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PRISM	Promozione Impresa sociale s.r.l.	Italy
Know and Can Ltd	Znam I Moga	Bulgaria
Spectrum Research Center Not yet	CLG	Ireland
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Executive summary

The Erasmus+ project **“RECHANCE: Rehabilitation approaches for providing former prisoners with personal development and society entry CHANCES”** is financed by the European Commission and implemented by a consortium of 8 partners from 6 European countries – Ireland, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria. RECHANCE project aims to educate and support former prisoners on their personal development and social entry chances through specific rehabilitation approaches and the cultivation of knowledge, skills, and competences.

The first output of the project - “The Review & Research Paper” belongs to the preliminary/foundation phase of the project. Despite all the knowledge and information, the eight partners have in the context of the project’s subjects, they also find it very important to update and access accurate information within the scope of the project. This paper is an initial cornerstone giving further directions and mainly contextualizing the next intellectual outputs.

The Review & Research Paper derives from a dual focus: a) the existing situation and the existing framework towards former prisoners in all the participant countries b) the existing situation along with relative survey on previous best practices available in the participating countries, c) the multidimensional research within the relative institutions, former prisoner’s centres, NGOs and with the former prisoners training providers, and experts and the former prisoners themselves concerning specific needs & characteristics.

This report is based on a blended research and presents the main findings from the partner countries: 1) Findings from the survey on good practices and the framework towards former prisoners and 2) Analysis of the field-based research.

Part 1 of this report presents a) the main analysis from the European Framework and the participant countries framework towards Former prisoners based in literature review b) Literature review and survey on good practices in the field of Former Prisoners in the 6 partner countries with a detailed description of many programmes or initiatives provided by different organisations and institutions. Those good practices can benefit the RECHANCE project by inspiring partners with their experience and good results. The RECHANCE project can bring an added value from its side by filling the missing gaps in the field.

Part 2 contains the results of the field-based research among stakeholders in partner countries. A specially elaborated questionnaire was submitted to the relevant stakeholders (adult educators, former prisoner

experts, NGOs, and former prisoners themselves) concerning specific educational and training needs, characteristics and requirements. This part gives an overview about the profile of the respondents, the usage of technologies, the most important learning needs for former prisoners and their choice for the learning methods and tools as well as their opinion on the main obstacles in education and training services and the most important skills for adult educators.

Finally, this report proposes a set of recommendations based on the results gathered through this combined research. The outcomes and information obtained will be exploited for the design of the innovative curriculum.

European Framework toward former prisoners

Literature review and good practices

Introduction

For the smooth reintegration of prisoners into society, they need to be given the opportunity to develop their skills and personal relationships in such a way as to reduce the risk of re-offending after release. For this purpose, great commitment is needed from prison staff, maintaining public safety, good order and encouraging balance.

“The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.”¹

In several countries there are problems about finding appropriate work for the increasingly diverse types of prisoners. Unfortunately, traditional forms of work for prisoners have become irrelevant to the changing work market and there is a need to devise new systems of work and activities for prisoners. This is a practical problem in some eastern European countries.

Demographics / Statistics

According to the 2019 report from the European Prison Observatory, there are over 584,485 people in the European Union who are currently imprisoned. The United Kingdom and Poland are the countries with the highest prison populations, over 93,000 and 73,000, respectively. Followed by countries France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, with around 64,000 prisoners each. Then there are Romania and Czech Republic, with less than 22,000 prisoners.

The average European prison population is 115.7 prisoners per 100.000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, a very small percentage of these people can undertake higher education and in many countries, there is a high rate of early school leaving among prisoners. Low qualification levels have a significant negative impact on the employability of prisoners on release, which is one of the main reasons why ex-prisoners re-offend. Therefore, basic skills training and vocational training have an important role to play in prisoner reintegration².

¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 10.3

² <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/epale-focus-prison-education>

Eurostat – Statistics Explained³, through the prison statistics, was written that there was a total of 495.000 prisoners in the EU in 2018. Specifically, there were 111 prisoners per 100.000 people in the EU in 2018.

EU Legislations

Objective of the regime for sentenced prisoners / Rule 102

This rule states on measures and programmes for sentenced prisoners that will encourage and develop individual responsibility rather than focusing narrowly on the prevention of recidivism. The rule agrees with the requirements of key international instruments including Article 10.3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which specifies that, “The penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners, the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.” However, even though ICCPR is using the term “rehabilitation”, the formulation here avoids using it. Despite the importance of the word, the rule highlights the provision of sentenced prisoners, who often come from socially deprived backgrounds, the opportunity to develop living in a law-abiding life. In this regard, Rule 102 follows the same approach as another Rule of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Policies

On the Council of Europe Portal, there are details of treaty No.051 with title “European Convention on the Supervision of Conditionally Sentenced or Conditionally Released Offenders”.

Summary of the Convention:

“The Convention aims to allow offenders to leave the territory of a Party where a sentence was pronounced, or where the enforcement of a sentence has been conditionally suspended, to establish their ordinary residence in another Party under the supervision of its authorities. The basic principles of the Convention require that Parties agree to assist each other in the social rehabilitation of offenders for facilitating their good conduct and the readaptation to social life of persons convicted abroad. The Convention specifies conditions as regard the

3

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Prison_statistics#:~:text=There%20was%20a%20total%20of,in%20the%20EU%20in%202018.&text=This%20article%20presents%20European%20statistics%20on%20prisons%2C%20prisoners%20and%20prison%20personnel.

enforcement by the requested State of a sentence of which the enforcement has been conditionally suspended in another Party.”⁴

Regulations

The European Prison Rules state that "Every prison shall seek to provide all prisoners with access to educational programs which are as comprehensive as possible, and which meet their individual needs while taking into account their aspirations."⁵ In almost every educational institution operating in prisons are included all levels of instruction up to the university level. However, due to the common lack of resources, not all types of training are provided.

The Council of Europe, in developing its role as a regional human rights institution, decided that the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UNSMRs) should be reinforced at a regional level and given a European perspective. This led to the adoption of the UNSMRs in 1973. At that point, the Council of Europe consisted of about 15 member states. By the beginning of 1987, the Council had expanded to 21 states and the Committee of Ministers adopted a new set of European Prison Rules.

In approving this recommendation in February 1987, the Committee of Ministers noted:

“that significant social trends and changes in regard to prison treatment and management have made it desirable to reformulate the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, drawn up by the Council of Europe (Resolution (73) 5) so as to support and encourage the best of these developments and offer scope for future progress”.

Governments of Member States recommend being guided in their legislation, policies and practice by the rules contained in the appendix to this recommendation, which replaces Recommendations No. R (87) 3 of the Committee of Ministers on the European Prison Rules. It also ensures that this recommendation and the accompanying commentary to its text are translated and disseminated as widely as possible and more specifically among judicial authorities, prison staff and individual prisoners.

Good practices

There are positive examples of what states can do to help former prisoners. In Turkey, for example, labour legislation requires companies employing more than 50 staff to include a fixed percentage of ex-prisoners in their staff. If companies do not fulfil this obligation, they must pay a fine to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The Employment Foundation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security is mandated to assist ex-prisoners with vocational training and appropriate rehabilitation programs so that they can find suitable employment and assist in

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/051>

⁵ http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/Maculan_sept2013.pdf

their social reintegration. The Ministry uses the fines to fund vocational training of probationers and prisoners, and post-release assistance, which are designed by the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Facilities of the Ministry of Justice. In addition, enterprises with fewer than 50 employees are offered a financial incentive for hiring ex-prisoners, whereby the employer's obligation to pay social security for these ex-prisoner employees is halved, with the other half being paid by the state fund⁶.

The European Prisoner Entrepreneurship Program (EPEP)

A project funded by the EU's Erasmus+ Program, should be noted as a good practice of the European Prisoner Entrepreneurship Program (EPEP) that helps inmates and ex-offenders to reintegrate into society. In the face of high recidivism rates of prisoners in Europe, EPEP facilitates their labour market reintegration through a training on entrepreneurship and personal development: to help them start a business but also regain self-confidence. The EPEP e-learning platform will be available from 2020 for ex-offenders and trainers of organisations supporting inmates and ex-offenders. The EPEP consortium brings together NGOs, higher education institutions and training providers from Italy, Belgium, and France to jointly design the training.⁷

ZUBILIS

"From Prison to working like. Networking for a successful transition"⁸ is an article regarding the situation in Germany. The level of education and training of most prisoners in this country is below average and this parallels the situation in other EU Member States. Many of these prisoners have accumulated serious disadvantages, such as drug addiction or psychological problems. Research and experience consistently confirm the strong correlation between overcoming these disadvantages and the successful rehabilitation of the ex-offender. However, over the course of their imprisonment, many prisoners do not have access to opportunities to develop the skills and abilities that they will need after their release if they are to successfully reintegrate into social life and a labour market that is experiencing an accelerating pace of change and increasing demand for new types of skills.

The European Employment Guidelines place a strong emphasis on strengthening social inclusion and preventing exclusion from the world of work. In its recommendation (2004/741/EC) on implementation of the employment policies of the Member States, the Council stresses, in one of its specific recommendations to Germany, the need to '...improve the level of education of the labour force and ... increase participation in lifelong learning, especially for the low-skilled ...'. Ex-offenders clearly represent a vulnerable group that

⁶ https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/4_Social_Reintegration.pdf

⁷ <https://www.erasmus-epep.eu/#team>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal_consolidated/data/document/etg1-exa2-zubilis.pdf

would benefit from policies that address this need. ZUBILIS⁹ Development Partnership (DP), coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, involves almost all the groups of the key actors and stakeholders in North Rhine-Westphalia whose cooperation is needed to achieve a sustainable improvement in the transition from prison to working life. ZUBILIS is the latest element in a comprehensive strategy of articulating the broad spectrum of education and training opportunities that exist in the prison of North Rhine-Westphalia with new approaches to the effective employment integration of ex-offenders.

REWIND

Another very interesting program¹⁰, started in 2016, lasted until 2019 and published on European Commission under the European Social Fund. Its name was “Reintegration of inmates and ex-offenders through employment and housing in an inclusive and sustainable manner - REWIND”. The project’s idea was to build a bridge between inmates and ex-offenders and potential employers. Employment improves the opportunities of inmates and ex-offenders in different areas. This project focused on constructing by and for the target group. A cross-sectorial collaboration created between the housing, food, and agricultural/construction sector.

Small Prison Offline Courses in Prison (SPOC)

Under the European Commission umbrella and the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) there is a very interesting project. “Small Prison Offline Courses in Prison – SPOC¹¹” cofounded by Erasmus+ Programme to support exchanges of good practices in the field of Adult Education and completed on first months of 2020. The overall objective of the SPOC project, which started in 2018, is to develop an educational digital program that allows inmates to acquire digital skills that can be exploited once out of jail. Alongside, the project aims to start a form of collaboration at European level in this field. Regarding the reintegration of prisoners, the launch of a European network plays an important role for what the European Court of Human Rights requires.

Conclusion

In the reintegration of prisoners basic skills education and vocational education play a very important role. Although, research has pointed out the low level of education and lack of qualification inside prisons. The human rights approach underlines the need to implement education activities inside prison, in order to provide opportunities to help and encourage prisoners to develop as a person. According to the Association

⁹ The acronym ZUBILIS stands for Zukunft der Bildung im Strafvollzug (Future of Training and Education in the Prison System of North Rhine-Westphalia)

¹⁰ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/TPI-82>

¹¹ <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/digital-devices-prison-space-pedagogical-innovation-spoc-project>

for the Prevention of Torture, work inside prison should not have a punitive character and it should be remunerated. Moreover, the normal standard of health and safety at the workplace must be applied.

