



ROAD TO FREEDOM



Comparative Report on Prison Education

Result 1

Section 1, Part 1 - Situational Analysis, Desk Research



Co-funded by
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Summary of the Project

Road to Freedom is a 24-month Erasmus+ EU project that includes 6 organizations from 6 European countries working on a support program for inmates and ex-inmates in and after incarceration in prisons through proven FROG leadership and life-mastery training and peer mentoring.

The partners of the Road the Freedom project are actively working in providing training and mentoring within prisons and want to expand these services with innovative training approaches, including the implementation of a proven method FROG leadership and life mastery program to empower inmates and ex-inmates and support inclusion and active participation in the community. It will help to teach and to implement methods to break the vicious cycle of criminality and multiple prison stays. The project's target groups are, firstly, convicts and ex-convicts and secondly, marginalized groups everywhere in the world as well as several stakeholders, such as trained peers.

The Project Results will include a methodological and situation analysis, video-success stories and documentaries, the FROG life-mastery and leadership training of trainers and pilot trainings for inmates and ex inmates for empowerment, as well as an open resource FREEDOM information and training platform with different methods, tools and peer networking.

The end result of the project that will be sustained after project finalization is a network of trained trainers, peers and professionals, and peers that have undertaken the FROG training and enjoyed peer support that will encourage them to volunteer and contribute to the peer network and peer support in the future.

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Executive summary

As the first step in the Road to Freedom project, this comparative research aims to have a close look at the prison systems of the five partner countries, namely Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland and Italy, analysing the general characteristics of their justice systems and providing an overview of related statistical data.

The first part of the research examines the general traits of each partner country's justice system, exploring policies, approaches to justice, and statistical data on the prison population in relation to each country's demographic data.

The second part of the research focuses on the education system within partner countries' prisons. Existing gaps are identified and limitations in access to education and training for prisoners are highlighted. At the same time, good practices to be enhanced within each country's prisons are explored. Particular attention is given to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in prison education, analysing how technologies can be used in innovative ways to enhance learning and facilitate the process of reintegration into society.

The main objective of this research is to provide a broad view of the challenges and opportunities present in the prison systems of partner countries. Through analysis of the general characteristics of the justice system and statistical data, as well as the effectiveness of the educational system in prisons, we have created a fundamental basis for the next phases of the project, which will culminate in courses using the F.R.O.G. methodology with young inmates and ex-inmates and the creation of a documentary that will tell the first-hand accounts of the educators and young people involved.

Desk research on justice systems and prison education in partner countries

Introduction

The first part of the Road to Freedom Situational Analysis examines the general context of the justice systems and prison education in the countries represented in the consortium of the Road To Freedom Project: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland and Italy. It is aimed at informing the construction of educational and training material for custodial settings for the rehabilitation of people in conflict with the law. It is based on a desk research conducted by the partners in each country and collected in this comparative report that highlights similarities and differences between the different contexts.

The first chapter focuses on the justice systems in each partner country: what are the general approaches and principles that guide them? What are the main figures of the detention systems? What are the demographics and backgrounds of people in custody?

The second chapter focuses on the prison education systems: What is the general approach to prison education? What policies and practices are in place? What are the main gaps? What examples of good practices are there?

The conclusions of this first part will be the starting point for the conduction of more in-depth research on the field involving relevant stakeholders, professionals and people in conflict with the law who will provide more direct insights on the current status of prison education and recommendations on how to improve it to respond to the needs of inmates and societies alike.

Chapter 1 - The general context - the justice systems in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland, Italy

In this first chapter, we will analyse the general context of the judicial systems in the project partner countries: Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland, and Italy. Initially, the research will focus on the types of judicial systems in the partner countries and the approaches used by the states to structure punishment and reintegration into society. Subsequently, demographic data on the prisons in the countries under study will be presented and compared.

1.1 Approaches to justice: punishment, rehabilitation and restorative justice in partner countries

In terms of general approach, the justice systems in partner countries are intended to facilitate re-education and rehabilitation. Being fundamentally democratic states with a long history of public participation of the civil society, the judicial systems can also be influenced by political seasons, ranging from periods in which prison-related issues are perceived as more pressing or in which there is a clearer intention towards decriminalization, to periods in which the approach becomes more punitive. Although these countries share similar approaches to detention, the reality can be very different among them due to political, social and cultural differences. For example, in some contexts, restorative justice and mediation are more systematic and better funded, while in others these interventions are fragmented and left to the initiative of third sector organizations.

