoners' social reintegration at a national level? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	10.0	80.0	0.0	20.0	30.7
No	90.0	20.0	100.0	80.0	69.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

The potential for former prisoners to continue their education after release are reported as being very active in Netherlands (80.0%) and Latvia (66.6%). The lowest percentage is reported in France (10.0%).

Tab.24 – Are you aware if there are procedures in place for former prisoners who would like to continue their education after release? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	10.0	40.0	66.6	80.0	30.7
No	90.0	60.0	33.3	20.0	69.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

All the countries involved in the study considered that the procedures and support networks in place to allow former prisoners to continue their education after prison are not sufficient.

Tab.25 – Do you believe that there are sufficient procedures and support networks in place to allow former prisoners to continue their education after prison? Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Country of prison				
	France	Romania	Latvia	Netherlands	Scotland
Yes	0.0	0.0	33.3	0.0	15.3
No	50.0	100.0	33.3	80.0	69.2
I don't know	50.0	0.0	33.3	0.0	15.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Conclusions

Our research determines a significant difference between youth and adults regarding the importance and influence of personal and interpersonal factors on motivation to engage in prison learning.

(i) Adult prisoners are more motivated by personal factors. They are less likely than young prisoners to have attended initial education regularly (64% did not attend school compared to 12% of youths) and are more aware about the importance of learning process as a personal decision and they are more focused on achieving some personal acquisition, and subsequent employment opportunities.

(ii) Interpersonal factors are more relevant for young prisoners and increased engagement. The interpersonal factor is focused on the environment and on the relations with the teachers and peers during the learning process. For young prisoners, this period is influenced by the others, therefore the educative factors, such as teachers, educators are very important for developing motivation to learn. Thus, validation received from educational factors is very important at this stage for developing learning to learn competencies.

(iii) Education in prison is considered by the staff as very important in Romania (60.0%), Netherlands (60.0%) and Scotland and as important in France (60.0%) and Latvia (66.6%). Informal and non-formal education in prison is considered as very important in all the countries with relatively slight differences recorded: Romania (score: 8.8), Latvia (score: 8.6), Netherlands (score: 8.4), Scotland (score: 7.7) and France (score: 7.6).

(iv) The community dimension is a very important factor for prisoners' social reintegration, both during sentences and after their completion. Collaboration with the NGOs and with the community is considered as important in all the countries, in Romania being considered as most important 100 % while in Latvia and Netherlands about 60%.

(v) The societal/political dimension offers the legislative context for focusing on the prisoners needs and developing the learning to learn competence. The majority of the respondents from all the countries involved in this study believe that "society does not consider the social reintegration of prisoners to be an important issue". Furthermore, all the countries involved in the study considered that the procedures and support networks in place to allow former prisoners to continue their education after prison are insufficient.

IV. VALMOPRIS project - Evaluation of non-formal & informal learning activities in prison

i. Introducing the LEVEL5 approach: validation of non-formal & informal learning

The validation of non- or informally acquired social, personal and organisational competences is carried out along a standardised procedure developed by a community of evaluators specialised in informal and non-formal learning ("REVEAL").

REVEAL and LEVEL5

REVEAL is a transnational network of European experts from grass-root projects, adult education providers and universities working for more than four years on the question of how the impacts of non-formal and informal learning can be measured and visualised.

In the framework of three European funded projects, the community developed **LEVEL5**, a formative *validation system* which enables stakeholders in European projects to assess and display the impact of collaborative project work in transnational teams. The effects (or the impact) of non-formal and informal learning can be displayed through the development of learners' competences (e.g. specific theme-centred knowledge, improvement of "soft" skills like collaboration and intercultural communication, attitudes towards other groups etc.).

The **LEVEL5** evaluation procedure is on one hand standardised but at the same time enables users to establish individualised reference systems for assessing and evidencing relevant competences of their target groups in a process-orientated way. With the help of **LEVEL5** one can measure, display and evidence individual competence developments and give proof of the range of effects resulting from cooperation in European projects.

Principles of LEVEL5

Initially the LEVEL5 evaluation system has been developed and piloted in more than 60 informal and non-formal learning projects since 2006 in order to assess:
- cognitive,
- activity related and
- affective

learning outcomes to evidence and visualise competence developments of learners in informal and non-formal learning projects.

The basic principle

Individual or group competences can be evaluated in a process-orientated way, visualised in a 3-dimensional cube model and fully documented in a specific software system.

Based on this model LEVEL5 is grounded on the basic competence definition of the EU[12] that a competence is the ability to apply a synthesis of **knowledge, skills, and attitudes** in a particular situation and in a particular quality.