According to Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE), the median European prison population rate is 115.7 inmates per 100.000 inhabitants. A very small percentage of these people are qualified to undertake higher education. One of the key reasons for ex-prisoners to reoffend have been the low levels of qualifications and that have important negative effects on their employability upon release.

Governments of Members States recommend being guided in their legislation, policies and practice by the rules contained in the appendix to this recommendation, which replaces Recommendations No. R (87) 3 of the Committee of Ministers on the European Prison Rules.

There are positive examples of what states can do to help former prisoners. In this research, we found some interesting, good practices from all around Europe and various Erasmus Plus Programmes. More specifically, there were presented programmes that took place in Italy, Germany, Belgium and France that contribute to the smooth collaboration of different organisations who have the same target of helping ex-prisoners in their social reintegration.

Country specific frameworks towards former prisoners

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, there are 12 prisons, eight of which are for recidivists, two for non-recidivists, one for women and one for juveniles. Twenty-six prison dormitories exist from which 19 open, transitional and closed types 7, attached to the prisons. As on 31 of December 2010, 9,404 prisoners were accommodated in them. In the period from 2010 to 2020, the number of prisoners was constantly decreasing, which led to a halt in the trend of overcrowding in most of the prison buildings, typical of the previous period and all the related consequences. For the whole period, there is a steady tendency to reduce the number of prisoners, as Bulgaria is in second place in Europe in this indicator with a little over 30% reduction. Thus, according to the National Statistical Institute, at the end of 2020 there were 6,227 prisoners in Bulgarian prisons and 888 in pre-trial detention facilities, including 208 women. The number of parolees has also decreased disproportionately to the total number of prisoners, reaching 790 in the last year.

For several decades, the prison system has been experiencing serious difficulties with the obsolete and depreciated building stock. The main prison buildings, such as those in Lovech, Pazardzhik, Vratsa, Stara Zagora, Varna and Burgas, were put into operation in the 1920s and 1930s. The oldest is the prison building in Sofia, which was built 100 years ago. The buildings of the prisons in Bobovdol and Pleven are buildings of ex workers' dormitories, adapted for the needs of the prison. The closed type establishments, which accommodate the largest number of prisoners, have not increased their capacity for years.

The moratorium on death sentences after 1989 and the subsequent replacement of the death penalty by life imprisonment in 1998 led to a significant increase in the number of prisoners with life sentences. Thus, if on September 2002 the total number of lifers serving life sentences was 77, by the end of 2007 their number had increased to 128 and at the end of 2020 to 189. This led to serious problems for the individual prisons related to the living arrangements and the overall care of this category of persons.

Prisons have schools where prisoners have the opportunity to start or continue their education. These are created in five of the places of imprisonment in the country:

- For non-recidivists - Stara Zagora, where up to 300 prisoners can study;
- For recidivists - Lovech and Vratsa;
- For women - Sliven;
- For minors - CD Vratsa.

Depending on their legal status and level of education, detainees from other prisons who wish to study may be sent to an appropriate prison to which a school operates. Moving to another prison to attend school is associated with greater financial difficulties for relatives visiting. Due to the lack of contacts, after the beginning of the school year some of the students insist on being returned to the prisons where they came from.

The high relative share of illiterate and semi-literate prisoners requires methodical and comprehensive literacy programs. Prisoners up to the age of 16 are subject to compulsory training in places of detention. This share of

illiteracy is the highest in the prisons for recidivists. For another year the number of prisoners included in school education is decreasing. As on December 31, 2019, their number was 1080, from which 124 were enrolled in first grade!!! In previous years, educational programs and courses have been funded by various projects, together with external organizers. At the beginning of such initiatives, the interest among prisoners was high, but many of them subsequently gave up or dropped out of the groups. The reasons for this are a small remainder of the sentence, demotivation due to lack of material interest, discrepancy between the declared education and the educational level of the prisoners, etc.

One of the main problems facing the teaching staff in prisons is the lack of special literacy textbooks and training programs adapted for adult prisoners. The textbooks that are used are intended for mainstream schools and can hardly be used for adult literacy. There are also legal obstacles that hinder the learning process - for example, the admission of persons deprived of their liberty in vocational schools, where they could receive a good profession, requires completed primary education. Such a requirement is difficult to meet in prison, which hinders the acquisition of a profession and professional realization after release.

Two main trends are observed in medical care in prisons. The first is positive - the institutional growth of the medical centers continued, with additional equipment, application of the mechanisms of the National Health Insurance Fund, the doctors started or continued their specialization. The second observed trend is the continuation of the line of inadequacy of service and isolation from national health care as a material standard and volume of medical activity, which was particularly pronounced during the Corona virus pandemic. Prevention activities are not high enough.

Prisoners who serve their sentences in prisons or closed dormitories, as well as those in correctional facilities under strict or general conditions, work in enterprises and workshops on the territory of the respective prisons, correctional facilities and dormitories. Those serving sentences in open-type prison dormitories and those in light-duty correctional facilities can work on unguarded sites outside the area. When the term of the employment contract is longer than three months, courses for acquiring a specialty, for raising the qualification or stimulating social events can be arranged.

In Bulgaria, there are different organizations, working with former and current prisoners, providing different types of assistance - legal, medical, psychological and educational. All organizations were invited to cooperate on the RECHANCE project, both in the first phase - collecting data on the profile of former prisoners and their educational needs, and in future training activities.

- Bulgarian Prisoners Association <https://bpra.info/about-bpra/> - organization of former and current prisoners.
- Association for Reintegration of Convicted Persons <http://www.arspbg.org/>
- Bulgarian Helsinki Committee <http://www.bghelsinki.org/>
- Society for Religious and Public Support of Prisoners <http://dropls.wordpress.com/>
- Salvation Mission Fondation <http://www.missionbg.org/bg/>
- Crime Prevention Fund – IGA www.iga-bg.org

The pandemic situation found unexpected or little expected reflection in new convictions. 786 people were convicted in 2020 of violating quarantine. This is clear from the data provided by the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office. Eight people were effectively convicted, 244 received suspended sentences, and 528 were sentenced to probation. In the first year of the pandemic, 3,253 quarantine violations were launched. 971 people were taken to court. Prosecutors have filed 484 indictments, 474 agreements and two motions for release from criminal liability and imposition of a fine. twelve people were acquitted.

Cyprus

Introduction

A person who commits any crime, according to the regulations of the state, is required to serve a specific prison sentence, in accordance with the judgment of the court. Upon completion of this sentence, the person is released from prison to be reintegrated into society. Unfortunately, the prison sentence inevitably has an impact on the personal and professional life of the individual. The prison environment completely isolates the individual from society and the working environment as is required to serve the sentence in the central prisons. The reintegration is a difficult issue the individual must face. First, the person will no longer have white criminal record. This will make the potential employer to be suspicious of rather to recruit them with effect the disappointment, the isolation, and the economic disaster of the former prisoner.

For this reason, the social reintegration of released persons must begin while the individual is still in prison and during his sentence, especially the last period before his release. Successful models from other countries showing the effective reintegration of such individuals will be of help. The republic of Cyprus has begun to understand the need to employ ex-prisoners through the creation of a scheme. The Department of Labour & Social Security has already started “Scheme that provides incentives for the Labor Restoration of Detainees”¹². This project will send a very optimistic message, if it is carried out successfully because it will reinforce the change of the Cypriot culture in society in such way that a second chance is given to these individuals to take back their lives.

Prison Department in Cyprus – General Information

The Prison Department in Cyprus is under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and is responsible for the safe custody of convicts. Convicts and remand prisoners are held in the Central Prison located in Nicosia, in a building built by the English in the late 19th century. Today the Central Prison consists of eleven wards of the closed prison, eight for men, one for women and another one, which accommodates young people up to the age of 21.

After the declaration of Democracy of Cyprus Republic in 1960, the change in the perceptions of the mission and the purpose of the Prison began. Particularly, the last years the prisons ceased to be considered as a place of torture, punishment, and isolation of inmates from society. Nowadays, it is considered as a place of preparation to reintegrate into society as a useful and self-sustained citizen, and as an individual that can undertake his familial and social responsibilities.

Aiming to the achievement of this mission of the Prison, new legislations have been introduced for the treatment of detainees, adapted from European models and from the international statements on the protection of Human Rights. New systems of education and professional training are enriched and the environment as well as the living conditions and work are improved.

Demographics / Statistics

According to a survey conducted by the Statistical Office for the year 2018, the prison population by prisoner status,

¹² http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/dmlschemes_en/dmlschemes_en?OpenDocument

nationality, age, and gender is 648. In detail, 616 are men of which the convicts are 4 Cypriot citizens men and 1 woman under 21 years old. 262 are men and 10 women with Cypriot citizenship over 21 years old. At the same time, there are 5 male foreign citizens under 21 and 158 males and 11 females over 21. Below you can see a detailed table from the Statistical Office.

TOTAL			CONVICT								IN CUSTODY							
			CYPRIOT				FOREIGNERS				CYPRIOT				FOREIGNERS			
			UNDER 21		ABOVE 21		UNDER 21		ABOVE 21		UNDER 21		ABOVE 21		UNDER 21		ABOVE 21	
TOTAL	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
648	616	32	4	1	262	10	5	0	158	11	5	0	81	3	8	0	93	7

M: men W: women Age of 21.

Pandemic Covid – 19

Cyprus is among the Council of Europe member states that released the highest percentage of prisoners during the pandemic, according to the SPACE II survey conducted by the University of Lausanne on behalf of the Council of Europe. The 16% reduction also resulted in a decrease in overcrowding in Central Prisons, according to the survey data.

According to a report in Cyprus (June 2020), out of a total of 762 prisoners, 121 were released from prison. Consequently, overcrowding in prisons has decreased, as for every 100 places there were 134.6 prisoners until 1 January, a number that dropped to 108.8 prisoners on 15 April. On 15 April, the total number of prisoners fell to 616, including those in pre-trial detention, when the total capacity of the Central Prison was 566.¹³

The Law on Prisoners

The Law on Prisoners under Cypriot Law, Decree 121/97, in the section "Nature and purpose of prisoners' work" 1263/89 (2) states that "Prisoners' work must be aimed at the creative use of the time spent in prison, contributing to their vocational training, maintaining or increasing their potential for employment after their release and contributing to their smooth reintegration into society. " and 1263/90 (2) "Prisoners must be given at least one free day each week and sufficient time to participate in educational programs and other activities provided for in the context of their treatment and education with a view to their smooth reintegration into society."¹⁴

Policies

The Minister of Justice and Republic Order and the President of the Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation

¹³ <https://m.kathimerini.com.cy/gr/kypros/ereyna-meiwthike-o-yperplithysmos-stis-kentrikes-fylakes>

¹⁴ http://www.cylaw.org/KDP/data/1997_1_121.pdf

(OEB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the promotion of an employment scheme for released prisoners with incentives for companies in October 2020.¹⁵

The aim of the Memorandum is the smooth and full integration into society of those who are released from prison and dealing with the phenomenon of their recidivism and return to prison. For this purpose, the Scheme for subsidizing will optimize the wage costs of unemployed released prisoners. The Scheme was recently approved by the Council of Ministers and is part of a project of the Ministry of Labour. According to an announcement, the approved amount is 4 million euros and will be financed by the European Social Fund.

The Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB) is the most representative national employer organization, politically independent, with a mission to promote and support the benefits of Cypriot businesses in Cyprus, in the European Union (EU) and internationally. In March 2021, the Ministry of Labour announced the recent data regarding the interest of employers in hiring former prisoners, through the provision of incentives, and seems that does not disappoint the OEB in terms of the effort it is making to reintegrate released prisoners into the labour market.

Ms Panagiotou, the Director of the Labour Relations and Social Policy Department of the OEB said “with targeted actions, planning and methodology, we hope that through cooperation with the relevant bodies, we will in the near future significantly increase the number of interested companies for hiring people who have served prison sentences”. She also noted that from the information that the federation has received so far from the Department of Prisons, there are currently people with all levels of academic backgrounds and experience in 26 different professional categories. "What is interesting is the work carried out in the schools of the Prisons Department, as they provide educational programs of formal education, informal education, vocational training, as well as the opportunity to participate in higher and higher education programs. With proper planning and coordination between the OEB and the Prisons Department, we will be able in the future, through monitoring the needs of the labour market, to develop programs that are directly linked to them", Ms Panagiotou added.¹⁶

Guidance Center for Rehabilitation of Prisoners

The policy of Ministry of Justice and Public Order of the Republic of Cyprus and by extension the Prison Department is supported upon four major issues:

1. Safety

¹⁵

[http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/252C47CC41CC083DC22586090044BE68/\\$file/%CE%A3%CE%A7%CE%95%CE%94%CE%99%CE%9F%20%CE%91%CE%A0%CE%9F%CE%A6%CE%A5%CE%9B%CE%91%CE%9A%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%98%CE%95%CE%9D%CE%A4%CE%A9%CE%9D.pdf](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/252C47CC41CC083DC22586090044BE68/$file/%CE%A3%CE%A7%CE%95%CE%94%CE%99%CE%9F%20%CE%91%CE%A0%CE%9F%CE%A6%CE%A5%CE%9B%CE%91%CE%9A%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%98%CE%95%CE%9D%CE%A4%CE%A9%CE%9D.pdf)

¹⁶ <https://www.philenews.com/oikonomia/anthropoi/article/1146047/choris-desma-me-exeidikefsi-kai-peira>

2. Humanitarian treatment
3. Education
4. Rehabilitation

There is a guidance center for out of prison employment and rehabilitation of prisoners. In this center, the prisoners stay for a period that cannot exceed twelve months or be shorter than one month. They work in the free market, on the same terms of employment as the rest of the employees. The center has a kitchen that can be used by the prisoners, to prepare and cook their food at their own expense. Not many facilities are provided because the prisoners spend many hours of the day outside the Prison and are allowed to house visits more often. Female prisoners who are selected for out of Prison employment continue to stay in the women's wing.

Further to the above, there are workshops in prisons where convicts work under supervision and guidance of instructors and are encouraged to learn one of the following trades: car mechanics, tailors, shoemakers, barbers, plumbers, painters, builders, electricians.

The general education offered to them, in addition to personal development, will help them to provide support for their families and the smooth social integration. Education will help them not to repeat the same mistakes that led them to prison. It is worth noting that the courses in which prisoners participate, help them to develop their self-confidence, which is low mainly due to their confinement in prison.

For their reintegration into society, it is also important to note that the opportunities provided in prison for vocational training skills can be used after release for employment purposes. Finding a job is considered a very important aspect of life after release. The training provided in prison, as mentioned before, provides opportunities for those who take part in courses to gain a general education which they have not had the opportunity to receive.

Main challenges

One of the main problems of the Prison is overpopulation and the large number of foreign detainees. Based on an article in November 2019, the House Human Rights Committee expressed concern over the Central Prison's capacity. They point that there are 762 inmates even though the total capacity is only up to 566¹⁷.

According to Council of Europe Portal, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) conduct a report¹⁸ that raises concerns over persistent allegations of police ill-treatment and shortcomings of the current system of investigations into such allegations. The report mentions the situation in different departments like Menoyia Detention Center, Nicosia Central Prison, Athalassa Psychiatric Hospital and at Ariadni Home.

¹⁷ <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/cyprus-republic>

¹⁸ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cpt/-/anti-torture-committee-publishes-report-on-its-visit-to-cyprus>

In their reply, the Cypriot authorities informed the CPT about renovation of several wards of the specific Departments and the establishment of two committees which have started to examine the revision of the law on psychiatric care and the development of a new protocol for the hospital in the light of CPT's recommendations. The Cypriot authorities acknowledge the poor situation found in Ariadni Home and state that measures are being taken to improve living conditions there. The report and the reply were made public at the request of the Cypriot authorities.

Conclusion

The social reintegration of released persons must begin while the individual is still in prison and during his sentence, especially the last period before his release. Successful models from Europe showing the effective reintegration of such individuals will be of help. Further to that, there are workshops in prisons where convicts work under supervision and guidance of instructors and are encouraged to learn different trades.

Prison is considered as a place of preparation to reintegrate into society as a useful and self-sustained citizen, and as an individual that can undertake his familial and social responsibilities. Aiming to the achievement of this mission of the Prison, new legislations have been introduced for the treatment of detainees, adapted from European models and from the international statements on the protection of Human Rights.

The Republic of Cyprus signed an important Memorandum by the Ministry of Justice and the Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB) for the rehabilitation of released prisoners and their smooth reintegration into society. The benefit of the implementation of the Memorandum is twofold, since on the one hand, released prisoners will be able to have a secure job from the first day of their release from prison and on the other hand, companies are given an incentive, through funding, to hire those released from prison.

One of the main problems of the Prison is overpopulation and the large number of foreign detainees. Based on an article in November 2019, the House Human Rights Committee expressed concern over the Central Prison's capacity. In 2020 during the pandemic of COVID-19, according to the SPACE II survey conducted by the University of Lausanne on behalf of the Council of Europe, Cyprus is among the Council of Europe member states that released the highest proportion of prisoners. There were also some Best Practices from The Association for the Protection and Rights of Prisoners and Support for Released Prisoners from Cyprus and Human Rights 360 from Greece, which aim to help ex-prisoners reintegrate into society.

Czech Republic

Czech prison population and conditions in prisons

As of 16th of April 2021, there was 19 041¹⁹ prisoners in the Czech prisons in 35 prisons, which is more than 2 400 prisoners less than the average number of prisoners in 2019, which equaled to 21 448 (PSCR 2020). This sharp decline can be explained by the COVID-19 situation in the Czech Republic (CR) that began worsening in the second half of September 2020, only to end up for the CR to be the worst country in terms of virus spreading and number of deaths in Europe from January to March 2021. Due to this situation, the Prison Service of the CR declared in 2020 that it would limit intake of new prisoners (those who were sentenced for banal property crimes) to protect personnel and prisoners in prisons. Because of this, the number of released persons was higher than newcomers and the total number declined. From the perspective of prison population rate (the number of prisoners per 100 000 inhabitants), the CR had 201 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2019, which is high above the EU average (111 in 2018 according to Eurostat²⁰) and the second highest in the EU (only Lithuania had a higher rate). 59 % percent of the prison population was sentenced for a property crime (PSCR 2020).

In the pre-covid situation, prisons were often overcrowded – 21 448 inmates as the average number in 2019 was 103 percent of the formal system capacity (in the rate of 4 square meters of living space for each prisoner); the average degree of crowding in Heřmanice prison was 127 percent, in Oráčov 125 percent, and in Kuřim 122 percent (overall, 18 out of 35 prisons were at over 100 percent capacity) (Mertl 2021; PSCR 2020). The overcrowding along with understaffed prisons results in high personnel-prisoners ratio that is typically one to several hundred and tends to undermine quality and availability of therapeutic and counselling work with inmates. At the same time, therapeutic/counselling programs are destabilized by the conflict with prison employment that is prioritized, resulting in the ‘work-first and everything else later’ policy in most prisons. This policy also hinders retraining and upskilling in general (Mertl 2021).

Imprisonment is regulated by the Law 169/1999 Sb., whereas some other laws, mainly Labour Code (Law 262/2006 Sb.), are suspended during serving a sentence (however, for example, inmates are not stripped of their right to vote in elections). Labour conditions and remuneration for being employed are also regulated by the government decree 361/2017 Sb. that defines four levels of remuneration for prison employment:

- Non-qualified work (remuneration is then 50 percent of the minimum income in the CR, approximately €265 a month).
- Work requiring a vocational certificate (70 percent of the minimum income, approx. €371 a month).
- Work requiring graduation or a bachelor’s degree (95 percent of the minimum income, approx. €504 a month).

¹⁹ <https://www.vscr.cz/>

²⁰ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Prison_statistics#One_prisoner_for_every_896_people_in_the_EU-27_in_2018)

[explained/index.php?title=Prison_statistics#One_prisoner_for_every_896_people_in_the_EU-27_in_2018](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Prison_statistics#One_prisoner_for_every_896_people_in_the_EU-27_in_2018)

- Work requiring a master's university degree (120 percent of the minimum income, approx. €636 a month).

About 90 % of inmates are classified to the first level and the remuneration amount is stated without mandatory deductions (social and health insurance, enforcement proceedings, and savings for the release). Most jobs are unqualified, repetitive, and usually without any chance to learn a new skill. Inmates may work for prisons, other state/public institutions, or a private company. In case of prisons and other public/state institutions, there is an obligation to accept the offer; if an inmate refuses the offer, he/she is stripped of all the benefits in prison, must pay for serving the sentence (which is otherwise paid from public money), and loses claim for a prison social assistance (about €4 per month). Working for a private company is refusable without any consequences. Thus, inmates' right to choose an employer is somewhat limited and they cannot associate in unions, or otherwise unionise (Mertl 2021). In 2019, the prison employment rate was 59 % of all inmates eligible to work (PSCR 2020); as of 16th of April 2021, the rate was about 51 %²¹. It should be noted, however, that this number includes inmates trained in prison school programs and undergoing a specialized therapeutic program, as these inmates are classified as employed for bureaucratic reasons.

Most inmates have a debt and enforcement proceedings; in average, an inmate has a debt between €24 074 and €26 926. This kind of indebtedness is regarded as huge in the CR and it cannot be repaid without a debt counselling and beginning the procedure of personal bankruptcy.

Retraining and school programs in prisons are extremely limited in their availability. In nine prisons, there is a possibility to obtain formal upper secondary education in various kinds of three- or two-year apprenticeship as well as complete short-term (lasting several weeks) learning courses (again, various kinds, such as basic PC skills, ceramics, locksmith, bricklayer, CNC worker etc.). However, only a tiny portion of inmates attends apprenticeships and courses; in 2019, it was only 1 672 inmates (592 of them attended a long-term apprenticeship programs, while 1080 a short-term course). At the same time, almost half of prison population (about 46 % at the end of 2019) has finished only lower secondary or second stage of basic education level so they do not have any employment qualification (for more information about education level of Czech prison population, see table 1), which could be limiting for them in terms of post-prison employment (PSCR 2020). Data about completion of programs and courses are not available. The rest of 26 prisons secure retraining, education, and courses individually and there are no formal data available. Generally, there are four problems that limit possibilities for retraining and further education.