The basic idea of the **Austrian** penal system is to reintegrate offenders into society. In Austria, many restorative justice programmes were developed as alternatives to criminal justice proceedings, “offering a different pathway to justice, open to victims’ participation and community engagement. Several post-sentencing programmes, sometimes prison-based, are also being implemented that can contribute to the effective rehabilitation of offenders. Community-based restorative justice approaches to prisoners’ re-entry (resettlement) are also proving to be effective

in facilitating the successful social reintegration of offenders and strengthening their ties with the community.”¹

In **Cyprus** there is only one correctional institution, the Prisons in Nicosia Prisons Department. The whole policy of the Prisons Department is based upon the following four principles: security, humanitarian treatment, education and rehabilitation. For this reason, the Prisons Department has as primary mission: The secure detention of prisoners who are referred to it by the courts; ensuring prison conditions which guarantee respect for human dignity; equal treatment of detainees without any discrimination due to race, color, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, political or other beliefs of prisoners; encouraging self-esteem and developing a sense of responsibility of prisoners by providing them educational opportunities, vocational training, creative recreation, reflection, self-criticism and self-awareness; guiding and assisting prisoners to a new start in life.²

In **Greece**, recently, restorative justice is promoted through various mediation programs at social level, especially in school settings and is further promoted in academic and research level. The development of restorative justice schemes in Greece is based on both law and practice, but meets a number of organizational, operational and financial obstacles that hinder the implementation and development of restorative practices.³ The current situation is positive, but both the need to develop a wider dialogue on restorative justice and its practices as well as the need for better coordination and operation of existing practices and measures are very significant. Regarding the general approach to justice in Greece, in recent decades, the national penal climate has reflected both authoritarian-punitive and liberal-rehabilitative international policies. In different periods, there is either an emphasis on penal austerity and security in prisons, with a sharp rise of the prison population and prison construction plans, or a focus on the control of the prison population, humane conditions, respect of prisoners’ rights, meaningful activities and expansion of the use of alternatives to custody.⁴

In **Iceland**, the Prison and Probation Administration (PPA) is the national correctional agency. It manages five prisons currently in the whole territory. Of these five, two are open prisons, the largest is the prison at Hólmsheiði, which has the ability to house 53 prisoners. The general approach, policy

¹ UNODC *Introductory Handbook on the Prevention of Recidivism and the Social Reintegration of Offenders*, New York: United Nations. (2018). Retrieved on: 09.10.2022 from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/crimeprevention/Introductory_Handbook_on_the_Prevention_of_Recidivism_and_the_Social_Reintegration_of_Offenders.pdf

² Cyprus Law: *Judicial System in Cyprus* (2019). Retrieved on: 10.10.2022 from: <https://www.cypruslaw.com/article/court-procedure-and-judicial-system-in-cyprus.html>

³ European Justice: *National Justice System. Greece*. (2022) Retrieved on: 10.10.2022 from: https://e-justice.europa.eu/content_judicial_systems_in_member_states-16-el-en.do?member=1

⁴ Specific Programme Criminal Justice European Commission. *National Report of Greece*. (2013). Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: http://3e-rj-model.web.auth.gr/files/national_reports/Greece.pdf

and purpose of all Icelandic prisons are rehabilitative and preventive. One of the main questions interested by recent Icelandic sociological research is whether the criminal policy adopted by authorities suggests a movement toward punitive or non-custodial measures: "As it turns out, the Icelandic prison system has undergone major changes to meet penal challenges. A new modern prison has recently been built close to Reykjavík to replace three smaller, older facilities that have been closed. This suggests a punitive turn. Yet at the same time, non-custodial sanctions have been increasingly introduced and implemented in lieu of sentences to closed security prisons. These non-custodial sanctions include electronic surveillance, additional community service work and an increased possibility to serve time in open prison units. It is contended here that a combination of practical budget concerns and rehabilitation sentiments lies behind this criminal policy development."⁵

In **Italy**, the Italian Constitution with Art. 27 c3 affirms the fundamental principles of humanity and rehabilitative function of punishment. The repression of crimes is implemented today with a "differentiated strategy" based on individualized treatment that presupposes scientific observation of the convicted person, considers their specific conditions and has as its ultimate goal their recovery. The normative reference framework also includes the so-called European Minimum Rules on Prison adopted in 1987 by the Council of Europe with the aim of "ensuring humane conditions of detention and positive treatment."⁶

In conclusion, despite a homogeneous general rehabilitative aim of the penal systems there are differences in how these principles are applied in practice depending on different social, political and demographic contexts.

1.2 Demographics of people in custody

In the following table, there's a comparison of demographic data of partner countries' justice systems. Because of the heterogeneity of contexts and data sources, this table cannot be considered exhaustive but is an important starting point to reflect upon some of the differences between countries.