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12 The *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework* is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006
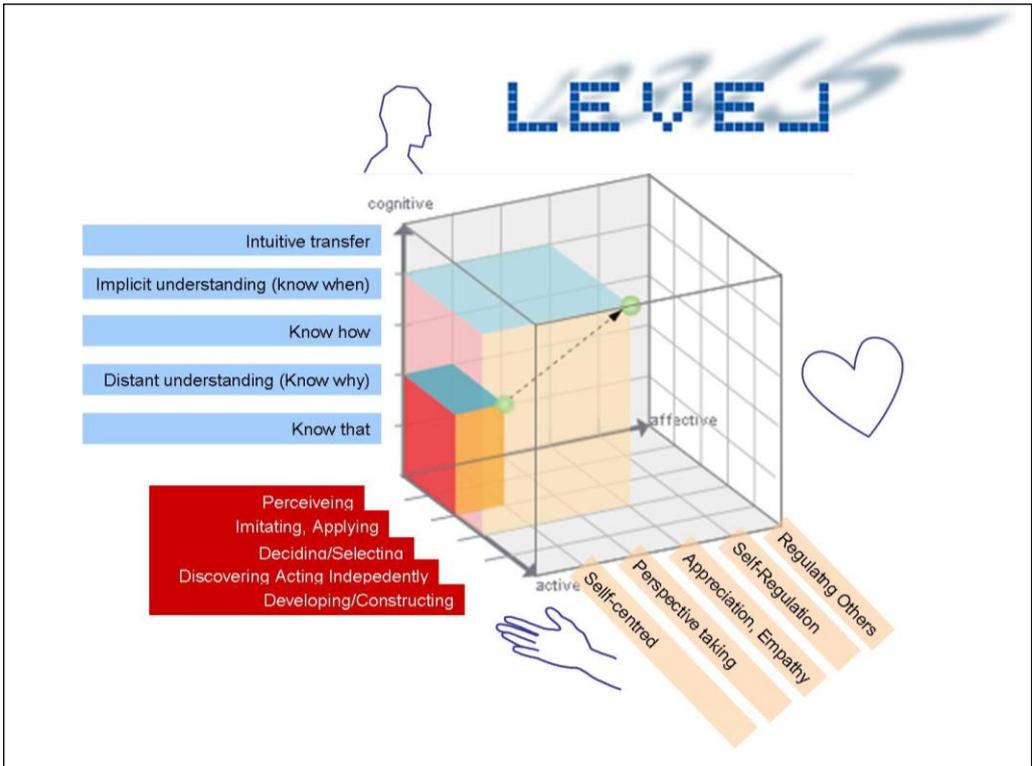
Fig. 1: The LEVEL5-cube

LEVEL5 is especially suitable to assess personal, social and organisational competences: exactly those, that are acquired in informal learning setting.

Approach and methodology

The LEVEL5 evaluation approach is based on a five-step procedure (Fig. 2):
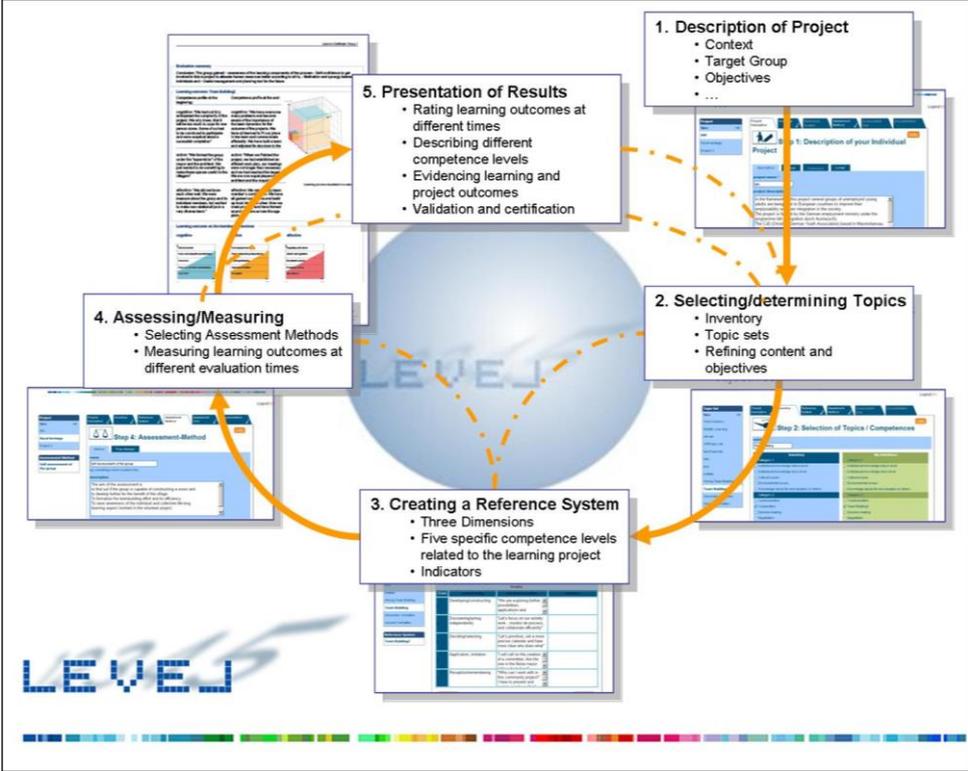

Fig. 2: LEVEL5 procedural approach

1. **Project Description**
   Describing the properties of the project in a preformatted pattern and the profile of the group and the learners

2. **Selecting topics**
   Selecting relevant competences to be assessed from an inventory specifically designed for your context and option to further refinement of the wording according to project's purposes

3. **Establishing an individualised reference system**
   Adapting the reference system from the general inventory to the specifics of project and target group on the basis of a 3-dimensional (cognitive, affective, activity related) rating system with five individualised stages/levels

4. **Assessment**
   Describing the evaluation procedure and its timing as well as the respective methods of data collection. In the VALMOPRIS pilot projects, a broad range of assessment methods can be applied and combined, e.g. questionnaires and interviews to group discussions, assessment exercises, project work and observation by training staff. Besides the named there is a wide variety of further methods to apply for assessing data on competence development (see annex).