First, attending formal long-term apprenticeships programs is economically disadvantageous for inmates because they cannot combine study with employment. As a result, they are bureaucratically classified as employed and receive prison social assistance (about €4 per month). Due to securing their needs (e.g. being able to buy coffee or tobacco) and because of their debts, inmates choose prison employment instead of apprenticeship programs or short-term courses, if this option is available to them (Bareš, Mertl 2019).

²¹ <https://www.vscr.cz/>

Second, most prisons (26) do not have any special rooms or space and personnel available for education or retraining activities so, usually, they cannot carry out them and must rely on Labour offices outside and their offer of courses and retraining programs. Typically, due to the space restrictions, trainers from Labour offices cannot go through with the programs in prisons so prisons must send inmates via extramural activities to Labour offices to attend and complete retraining or other programs. And again, if an inmate is trustworthy enough and has been granted free movement, he/she is a valuable for employment reasons (most of private companies prefer employing an inmate who can arrive to a place of work) due to a scarcity of such inmates (there are no official number, but qualified estimate is between 2 000 and 3 000 inmates). And, as it has been said, inmates prefer prison employment remuneration as a short-term benefit rather than education as a long-term benefit (Bareš, Mertl 2019).

Third, there is a problem with the system of Labour offices, too. Registration to a labour office is based on permanent residency so anyone who would want to register must do so in the local labour office. The problem is that most inmates serve their sentence in other parts of the CR than they are or should be registered. It is possible to swap the documentation between Labour offices (for example, in the case of moving) but it cannot be done from prison. Thus, even if an inmate has an interest in retraining, be able to attend it, and there would be an adequate course, he/she would have to be imprisoned in a place of their permanent residency to be eligible for applying for retraining. At the same time, Labour offices are reluctant to cooperate with prisons and see inmates and ex-prisoners in a stigmatising prism (Bareš, Mertl 2019; Tomášek et al. 2017).

Fourth, even prisons prefer employment in unqualified positions as a short-term benefit because it raises the prison employment statistics, which is, unfortunately, *the* main standard for an evaluation of working with inmates. Apart from that, prisons prefer this option also for pragmatic reasons – they have limited possibilities to work therapeutically with or give counselling to inmates (there is a shortage of personnel, prisons are overcrowded, there is no space for therapeutic units or even rooms etc.). Thus, prison employment is a relatively accessible way to do *something* with inmates (Mertl 2021).

LESS THAN PRIMARY EDUCATION	0,22
PRIMARY OR FIRST STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION	1,64
LOWER SECONDARY OR SECOND STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION	45,77
UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION	46,73
POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION	0,14
TERTIARY EDUCATION	0,39
MASTER'S DEGREE	1,11
DOCTORAL DEGREE	0,19
SPECIAL SCHOOL	2,25
NOT AVAILABLE / NOT IDENTIFIED	1,57

According to SARPO, a diagnostic and database software implemented by the Prison service, inmates have various intersecting needs: nearly 54 percent of prisoners have problems with alcohol and/or drug use, nearly 60 percent have insecure or no housing, 73 percent have debts that they are unable to pay, 46 percent have a behaviour disorder combined with impulsiveness, a lack of social skills, and/or have experienced other psychological and psychosocial traumas; psychosis was identified in approximately 7 percent of prisoners; and nearly 18 percent had undergone psychological treatment in the past (Drahý et al. 2018; Mertl 2021). Yet, in a long-term perspective, therapeutic and counselling programs are available only for about 10 % of prison population, despite the fact that programs effectively decrease the recidivism rate (Jiříčka, Kejřová 2015; Jiříčka, Prokeřová 2012). In fact, the Czech prison system officially adheres to the RNR principles but needs of inmates are reflected in their individual prison plan only very limitedly in practice due to the various issues (lack of personnel, not enough rooms/space, but also prevailing repressive culture among prison personnel, limited cooperation with NGOs providing social services etc.). Thus, prison employment is prioritized to report at least some activity with a larger portion of inmates (Mertl 2021).

In main (and only) Czech policy document dealing with the Czech prison system, most of the issues already mentioned are also identified, mainly drug abuse, insufficiency of therapeutic programs availability, lack of personnel and its quality, obsolete and unsatisfactory prison buildings, recidivism rate, and availability and quality of healthcare. Some issues, such as conflict between prison employment and therapeutic/counselling programs, and short sentences, are mentioned but not properly discussed (MJ 2016). However, it has been proven that these issues are among the most pressing ones (Mertl 2020, 2021). The conflict was introduced above so let us focus briefly on the short sentences, i.e. sentences up to one year, that are pointless from the therapeutic and counselling point of view because when the bureaucratic process of entering and assessment of a newcomer is done, the process of releasing begins. Many prisoners stated that the year they spent in prison was a waste of time for them because they cannot study, retrain, finish short-term courses, or even work; all they could do was wait for the release (Mertl 2020). At the end of 2019, the number of inmates with sentence one year or less was 4 216 (22 %) (PSCR 2020). In the context of retraining and gaining upper secondary education, it is also worth noting that the number of inmates serving sentences from one to three years was 7 273 (38 %) in the same period (PSCR 2020). The issue here is that because upper secondary education programs last two or three years the inmates with three year or less are automatically disqualified from the possibility to enroll. The same usually applies for therapeutic programs that last one year at a minimum. Inmates who had been serving this sentence length also complained about unproductive time spent in prison (Mertl 2020). Thus, the mere length of the sentence has huge negative impact on the staggering 60 % of Czech prison population and its (un)productive spending of time in prison.

Ex-prisoners' social position and intersectionality of their problems

Ex-prisoners are mainly on their own after the release as there is no institution or system that would guide and aid them during the reentry/reintegration process so many former inmates return to prisons (there is no official statistics, but qualified estimation is as much as two-thirds). Social curators are the only public/state institutions that

target ex-prisoners as a specific group for social work, nevertheless they do not work only with ex-prisoners but also with other target groups, mainly persons who lost their home and other groups with subsistence problems. Apart from working with various target groups, the social curators fight with understaffing and unavailability of services they provide in some parts of the CR. Apart from the social curators, there is also the Probation and mediation service (PMS) as a specific institution that targets ex-prisoners; however, only those who were released on parole. At the same time, it needs to be said that PMS has the same personnel and coverage problems as the social curators, and it is primarily a control institution whose goal is not to provide social work, although, in some cases, probation officers approach the parolees in a manner resembling social work (Mertl, Bareš 2020). Both social curators and the PMS must cooperate with the third major type of entity that works with ex-prisoners – NGOs. NGOs are an integral part of the reentry/reintegration process since they are often the only entities that provide specialised therapeutic or counselling social services. However, their financing is project based and, thus, unstable, resulting in fluctuation of personnel and services provided as well as limited social services net. Overall, huge regional discrepancies in terms of available institutional and social services are no exception in the CR. For example, it may well be that in some regions there are (well) working social curators but scarce social services provided by NGOs, some regions have robust social services net but non-functional social curators or the PMS and so on. In any case, the non-systemic approach to post-prison work with ex-prisoners is a factor that has a significant impact on the reentry/resettlement success .

As for problems or issues that ex-prisoners must face after their release, there are several of them that were identified as key for successful reentry/resettlement (Bareš, Mertl 2016; Mertl 2020; Mertl, Bareš 2018, 2020; Tomášek et al. 2017). That includes unstable or no housing, material deprivation, drug abuse, debts and enforcement proceedings, health issues, problematic relationships with close persons (and past toxic relationships), prisonization effect, and feeling of stigmatisation (reinforced by criminal records that is checked by employers when inmates apply for a job). It is important to acknowledge that usually ex-prisoners have some combination of these issues that needs to be identified and worked with in its complexity and as effectively as possible. At the same time, some issues are currently unsolvable because they are of systemic nature so the CR needs policy and legislative solutions to deal with them. Typically, this applies to housing that is very scarce in the CR and there is no state social housing policy (social housing is implemented by municipalities, which tend to enforce housing ready policy, instead of housing first, and have limited number of flats at their disposal due to a privatisation process in 1990s).

Because of the ex-prisoners' complex needs there is only exceptionally an opportunity for retraining or other forms of upskilling after the release. An ex-prisoner usually does not have too much money saved from prison employment, immediately must secure some form of housing, register at the Labour office to receive social assistance, and it is expected that he/she would secure employment as soon as possible. In the case of the release on parole, there are also mandatory visits at a probation office and possibly other requirements imposed by a court. Frequently, ex-prisoners also attend drug therapy programmes, debt counselling, and sometimes psychotherapeutic programmes or a psychologist. It is no surprise that some ex-prisoners complained about too much obligations imposed on them,

especially in cases when children were also involved (Mertl, Bareš 2020). In such a situation, retraining or upskilling is set aside, as ex-prisoners do not have time, money, and capacity to pursue another long-term goal. Instead, they prefer immediate monetary gain due to their material deprivation (as well as debts and enforcement proceedings) and rather take an unqualified job than retrain and secure a qualified job.

If there is a room for retraining, it is typically provided by a Labour office but there are also other, mainly local, non-state providers, such as companies or certified providers. Ex-prisoners are often retrained in handling warehouse equipment (such as forklift etc.), welding, locksmithing, or other crafts. As for social skills, programmes are provided only by NGO via grant financing. The common barriers are: regional and local discrepancies in retraining and courses offers; vague conditions set by Labour offices under which ex-prisoners are entitled to apply for retraining; ex-prisoner' insufficient time and money for retraining and upskilling; scarcity of social skill programmes due to the often year to year grant financing (Bareš, Mertl 2019; Mertl, Bareš 2018). Thus, there is no usual training, everyone gets assistance on an individual basis and based on (non-) functionality of regional and local network of NOGs, the PMS, social curators, and Labour office.

Greece

Introduction: setting the scene

Individuals who were in prison constitute a specific population, being at risk of marginalization, with particular needs, personal, psychological and social ones. Most of the times former prisoners lack essential personal and social skills and they have limited opportunities to re-enter society and to be re-integrated successfully. The aim of the present report is to outline the current situation of former prisoners in Greece regarding the fundamental sectors of life. The personal development and social entry chances through specific rehabilitation approaches and cultivation of knowledge-skills-competencies reflect an important social issue that it is crucial to be resolved.

The labour and social reintegration of former prisoners has always been a central issue of penitentiary policies both at national and international level. Ensuring the right to work and the regular social integration of the individuals in society has been proven to contribute significantly, in combination with other factors, to achieving the primary goal of any penitentiary system, that is neither more nor less reducing relapse (Davis et al, 2013). Efficient services regarding rehabilitation and social integration are expected to have exceptionally beneficial effects on former prisoners' socialization and mentality. In this context, there are plenty of examples from many European countries where efforts have been made to develop social enterprises inside and outside penitentiaries, to employ detainees while they are incarcerated and to provide them with employment and rehabilitation after their release.