⁵ Gunnlaugsson, Helgi in: Nordisk Tidsskrift for Kriminalvidenskab Nr 1- 2021. *Criminal Justice in a small Nordic country: The case of Iceland*. Retrieved on: 01.11.2022 from: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:VtDo5-3wQX0J:https://tidsskrift.dk/NTfK/article/download/125562/172239/264303&cd=13&hl=de&ct=clnk&gl=at>

⁶ Ministero della Giustizia. *Osservazione e trattamento*. (2022). Retrieved on: 08.10.2022 from: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_3_0_9.page

Country Population (in 2021) ⁷	People in Detention (in 2021)	Percentage of people in detention /population	Number of detention centres (year 2021)	Foreign prison population (in 2021)	Ratio of prison occupation (inmates per prison)	Gender (in 2021)	Age (in 2021)	Recidivism Rate (in 2021)
Austria 8.979.000 ±	8.789 people ⁸	0.09%	28	51% ⁹	195,3	Male: 93,37 % Female: 6,63 % Other: no data available ¹⁰	14-18: 1% 18-21: 4% 21-30: 26% 30-40: 33% 40-50: 20% 50-60: 12% 60-70: 4% 70-80: 1% ¹¹	+50% ¹²

⁷ The World Bank. IBRD. IDA (2022) *I dati sul numero di abitanti sono stati presi dal portale internet della banca mondiale*. Retrieved on: 11.10.2022 from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

⁸ Die Österreichische Justiz. *Verteilung des Insassinnen- bzw. Insassenstandes* (2022). Retrieved on: 09.09.2022 from: <https://www.justiz.gv.at/strafvollzug/statistik/verteilung-des-insassinnen-bzw-insassenstandes.2c94848542ec49810144457e2e6f3de9.de.html>

⁹ Die Österreichische Justiz. *Verteilung des Insassinnen- bzw. Insassenstandes* (2022). Retrieved on: 09.09.2022 from: <https://www.justiz.gv.at/strafvollzug/statistik/verteilung-des-insassinnen-bzw-insassenstandes.2c94848542ec49810144457e2e6f3de9.de.html>

¹⁰ Kinderrechte. (2000) *Number of juveniles in Austrian Prisons*. Retrieved on: 09.09.2022 from: <https://www.kinderrechte.gv.at/factbook-english/number-of-juveniles-in-austrian-prisons/>

¹¹ Die Österreichische Justiz. *Justizanstalten* (2022). Retrieved on: 10.09.2022 from: <https://www.justiz.gv.at/home/justiz/justizbehoerden/strafvollzug/justizanstalten.8ab4a8a422985de30122a92b4c1b6371.de.html>

¹² Hofinger/Peschak, (2018) *The New Austrian Reconviction Statistics*; Hofinger/Neumann, (2008) *Legal Biographies of NEUSTART Clients*. Retrieved on: 26.09.2022 from: https://www.uibk.ac.at/irks/publikationen/2020/pdf/legalbiografien_ii_endbericht.pdf

Cyprus 1.254.000 ±	930 people ¹³	0.07%	1	55% ¹⁴	930	Male: 85%	< 18: 2 people	N/A
						Female: 15%	18-29: 318 (43%)	
						Other: no data available ¹⁵	30-49: 321 (44%)	
							50-64: 12,8%	
							>65: 2,3% ¹⁶	
Greece 10.341.000 ±	11.131 people ¹⁷	0.1%	34	59.9% ¹⁸	327,3	Male: 95,3 %	Juveniles: 0,3 %	N/A
						Female: 4,3 %	Adults: 99,7 %	
						Other: no data available ¹⁹		
Iceland 347.900 ±	140 people ²⁰	0.04%	5	23.3% ²¹	28	Male: 94%	< 18: 0.0%	27%

¹³ Philenews (2022) Retrieved on: 09.10.2022 from: <https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/1545390/asfyxia-stis-kentrikes-fylakes-me-rekor-kratoymenon>

¹⁴ Philenews (2022) Retrieved on: 09.10.2022 from: <https://www.philenews.com/koinonia/eidiseis/article/1545390/asfyxia-stis-kentrikes-fylakes-me-rekor-kratoymenon>

¹⁵ Government of Cyprus. Retrieved on: 07.10.2022 from: <https://www.cystat.gov.cy/el/KeyFiguresList?s=44&p=0>

¹⁶ ibidem

¹⁷ Statista. Society, Crime & Law Enforcement. *Incarceration rate in Greece from 2008 to 2021 (per 100,000 inhabitants)*. Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1023995/incarceration-rate-in-greece/>