5. **Rating/Documenting/Visualisation**
   - Inserting the ratings of a group or individual participants at the given time into the individualised reference system to later on be displayed in a 3-dimensional evidencing system (**CUBE**)
   - The ratings are substantiated and documented in the software
   - Results may be recorded internally and/or connected with learners' certificates
   - Option of automatic generation of learner certificates.

Reasons to apply LEVEL5

Specific benefits at a glance:

- Not only validating learning outcomes but competence developments
- Contextualised validation possible (fit to purpose and learning environment and learners)
- Development of an extendable but still specific inventory for competences acquired through your context
- Reference systems designed in accordance to project's objectives and aspired learning outcomes, focused on cognitive, activity related and affective competence developments
- Preformatted reference systems for social, personal and organisational competences
- Evidencing, documentation and visualisation of the competence developments
- Certification: Competence developments of the learners can be evidenced and documented
  - in the web-based 3-dimensional visualisation and documentation system
  - in personal certificates either printed or as PDF.
- Accreditation: projects and learning activities may be accredited with the European LEVEL5 label after an external evaluation carried out by an accredited REVEAL evaluator.
- Possibility to evidencing the impact and learning progress of non-formal and informal learning activities and projects
- Possible integration of results in QM systems in HRM.

Examples of previous LEVEL5 applications in EU projects

The LEVEL5 assessment system has been applied to several different contexts and target groups
in more than 60 European projects in the past ten years. Here a few examples:

- Educckate - Education Cultural & Creative Knowledge Alliance for Tomorrow's Entrepreneurs (www.educckate.eu). The project aims to develop an innovative training and mentored internship scheme for the support of Higher Education Institutions and businesses, the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindset of students and graduates and the promotion of entrepreneurship. EDUCCKATE provides the students and graduates of Cultural and Creative majors with access to businesses in the sector as well as opportunities to develop business projects & discover new professional routes.
- VITA - (www.vita-eu.org). VITA utilise a unique and innovative validation system (LEVEL5) for personal, social and organisational competences (SPOC) to provide evidence of human potentials for learners, educational professionals and employers. This relates for instance to customer orientation, team work, cooperation, intercultural communication, flexibility but also entrepreneurial skills and planning competences.
- VILMA - Validation of Informal Learning in Mobility Actions (www.vilma-eu.org). The aim of the 24 months VILMA project is to assess and evidence the development of competences by participating in transnational mobility actions.
- RIVER - Recognition of intergenerational Volunteering Experiences and Results (www.river-project.eu). The project aims to develop reliable and convincing methodologies for the assessment and validation of the impact and outcomes of senior volunteering.
- SuperMAN - Supermarkets meet accessibility needs (www.supermanproject.eu). In order to foster the concept of accessibility, within the framework of the SuperMAN project, the staff of some Italian and German supermarkets took part in a formative training which allowed them to offer an adequate welcome, support and assistance to people with mental disabilities.

VALMOPRIS project - Implementation Context Questionnaires: comparative analysis

Introduction

This report is a comparative analysis focusing on the implementation process. Using quantitative and qualitative analysis, the aim was to measure perceptions relating to the implementation of the VALMOPRIS project in five countries: Scotland, Romania, France, Latvia and Netherlands.

According to project goals and the theoretical framework, a descriptive research with a qualitative and quantitative research method was adopted. The research subjects are prisoners detained in prisons and detention centres from Scotland, Romania, France, and Latvia; and those within criminal justice settings in the Netherlands. The research also encompasses staff and stakeholders working with these prisoners.

The objectives of this research are:

1. To determine the perceived purpose of the non/informal learning activity from each respondent's perspective.

2. To assess the extent to which the non/informal learning activity, as piloted in prison, meets expectations (from teachers/stakeholders and prisoners' perspectives).

3. To identify key success factors relating to the implementation of non/informal learning activities in prison settings.

4. To identify perceived barriers and/or other factors that might have a negative impact in similar initiatives in the future.

Research Design

Data collection was carried out using structured questionnaires administered to the prisoners, implementing practitioners, and stakeholders. The questionnaire is articulated in four sections, resembling the research objectives shown before.

Variable coding used four different procedures according to the different type of questions asked:

- Questions collecting numeric information were simply transformed into continuous variables;
- Close-ended questions with one answer allowed were coded into nominal or ordinal variables;
- Close-ended questions with more than one answer allowed were coded as multiple response sets; this procedure generated for each variable as many dummy variables as the number of answer choices, i.e. each answer became a dichotomous variable (1 = chosen; 0 = not chosen);
- Open-end questions were transformed into nominal variables after the content analysis of the respondents' answers.