The social integration of former prisoners needs to be examined also under the lens of how the penitentiary system functions as a whole. Imprisonment seems to be a "total institution", completely detached from the society and the community, having as primary goal to control the behavior of the prisoners (Goffman, 1994). A former prisoner in Greece shares: *"Actually, there are two penalties imposed: the one, when you get into the prison and the other when you go out of the prison...Everything starts from inside. You get into the prison in order to be retributed and you go out without family, without a job, without interests and with a criminal record"* (Tsounakou-Rousia E., 2016). Leaving conditions in prison cause also among others health and mental health issues in individuals, which may already have a "broken" physical and mental health (Leese et al., 2006; Preti & Cascio, 2006; Anselmi & Mirigliani, 2010; McCay, 2010; EMCDDA, 2012).

The report aims to shed some light on the main issues former prisoners are facing. More specifically, at the beginning the national framework and legislation regarding prison and rehabilitation of former prisoners including also provided support and counselling services are analyzed. Additionally, health issues in terms of physical health, mental health and COVID-19 pandemic are presented based on research findings from national but EU level studies. As detailed below, education, vocational rehabilitation, social inclusion and personal assistant and self-improvement consist the key pillars of social integration. Since RECHANCE aims to create adequate educational material in order to support former prisoners in their social reintegration, education is elaborated in a more detailed way. In the context of RECHANCE project, a research was conducted, aiming to explore the needs of former prisoners and of educators working with prisoners and former prisoners. Results are explained and discussed in terms of their

implication. Last but not least, a review of good practices, trainings and projects in national context was also carried out, in order to be used for the development of the educational material of the RECHANCE project.

Social Reintegration and Rehabilitation of former prisoners

“Greek Social and Solidarity Economy” (SSE), whose development has not followed the European example up to this time, is still in a premature stage (British Council, 2017). It is a dynamically growing and changing field, but the necessity for further support and enhancement is certainly urgent, particularly when it comes to the formulation and the renewal of skills development, networking, finance and enabling policies. It is worth mentioning that the responsible bodies have done little to no work regarding the reintegration of former prisoners in the labour market. Community reintegration of former prisoners, in general, is a demanding process that constitutes a central issue for Greek society. The situation deteriorated when the economic crisis of 2009 exploded and was the major cause of the gradual escalation for the stunting of SSE and for the lack of a collaborative culture and, consequently, of strategic investors.

Prisoners and former prisoners in Greece: national framework and data

According to the data of the Greek Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, by the end of 2020 the number of total populations in prison (including pre-trial detainees/ remand prisoners) is 11.459 people which equates to a rate 107/100.000 persons. After the consideration of the annual figures, it is obvious that the imprisonment rates have been increased in comparison with the existing data recorded in 2000 (7.625 prisoners in total). Year by year, the rate is gradually multiplied especially after 2014, a year where the financial crisis consequences intensified. Moreover, from 11.459 people 26,6% are pretrial detainees and the rest are condemned prisoners. The rate of women, who are in jail is 4.5% of total population. Also, by examining the origins of the prisoners in 2018, it is noticed that 52,7% are foreign people. As for the level of occupancy, it reaches 113,2%, based on official capacity data, which overcomes the number of existing facilities (World Prison Brief, 2020).

At the same time, there is available data about the educational level of prisoners in Greece and numbers that demonstrate the interest of prisoners to take part in educational programmes during their stay in prison. The low educational level of inmates constitutes a reality unrelated to the time or place, a fact supported by all studies which have tackled this particular topic, as well as by the official statistics of every country. It has been found that most inmates have not completed their basic education and they lack vocational specialization (Vacca, 2004; Theophilou, 2004). The majority of prisoners in Greece are less educated than the general population and have negative experiences from the education system.

According to a study conducted by the National Center of Social Studies in six Greek prisons, it has been found that only 25% of interviewees were high school graduates, while only 6% had high or university education, which means that the majority (69%) had failed to complete basic education. In addition, in a study carried out in Korydallos prison in 2005, it has been concluded that 7.1% of inmates had high or higher education, 21.4% were Lyceum (upper

secondary school) graduates, with the majority (71.5%), being, in the best case, Junior High school (lower secondary school) graduates (Varvatakos, 2010). The above findings clearly depict the educational deficiency of inmates and highlight the imperative need for their education.

In this context, the General Secretariat for Lifelong Learning in cooperation with the Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation have put an effort to organize programmes and activities of formal and non-formal education in this field in different prisons of the country. The Second Chance Education programmes as part of the non-formal education are the most significant. Prisoners usually due to their low educational level feel disappointment and because of the fear of failure avoid participating in such educational actions. Besides the low educational level, they are also facing problems because they have low-self-esteem and lack of planning. Based on the statistical Analysis of the Greek Ministry in 2016-2017, 17% of the prisoners are illiterate, and only 15% have a high school degree. However, the majority of the inmates choose to be integrated in “Second Chance Schools” in the prisons that provide this facility, as this institution is not established in all the custodial foundations. There has been observed an increased number of prisoners who take the middle school degree during their imprisonment penalty, but the percentage of illiterate people still remains on the same level (Dimitrouli, Rigoutsou, 2017).

Legislation

The special characteristics of the prison system of Greece are mainly carried out in accordance with the current law 2776/1999 "Penitentiary Code" (Greece, Law 2776/1999 Penitentiary Code). Since 1999, there have been some reforms through the passing of laws and Presidential Decrees to improve the original penitentiary system. There has been observed some improvements in the legislation framework and more specifically in Law 3860/2010 that refers to the *“Improvements of the Criminal Legislation for juvenile offenders, prevention and treatment of victimization and juvenile delinquency”* and some individual articles concerning: *“Beneficial calculation of days of punishment for prisoners and defendants for work or employment in programmes or studies”*, *“The right to vote of prisoners”*, and the *“Establishment of a Therapeutic Team of the Center Detoxification of drug addicts Eleona Thebes”*. Additionally, there is also the law 4521/2018, according to which, there should be school units in all prisons of Greece that can offer the prisoners the completion or the beginning of their studies, depending on their educational level.

In February 2018, a three-year strategic plan for the penitentiary system (2018-2020), drafted by the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights and the General Secretariat for Crime Policy and highlighted four main crime policy pillars: humanism, security, reintegration and transparency. Some of the most important strategic goals for the penitentiary system, according to plan, are:

- the improvement of living conditions in prisons and the modernization of infrastructures
- the development and training of staff and prison management
- the reduction of the prison population, the expansion of credible alternative measures
- the prevention and control of juvenile delinquency

- the preparation for social reintegration and post-release care
- the security for prison staff and prisoners, transparency and accountability
- the healthcare services provision in cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

Accordingly, there are some essential policies and legislation that concern the social reintegration of former prisoners after their release. According to Law 4491/2017, there are sectoral references and allusions regarding reduction of juvenile delinquency, with a view to better social and professional reintegration of prisoners. Furthermore, it takes care of the evaluation of the Anti-Crime Policy programs and actions implemented by the competent services, as well as for the feedback of the new planned policies with the findings of the evaluations (General Secretariat of Anti-Crime Policy, 2017). Prisoners without financial means in most cases can obtain clothing from the social work departments of prisons. After release, they have partial support for NGOs and CSOs in order to be able to cover their basic needs such as accommodation, nutrition and hygiene (Koulouris, Aloskofis, 2013).

Confinement: provided services and limitations

In Greece, there are 34 custodial institutions. There is also a Youth Education Centre, which hosts up to twenty-five minors, both Greeks and foreigners. The majority (27 institutions) operate on the mainland. Seven prisons are located on the islands of Crete (four), Kos (one), Chios (one) and Corfu (one). They are split into three main categories: general, special, and therapeutic. General custodial institutions are further divided into type A (12 institutions, for inmates awaiting trial and for convicted inmates serving prison sentences for minor crimes) and type B (11 institutions, for inmates convicted to prison sentences imposed for more serious criminal acts defined as felonies, lifers included).

There are special prisons including rural units (3), the central open productive unit (bakery), institutions for juveniles and young adults (4, one of them rural) and one semi-liberty centre/ department in Thiva prison for women. In 2017, a small part of the female prison in Thiva was transformed into an agricultural unit. Male juveniles (children 15-18 years old) are separated in one establishment (formally a general, which is actually a special, juvenile institution) and young adults (18-21 years old and, exceptionally, for educational reasons, up to 25 years old) are detained in special institutions (Koulouris, Pantelidou, Spyrea, 2018).

As far as it concerns the health sector, the three therapeutic institutions include one general hospital operating as a first aid and long care unit, just integrated into the National Health System and renamed as “Special Health Centre for Prisoners” (Koulouris, Aloskofis, 2013). Despite the well-organized separation properties, the Penitentiary System presents severe shortcomings. In fact, there is not a common organized educational framework that is liable to every prison faculty. Otherwise, every prison adopts separate educational programmes, considering the educational status of the detainees. Second chance schools constitute the most common education programme and it is realized in 10 Greek prisons. Additionally, there is no provision for illiterate prisoners or prisoners who do not have a high

school degree. The limited number of prisoners who want to take their exams, they should be transferred on school faculties (Mysirli, 2020).

Support and Counselling services

Social workers, who belong to prison staff and are responsible for prisoners' support, safety and surveillance during their stay in prison, were appointed for the first time in 1973. Over the following years, the presence of psychologists, sociologists and other specialists in prison was increased. The first detoxification prison centre, established in Eleonas, Thebes in 2000, confirms the increasing presence of social workers. In the same, one sociologist and one criminologist were also appointed in the central prison of the country, Korydallos Custodial Institution. In 2007 more than twenty psychologists were added to the small number of specialists, being the second "most represented" professionals with a scientific qualification in the field (in total 26 officers), after social workers (64 officers) (Koulouris, Pantelidou, Spyrea, 2018). Responsibility of social workers is also to facilitate the communication with prisoner's families, employers, various services, organizations or individuals related to their social rehabilitation.

Counselling and treatment for drug addicted prisoners is also offered in some prisons by external organizations such as the Centre for the Treatment of Addicted Persons (KETHEA, see bibliography) and the Organization Against Drugs (OKANA, see bibliography), both supervised by the Ministry of Health. KETHEA staffed fully by the prison service (therapeutic personnel, custodial and perimeter security staff), for example, runs 18 Counselling Programmes, covering most of the prisons in Greece in order to diagnose and evaluate addicts' problems, to motivate addicts to tackle their health problems, to reduce addicts' involvement with substances, inform, to motivate and to prepare addicts to join a counselling or treatment programme, either in prison or outside in society.

There is no doubt that former prisoners continue to need help and support after release. According to article 81 of the 1999 Penitentiary Code, post release integration of ex-prisoners to their social, professional and family environment are tasks assigned to "EPANODOS" (see bibliography), a non-profit -Athens based- private law legal entity, supervised by the Ministry of Citizen Protection. This after-care structure is staffed by volunteers and affiliated collaborators, who cooperate with prison social services and offer counselling, vocational training, minimal financial support and a short-term housing, to facilitate the social reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners. More particularly, "EPANODOS" usually supports rehabilitation in two ways: in the first place by providing practical help immediately after release with phone call cards, meal vouchers and a short-term accommodation, afterwards, through the implementation of EU programmes providing legal counselling, employment support and psychosocial services as well, addressing the varied barrier which may face during their integration.

It is worth mentioning that most of the counselling organizations in Greece provide their services to prisoner's families and friends, with the view to redefine and restore their relationship with their addicted relatives/friends. Except from KETHEA and its Family Support Centre, there is another one Association in Greece known for its support to (former) prisoners, based in Athens and called "Onisimos". More particularly, this association assists prisoners

during their stay in prison or immediately after release and their families as well, with legal support, employment, educational support and psychological support. In cooperation with social workers “Onisimos” contributes also to the release of prisoners, but under strict terms.

