

## O1/A2 Methodology Paper

- **Research Methodology**
  - **Needs Analysis**
    - Partners' Prison Systems
    - Desk Research
  - **Field Research**
    - Survey: informal learning in prison
    - Development of pilot activities
  - **Implementation Process**
    - Implementation Process Questionnaires
    - Socio-ecological study
    - LEVEL5 Evaluation

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## Intellectual Output 1

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

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

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

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

### 1. Reporting on Methodology

A research methodology paper was drafted and edited in March, 2016. This is a working which will potentially require further development as a result of ethical considerations raised in partner countries (**see reporting appendix IO1/A2**).

The methodology covers three key areas of the project: **needs analysis, field research, and assessment of the implementation process**.

#### a. Needs analysis

This methodology incorporates the state of the art (**O1/A1**) which will include a synthesis of the results from two phases:

- a **qualitative questionnaire** focusing on prison systems within the partner countries;
- a **desk research paper** written by each partner country.

##### Phase one: Qualitative Questionnaire – partners' prison systems

In order to gather up-to-date information regarding the prison systems in each of the five delivery-based partner countries, a qualitative research template will be created by the lead partner for reflection, research and completion by those partners. It should prove an effective and interesting precursor to the desk-based research findings and recommendations, providing necessary organisational and contextual information.

That survey will collect information on a description of the prison system in the partner country (global prisoner number, states and trends) and the arrangements for prison education in the partner country (accessibility of education, opportunities, class size, resources, challenges) (**see reporting appendix IO1/A1**).

## Phase two: Desk Research

An incisive summary of recent study and policy recommendations within the respective partner countries surrounding the delivery of non-formal and informal learning, as well as its validation of informally gained competences. Finally, we will seek to gain information about any currently existing practices or policy which would support the application of VINFL processes within prison. This information is intended to allow for the drawing of comparisons, and to provide insights into areas of good practice and working alternatives to current practice.

This might include content arising from professional discussions, just as readily as it would conventional desk based research. Existing reports and studies of informal and non-formal learning will be consulted in the research and should be reported for documentation. Interviews and conversations will take place with Ministries and National Prison services as well as professionals working within relevant fields and reporting will be reported qualitatively.

The design is to facilitate an opportunity to review current policy and theory surrounding informal learning and its validation as well as the views of practitioners and professionals working within the field. The purpose of this research will be to summarise the current state of the art in informal learning and validation, with a particular interest in prison contexts.

This information will be gathered by each partner country in the form of a mapping document designed to allow for national variances and qualitative responses driven by desk-research.

Information will be collated, analysed, compared and edited where possible and will constitute an effective 'state of the art', although differences in policy priority necessarily leads to some variation within the national reporting. The data provided relating to non-formal and informal learning will not and cannot claim to be complete or empirically-grounded research but instead to represent and reflect the research and estimations of experts working within prison and offender learning contexts.

\* At the time of reporting, initial research has been carried out and a working version of the documents pertaining to needs analysis have been drafted and are available for viewing (see reporting appendix IO1/A2). This is organised into various sections, each including content on the 'state of the art' within each partner country.

## b. Field Research

The methodology for this section will focus on the design and development of non-formal learning initiatives in prison.

The field research will be conducted in two distinct phases:

**Phase one: analysis of the potential for non-formal and informal learning and its validation in prison settings**

This will contain the findings of a mixed-methodology survey distributed to professionals working within, and associated with, prison learning (**see reporting appendix IO1/A2**). This survey was distributed early in the project in order to pre-test intuitions arising from early discussion in order to best include content and implement processes within all intellectual outputs which would ultimately support the design, delivery and evaluation of non-formal and informal educational activities in prison settings.

Furthermore, the survey will seek to help us better understand *the need* and potential of implementing and supporting VINFL processes within European prisons.

\* At the time of reporting, initial research has been carried out. The survey results as well as a working summary document are available for viewing (**see reporting appendix IO1/A2**).

### Phase two: development of pilot learning activities in partners' countries/institutions

The Learning Pilots were developed early in the project to provide a clear indicator of the kinds of learning activities that take place within prison environments and to complement theoretical findings, policy documents and qualitative field research.

The template for these learning activities (COL Implementation contexts) were developed according with a structure agreed within the partnership at the first steering group meeting (**see reporting appendix IO1/A2**):

- General information about the learning project: trainer name, activity name, location of the activity, activity start date, duration of the activity, total learning hours, number of learners, target learners, profile of learners
- Brief summary of the activity
- Aim of the learning
- Proposed learning Outcomes
- Target Competence(s)
- Means of validation
- Effectiveness assessment of the learning activity

\* At the time of reporting, pilot activities have been designed and will be finalised during the training phase in C1. Working versions of the pilot activities (COL Implementation contexts) are available for viewing (**see reporting appendix IO1/A2**).