¹⁸ WPB *World Prison Brief Data. Europe. Greece* (2020). On 31st January 2020: 57,8%
Retrieved on: 10.10.2022 from: <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/greece>

¹⁹ EPSU. *Quality of Employment in Prisons. Country report: Greece prisons*. (2020). Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: <https://www.epsu.org/sites/default/files/article/files/Country%20report%20Greece%20prisons.pdf>

²⁰ Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (2022). Retrieved on 01.11.2022 from: <https://wp.unil.ch/space/space-i/prison-stock-on-1-january/prison-stock-on-1st-january-2022/>

²¹ Ciric, Jelena (2019) *Iceland Review. Iceland has highest proportion of female prisoners in Europe*. Retrieved on: 31.09.2022 from: <https://www.icelandreview.com/news/iceland-has-highest-proportion-of-female-prisoners-in-europe/>

						Female: 6.0% ²²	18-49: 78%	
						(31.1.20 21)	50-64: 20%	
						Other: no data available ²³	65+: 2.0% ²⁴	
Italy 58.851.0 00 ±	55.637 people ²⁵	0.09%	189	Foreign prison populati on: 33% ²⁶	294,3	Male: 95,8% - 53.306	< 18: 1295	62%
						Female: 4,1% - 2.331 ²⁷	18-29: 16,7%	
							30- 49: 55,3%	
							50- 64: 26,1%	
							>65: 1.8% ²⁸	

As shown by the data in the table, Cyprus and Iceland are the countries with the lowest ratio of incarcerated population to country population. However, while Iceland distributes its inmates across 5 detention centres, Cyprus concentrates its entire prison population in a single detention centre. Greece followed by Cyprus are the countries with the higher percentage of foreign prisoners, while Iceland has the lowest. Furthermore, Greece, Italy, and Cyprus all present a high ratio of inmates to the number of prisons. Austria has an average of 195.31 inmates per prison, while Iceland has only 28. Italy has the highest recidivism rate. Finally, it is appropriate to note that the prison population is predominantly male, and the most prevalent age group in prisons falls between 30 and 50 years of age.

²² Ciric, Jelena (2019) *Iceland Review. Iceland has highest proportion of female prisoners in Europe*. Retrieved on: 31.09.2022 from: <https://www.icelandreview.com/news/iceland-has-highest-proportion-of-female-prisoners-in-europe/>

²³ ibidem

²⁴ ibidem

²⁵ Ministero della Giustizia. (2022) *Detenuti presenti – aggiornamento al 31 agosto 2022*. Retrieved on: 16.11.2022 from: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?contentId=SST393945&previousPage

²⁶ Ibidem

²⁷ ibidem

²⁸ Minorenni e giovani adulti in carico ai servizi minorili analisi...(n.d.). Retrieved on: 16.11.2022 from: https://www.giustizia.it/cmsresources/cms/documents/Analisi_Servizi_minorili_30.06.2022dati_convalidati Rettificati.pdf

Chapter 2 - Prison Education in Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Iceland, Italy

This second chapter gives an overview of prison education in partner countries. It outlines the general approach to prison education in each country, how prison education is organized and what kind of policies are in place, their gaps and some best practices. The end of the chapter will focus on ICTs, what they are and how they are used in custodial settings.

2.1 General approach to prison education

In order to be rehabilitative, justice systems have to guarantee educational paths that aim to enhance the inmates' abilities, hard and soft skills, in order to increase their life opportunities once they are reintroduced in the society.

In **Austria** individual prisons have their own vocational schools. They cooperate with the Labor Market Service to provide abbreviated apprenticeships in various trades. In some prisons, inmates can catch up on compulsory schooling. Basic education, language and computer courses are also offered. Specialized courses represent another, shorter training track. They are usually offered in conjunction with vocational training institutes (BFI) or business development institutes (WIFI) and focus on languages or working with machinery or in the catering industry.²⁹ Convicted prisoners have access to distance learning universities and other external training institutions in terms of formal and/or non-formal training. However, the completion of studies during imprisonment is more often made possible in the context of "relaxed enforcement". Convicted prisoners can have access to e-learning programs, but, since there is no general Internet access in the penal system for security reasons, studies in multimedia form can only be completed in specially permitted cases.³⁰

The operation of the Central Prisons in **Cyprus** has been modernized and it now follows a new philosophy based on respect for human rights, human dignity and the individual personality of each prisoner. In the context of upgrading education, the number of prisoners participating in the Prison School programs has increased, reaching almost 2/3 of the Prison population. Learning in prisons is no longer limited to non-formal education, which until 2014 was the main education for prisoners, and the groups of educational programs have been increased from 15 to 30, in order to give