Health and mental health needs and issues of prisoners and former prisoners

Physical and mental health status of prisoners and former prisoners is influenced by various factors, such as political, social, economic, environmental and institutional factors. Previous and current health status, when entering the prison, is also an extra factor that affects them (de Viggiani, 2007). Most of the research is focused on the health and mental health issues during the time of imprisonment, mostly because of the living conditions in prison, the internment and the barriers of accessing appropriate physical and mental health care. Based on this we have also included information about the health status of prisoners and not only of former prisoners, both at national and international level.

Health issues and needs

Most of the prisoners have high levels of morbidity in chronic conditions, communicable diseases and sexually transmitted diseases – STD (Macalino et al., 2005, Aerts et al., 2006, Thomas et al., 2008, Gupta & Altice, 2009). Tuberculosis seems to be the most frequent infectious disease. Regarding STD, HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, which is also a sexually transmitted infection are the most common diseases (Dolan et al., 2007; Christensen et al., 2000; Vescio et al., 2008)

High percentage of the aforementioned health issues are due to various risk factors, such as HIV infection, use of intravenous drugs, overcrowding, bad ventilation in detention centers, mal- and undernutrition, lack of housing and difficulties in accessing healthcare services (Bone et al., 2000; MacNeil et al., 2005).

Other health issues that prisoners face is smoking, use of drugs and alcohol consumption (Koulierakis et al., 2000; Fazel et al., 2006; Richmond et al., 2012; Public Health England, 2014). In a study in Greece, it was found that smoking increased by 20% inside the prison (Geitona & Milioni, 2016). Additionally, obesity, malnutrition, lack of physical activity and activity in general, dental problems, arthritis and muscle pain seem to be other issues in prisoners (Osborn et al., 2003; Nobile et al., 2011; Herbert et al., 2012).

Prisoners report poor perceived health status and quality of life, while a majority mentions that their health status deteriorated inside the prison (Nobile et al., 2011).

In a recent study in Greece, in one penitentiary, the percentage of non-communicable diseases was at 22,5% - general surgeries, cardiovascular diseases, allergies and skin problems. Frequency of STDs were quite small, while HBV and HCV was between 8-12%. Vaccination coverage was reported to be in very small percentage. Most of the participants were active smokers (77%), although use of alcohol and other drugs was quite small (6%) (Giouvri, 2019).

Mental health issues and needs

Mental health of prisoners is an important and crucial aspect both during the imprisonment and during the rehabilitation process (Gunn et al., 1991). Research shows that most of the prisoners are facing mental health issues (Holley et al., 1995; Brinded et al., 2001; Fazel & Seewald, 2012). In Greece 44,1% of inmates reported a mental health issue or disorder (Giouvri, 2019). Depression, psychotic symptoms and personality disorders are the most common issues (Fazel & Danesh, 2002). However, there are also inmates that may not have a mental disorder but they suffer from thoughts, emotions and experiences in the detention centers (Nurse et al., 2003).

Suicide, suicidal thought and self-injuries are also common and may be present also after the release (Nurse et al., 2003; Birmingham, 2003; Fazel & Baillargeon, 2011; Hawton et al., 2013). Overpopulation seems to be a reason for self-injuries, while the number of suicides is 10 times higher in prisons (Anselmi & Mirigliani, 2010; McCay, 2010; EMCDDA, 2012).

According to a qualitative study in former prisoners in Greece, former prisoners mentioned feelings of disappointment because of the reaction of the society to them. Although they report positive and optimistic feelings after their release, in contrast to the previous feelings of anger, loneliness and fear during the imprisonment, these feelings are decreased due to feelings of fear and uncertainty for the future (Alexias, Togas, Mavropoulos & Bakali, 2016).

Former prisoners are in great danger of mortality, especially in the first fifteen days after their release. Death could be a consequence of overdose, cardiovascular disease and suicide (Pratt et al., 2006, Binswanger et al., 2007, Rosen et al., 2008; Andrews & Kinner, 2012).

Prisons and COVID-19 pandemic

The risk COVID-19 infection is high for prisoners and former prisoners as well, especially due to various environmental factors and living conditions in detention centers as mentioned above, along with limited number of tests and bad hygiene . Globally, 11 million prisoners have been infected by COVID-19 (UN, 2021) and at least 2,990 have died (Equal Justice Initiative, 2021). It is important to mention that during COVID-19 pandemic, release numbers have been increased, aiming to reduce the overcrowded condition in most of the prisons globally.

Research findings for prisons and COVID-19 pandemic are quite limited, however pandemic remains one of the most important health issues currently. Former prisoners need to be educated in COVID-19 preventive measures as well as in the significance of vaccines and vaccinations.

Key pillars of Social Reintegration: indicators

The “resettlement” process aims to eliminate the obstacles attributed to the social gap between the offenders and the community. The marginalization renders the prisoner hopeless and pathetic and deteriorates the transition to the community. According to the legislation framework, former offenders should have the right to return in society and be integrated in a workplace. Additionally, this gradual adjustment should be supported by social service and

qualified staff (psychologist, sociologist, social worker) of the prison. Before the release, it is vital that they actively and intensively participate in educational activities that contribute to cultivating their self-confidence and social skills. In this way, the prisoners are gradually boosting their social participation, they recall open educational experiences, while practicing to a daily social routine. More specifically, social participation and psychosocial guidance are prerequisites to be prepared to deal with the subsequent challenges after the release (Dimitroulis, Rigoutsou, 2017).

Social reintegration is often understood as an essential, but inefficient support given to former prisoners, with the acceptance that they will return to prison in all likelihood. The belief that prisoners end back in prison comes up as a result of their past experiences and behavior. This restorative process is based on correctional programmes aiming to enhance education, vocational rehabilitation, social inclusion and personal assistance (Griffiths, Dandurand, Murdoch, 2007).

The key-pillars of social reintegration are the following and are briefly described below:

a. Education. Education is a fundamental right that in the past used to be forbidden for persons incarcerated in a penitentiary institution. As far as it concerns the Greek legislation framework, this is mentioned in no.33 Article of the Penitentiary Code. Each detention facility organises educational and vocational training programmes for small groups of prisoners, in cooperation with specialised training centres, under the supervision of the Social Work Department, the sociologist and the Advisor for Education of the facility. All educational programmes are conducted in an appropriate room, inside or outside the detention facilities and at least one guard is available to escort and supervise the prisoners (Government Gazette, Law 58819/2003). The education of prisoners implies the acquisition of new knowledge in various fields (such as learning to read, write, computer operation, etc.) or/and the updating of existing know-how, and besides, it is a way to relieve stress and manage the negative emotions that inclusion creates. For this purpose, it is necessary to have school units in all detention facilities, with fully equipped units. Through education, former prisoners acquire knowledge and skills, necessary to claim a job in the labor market. Education also eliminates the risk of unemployment and recidivism.

b. Vocational rehabilitation. Undoubtedly, vocational rehabilitation is a controversial issue that concerns society. It is an irrefutable fact that the most common question among the former prisoners is associated with the vocational sector. The vast majority of former prisoners are reluctant to reveal their imprisonment penalty and they usually wonder if they should refer to this part of their life. This issue leads to other respective practical obstacles that are responded to the society. Analyzing the current situation through the available data, there are emerging doubts regarding the Greek society's maturity to accept and integrate this marginalized social group. National Employment Service (OAED) (see bibliography) programmes and "Second Chance Schools" tend to encourage prisoners and former prisoners' self-improvement and provide them professional qualifications that offer financial boosts and certain career opportunities. Although, the vast majority of these people are facing unbeatable obstacles and

difficulties in finding a new job. In the time of economic crisis, especially for a person that tends to be considered as “socially stigmatized”, the rehabilitation process becomes even more difficult. Organizing vocational seminars will contribute to prisoner’s self-respect and smooth employment reintegration process (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018). Additionally, OAED runs a sketchy effort to deal with the unemployment and focus on the job reintegration difficulties of incarcerated social groups such as former prisoners. Therefore, OAED subsidizes three times more the employers to hire employees of special groups (released, deported, etc.) than for other unemployed. The provision of appropriate counselling services to former-prisoners and the general population, as well, constitutes a big challenge for the Greek society, taking into account that the counselling services and the dedication to a specialist’s point of view can gradually eliminate the stereotypes and the discrimination of neglected social groups of society.

c. Social inclusion - Reintegration bodies. The continued imprisonment induces many implications in the mental health of the prisoners. The phenomenon of social exclusion is related to the stigmatization, marginalization, and isolation and consequently deteriorates the social rehabilitation process. The prisoners are unable to be socially integrated and have a greater than average chance of recidivism. Although, there are certain bodies and organisations that make special effort to obtain a smooth reintegration into society for as many former prisoners as possible. Taking into account the penitentiary code and the human rights order, these projects facilitate their socialization and foster their acceptance among the community (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018).

d. Personal assistance and self-improvement. The psychological support, the promotion and the enhancement of social participation are also in the responsibility of social workers, psychologists and sociologists (prison staff members, as already mentioned). For example, drug addicted prisoners can ask for counselling and treatment, offered in some prisons by external organizations such as the Organisation Against Drugs (OKANA) (see bibliography) which is supervised by the Ministry of Health. For example, the Centre for the Treatment of Drug Addicted Prisoners is one of the 34 penitentiaries, staffed fully by the prison service (therapeutic personnel, custodial and perimeter security staff), and offers a therapeutic programme. In any case, lots of people believe that the biggest challenge is the regularization of their communication, their relationships and also the reintegration in the daily pace of life. After all the isolation, ex-prisoners often tend to neglect themselves. In addition, it is observed that the relations with their family environment tend to be rusty, which makes the situation more difficult. The alienation of social relations in everyday life, the essential indifference to the problems of others, appears more pronounced in the case of minors, who have fewer ways of defending, resisting, and supporting their fundamental human rights compared to adults.

In the lens of education

Correctional education in Greece has been implemented since 1985 by the Greek Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the General Secretariat of Adult Education aiming at combating social exclusion and enhancing rehabilitation. These attempts not only facilitate the familiarization of the prisoners with basic learning skills, but also provide special instruction projects to prison workers. Until 2003, most of the educational courses were held by NGOs and

they were involved in an attempt to combat social exclusion and enhance public services. Next five years, the courses programmes are expanded with alternative learning materials that emphasize on psychological assistance. These specialized projects were conducted by private non- profit organizations and volunteers. Special primary and secondary schools are implemented in a limited number of prisons.

In 2004, the innovative institution of Second Chance School (SCS) was introduced in Greek prisons aiming to form a positive attitude towards learning and to facilitate prisoners' social inclusion. SCS are attended by adults who have graduated from primary school and have not completed lower secondary education. In 2004, the first SCS started operating in the Judiciary Prisons in Larisa. Since then SCS have been set up in several prisons of the country, i.e. in Korydallos (Ahtens), in Grevena (region of Southern Macedonia), in Larisa and in Trikala (region of Thessalia), in Diavata Salonica (region of Central Macedonia), in Eleonas Thives (region of Continental Greece) and in the end of 2014 in Domokos, which has now suspended its operation (Papaioannou V. et al. 2016).

