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FEFI - Finding Education for Female Inmates

Progress Report

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Executive Summary

Within the framework of the multilateral EU-project „Finding Education for Female Inmates/FEFI“, ten partners from eight European countries cooperate on the subject of formal and informal education for adolescent and adult women in prison.

Women in prison are a particularity underrepresented group due to their small number (3 to 7%) of the total prison population in all of the partners' countries. The project aims to improve and increase participation in lifelong learning by female prisoners who are an integral component of a vulnerable and disadvantaged group - a socially stigmatized group, as well as prisoners and as women.

As female persons have specific needs the main target is to get to know the conditions about their possibilities in prison towards improving their competences in a country comparison as well as to get to know more about the necessities to overcome resistances towards lifelong learning and to initiate changes and new procedures towards three key aspects: staff qualification, pedagogical support and prison structure.

The project targets on regaining confidence and self-esteem to the female inmates, to give them a voice and to deliver a tool that identifies new procedures for policy and decision makers that ensures improvements that incorporate offenders and the professionals involved in rehabilitation as well as on an organizational level.

Under the coordination of the Center for Continuing Education (ZWW) of the University of Mainz the GRUNDTVIG-project started in November 2013 and will have a two year duration (until the end of 2015). Project partners are prisons, ministries, universities and education centers from Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, France, Italy, Malta and Turkey.

In the first year of the project the area has been explored in the participating countries on the basis of questionnaires, the needs of women in prison could be identified and the practical knowledge on their possibilities in supporting a learning process of prison staff has been captured. To find new procedures the evaluation is being carried out on three levels: the needs of women in prison, the experience of prison staff and the needs of the organization. The jointly evaluated results of the questionnaires are the basis for the next steps that will be taken within the work packages relating to formal and informal education for young and adult women in prison.

The next steps towards the aim of the project are to develop, to provide and to evaluate appropriate educational programs for the target group of female prisoners, the prison staff and the organization.

The results of the project activities are available on the FEFI homepage <http://www.euro-cides.eu/FEFI/>. This page will be launched beginning of January 2015.

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1. Project Objectives

The objectives of the project are to gain an understanding of the realities faced by females while in prison and once released. The objectives initially target the personal aspects that have an affect on the socio-psychological livelihood of the offenders, moving to a data gathering stage, through a process targeted at bringing in professionals who can ensure access to learning and finally to draft procedures to policy and decision makers.

*To enable female inmates to gain confidence and self-esteem, attributes that are experienced on the commission of crime, where the offenders are often abandoned by their family and/or children. The project aims to identify the negative aspects and to deliver solutions enabling inmates to find motivation to start over.

*To give a voice to female inmates and to facilitate their participation in the creation of a state of the art inventory of their needs and requirements.

*To employ a triangulation method based on questionnaires and discussions that involves female inmates as well as prison personnel, aimed at reaching an understanding of the dynamics affecting the prisoner-society interaction.

*To prepare prison staff and other professionals to support and motivate female inmates to use the time they spend in prison to develop self-competences and new skills to prepare for their release.

*To ensure that during the period of their imprisonment the holistic approach is employed, which includes the involvement of prison staff, social workers, teachers, volunteers, who at any time interact with the female inmates in prison.

*To investigate the best modus operandi within the prison environment to ensure a normal right to access learning.

*To analyse the state of the art for female inmates in prison together with the requirements towards the three key aspects (prison structure, pedagogical supports, prison staff) in a country comparison.