### c. Assessment of the Implementation Process

The purpose of this research will be to:

- Help reduce the individual risk factors that inhibit engagement in learning opportunities
- Garner peer-related and teacher-learner messages in order to clarify the importance and impact of VINFL in prison settings

- Ascertaining organisational/institutional policy that could support the development of a framework for VINFL in prison
- Work out ways of working with other institutions, in order to promote VINFL and to involve the community in developing VINFL in and after prison settings
- Support the development of a national strategy in order to promote VINFL in prison

The research will take place in three phases:

**Phase one: Pilot (COL Implementation Contexts) Implementation Process Questionnaires – conducted with teachers, stakeholders and prisoners**

Starting from October 2016 (C1 in Rotterdam), there will be 30 pilot activities ready to be rolled out across the five partner countries operating in prisons. These will be carried out by three teachers in each country each undertaking two pilot activities (6 pilots per country). These pilot activities should include three learners each (totalling 18 prison learners per country, 90 in total).

A questionnaire will be drafted early September 2016, prior to C1, and will be distributed to partners for ethical consideration. The documents will be finalised at M3 and discussed at the training with participants. (see reporting appendix IO1/A2). This element of the research will be implemented after the pilot activities in order to allow for reflection on the implementation of the learning activity, the validation process and personal competence development.

An interview will be conducted after the pilot activities' implementation process which will involve in each activity, three respondents:

1. The prisoner
2. The teacher/facilitator
3. A stakeholder: personal officer, education officer, education manager, throughcare officer

In each case, the Interview will be focused on 4 objectives:

1. Ascertaining the perceived purpose of informal learning in prison from respondents' perspective.
2. Assess the extent to which the pilot informal learning activity met expectations
3. Identify key success factors for issues relating to the implementation of informal learning activities in prison settings.
4. Identify perceived barriers and/or other factors that might have negative effects in similar initiatives in the future.

The methods of analysis used for data will be quantitative and qualitative, using non-parametric statistical methods.

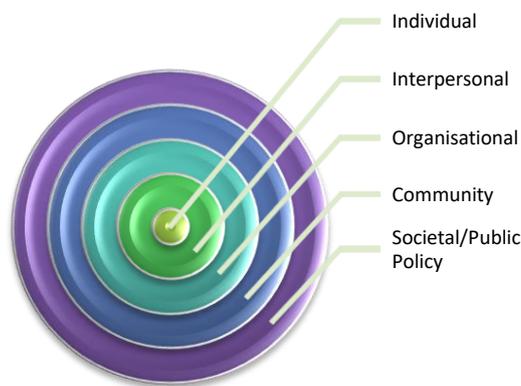
Descriptive indicators (frequencies and diagrams in order to illustrate how many participants answered in a certain way to a certain topic) will be deployed as well as qualitative explanations of the quantitative data.

**Phase two: Socio-ecological Study**

A socio-ecological approach to a study of VINFL will emphasise that 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 interrelationships between individuals and their personal, social, physical and policy environment.

This model will give a visual depiction of the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors that relate to VINLF. This approach is more likely to sustain the implementation of VINFL in prison over time than any single intervention.

A questionnaire will be drafted early September 2016, prior to C1, and will be distributed to partners for ethical consideration. The documents will be finalised at M3 and discussed at the training with participants. (see reporting appendix IO1/A2). This element of the research will be implemented after the pilot activities in order to allow for the early focus to be on the learning activity and validation processes.



### ***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 affect attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. The partnership recognises that disclosure of this type of information can cause ethical concerns, therefore our study will focus only on those most relevant to the study of VINFL in prisons.

### ***Interpersonal Dimension***

The second level examines close relationships that may affect the individual's ability to learn - closest social circle-peers, teaching and prison staff and family members. All may influence their behaviour and contribute to their range of experience. The partnership recognises that emotional issues raised by such disclosure type can cause serious ethical concerns, therefore our study will focus only on those most relevant to the study of VINFL in prisons.

### ***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 arrangements in place governing education (the contractual arrangements governing delivery of 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.

## C. Phase three: Impact of Informal Learning and VINFL in prison (LEVEL5 Evaluation)

This element of the research methodology is designed to support the project to formally evaluate the change in learner motivation as a result of the informal learning validation. The LEVEL5 model adopted as the validation methodology will be used throughout the implementation process and we will develop an evaluation system in line with their model. This system will involve a 'before' and 'after' reflective process which can involve a mix of established assessment approaches, such as: self-assessment, peer-assessment and tutor-assessment, taking a range of forms.

The LEVEL5 approach systematically addresses the issue of "learning to learn" (as the developed competence) and "learner motivation" (as the human impact). The model is designed to assess, evidence and validate the cognitive, activity-related and affective competence development of learners in informal and non-formal learning contexts. Individual or group competences are evaluated in a process orientated way, visualised in a 3-dimensional cube model and fully documented in the LEVEL5/REVEAL software system.

The LEVEL5 evaluation procedure is, on the one hand, standardised but also enables, at the same time, grass-root projects to establish an individualised reference system for assessing and evidencing relevant competence in a process-orientated way. **The individualised process will be decided during C1 in October in conjunction with the development and finalisation of the learning activity. The evaluation procedure will be implemented alongside the pilot activities following the training (see reporting appendix IO1/A2 for case study to illustrate possible approaches).**

The LEVEL5 system allows users to evidence the impact of their work according to a standardised procedure whilst retaining the individuality of informal learning projects in their specific contexts. This system provides the methodology to measure, display and evidence these impacts and give a convincing picture of the learning gained as a result of the activity.