SCS constitute a part of the Operational Programme "Education and Lifelong Learning" of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs (see bibliography) and they are co-funded by the European Union (European Social Fund). This type of schools lead to the acquisition of a certificate equivalent to secondary school diploma. The duration of the school curriculum is 18 months, divided in two study circles, each of them lasting one year. The curriculum differs from the normal education, as it is more flexible and follows an adapted teaching methodology and assessment of the trainees. These Schools aim to offer opportunities to adults entering again the education and training system. Their courses expect not to replace the basic educational programmes, but to supplement the prison's educational curriculum with innovative learning materials.

The educational process addressed to prisoners and former prisoners is an investment both for the correctional system and the society. It stands for a necessary institution that creates added value for the former prisoners themselves and, in effect, for all of us. Through education, therefore, the prisoner ideally develops, keeps his mind active and his spirit alive with the major aim of acquiring skills and qualifications for his professional rehabilitation.

Last but not least, it is worth pointing out the role of the adult educators in the whole education and rehabilitation process. Education of former prisoners should be governed by the basic principles of Adult Education and the customized educational methodology that fit to the background and the needs of the learners, but also requires appropriate training and awareness of trainers so that they will be able to face the peculiarities and difficulties of the specific educational framework. In order to acquire this information and know-how, they must in turn be further educated and specialized to be capable of corresponding to the special educational needs of former prisoners (Kardara, 2020).

In an optimistic angle, the available data and resources foresee that the Greek society can overcome the existing difficulties with the good use of evaluating and utilizing the applied international good practices and through the substantial adoption of the European directions.

Ireland

Overview of the Prison System in Ireland

The Irish Prison Service (IPS) is an executive office of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants, 2006) with power and responsibility vested in The Minister for Justice and Equality, which is currently held by Minister Helen McEntee.

Within the Irish Prison Service, the Director General has support from five directors, including a Director of Human Resource; a Director of Custody, Security and Operations; a Director of Finance and Estates; a Director of Corporate Services, ICT, Health and Safety; and a Director of Care & Rehabilitation. Within each prison, one Governor oversees the day-to-day operations. In 2019, The Irish Prison Service employed over 3400 members of staff (The Irish Prison Service, 2019).

The Irish Prison Service accommodates both male and female offenders over the age of 18, in one of 12 institutions. 10 of these institutions are 'closed'; Arbour Hill Prison; Castlerea Prison; Cloverhill Prison; Cork Prison; the Dochas Centre (located in Mountjoy Prison); Limerick Prison; Mountjoy Prison; Portlaoise Prison; Midlands Prison; Wheatfield. There are two open institutions for prisoners who require lower levels of security, including Loughan House, Cavan; Shelton Abbey, Wicklow. Females who are committed or remanded on their charges are accommodated in the Dochas centre in Dublin and Limerick Prison. Portlaoise prison is a high security prison for males.

Children not less than 10 years of age and not older than 18 years are detained in reformatory centres which are managed by the Irish Youth Justice Service under the umbrella of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (Citizens Information, 2021). Oberstown Children Detention Campus accommodates a maximum of 54 children, including 48 boys and 6 girls (Irish Youth Justice Service, 2021).

Demographics of Irish Prisoner Population

As of February 2021, 3,729 people were in custody in Ireland (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021) which accounts for 0.00073% of the general Irish population (73 per 100,000). The average age of a person in custody in Ireland was 36 years of age on 30th November 2019, with 95% of the prison population being males with an average number of 3,801 detainees during 2019 (The Irish Prison Service, 2019). The number of females incarcerated in Irish prisons has been on the rise since 2006. Between 2006 – 2016, there was a 29% increase in females accommodated in Irish prisons which has also risen by 3% from 165 inmates in 2018, to an average of 170 female inmates in 2019 (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021).

Statistics from 30th November 2019 highlight that 3,208 people were under sentence in Irish prisons, with 780 on remand or trial and 29 facing immigration or extradition (The Irish Prison Service, 2019). Of these figures the top five reasons for being in the criminal justice system include, 582 cases related to 'Theft and Related Offences'; 450 cases related to 'Sexual Offences'; 438 cases related to 'Attempts / Threats to Murder, Assaults, Harassments and Related Offences'; 412 cases related to 'Homicide Offences'; and 358 cases related to 'Controlled Drug Offences'.

Other issues include 'Weapons and Explosives Offences', 'Burglary and Related Offences', and 'Damage to Property and the Environment' (The Irish Prison Service , 2019). Of these statistics, the majority of prisoners sentenced in 2019 were serving less than 3 months (1,552), between 3 to less than 6 months (1,609), and between 6 months to less than 12 months (1,153), there were 9 individuals serving life sentences (The Irish Prison Service , 2019). These statistics could be explained by the fact that prisoners are reported to have poor educational attainment levels, with the majority having never achieved state examinations, including the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations. Additionally, more than 50% of prisoners left school before reaching the age of 15 years (Irish Penal Reform Trust , 2021).

Currently, the condition of Irish prisons from a humane perspective is 'troubling' (Irish Penal Reform Trust , 2020). There are issues at present with overcrowding of cells, complaints of excessive use of force, and failure to support prisoners with mental health issues (The Council of Europe Committee on the Prevention of Torture and Degrading Treatment (CPT), 2020). There are also examples of inter-prisoner violence which is not being documented correctly due to an inadequate and not fit-for-purpose complaints system that is currently in place in Irish prisons.

Throughout the 12 prisons in Ireland, there are a mix of single occupancy and shared cells. The CPT highlights that for single occupancy cells, there is a general consensus that cells are of good standard but there is a lack of space in Irish prisons as 71 of 4,235 prisoners have been required to sleep on a mattress on the floor. The inhumane practice of 'slopping-out', or removing faecal matter from a cell, was undertaken by 47 inmates in October 2020 due to not having a flushing toilet (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021). Additionally, due to shared cells in the Irish prison system, 45% of prisoners were required to use toilet facilities with other prisoners in their presence (Irish Penal Reform Trust , 2020)

Under the Prisons Act 2007, prisoners are entitled to receive basic provisions; social provisions; medical services; education services and vocational training. The (Irish Penal Reform Trust,2021) highlighted that prisons across Ireland must implement additional measures to ensure that prisoners have access to hygiene products and more regular showers in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisoners across Ireland are entitled to receive a range of health services including primary care, pharmacy services, mental health, drug treatment and dental services (Citizens Information, 2020). To date (April 2021), prisoners have not been prioritised in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, other than those with pre-existing medical issues and those over the age of 70 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of easing restrictions within the prisons, especially with regards to allowing prisoners to have more time outside of their cells, and have access to both education and exercise (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021).

The challenges experienced by ex-prisoners trying to integrate back into society

Due to the fact that the majority of ex-prisoners have poor educational attainment levels, often they lack the skills required to access labour market opportunities. Prisoners should be equipped with essential skills during their

sentence, such as work skills and connecting with members of the wider society, such as those who offer mental health services and substance abuse support (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2013).

Ex-prisoners need to be accountable for their actions, as this can impact on them accessing jobs after being released from prison. Ex-prisoners face challenges associated with reoffending especially within the first year of their release. The (Central Statistics Office, 2020) reported that 63.8% of prisoners released in 2011 reoffended within a 3-year period. 40% of those released from prison in 2017 re-offended within one year of their release, with 55.2% reoffending within three years of release. The 3-year reoffending rate has decreased from 63.8 % in 2011 to 55.2% in 2014. In 2017, higher levels of reoffending were seen with those under the age of 21 (80%) than those over 50 years (30%). 58% of females were reported to have reoffended, compared to 55% of males.

Ex-prisoners face a multitude of challenges when returning back to their homes as they are often presented with the same factors that got them in trouble in the first place. Many ex-prisoners come from disadvantaged backgrounds with poor educational attainment and little opportunity to find legal work. Additionally, there is stigmatisation in Ireland towards ex-prisoners which can result in them finding it challenging to secure employment opportunities. The RECHANCE project should take into consideration this high rate of reoffending and provide ex-prisoners with knowledge in terms of key agencies in the community that they can avail of should they be inclined to reoffend.

Italy

Demographics of Italian penitentiary population

In Italy there were 53.364 prisoners at the end of December 2020, while the previous year was higher than 60.000. The total regulatory capacity of all Italian institutions amounts to just over fifty thousand units, as stated in the Report of the 30th November 2019, by UEPE (Ufficio Esecuzione Penale Esterna).

The overcrowding and the narrowness of the spaces in prison have made it necessary to take urgent action in the Italian penitentiary system, in order to protect the health of the prisoners, to ensure one meter physical distance and to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic within the prisons, with serious consequences on the outside world.

In line with these reasons, the Italian government adopted the Decree n. 18/2020 later amended and converted into law no. 27 of April 24, 2020, so called "Cura Italia", that contains only two articles dedicated to the prison population:

- Article 124 provides, by way of derogation from Article 52 of the Penitentiary Regulations, extraordinary licenses for prisoners who already benefited from the semi-freedom regime, beyond the limit of 45 days. By omitting extraordinary measures, even for prisoners who had already been deemed worthy of the external work regime.
- Art. 123 provides, in accordance with Law no. 199/2010 and until June 30, 2020, that a prison sentence of between 6 and 18 months subject to exceptions²² for certain categories of crimes or convicted persons. even if it is the residual part of a longer sentence, is carried out at home (the so called "special home detention").

This Decree has provoked strikes and polemics inside and outside prison, but for sure it has contributed to the reduction of the prison overcrowding's rate²³ that was 106.1 % in 2020, while 119.8% in 2019, the highest in the European Union, followed by Hungary and France, which is worrying given that in some prisons the rate of overcrowding is as high as two hundred percent²⁴.

²² Subjective and objective preclusions: this measure doesn't apply for those convicted under articles 572 (crime of mistreatment against family members and cohabitants) and 612 bis (persecutory acts) of the Italian Criminal Code and, in fact, all subjects without a "suitable" domicile. From the point of view of subjective preclusions, the measure is aimed at a limited list of prisoners, i.e. those who have to serve a residual sentence between 6 and 18 months. In addition, the provision also excludes (think of all foreigners). From the point of view of objective preclusions, the sore point of this provision is the mandatory provision of the security device (so-called electronic bracelet), the lack of which has always been one of the most critical issues of our prison system. <http://www.salvisjurius.it/diritto-alla-salute-dei-detenuiti-dal-decreto-cura-italia-alla-legge-di-conversione-n-27-del-24-aprile-2020/>

²³ XV Report Antigone 2019 from Observatory on detention conditions of Antigone association: <https://www.antigone.it/quindicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/>

²⁴ <https://www.diritto.it/il-sovrappollamento-delle-strutture-penitenziarie-problematiche-profilo-risolutivi-sfumati-ed-amare-riflessioni/>

The presence of women in prison follows the general trend of the prison population; as by the end of December 2020, there were 2.255 women in prison, compared to 2.663 in 2019.

At the end of 2019, women made up 5.6% of the total number of prisoners who were workers and foreigners made up 35.2 %.

Also the nationality of the prisoners follows the general trend of the prison population, as on the 31st of December 2020, there were about 17.300 of foreigners prisoners against about 19.900 in 2019, so they represent the 30% of the total number of prisoners²⁵.

The prisoners are divided according to their age in three categories: young (0-14), adults (14-64) and old (+ 65). The average in 2020 was 46 years old, so those who were less than 40% of the present in 2009, are over 50% at the end of 2020. The age's average generates another problem: once a prisoner around 40 years old will get out of the prison, he/she will be too old to be included in the labour market.