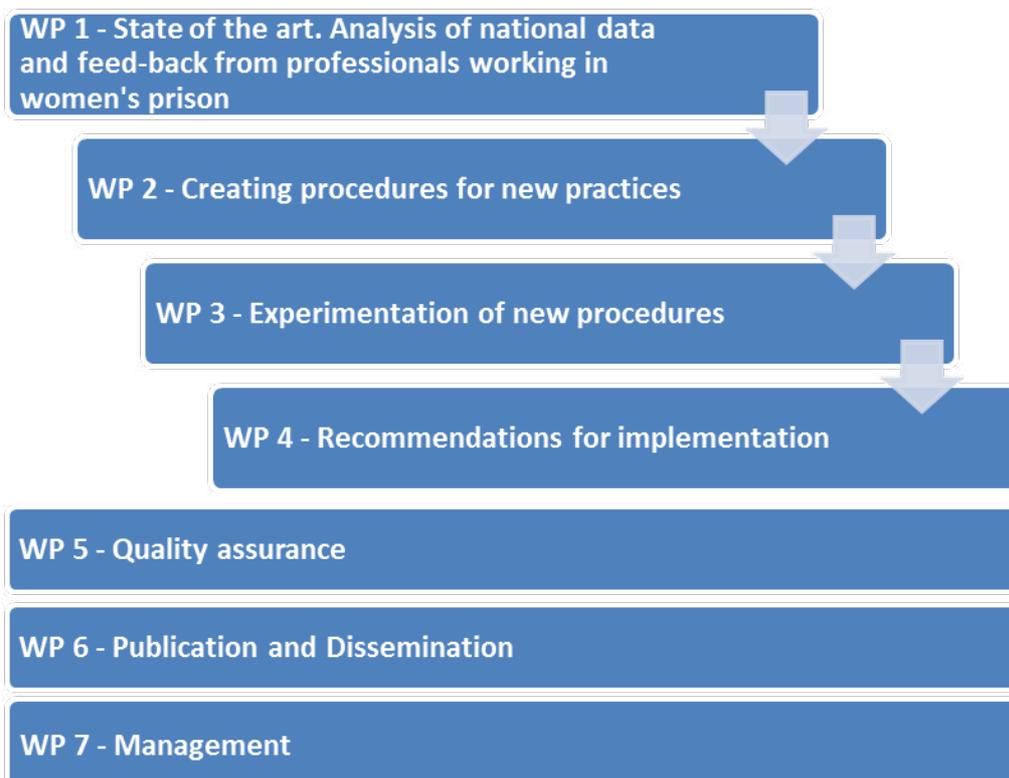
*To create procedures for new practices that will be explored to develop recommendations that would in turn be transferred to new practices.

2. Project Approach

FEFI is based on the collection of data from female inmates who were given a voice to express their educational needs to promote reintegration into society. During the kick-off seminar in Mainz in December 2013 an overview of the situation of female inmates in eight European countries was given on basis of national data presented by all partners. Two questionnaires were developed by the Finish partner, the first one for female inmates and the second one for prisons' staff. These proposals were discussed at the meeting (see work package 1 / WP1 in the table below). After the conference the suggestions were integrated, a test phase followed and after revision the forms were translated into the different languages.

After the collection of the data in June 2014, the responses have been analysed by the Maltese partner (WP2). After a first discussion process at the work meeting in Finland in September 2014 the partners are actually developing new resources and procedures to increase a better access to education for female inmates.

An experimental phase (WP3) is planned in the first part of 2015 to operationalize new forms of individual/collective approaches towards ideas, instruments, methods and structure development for female inmates and staff. The recommendations (WP4) for the necessary changes with regards to people, systems and tools will follow. Assessment of the partnership is a continuous process (WP5), culminating with a cross examination of the latest results obtained through female inmates. Dissemination of results (WP6) will be both an internal (e-letters, meetings) and external process (project work platform, brochure and press releases). The table below gives an overview of the process.



The process employed is based on both desk and field studies in which each milestone is given an indicator tag, which is used for the analysis of the success of the milestone.

The first milestone to give voice to female inmates has been reached though the filling out of questionnaires & the feed-back obtained from female inmates who showed a willingness to participate.

The second milestone is the creation of an innovative tool through an inventory structure on the inmates' needs and requirements as perceived by the inmates and by the prison personnel. The tool will list the common and/or unique characteristics across the different states that the project covers. This will enable the drafting of recommendations for policy and change.

Milestone three is the creation of two questionnaires aimed at reaching an understanding of the dynamics influencing on the prisoner-society interactions. The two Questionnaires have been organised across the different countries. The target was to comprise a minimum of 300 female inmates and 100 staff/professionals, however we managed to carry out the survey with 440 female inmates and 134 staff/professionals.

To prepare prison personnel to act, to motivate female inmates to develop self-competences and new skills to prepare for release is milestone four. For this a set of motivation criteria will be prepared to measure the level of transmission of skills. The indicator will measure the number of times interaction has occurred through attendance to sessions.

In milestone five consist of the encouragement of the prison management to ensure a multi-disciplinary team approach. To reach this a number of meetings will be held and the outcomes of the interactions will be noted.

Milestone six is to investigate the best modus operandi in prison to ensure a normal right to access learning. To measure the methods employed, to gauge access to learning and to list best practices.

Milestone seven is to analyse the state of the art for female inmates in prison and of the requirement towards the three key aspects (prison structure, pedagogical supports, and prison staff) in a country comparison. Followed by a synopsis about specific conditions of female inmates in prisons (common and national/regional) and measurable changes of the key aspects to support them towards a better re-integration.

Milestone eight is to create procedures for new practices and to develop recommendations that would be transferred to new practices. This will be realized by a draft of measurable recommendations for change in terms of policy making through the creation of a number of scenarios.

3. Project Outcomes & Results

First Outcome of the two year Grundtvig-project FEFI was the kick-off seminar in Mainz December 2013. The opening of the conference was done by the vice president of the University of Mainz. Besides the FEFI-partners, guests from the Ministry of Justice (Rheinland-Pfalz) and heads of prisons participated in the conference.