Data analysis was performed in several steps:

- Firstly, preliminary data quality control procedures were applied, such as mean analysis.
- Secondly, univariate analysis (tables, graphics) was performed to give a general overview of trends.

- o Univariate statistics are useful, but they give only a partial view of research objects, especially when analysing multiple-item questions. Therefore, in order to synthesise the items in a single variable, for some sets of questions an index was created combining respondents' answers with different techniques to give a final score.
- Thirdly, a Statistical Significance (T-Test), was performed in order to indicate whether or not the difference between the two groups' (prisoners and staff) averages most likely reflects a 'real' change in the population. Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS software.

Sample

The questionnaire was administered to:
- the prisoners detained in prisons and detention centres from Scotland, Romania, France and Latvia; and those within criminal justice settings in the Netherlands.
- the prison staff working with these prisoners and stakeholders (prison director, head of prison departments: educative department, social department, surveillance department, school).

The first layer of the research sample is made up of 59 prisoners, the majority of them coming from Scotland (18 prisoners, 30.5%) and Latvia (17 prisoners, 28.8%).

Tab. 1 – Distribution of the prisoners by Country.

	Total	*%*
Scotland	18	30.5
Romania	5	8.4
France	12	20.3
Latvia	17	28.8
Netherlands	7	11.8
Total	59	100.0

The second layer of the research sample is made up of 14 prison staff members, the majority of them coming from Scotland (5 staff, 35.7%) and Romania (5 staff, 35.7%)

Tab. 2 – Distribution of the staff by Country.

	Total	*%*
Scotland	5	35.7
Romania	5	35.7
France	3	21.4
Latvia	0	0
Netherlands	1	7.1
Total	14	100.0

The perceived purpose of the non/informal learning activity from each respondent's perspective.

The perceived purpose of the VALMOPRIS project from teachers' perspective is reflected in Table 3. At the entire sample level, the perceived purpose is considered as "skills development" (37.5) and "validation and assessment of Level 5" (29.1).

The differences among the detention centres/prisons are significant: validation and assessment of LEVEL5 is the most significant for Scotland (80.0), skills development is the most significant for Romania (36.3), France (50.0) and Netherlands (50.0)

Tab.3. The perceived purpose of the non/informal learning activity for teachers.
Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Total	*Country of prison*			
		Scotland	*Romania*	*France*	*Netherlands*
Learning to learn	8.3	0	18.1	0	0
Validation and assessment of LEVEL5	**29.1**	80.0	27.2	0	0
Skills development	**37.5**	20.0	36.3	50.0	50.0
Communication	4.1	0	9.0	0	0
Prisoners' personal development	8.3	0	9.0	16.6	0
New knowledge	8.3	0	0	33.3	50.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

The perceived purpose of the VALMOPRIS project from learners' perspective is reflected in Table 4. At the entire sample level, the perceived purpose is considered as: "skills development" (30.7), "personal development" (17.3) and as developing "learning to learn competences" (15.3)

The differences among the detention centres/prisons are significant: "skills development" is the most significant for Scotland (27.2), Netherlands (37.5) and for Latvia (46.6), "learning" is the most significant for Romania (40.0), developing "learning to learn" competence is the most significant for France (35.7)

Tab.4. The perceived purpose of the non/informal learning activity for learners.
Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Total	*Country of prison*				
		Scotland	*Romania*	*France*	*Latvia*	*Netherlands*
Personal development (self-confidence, emotions awareness, self-reflection)	**17.3**	9.0	20.0	14.2	26.6	12.5
Skills development (social, life, literacy, job, team working skills)	**30.7**	27.2	20.0	14.2	46.6	37.5
Learning	13.4	18.8	40.0	14.2	6.6	0
Communication	11.5	9.0	20.0	7.1	6.6	25
Learning to learn	**15.3**	9.0	0	35.7	6.6	1.9

	Total	Country of prison				
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Personal development (self-confidence, emotions awareness, self-reflection)	**17.3**	9.0	20.0	14.2	26.6	12.5
Skills development (social, life, literacy, job, team working skills)	**30.7**	27.2	20.0	14.2	46.6	37.5
New methodologies	1.9	0	0	7.1	0	0
Creative activities	3.8	0	0	0	6.6	12.5
New knowledges	3.8	18.8	0	0	0	0
See other perspective	1.9	9.0	0	0	0	12.5
I don't know	1.9	0	0	7.1	0	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

We can conclude that both layers expressed an accurate perception regarding the main purpose/aim of the VALMOPRIS project":

(i)   for the staff involved in the project the main aim is represented by "skills development" and "validation and assessment of LEVEL5".

(ii)   for the prisoners' involved in the project the main aim is represented by "skills development", "personal development" and as an opportunity to develop "learning to learn competences"

Expectations' assessment with regards to VALMOPRIS project

The personal benefits of the VALMOPRIS project's implementation perceived by prisoners and prison staff

The perceived benefits for teachers involved in VALMOPRIS Project are indicated in Table 5, reflecting that the most relevant benefit, reported within the entire sample is "gaining validation tools" (35.7). The highest percent has been recorded for Scotland and France (50.0) and Romania (28.5). Nevertheless, "personal and professional development" (14.2) are significant for French (50.0) Romanian staff (28.5), as well.