²⁹ Hofinger, V. Fritsche, A. (2021) *Violence in Prison. Results of a dark field study in Austrian prisons*. Retrieved on: 28.09.2022 from: https://www.uibk.ac.at/irks/publikationen/2021/pdf/gewalt_in_haft_ebook.pdf

³⁰ EPEA - *European Prison Education Association* (2022). Retrieved on: 29.09.2022 from: <https://www.epea.org/>

prisoners more choice of educational path. At the same time, the prisoners receive the corresponding certifications, in order to be able to use them either to continue their studies at an Evening Technical School or a Middle and High School Evening School, or to rehabilitate professionally.³¹

In **Greece**, The General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning has implemented since 1984 educational and vocational programs for inmates, as well as counseling programs, while in the last decade has included programs of psychosocial support for inmates³². In 2004, the innovative institution of Second Chance Schools (SCS) was introduced in Greek prisons. SCS are attended by adults who have graduated from primary school and have not completed lower secondary education. The SCS constitute an institution of social justice and offer inmates a second chance for a fresh start in life, with changing their way of thinking and adopting the right choices.³³

In 1990, In **Iceland**, school facilities on the prison premises were inaugurated, and since then most of the education for prisoners has taken place there. In special cases, prisoners are allowed to attend school outside the prison to study subjects not available at the prison school. Prison education and educational options have received increasing attention from the Icelandic prison administration in the years between 2000 and 2010. The brief of the authorities was to propose measures in the following areas, among others: more vocational training in prisons, ICT courses, focus on prisoners with little or no completed education, focus on foreign citizens in Icelandic prisons, formal and non-formal educational competence assessments. The proposals were well received, and many of them have already been implemented in practice.³⁴

In **Italy**, educational activities for inmates are handled by the Ministry of Education, which has the institutional responsibility for what concerns the implementation of courses in prison. Vocational and cultural courses provided during the period of detention are intended to serve as a training tool with a view to social reintegration. In recent years, the field of education intended for adults has been the subject of regulatory interventions aimed at creating an integrated system capable of accompanying, throughout life, the development of the person, ensuring the right to learn and the full exercise of the right of citizenship. Pathways are divided into first-level education, literacy for foreigners, second-level education up to university courses and vocational training

³¹ Ministry of Justice and Public Order Republic of Cyprus. (2020) Retrieved on: 10.09.2022 from: <http://www.mjpo.gov.cy/mjpo/mjpo.nsf/All/C0ECCA87AF3A475DC2258551002FE327?OpenDocument>

³² Papaioannou, Vasiliki. Anagnou, Evaggelou (2016) Researchgate. *Inmates' Adult Education in Greece. A case Study*. Retrieved on 13.11.2022 from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308752707_Inmates'_Adult_Education_in_Greece-A_Case_Study

³³ Koulouris, K. Nikolaos, Aloskofis, William (2013) *European Prison Observatory. Prison conditions in Greece*. Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Prison%20conditions%20in%20Greece.pdf>

³⁴ Nordic Prison Education. *A lifelong Learning Perspective* (2009), Pages 80 – 85. Retrieved on: 03.11.2022 from: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:700745/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

courses. The latter are organized following agreements with the regions, relevant local authorities and training agencies accredited by the regions, based on the needs of the inmate population and the demands of the labor market.³⁵

In all these countries there is a provision of vocational training and formal education, and courses are organized for the different age groups. These are mainly aimed at providing them with skills that can be useful in the work environment, at allowing them to start over and to escape the vicious cycle of criminality. What seems to be lacking is the provision of training in social, personal and life skills which are also fundamental to be active members of a society.

2.2 Main gaps in prison education in partner countries

What follows is an overview of the main gaps in prison systems in partner countries and factors that hinder the rehabilitative goal of prison education.

The situation in **Austria** showed that vocational education has proven to be a very necessary but not a sufficient measure for successful integration. Inmates with higher initial qualifications and a shorter "criminal career" benefit more from education in prison. International recommendations advise keeping the prison as open as possible for educational purposes. Work training and job coaching should also facilitate entry into the workforce after incarceration.³⁶

In **Cyprus**, there's a gap between normative tools and educational prisons' practices. The main need for the Mediterranean island is to enhance the legislation for law enforcement and modernization of correctional policy.

