

### Partner Countries – Desk Research Exercise (VINFL)

*\*\*please note, the aim of this template is to collate information on VINFL in national and prison contexts from **already completed research**, such as policy and academic papers. The purpose of this form is not to collect original research – the teacher survey will begin this process.*

Partner Country	<b>FRANCE</b>
Organisation	<b>Euro-CIDES</b>
Representative	<b>Elie CHARRIER as President</b> <b>Dominique ANTONY as EU projects' social engineer</b>

Provide an outline of the **prison system** in your country (maximum 500 words)

*- You should include information such as: global prisoner numbers, estates, and trends.*

In France, we have 188 prisons whose objects are different:

- **maison centrale** / for very long sentences
- **centre de détention** / for sentences over 2 years
- **maison d'arrêt** / for short sentences and for persons on remand
- **centre de semi-liberté** / for inmates who have a specific plan to do outside during working hours for example, or to attend a training session... but they have to come back to the prison

Mainly all the above prisons are for males but in some you can find wings for female inmates and/or wings for minors.

Specifically for minors, you also have **Etablissement Pénitentiaire pour Mineurs** (EPM) but they are not so numerous.

When, in a same penal establishment, you have two different types of prisons (for example, centre de détention and maison d'arrêt, then you will use the term of **centre pénitentiaire**.

About official data at January 01, 2016 figures are as follow in France: 76 601 persons refer to justice among them 9 923 are not in jails (but 9 429 wear an electronic bracelet), the rest (66 678) are jailed inmates and among them 18 158 (27,2 %) are on remand.

For memory, France is a country of 66,6 millions of inhabitants that means that 1% of its population is incarcerated.



Outline arrangements for **prison education** in your country (maximum 500 words)  
- *You should include some information regarding the accessibility of education, opportunities, class sizes, resources, challenges.*

The organization of the teaching units in prison belongs to the French ministry of education and is subjugated to the organization of the penitentiary administration.

### 1. ACCESSIBILITY TO EDUCATION

#### What does the code of criminal procedure say?

- «Primary education is provided in all prisons».
- «Convicts who cannot read, write or calculate commonly should receive this education».
- «Other inmates may be allowed on request».
- “Prisoners may engage in all studies compatible with their criminal status”.

#### What does the penal law dated November 24, 2009 say?

- *Article 27 – Chapter 3 – Section 2:* “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 organized if the convicted person also realizes a work activity”.
- *Article 60 – Chapter 3 – Section 9:* «Minors, when they are not subject to compulsory education, are required to complete an activity with educative features».

### 2. Teaching in prison: OPPORTUNITIES

- Participate to admission of new detainees for needs’ diagnosis (training pathways, identification of illiteracy,...) in all prisons.
- Develop education for all applicants with a specific focus on minors and young adults without qualifications including the illiterate ones.
- Support the person (own development and self-esteem).
- Facilitate different forms of access to knowledge.
- Evaluate and validate the achievements.

### 3. Teaching in prison: RESSOURCES

- In each penal institution, there is one local teaching unit (school). Depends the size of the prison, you will have one or several classrooms (so one or several teachers)
- Teachers teaching in prison, as public servants, belong to French national ministry of education.
- Since 1995, Ministries of Education and Justice have common references to underpin the work of teachers.

#### Who are the teachers from French ministry of education?

- Graduated teachers qualified to teach in special schools (mainly working full time in prison on basic skills). Their training is in 2 periods (after being graduated as teacher):
  - 1 – one year of specialization on persons with special needs (ie. Disabilities,...)
  - 2 – three weeks with topics on prison (penal environment, security, rules, staffs, specific teaching methodologies,...)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree teachers (part time) for specific matters (English, Philosophy,...)



#### 4. Teaching in prison: CHALLENGES

- Individualization of training pathways
- Management of heterogeneity
- Permanent drop in / drop out
- Prison constraints' dependencies
- No control of time (transfer from one prison to another one, for example)
- Simultaneity of both procedures (Justice / Education)
- Disabilities (mental disorders, behavioural attitudes, addictions,...)