Tab.5. Teachers' perception level of personal benefits related with the implementation process **Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.**

	Total	Country of prison			
		Scotland	Romania	France	Netherlands
Personal and professional development	21.4	0	28.5	50.0	0
Certification	14.2	25.0	14.2	0	0
Gaining Validation tools	**35.7**	50.0	28.5	50.0	**0**
Professional networking	7.1	0	14.2	0	0
Skills development	7.1	0	14.2	0	0
Students' development	14.2	25.0	0	0	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 6 shows the personal benefits for prisoners, which are: "personal development (including: emotional balance, self-confidence, self-exposure, self-assessment" (44.8) and "skills development" (28.5). There are no significant differences reported by country of detention; "personal development" being considered as the most relevant benefit by each participating institution. We can assume that personal development has been indirectly targeted as the main objective of each Learning Project piloted during the project implementation, therefore it has been perceived by the participating prisoners as the most relevant benefit.

Tab.6. Learners' perception level of personal benefits related with the implementation process. **Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.**

	Total	Country of prison				
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Personal development (emotional balance, self-confidence, self-exposure, self-assessment)	**44.8**	50	60.0	42.8	30.7	50.0
Positive thinking	6.1	0	0	14.2	15.3	0
Listening to others/patience	4.0	0	0	28.5	0	0
Skills development	**28.5**	25	40.0	14.2	30.7	25.0
Useful information	10.2	12.5	0	0	23.0	12.5
Skills certification	2.0	0	0	0	0	0
Learning to learn	4.0	12.5	0	0	0	12.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Level of satisfaction regarding VALMOPRIS project implementation, perceived by prisoners and participating staff

Staff training activity delivered in Netherlands has been evaluated taking into account four criteria: content, novelty, utility of the information received, and the methods used for presentation. Only prison staff from Scotland and Romania answered to this item, due to the fact that respondents selected from France and Netherlands were not involved in staff training (C1 activity). For both countries (Scotland and Romania) the most relevant has been "the content" of the training programme (3.8 out of 5 maximum), but also the other criteria were considered as highly relevant

Tab.7. Teachers' satisfaction level related with staff training activity (C1). **Distribution by Country of Prison. Column average**

	Mean (5 maximum)	Country of prison	
		Scotland	Romania
The content	**3.8**	3.7	4
The novelty of the information received	3.7	3.7	3.8
The utility of the information received	3.7	3.7	3.8
The methods used for presentations	3.4	3	3.8

Teachers' satisfaction level, reflected in Table 8 can be considered as significant: 64. 0 are satisfied and 21.4 reported a total satisfaction level.

Tab.8. Teachers' satisfaction level regarding expectations for the VALMOPRIS project implementation.

Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Total	*Country of prison*			
		Scotland	*Romania*	*France*	*Netherlands*
Not-satisfied	0	0	0	0	0
Satisfied	**64.0**	40.0	100.	66.6	0
Totally satisfied	21.4	40.0	0	0	100.0
No answer	14.2	20.0	0	33.3	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Learners' satisfaction level, reflected in Table 9 is considered as significant, with 59.3 satisfaction level and 18.6 totally satisfaction level. 18.6% percent of the entire sample did not answer this item.

Tab.9. Learners' satisfaction level regarding expectations during the VALMOPRIS project implementation.

Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.

	Medium percentage	*Country of prison*				
		Scotland	*Romania*	*France*	*Latvia*	*Netherlands*
Not-satisfied	3.3	0	20.0	8.3	0	0
Satisfied	**59.3**	77.7	80.0	8.3	82.3	28.5
Totally satisfied	18.6	28.5	0	16.6	17.6	28.5
No answer	18.6	0	0	66.6	0	42.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Competences developed during VALMOPRIS project's implementation

During the VALMOPRIS Project's implementation, staff trained in LEVEL5 approach delivered informal learning activities to prison learners in order to achieve enhanced ability to learn (development of KC5), and enhanced motivation to learn (through validation and recognition of informal learning more generally).

Modular competence-oriented learning approaches (COL) were set up in the prison setting, based largely on the results of the large-scale survey as part of Intellectual Output 1, which identified an extensive range of possible competence-oriented informal learning activities and helped inform the creation of 'learning projects' (such as sport, forum theatre etc.).

In Table 10 the competences that were developed during the learning projects' implementation are identified, reflecting the learners' point of view. Regarding the entire sample, "assertive communication" (21.4) and "team working skills" (20.6) are the most representative.

Regarding the countries, the results are different due to the fact that each learning project implemented focused on two competences:

1. Learning to learn competence (or a sub-competence of it) for all the learning projects
2. A second competence (different for each learning project). The second competence is responsible for differing results between countries.

For Scotland, the most representative competences are: "assertive communication (21.6) and "learning to learn" (16.2), for Romania: "tolerance" (29.4) and "assertive communication" (29.4), for France: "team working" (57.1) and "tolerance" (28.5), for Latvia: "assertive communication" (21.4) and "problem solving" (21.4) and for Netherlands "team working" (27.2) and "creativity" (21.4).