In **Greece**, the Penitentiary Code provides that all prisons should have a lending library which should be kept up-to-date. The legislative "wish" is expressed for prison libraries to be connected with local Public Libraries, with the co-operation of a librarian. While lending libraries exist in all prisons, this connection rarely happens³⁷. Some of the Second Chance Schools operating in prisons do not have educational material adapted to the needs of adults and young people who attend the early classes of primary school or for students who are not familiar with or have little knowledge of

³⁵ Antigone. XVIII rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione. (2021) Retrieved on: 16.10.2022 from: <https://www.rapportoantigone.it/diciottesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/numeri-del-carcere/>

³⁶ EPEA - *European Prison Education Association* (2022). Retrieved on: 29.09.2022 from: <https://www.epea.org/>

³⁷ Koulouris, K. Nikolaos, Aloskofis, William (2013) *European Prison Observatory. Prison conditions in Greece*. Retrieved on: 12.11.2022 from: <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/Prison%20conditions%20in%20Greece.pdf>

the Greek language. This complicates the educational process and reduces its effectiveness, despite the efforts of the teachers to cover the above gaps on their own initiative. Moreover, there is a lack of teachers in the high schools that operate, with the existing few teachers teaching all subjects. The source of this problem, at least as far as the Second Chance Schools are concerned, is potentially in the non-separation of the announcements for the positions of permanent and hourly teachers for the Second Chance Schools that operate in the community and those that operate inside the prison. As a result, teachers with a lot of experience in prison schools who are interested in working in them are left out and teachers with no experience are hired because they have two degrees or other qualifications which are foreign to the qualifications that a prison school really needs.³⁸

In **Iceland**, gaps in the educational system for inmates are similar to other countries. Icelandic researchers highlight that it is crucial to ensure that the time spent in prison is used to address, also through education, key factors that influence the prisoner's chances of returning to crime: level of education, employment status, drug and alcohol misuse, mental and physical health, attitudes and self-control, institutionalization and life skills, housing, financial support and debt, and family networks.³⁹ The main challenges in prison education in Iceland are: difficulties to plan, arrange and carry out education, training and other school activities; different age levels of inmates; different educational background; different lengths of sentences to serve.

One of the major limitations of prison education in the **Italian** system is the lack of connections with the outside and with the real needs of society. The recent phenomenon of multiculturalism has contributed in a decisive way to bring out the contradictions of the prison system. In fact, the treatment of prisoners is often designed for an exclusive Italian population, who respond to characteristics that are often different from the current one-third of foreigners. The heterogeneity of the target audience is certainly a factor to be considered because learning also passes through the use of materials and tools that are adapted and functional for learning. In addition there are still gaps in the available educational materials, where volumes in some of the languages of the foreign inmates are often absent.⁴⁰

In summary, the main gaps in the prison educational system are related to the difficulties of institutions to adapt the normative frameworks to the needs of an ever changing society, while keeping the connection between the prisons and requirements of the society outside. The diversity of cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds also pose a challenge to an education system that should respond to different needs. The need for informatic abilities in the work

³⁸ FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. *Criminal Detention in the EU. Conditions and Monitoring. Update of FRA's Criminal Detention Database (Franet). Greece* (2021). Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/greece-criminal-detention-2022-country-study_en.pdf

³⁹ Social Exclusion Unit, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, UK. (2002) *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. Retrieved on: 03.11.2022 from: http://www.gos.gov.uk/497296/docs/219643/431872/468960/SEU_Report.pdf

⁴⁰ La formazione della persona in carcere. Attese, resistenze e riscatto. (2016). *Formazione, Lavoro, Persona*. Retrieved on: 26.10.2022 from: <http://www00.unibg.it/dati/bacheca/1029/79126.pdf>.

environment are also slowly absorbed by the justice and educational system, and more importantly the need to improve personal, social and life skills often remains unmet.

2.3 Examples of good practices in prison education

People in custody often have not completed their education. In this context, the opportunity to complete their education increases their job opportunities and thus the chances of reintegration once detention is over. Education can therefore be a means of resocialization. Some good practices from prison education in partner countries are synthesized below.