Through the Law (common rights) reinforced by the European Prison Rules, any inmate has right to access to education but the problem are the lack of means (mainly for special target groups like female inmates when not so numerous in wings). Whereas the majority of detainees (especially adult males) have a very low level of knowledge very often for most of them they will be placed on a waiting list for several months before to join courses.

In France, a big number of prisons are very old and built when classrooms were not necessary a need / a priority. So that explains why sometimes the rooms are very small and not adapted. Sometimes too, the overcrowded occupation of the prison can be a brake to education. In French new prisons, classrooms fit normal sizes.

In the French prisons, education programs are the responsibility of the prison manager. They can change from one penal institution to another, particularly as regards non-formal and informal education.

#### What does the law on the future of the school dated April 23, 2005 say?

« Education 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, what are they?*

- 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

#### Recent **study and policy recommendations** in your country (maximum 1500 words)

*Is there a national strategy for the validation of informal learning (VINFL)? If so, how well developed is this?*

*Has there been any pre-existing research carried out on the value of informal learning in education?*

*Does VINFL form part of training for teachers?*

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We sent various messages to our formal network of contacts (in Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Education), we had exchanges with several main actors working at national department of prisons, we interviewed the public training institution for teachers in prison as well as teachers in prison from several areas of France (in fact 8 over 14) and we came to the point that:

- The not formal and informal actions and/or activities to detainees are implemented by the prison administration through various agreements signed with institutional and associative partners on the concept of public prison service. To our knowledge, and after research, it does not exist for professional actors/stakeholders obligation to work transversal competences when teaching inmates during their detention.

- About validation and monitoring acquired in training, working groups may exist in some interregional directions to develop a management tool for monitoring the acquired skills (ie. Canadian tool as GILC renowned in France as "personal skills portfolio" <http://gilc.psko.fr/>) in which are validated academic skills following summative assessments. For adults, we have assessment tools to identify the academic skills of prisoners, but not to seize their transferable skills as well as informal abilities. Here and there, we are able to observe some uses but it remains mostly a local initiative shared by a group of actors brought together from one/multiple teaching unit(s) (same management, for example) but without real order from their hierarchy.

- Although the Prison Act 2009 introduced the concept of obligation that may be warranted to the detained person, this idea is more understood as an incentive to win the support of the inmate during his sentence plan in the goal of preparation for release rather than the identification and enhancement of soft skills.

Are you aware of pre-existing research that has been carried out into **the need for and potential benefits of VINFL, particularly in prisons?** (maximum 1000 words)

Except very local initiatives from group of teachers working in the same prison or within the same regional unit of education in prison, we do not have knowledge on pre-existing researches unfortunately.

May be can we just observe this **recent French approval (as policy recommendation) dated May 3, 2012** which organizes the implementation of cultural projects to benefit people (adults / minors) under measure of justice but did not prove a real will from decision makers.

The protocol notes that access to culture is a fundamental right, as well as education and health. But those involved are among the most isolated of the offer. This is why it says affirmative that action services of the Ministry of Justice which contributes to the integration and prevention of delinquency and recidivism. Indeed, culture is a vector of openness and exchange. It has an educational and civic virtue that contributes to the enhancement of self-esteem, mastery of fundamentals, to deepening the knowledge base and the acquisition of professional skills.



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 program of activities for the public supported in detention: visual arts, music, workshop writing, theater, sport,... Access to these non-formal or informal activities also constitute the elements of an integration or reintegration of persons under measure of justice. Developed equities are thus strengthen and bring a particular perspective on the potential impact of the actions of training and artistic creations of detainees who enroll.

These impacts are multiplied by the dynamic that involves cultures, languages and different educational and institutional approaches. This diversity allows detainees associated with these practices to experience the difference (cultural, social), to seek and find a place as a participant in a collaborative and demanding project. These actions allow detainees to enroll in a specific context (instead of individual and collective work) where they can re-examine their memory, their imagination, their sensitivity and their capacity for emancipation.

Give examples of **good practice in informal learning activities/projects in prisons and community justice settings** (maximum 1000 words)

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<http://gilc.psko.fr/>