Tab.10. Learners' competences developed during the VALMOPRIS project implementation. **Distribution by Country of Prison. Column percentages.**

	Total	Country of prison				
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Tolerance	10.4	0	29.4	28.5	7.1	9.0
Assertive communication	**21.4**	21.6	29.4	14.2	21.4	18.1
Team working skills (collaborative working)	**20.6**	10.8	17.6	57.1	16.6	27.2
Positive thinking	1.6	0	11.7	0	0	0
Self-management (self-evaluation, self-confidence. Self-reflection)	12.3	13.5	11.7	0	14.2	18.1
Problem solving	12.3	13.5	0	0	21.4	9.0
Critical thinking	6.6	8.1	0	0	11.9	0
Learning skills (learning to learn)	7.4	16.2	0	0	7.1	0
Creativity	3,3	5.4	0	0	0	21.4
IT skills	3.3	10.8	0	0	0	0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A significant result is presented in Table 11, reflecting the learners' beliefs in their capacity to use the competences achieved during the learning projects' implementation after release. The average response from the prisoners' sample is 6.6 (maximum = 10); the highest average is identified for Latvia's prisoners (7.9) and the lowest average for French prisoners (4.2)

Tab.11. Learners 'perception regarding their ability to use the competences developed after release. **Distribution by Country of Prison. Average.**

	Mean (10 maximum)	Country of prison				
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Overall satisfaction	6.6	6.8	6.6	4.2	7.9	7.7

The key success factors relating to the implementation of non/informal learning activities in prison settings and the level of satisfaction.

Table 12 indicates the level of overall satisfaction regarding the VALMOPRIS project's implementation from teachers' perspective. The average response from the teachers' sample is 7.5 (maximum = 10); the highest is identified for Romanian's teachers (9.2) and the lowest, for French teachers (5.0)

Tab.12. Teachers' overall satisfaction level regarding VALMOPRIS project implementation. **Distribution by Country of Prison. Average.**

	Mean (maximum = 10)	Country of prison			
		Scotland	Romania	France	Netherlands
Overall satisfaction	7.5	8	9.2	5	8

Table 13 indicates the level of overall satisfaction regarding the VALMOPRIS project's implementation from students' perspective. The average for the students' sample is 7.1 (Maximum = 10); the highest is identified for Latvia's learners (8.2) and the lowest, for French learners (5.0)

Tab.13. Learners' overall satisfaction level regarding VALMOPRIS project implementation. **Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.**

	Mean (maximum = 10)		Country of prison			
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Overall satisfaction	7.1	8.1	7	5	8.2	7.5

The effectiveness of the pilot activities from the teachers' perspective is reflected in Table 14. "The design of the activities (according with the competences chosen)" scored with an average of 8.3 (at the entire teachers' sample). The "effectiveness of the learning materials" scored with 7.5 and the "learning to learn" competence with 7.2.

Tab.14. Teachers' perceived effectiveness regarding VALMOPRIS non/informal learning activities implemented.
Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Mean (maximum = 10)	Country of prison			
		Scotland	Romania	France	Netherlands
Competence 1 (learning to learn)	7.2	7.2	9.2	4.6	8
Competence 2 (varies by project)	6.8	7.8	9.4	4.3	6
Design of the activities (according with the competences chosen)	8.3	7.8	9.4	8.3	8
The effectiveness of the learning materials	7.5	8.2	9.2	5.6	7
The training environment	6.9	8	8.8	6	5

	Mean (maximum = 10)	Country of prison			
		Scotland	Romania	France	Netherlands
Competence 1 (learning to learn)	7.2	7.2	9.2	4.6	8
Competence 2 (varies by project)	6.8	7.8	9.4	4.3	6
The support offered by learners and prison staff	7.2	7.8	9.4	3.6	8

The effectiveness of the pilot activities from learners' perspective is reflected in Table 15. The "learning to learn" competence is scored with the highest average – 7.9. The lowest averages for each criterion are identified in French learners' responses.

Tab.15. Learners' perceived effectiveness regarding VALMOPRIS non/informal learning activities implemented.
Distribution by Country of Prison. Mean.

	Mean (maximum = 10)	Country of prison				
		Scotland	Romania	France	Latvia	Netherlands
Competence 1 (learning to learn)	**7.9**	7.4	6.8	4	7.7	7.4
Competence 2 (different for each learning project)	6.7	7.8	6.6	4.8	7.5	6.8
Design of the activities according with the competences chosen	7.2	7.7	7.8	5	8.1	7.5
The effectiveness of the learning materials	7.1	7.8	7.6	5	8.4	7
The training environment (class room etc.)	7.1	8.6	7.6	5.2	7.1	7
The support offered by learners and prison staff	7.6	9.4	7.8	5.1	8.1	8

Perceived barriers and/or other factors that might have a negative impact on similar initiatives in the future.

Table 16 reflects the main barriers regarding the VALMOPRIS project's implementation identified by prison staff and stakeholders from Scotland, Romania and France. The main barriers identified relate to the limited time of the implementation process (having effects on the time allocated for preparation and delivering) and Internet access.