In **Austria**, of particular relevance and strength in the juvenile justice system is the elimination of learning deficits in juvenile inmates⁴¹. Convicted inmates are required to receive regular instruction in special institutions. In addition to compulsory schooling, juvenile inmates also can attend vocational school classes. Gerasdorf Prison has its own federal vocational school, which ensures continuous vocational school instruction⁴². In some prisons there is the possibility of completing intensive training for skilled workers. In cooperation with the Austrian Labor Market Service and the Vocational Training Institute, shortened apprenticeships are offered in various trades. Moreover, the graduates of a skilled worker intensive training course receive a neutral certificate, which means that it is not apparent that the training was completed in a prison.⁴³

In **Cyprus**, learning opportunities reflect the cultural diversity of the prison population. All teachers in prisons are Greek and English language speakers. Those who do not speak any of the two languages are assisted by inmates from the same country. There are many collaborations with universities for distance learning studies. Universities often send students or teachers who deliver lectures to prisoners. Moreover, vocational training programs are selected and designed in cooperation with the HR Development Authority for professional rehabilitation of inmates after

⁴¹ Die Österreichische Justiz. (2022) Cf. BMJ (ed.), *Strafvollzug in Österreich. Ziele und Aufgaben* (2020). Retrieved on: 09.09.2022 from: <https://www.justiz.gv.at/home/strafvollzug/ziele-und-aufgaben.b3e.de.html>

⁴² Europris. *Table of Recommendations and Practices in European Prison Education*. (2020). Retrieved on: 14.10.2022 from: <https://www.europris.org/file/table-of-recommendations-and-practices-in-european-prison-education/>

⁴³ FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. *Criminal Detention in the EU. Conditions and Monitoring. Update of FRA's Criminal Detention Database (Franet). Greece* (2021). Retrieved on: 12.10.2022 from: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/greece-criminal-detention-2022-country-study_en.pdf

release. Prisoners participating in educational activities are also paid the same as if they were working.⁴⁴

In **Greece**, many schools have been able to attract institution donations and constructive cooperation with local bodies. For examples, at the Corfu Detention Facility, a digital library has been developed in collaboration with the Ionian University. At the Larissa Detention Facility, a gallery of works by inmates has been established. At the Trikala Detention Facility, an exemplary computer room has been set up and prizes have been won in international student film contests. At the Nea Alikarnassos Detention Facility, the operation of a nursery, a soap factory and a woodworking workshop, as well as cooking courses. In the Corinth Detention Facility, educational excursions to museums and other cultural sites, but only for juvenile detainees.⁴⁵

In **Iceland**, the main strength is the access to computers in prisons, even if limited, due to security reasons. Even though, according to a study, most prisoners were interested in having easier access, mostly so they could communicate with their family and friends but also to learn and to use e-learning platforms.⁴⁶

In **Italy**, one of the strengths of prison education is certainly found in the territorial subdivision of training, in fact this allows direct contact with the community to which people belong. CPIA (adult education centers) can expand the training offer through agreements with local authorities, public or private entities and in particular with training facilities accredited by the Regions, within the framework of their autonomy and within the limits of available resources. The main investment in training has been promoted, supported and, for the most part, carried out by institutional subjects in the area, in synergy with the Prison Administration.⁴⁷

In conclusion, it could be said that education in prison is not just a phenomenon internal to the jurisdictional system, but a large process that includes many actors: national and local institutions, associations, NGOs, inmates and their family, universities and schools, teachers, trainers, companies. Probably, the main strength is, generally, the ability to involve many different types of public and private actors and to not isolate prisons and prisoners.

⁴⁴ Educational Background: Preferences and Needs. *A qualitative study of prisoners from Iraq, Poland, Russia, Serbia and Somalia*. (2013), page 95: Retrieved on: 31.10.2022 from: https://nvl.org/Portals/0/DigArticle/1246/educational_background_2013_eng.pdf

⁴⁵ Postmodern. *Making Multiple Choices*. Retrieved on: 12.11.2023 from: <https://www.postmodern.gr/ekpaideysi-stis-fylakes-i-foni-ton-ekp/>

⁴⁶ UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Guide to measuring information and communication technologies (ICT) in education*. (2009) Retrieved on: 10.10.2022 from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186547>

⁴⁷ Ministero della Giustizia - *Istruzione e Formazione*. Retrieved on: 12.11.2022 from: https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_3_0_1.page?previousPage=mg_2_4_3_7

2.4 Use of ICT in prison

What follows is an overview about Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and their application in the prison education system. Firstly, according to UNESCO, ICTs are defined as a set of technological tools and resources used to transmit, create, share, or store information. These technological tools include computers, Internet access to websites, blogs and emails, live broadcasting technologies (e.g. radio, television), recorded broadcasting technologies like audio and video players, and telephony. "It is believed that the use of ICT in education can increase access to learning opportunities. It can help to enhance the quality of education with advanced teaching methods, improve learning outcomes and enable reform or better management of education systems".⁴⁸ ICTs are increasingly important in prison education.