During this meeting all the partners presented themselves and gave an overview on their country situation.

A first draft of the questionnaires to collect data on female inmates and staff was created by the Finnish partner before the meeting and was presented and discussed during the meeting. After the kick-off the two questionnaires were updated/adjusted and a pretest was launched in three countries: Cyprus, Finland and Germany.

Through the feedback the final questionnaires were produced and translated by the participating countries from English into the Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Maltese and Turkish.

A prison visit enabled a practical view on female inmates and their education in Germany.

As a next step 440 female inmates and 134 staff were interviewed and the results were gathered in a database. The number of questioned person was higher than planned due to the active participation of the partners. The data was inputted via a computer programme.

A next outcome was the working seminar in Finland where all the partners were present. The conference contained first results of the survey, discussions on differences and comparison between countries and the preparation of future measures.

Prison visits gave a practical view on female inmates and their education in Finland.

The Maltese partner drafted a European report and the data output for each participating country from the questionnaires. First results were presented at the meeting in Finland in September 2014. The partners of the participating countries agreed upon the dissemination of these results in their national networks. Through this important part of the project a major goal has been reached since the questionnaires were meant to capture the situation of female inmates in each of the participating countries: to give them voice.

The different documents will be available on the newly created FEFI homepage in the beginning of January 2015.

Further more the large amount of data collected supports the project arguments and ideas for the next phase in the project: the finding of new procedures.

The first steps towards the creation of ideas on how to proceed toward them have been taken during the meeting in Finland.

To support a good professional communication glossaries have been created and will be constantly updated in the languages of the partner institutions.

To enable a daily communication between the FEFI-partners a Dropbox has been installed.

4. Partnerships

The consortium consists of ten institutions from all over Europe. The consortium members are active in the two areas which are prison education and penal system as well as partly stakeholders. They are all part of parent organisations or networks (prison, ministry, university, regional LLL initiative). This enables them to pass on project products to other associated partners as part of their regular continuing activity.

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The German coordinator of the project the Center for Continuing Education (ZWW) is a central facility of the University Mainz. In addition to teaching and research, the University of Mainz (JGU) sees continuing education as a core area of its mission and has responded to the ever-increasing need for LLL. With more than 36,000 students from about 130 nations, JGU is one of the ten largest universities in Germany. JGU is a research institution of national and international recognition and emphasizes the value of research-oriented teaching, i.e. the incorporation of research content into educational curricula. JGU lives the notion of the civic university closely collaborating with the community it is part of. This comprises in particular the areas of LLL, knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and the interface university/school.

GIP FCIP of Limoges Academy in France

UPR Bordeaux is the formal education's department which leads all schools running in prison for the 3 academies of Limoges, Poitiers and Bordeaux. The UPR department manages all teachers who teach in the 20 prisons that are located in this big area and which host convicted and sentenced adults and minors with short or long sentences. The priorities decided by the national level (French ministry of education) for all these schools are: to fight illiteracy, to teach French as foreign language, to reinforce basic skills,

JVA Zweibrücken- (juvenile correctional facilities) in Germany

The prison JVA Zweibrücken is an institution of the Rhineland-Palatinate Justice. It was built in 1839 - 1845 as a Bavarian county jail. Since then it had been expanded extensively and continues to expand and modernize. Besides the traditional enforced closed prison, there exists a type of "open prison" for both women and men. Currently 357 men and 106 women are imprisoned in Zweibrücken. The institution is very active and is responsible for the detention of young women (Youth custody).

UEPE (Office responsible for Extramural Punishment) in Italy is an Office of the Penitentiary Administration whose purpose is to foster the reintegration of sentenced persons. The organization takes care of extra mural punishment (community corrections: offenders on work release, offenders on home detention etc.). EUPE provides the supervisory Magistrate with reports on offenders prior to release and progress reports of offenders under supervision. It also participates in the activities of observation and treatment inside prisons: educational activities, integration and eventual release.

Ministry of Justice, Cyprus prison department. In Cyprus there is only one correctional institution, the Prison in Nicosia which is under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice. The prison in Nicosia caters for all categories of convicted and unconvicted prisoners of both sexes and of all age groups from 16 years and over.

The University of Malta is the only university in Malta. The University of Malta employs more than a thousand employees with a student population of over 10,000. The Department of Criminology employs 8 full time members of Academic Staff plus a number of part-time members. The academic body is assisted by 3 members of the secretarial staff.

Izmir Women Prison in Turkey has opened in February 2012 and is the only women's prison in İzmir. The female prisoners have committed different crimes. Its capacity is 600, and 410 prisoners are currently imprisoned.