Tab.16. Teachers' perceived barriers regarding VALMOPRIS implementation. **Distribution by Country of Prison.**

Country of prison		
Scotland	*Romania*	*France*
- LEVEL5 introduced too late on in the training - Not enough time to redesign activities utilising competences/ dimensions - Insufficient introduction to Learn to Learn as a competence/ sub-competence - The paper workflow required to deliver the research aspect it has not been introduced - Insufficient information about the VALMOPRIS aims and objectives to students, so they can understand the value of their participation - Not enough time allocated to teachers to prepare the activities and familiarise with LEVEL5 and related-research workload	- Activities organised inside the institution - No/difficult internet access - Not very clear selection of the learners	- Not enough work on the informal competencies

Table 17 indicates the main barriers from prisoners' perspective, such as: prison restrictions, limited or no access to the internet and/or ICT tools, limited project's duration, activities organised inside the institution.

Tab.17. Learners' perceived barriers regarding VALMOPRIS implementation. **Distribution by Country of Prison.**

Country of prison				
Scotland	*Romania*	*France*	*Latvia*	*Netherlands*
- Prison restrictions - Not enough sessions	- Activities organised inside - No Internet access	- Not enough time for the activities - Limited project duration - Activities organised inside the school	- Limited access to Internet and ICT tools - Many other activities	- The group of prisoners themselves

Conclusions

The feedback received after the VALMOPRIS project's implementation, emphasises the importance of developing the learning to learn competence, the validation process of non/in-formal learning in prisons and the satisfaction experienced by staff and learners. We underline as conclusions of the Implementation Report:

- for the staff involved in the project the main aim is represented by "skills development" and "validation and assessment of LEVEL5", while for the prisoners' involved in the project the main aim is represented by "skills development", "personal development" and developing the "learning to learn competence".

- the most relevant benefit for teachers involved in VALMOPRIS Project are the benefit of gaining "validation tools".

- The level of overall satisfaction regarding the VALMOPRIS Project's implementation is high for teachers and for learners as well

- The competences developed during the learning projects, considered as the most significant are: "assertive communication" and "team working skills". "Learning to learn" is also considered as significant (especially in Scotland's prisons).

- A significant result reflects the learners' beliefs in their capacity to use the competences achieved during the learning projects' implementation, after release.

The effectiveness of the activities piloted through learning indicates the "learning to learn" competence is most important.

V   Recommendations: Impact of VINFL in prisons

Introduction

In order to conclude this report, we must make reference to the question 'What next?'. What are the next steps in validation of non-formal and informal learning (VINLF) in prisons and criminal justice settings across Europe?

What follows is a list of key recommendations that have emerged from our findings.

In order to identify sustainable opportunities for the implementation of VINFL in prison settings, these recommendations aim to clearly identify the potential benefits to stakeholders whilst taking account of practical obstacles.

We hope that these can be taken forward by policy-makers, organisations, institutions, and future research studies.

Ensuring effective competence-oriented prison education

Whilst there are many examples of promising practices in our research, there remains key challenges within prison education. To summarise:

- o Not all prisons offer all forms of learning – formal, non-formal and informal – and provision is subject to regional, national and international variety
- o Not all prisoners are entitled to the same level of education: special sentence conditions, health concerns, remand prisoners and gender can all limit access to education
- o Overcrowding remains a problem, with an average occupancy rate of 105% across the EU-27
- o Prisoners represent a significantly diverse group in terms of nationality, cultural backgrounds, age, educational level, health issues, skills and sentence length
- o Education is still not at the centre of sentence planning, and it is still often seen as the preserve of an education department, rather than enjoying a whole prison approach
- o Digital exclusion is still a widespread problem across Europe.

- o If we can respond to these ongoing challenges, we are more likely to counteract the negative and alienating impacts of imprisonment. With equality of opportunity and cultural democracy in mind – we need to advocate for full access to educational opportunity, equal to that outwith the walls of the prison.

- o We need to advocate for educational provision to be at the centre of sentence planning; education that is contextualised based on local, national and – most importantly – individual need, in order to ensure its effectiveness for learners.

- o It is important to involve the learner in this process. Supporting the individual learner should involve a degree of self-direction, which helps to promote autonomy and individual

responsibility – ultimately increasing the learner's capacity in 'learning to learn', allowing prisoners themselves to function as creators and constructors of learning.

- o Furthermore, non-traditional and innovative methodologies are required in teaching and learning in order to attract more prisoners into learning – particularly in a population where negative perceptions of education are relatively widespread. It is not by organisation that our pilot learning activities are largely centred around group activities and utilise peer reflection, but it is not surprising. These types of approach are commonplace within non-formal and informal learning and can be effective in increasing and sustaining engagement in learning. We would also recommend that collaborative learning can also be a powerful tool to strengthen associational life and provide a valuable opportunity to develop reflective, team-working and communicative competences.