In **Austria**, learning opportunities are also continuing to increase in the prison system with digitization. However, since full Internet access poses a high security risk here, special technical solutions are needed. The Institute for Education in the Information Society gGmbH (IBI) in Berlin has been working for the prison system for many years and also operates the ELIS ("e-Learning im Strafvollzug") learning platform. Austria also uses this platform and thus offers prisoners more than 200 learning opportunities and programs for general and vocational education, a comprehensive media library including reference works, and access to the portal Ich-will-Lernen.de.⁴⁹

On the contrary, in **Cyprus**, supervised access to the internet is only allowed to access information necessary for their representation in court. Prisoners who do not have frequent visits with their family, can use skype for communication with their families⁵⁰.

Currently, the use of ICT in prison education in **Greece** is limited. The need to use electronic media and new technologies has been referred to by many stakeholders, who underline the fact that today many prisons refuse the access of incarcerated students or even staff members to new technologies, due to the risks that the latter entails. However, they argue that new technologies can be used positively in the learning process as long as there is careful planning and appropriate arrangements for their access and use within prisons.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Europris. *Table of Recommendations and Practices in European Prison Education*. (2020). Retrieved on: 14.10.2022 from: <https://www.europris.org/file/table-of-recommendations-and-practices-in-european-prison-education/>

⁴⁹ Aschemann, Birgit. *Die Freiheit des Lernens im Justizvollzug*. (2016). erwachsenenbildung.at Adult Education Platform (2022). Retrieved on: 26.10.2022 from: <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten/9785-die-freiheit-des-lernens-im-justizvollzug.php>

⁵⁰ Europris. *Table of Recommendations and Practices in European Prison Education*. (2020). Retrieved on: 14.10.2022 from: <https://www.europris.org/file/table-of-recommendations-and-practices-in-european-prison-education/>

⁵¹ Postmodern. *Making Multiple Choices*. Retrieved on: 12.11.2023 from: <https://www.postmodern.gr/ekpaideysi-stis-fylakes-i-foni-ton-ekp/>

In **Italy**, the diffusion of ICTs in prisons has received a great impulse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Starting as tools for keeping in touch with families during the lockdown, ICTs became in a few years an important element to redesign educational methods. However, their use is still uncommon for all custodial settings, it is still not included in official national educational programs for inmates⁵². Therefore, it is still necessary to find the most appropriate tools to overcome the digital divide that separates students placed in the prison circuit from those in the free world and that makes the prospect of social reintegration of prisoners even more difficult.

In conclusion, the use of ICT in prison education is seen as a way to provide personalized teaching support, respond to the diverse learning needs of inmates, promote access to up-to-date teaching materials and overcome the problem of lack of continuity for inmates who are transferred to another institution. Nevertheless, there is a lack of parity in educational provision and services and a general delay in the introduction of ICT, pointing to security issues as the main reason for this delay. The changes society is undergoing and the new areas of knowledge express a strong demand for more new skills and abilities. As a result, the educational system, in whose transformation ICT plays an important role, focuses on issues of motivation, self-esteem, learning methods and social skills, creating a connection with the outside world.⁵³

⁵² Pillera, Carmelo Giuseppe (2021). *ICT in prison during the Covid-19 pandemic: a case study*. Retrieved on: 13.10.2022 from: <https://oaj.fupress.net/index.php/formare/article/view/12134>

⁵³ Torlone, F. (2016). *Il diritto al risarcimento educativo dei detenuti*, Firenze University Press. Retrieved on: 13.10.2022 from: https://media.fupress.com/files/pdf/24/3111/3111_9490

Conclusions

This research has highlighted many similarities and differences between the partner countries of the Road to Freedom project. It has outlined a justice system that tends to rehabilitation and the improvement of restorative justice measures but that is often faced with challenges and obstacles related to lack of significant investments for the improvement of prison education systems; difficulties to combine the need for both physical and virtual connections with the outside world with the conditions of a secure setting; the difficulties to meet the needs of people with different cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

While vocational training is provided in most prison education systems, an important conclusion that we can draw from this research is the need for more and better education on personal, social and emotional skills. People in conflict with the law often come from disadvantaged backgrounds and lack the competences needed to navigate the personal challenges and social relationships that surround them. The potential that prison systems should further explore is that of providing individualized and personalized training on soft and life skills.

In terms of technical skills, access to ICT in prison is crucial to enable people in conflict with the law to be successfully reintegrated into societies. This is one of the main challenges faced by prisons in the participant countries where inmates are often kept out of the main source of information and education used in the society.

All of these challenges are very relevant to the goals of the Road to Freedom project which will implement educational activities aimed at improving the personal and leadership skills of people in conflict with the law and will develop an online platform for education in prison.

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