Hämeenlinna Prison, Finland belongs to the region of Western Finland (Finland is divided in to three criminal sanctions regions based on the general population and the prison population rate). Hämeenlinna Prison is a closed prison for men and female prisoners and there is a family unit for mothers with babies. Prison capacity is 173 (92F, 81M) and in 2011 the average number of prisoners was 181. The main office of the prisoners' Health Care Unit is located in Hämeenlinna prison grounds.

Directorate General Penal Institutions in Belgium is a Belgian public national institution, subordinated to the Ministry of Justice. It consists of the Directorate General EPI and 38 territorial units. In Belgium we have 31 penitentiaries (15 in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, 14 in the French speaking part of Belgium and 2 penitentiaries in Brussels), 3 Juvenile Detention Centres, 1 Social Protection Centre and 3 Training Centres for the training of penitentiary personnel. To be complete the prison rented in the Netherlands (Tilburg) has to be mentioned. Over 11 000 inmates are held in custody in the Belgian penitentiaries.

Webros XIII Consortium vzw - BE The Flemish community in Belgium has specific responsibilities in detention and reintegration. Since 1980 the Flemish community ensures specific services and assistance to inmates. These services and assistance contain the following subjects: Work, Health, Welfare, Education, Culture and Sports. Different local external organizations, depending on the region, take place participate within the prison to realize their specific tasks in detention. In 2000 the Flemish government approved the 'Strategic plan services and assistance for inmates'.

The project consortium also consists of a number of associated partners. who are interested in contributing their expertise to the project's progress.



Kick Off meeting of the FEFI project in December 2013
at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz

5. Plans for the Future

Now that the preliminary data has been inputted by the partners and analysed by Malta, all partners were given their country analysis. From this analysis each partner will list a priority of at least three procedures which they think are necessary for new practices. Once the list will be ready in the beginning of 2015, the partners will look for commonalities to create procedures for new practices. Each country can choose which procedures to apply.

The next meeting will be in Turkey at end of January 2014. During the meeting the project partners will discuss first ideas on projects that could be carried out in the different countries and possibilities to realize them during the first half of 2015. A prison visit will give a practical view on female inmates and their education in Turkey.

The procedures created will be experimented with in a number of partner countries. After which a feedback about the procedures to those that had “experimented” on will be given. This will help to learn from each other and to improve the own procedures. At the end each partner country will be asked to experiment at least with one procedure and collect feedback from the participants.

During the meeting in Italy in June 2015 a reflection is planned on the measures carried out in the different countries.

A prison visit will give a practical view on female inmates and their education in Italy.

Toward the end of the project duration the measures will be described, collected and categorised and the results will be exploited. The FEFI-partners will agree on a common Recommendation for Implementation.

These good practice examples could also be used to disseminate and will be part of the brochure which will be created for the end conference.

In each of the participating countries there will be a final conference at the same time on 24th September 2015. One part of the conference will be the European exchange of the FEFI-results (video conference), the second part is meant to also present the national aspects to other interested organisations, decision-makers and stakeholders.

During entire process the homepage will be continuously updated with newly developed documents and

Contribution to EU policies

FEFI fits within the EU2020 strategy due to its broad remit in different areas (employment, education, poverty) from a gender point of view. It is also complementary due to its recognition of the environmental factors that affect females being active in their social surroundings. This guarantees that the project would help to ensure a gender-equality perspective in regard to not only employment, education and social inclusion issues but also to the strategy as a whole.

The main benefit emanating from the international participation across the EU is mainly focused on the identification of the realities experienced by female offenders, which results could show homogeneity in the circumstances leading to imprisonment. Thus a common approach would be favourable to policy-changes across the different states.

The EU value added component is highly relevant in this project targeted mainly to the impact on the social cohesion aspect. This factor ensures adhesion to the EU2020 strategy particularly to its remit to address the dissemination of skills for employment, enhance educational opportunities and reduce poverty, with emphasis from a gender point of view.

Besides personal enrichment of the inmates, the professional know how of each partner and associated entities such as the prisons, the synergetic competencies of the project partners will ensure enhancement of the commonalities between the members states, draft scenarios for change and expand the expertise of the partner countries towards other countries who are facing the same situation.

The target group and the prison personnel directly and actively involved in the project activities are learning from the other partners' expertise to improve their own knowledge and attitudes based on the concept of giving a voice to the disadvantaged. They will improve their theoretical and practical experience through the development of different methods and tools.

The individual partners are assessing their situation and comparing it with those from the other partner countries. These enrichments will influence the way of working with female offenders and develop a mitigation process that enhances their chances without resorting to crime once released.

Through participation in the FEFI project, the feeling of European citizenship is being experienced. The European dimension is being introduced in the partners cooperating prisons by explaining, learning, giving information, adapting and organising international meetings.