- o In our research in prisons, the range of competences perceived as most important for prison learners do not align with the 'traditional' competences within the European Framework; they are, in fact, much more in line with those competences perceived as transversal – such as learning to learn; and social and civic competences. Our research highlights that competences such as problem solving, autonomy, team-working, critical-thinking, creativity, self-reflection, and learning to learn are of vital importance to prison learners. Therefore, we would also recommend that there is scope for increasing the range of competences which can be assessed and measured through validation processes.

- o We recommend that the focus on education, learning and competence-development should move towards a 'whole prison' approach. Officers, teachers, vocational trainers, psychologists, probation workers, librarians, volunteers and visiting workers, chaplains, health care professionals can all play an equally important role in competence development and its recognition. If a 'learning system' could be adopted that spanned all areas of the prison; then the 'distance-travelled' across the whole of a prisoner's sentence could be recorded. This 'joined-up' approach is much more likely to 'capture' progress and be of value to prisoners and external stakeholders.

- o Ultimately, our research and evidence shows that prison education, non-formal and informal learning in particular, brings substantial benefits to prisoners. Investment in this provision should be considered as a major social investment. Subsequent desistance, even though not always immediate, could have a lasting positive effect within wider society.

Agreed standards for validation

The core element of the VALMOPRIS project is to facilitate the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning through the design and delivery of educational activities in prisons across Europe. We adopted the LEVEL5 system of validation (developed by the REVEAL network with European funding) in order to assess the informal competences developed as a result of these learning activities.

The partnership agreed that it was not only our responsibility to measure the potential benefits of informally-developed competence validation, but also to consider where the challenges and potential barriers might be if validation processes were to be adopted in prisons.

o Our research finds that non-formal and informal learning can provide a valuable path into formal education and training, through increased motivation and competence. However, progression to formal education should not be the only goal. One of our most fundamental challenges is to improve the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the demonstrable benefits that it can have on skills and competence development.

o We have a responsibility to validate the competences developed as a result of engagement with non-formal and informal learning in order to demonstrate tangible outcomes. If we cannot, then we reduce the perceived value of these forms of learning; we effectively subordinate them to formal learning, given its ability to demonstrate learning outcomes.

o The partnership recommends that our research is a positive first-step towards the implementation of VINFL within prisons. Going forward, policy-makers and service providers must work together towards an open validation process for informal and non-formal competence development, which is recognised, understood, trusted, and valued by all stakeholders, at least at a national level. Ideally, this learning could be mapped against national qualifications frameworks, and latterly the European Qualification Framework. This would require the input and sustained efforts of policy makers and representatives from all sectors involved in prison education and learning.

o In the development of a consistent approach to validation, the partnership recommends that the following criteria need to be considered:
  o **The purpose of the validation process:** to help support competence development and the setting of learning goals, to make learners aware of distance-travelled, to chart activity and learning across the learner's interaction with the justice system, to help ease prisoner progression pathways, to encourage desistance;
  o **The breadth of competences to be assessed:** what competences are particularly relevant to prison learners in supporting their effective rehabilitation and ultimate desistance from crime;
  o **The depth of learning required:** sufficient infrastructural and human resources are required to ensure the effective management of competence-development and validation through engagement in non-formal and informal learning;
  o **How to manage time and resource restrictions**: Although universally responding to the benefits of the validation approach – for learners' confidence, competence level, engagement and motivation – our piloting practitioners noted the challenges they faced when adapting competence frameworks to tasks. A flexible and straightforward system is an important step in terms of relevance to learners. A framework which requires only simple adaptation would be necessary for widespread professional engagement in the validation of competences through non-formal and informal learning. A system of validation and certification over-burdened by heavy amounts of paperwork would also be self-penalising and inhibit engagement.

Investment in continuing professional development

This project has underscored the desire and commitment of professionals working in direct contact with imprisoned persons of all ages[13] to widening access and participation in educational opportunities. In particular, our research shows that those professionals value learning activities which are designed to inspire and motivate, and offer new pathways to learning. However, most of

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13 Including those recently released, young offenders, those in danger of entering the criminal justice system, those with addiction issues….

those professionals admitted that not having the tools and methodology to assess and validate this learning, limited their interaction with competence-development planning.

- o In addition to unified national approaches to validation, the partnership calls for further investment in VINFL training opportunities for staff working in prisons and in criminal justice settings. This training should not only include appropriate and recognised validation methodologies but also appropriate teaching methods to promote non-formal and informal learning and embed systematic links between these and formal learning. The professionalisation of staff in validation methodologies is vital, not only for the confidence and competence of those staff involved, but also to ensure rigour and consistency, regardless of where said validation takes place.

- o Training in validation should encourage 'assessors' to consider what makes an assessment judgement sound, as well as how to verify competence-development with respect to particular and accepted standards.

- o The assessment process must be of high quality:

  - o It should allow for flexible approaches to assessment, allowing practitioners to personalise the learning and validation processes to their own setting.
  - o Competence frameworks must be flexible enough to apply to a wide range of prison learning settings.
  - o In non-formal and informal learning there can be little constructive benefit to setting a fixed duration for learning activities or the validation process. In fact, it is the flexibility of approach which is vital to learners and practitioners alike. The partnership and prison-based professionals involved in the piloting agree that what really counts is building in sufficient time and activities to ensure that knowledge, skills or competences can be acquired.