In short, over the past 10 years, the prisoner's population has increased, but it has also significantly aged. Young prisoners go to prison only in extreme cases and their inclusion in school or traineeship programmes allow them to restart a new life out of the jail.

Goal of penitentiary system

Article 27 of the Italian Constitution states the principle of re-educational function of criminal punishment: "Criminal responsibility is personal. The accused is not considered guilty until he or she has been definitively sentenced. Punishments may not consist of treatment contrary to the sense of humanity and must aim at the re-education of the convicted person. The death penalty is not permitted." This objective is reached if the judicial measures make the person accused of crime understand the mistake, otherwise in case of recidivism the general objective above mentioned will bring issues and complications²⁶.

Italian relevant legal framework within the penitentiary system:

- Law on Penitentiary System n. 354/1975 where Articles 13, 70, 80 provide the involvement of the psychologist in the application phase of the Court decision.
- Reform of the Penitentiary System prepared by the Commission established by the Ministerial Decree of July 19, 2017 merged into the Delegated Law June 23, 2017.

The challenge of the social and labor integration in the local community

One of the biggest challenges that the RECHANCE project takes into account concerns the labour and social

²⁵ <https://www.poliziapenitenziaria.it/carceri-al-nord-6-detenuti-su-10-sono-immigrati-record-in-sardegna-82/#:~:text=Sono%2017.510%20gli%20stranieri%20nelle,del%20totale%20della%20popolazione%20detenuta.>

²⁶ https://www.questionegiustizia.it/articolo/carcere-e-recidiva-l-offensiva-contro-le-statistiche-per-fermare-il-cambiamento-vero_28-05-2018.php

integration after detention²⁷ of former prisoners, giving value to their attitudes and skills to be spent in the labour market.

The Collaboration between the third sector, volunteers and institutions can do a lot to "educate" those citizens, who for various reasons find themselves deprived of their freedom for medium and long periods of their lives.

The working field, nowadays, has suffered in practice from a lack of effectiveness. In December 2019²⁸, there were 18,070 prisoners involved in a work activity, even for just a few hours per week, or 29.74% of the total number of prisoners. Very rarely has the percentage exceeded 30% in the last ten years. The vast majority were employed by the Penitentiary Administration itself (86.82%), essentially in institutional services (82.3%) related to cleaning delivery of meals and other small assignments, a percentage that in the last ten years has fluctuated only a few points and that testifies to the low level of qualification of prisoners. 4.5% of the people employed by the Administration were engaged in internal work (first and foremost, tailoring, carpentry and the assembly of various components), 1.1% in agricultural work, 7% in building maintenance tasks and 5.1% in external services pursuant to article 21 of the Penitentiary Regulations. Of the 2,381 persons who worked for entities other than the Administration, 28.6% did so outside of the prison pursuant to article 21 of the Penitentiary Ordinance, 33.9% were prisoners on semi-release, 8.86% worked inside the prison in the service of companies while 28.7% worked in the service of cooperatives.

A crucial role in raising awareness within local communities and providing support in the social and labour reintegration processes of prisoners or former prisoners are social cooperatives; as Article 1 of the law 1991 n. 381 states: they have "the purpose of pursuing the general interest of the community in human promotion and social integration of citizens".

Public and private entities²⁹ have funded and supported different reintegration processes to train and guide prisoners after their detention period. The absence of social integration favours recidivism, because if the former prisoners do not have resources and alternatives to survive they may easily follow into the criminal circuit.

In that direction in Italy different projects already during the detention period are promoted to provide them competences and recognized qualifications to spend in the labour market(see for example the Fuori le mura or Cotti in Fraganza projects as best practises); as well as psychological support to build up their self-esteem and a stronger personality. The Ministry of Justice and social professionals, including psychologists and social workers have reached an agreement ("firma del patto del detenuto"), where different valid job categories are identified, depending on the

²⁷ Research about the moment after detention and the role of the Prison Service Centre:
<http://www.ristretti.it/areestudio/territorio/ali/ricerca.htm>

²⁸ Report 2020 Antigone: <https://www.antigone.it/news/antigone-news/3301-xvirapporto>
<https://www.antigone.it/upload2/uploads/docs/PreRapporto2020.pdf> p.33

²⁹ <https://italianonprofit.it/enti/filtro-beneficiari-detenuiti-ex-detenuiti/>

"curriculum" chosen, such as English language, cooking, acting, painting, plumbing, and mechanics.

Furthermore, a possible solution pushed by the Covid-19 emergency, to expand the labour and social reintegration of former prisoners would come from the promotion of remote jobs³⁰:

Remote work can be useful to overcome certain fears of many entrepreneurs and at the same time allow better employability to those who return to civil society and want to get a job. This issue is absent in the Italian debate and specifically on the subject of reintegration of people who have had a past in the prison system. The job categories identified under the agreement could be updated by including working sectors that admit distance jobs in a digitalized world.

Our project aims at intervening in the personal sphere, improving self-confidence and self-esteem of former prisoners, taking some good practices in the traditional field as examples and, at the same time, opening up the route towards digital working options.

³⁰ <https://entd.org/reinserimento-nel-mercato-del-lavoro-degli-ex-detenuiti-tramite-lavori-in-remoto/>

Best practices

Bulgaria

A municipality program of Varna city

With main objective: Continuation of good practices regarding the creation of conditions for faster and more efficient re - socialization of persons leaving penitentiary establishments located at the territory of Varna district - Prison - Varna, prison dormitory "Varna" and prison dormitory "Razdelna". Upgrading and further development of the achievements in the previous period through new innovative methods and practices in work to overcome deficits in attitudes and social skills of offenders while in conditions of restricted liberty. In this way, the aim is to reduce penitentiary recidivism, respectively work on solving one of the most serious problems of modern society - petty street crime.

All activities that the Supervisory Commission of the Municipal Council of Varna has included in its program for 2020 aim to achieve the much - needed long - term change in re-socialization activities in order to ensure that all those key institutions dealing with prisoners and ex-prisoners provide maximize the impact on relapse prevention and contribute to successful social inclusion of persons residing and residing in a penitentiary institution. List of diverse activities is listed below. All activities are financed from the general budget, their implementation is monitored and their effectiveness is objectively assessed. For 2020 the total funding of the program is about 20,000 euros.

Correction and resocialization work:

- In the penitentiary institution:
 - 1.1. Organizing and implementing a **psycho-social program rehabilitation, personal development and self-knowledge** of persons deprived of freedom over the age of 30 with drugs, alcohol and gambling addictions and / or with a history of drug, alcohol and gambling, serving effective sentences in Varna Prison and in a prison dormitory "Razdelna" to Varna Prison.
 - 1.2. Implementation of a program for correction of **psychological attitudes** and the social skills of prisoners over the age of 30, serving effective sentences for serious crimes against the person accommodated in the zone with increased security in the Prison – Varna.
 - 1.3. Legitimate at large - issuance of identity cards to prisoners whose documents have expired at the time of leaving the penitentiary.
 - 1.4. Reproduction of the manual "First steps of freedom" - algorithm of social reintegration into society.

1.5. Organizing and conducting a qualification and re-qualification course in the profession
"Landscaping"

Cultural and sports activities

- In the penitentiary institution

2.1. Issuance of a periodical – "Horizons" newspaper The whole year the edition will be dedicated to the anniversary of the opening of the prison, its history, celebrities and their history after prison.

2.2. Organizing and conducting two festive events: Spring sports and entertainment festival with the participation of sports figures, theater and / or variety artists and performers; Christmas gala evening of talents together with theatrical and / or variety artists and performers.

2.3. Implementation of the program "I am not guilty" – Organizing and holding a celebration on the occasion of June 1 - Children's Day. Implementing program "I am not guilty" - Organizing a celebration on the occasion of the first school day.

- Outside the penitentiary institution

2.4. Organizing and conducting activities for restoration and / or preservation of the psycho-physical health of prisoners without family members who left a penitentiary institution, after serving an effective sentence and in dire need.

Brigade for construction and landscaping

Due to the request of the employer, the name of the company and its geographical location have been changed. The brigade consists only of men who work in various fields of construction - rough construction, finishing works, road construction, maintenance of parks and gardens. Due to labor migration, the workers in the brigade often change, but in the mission of his company the employer has set - training and employment of former prisoners. The training is based on the principle of learning by doing, and depending on the acquired skills, workers are divided into different sites and types of work. Workers are also provided with a lot of social benefits - due to the nature of the work, they often have to work overtime and are provided with transport to and from the company. For families with children, regular school attendance is a prerequisite for continuing work.

The company works mainly on small and medium-sized municipal public procurement, where on the one hand the labor integration of ex-prisoners becomes public, on the other hand with the quality of their work they make good advertising for hiring in other settlements as well. Many of the workers, after their good training practice, become competitive on the labor market not only in Bulgaria but also abroad.

Unfortunately, the main problem of former prisoners in Bulgaria, low or even no literacy, often brings them back to prison due to non-compliance with various restrictions.

Cyprus

Social and Labour Integration program

The Association for the Protection and Rights of Prisoners and Support for Released Prisoners (Prisoners Rights Protection CY) runs the Social and Labour Integration program³¹. Is a good example along with the University of Psychology of Neapolis Pafos district, Strovolos Municipality, Social Policy Department of the Municipality of Strovolos, UCLan University of Cyprus, Giving Hope NGO, Cultural Center “World with no Limits”, Recognized Center of excellence human resources development “Estia Gnosis”. The Cypriot Addiction Treatment Authority supports the program by providing its expertise on addiction issues. The program started in January 2021 and provides services **once per week for five hours at the the Cultural Center of the municipality of Strovolos area.**

Convicts Upskilling Pathways (CUP) project

The Human Rights 360° is a civil society organization established in Greece and runs the Convicts Upskilling Pathways (CUP) project³². CUP is a 36-month project funded by the EU’s Erasmus + program that aims to design a pilot training module for the upskilling of women and men prisoners in 6 European prisons while also providing the necessary tools to evaluate the impact of these upskilling paths and promoting the social reintegration of prisoners. The international partnership spans 4 EU countries including Italy, Greece, Cyprus and The Netherlands.

Specifically, the project will aim to:

1. Design successful training modules (e.g. modules based on technical skills as a means of embedded learning for soft and basic skills) aimed at enhancing the medium and long-term employability of convicts and ex-convicts.
2. Promote an overall culture of evaluation: CUP aims to offer an evaluation kit that prison administrations and third sector organizations can use to measure the progress and the impact of their upskilling actions.
3. Develop a “Call to Action” advocacy strategy targeting policy makers and stakeholders to counteract stigma and a disabling environment for the social reintegration of convicts.

³¹ <https://frontline.cy/%cf%80%cf%81%ce%bf%ce%b3%cf%81%ce%b1%ce%bc%ce%bc%ce%b1-%ce%ba%ce%bf%ce%b9%ce%bd%cf%89%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%b7%cf%83-%ce%ba%ce%b1%ce%b9-%ce%b5%cf%81%ce%b3%ce%b1%cf%83%ce%b9%ce%b1%ce%ba%ce%b7%cf%83/>

³² <https://www.humanrights360.org/cup-convicts-upskilling-pathways/>

Czech Republic

Previous social work / retraining / intervention programs and good practice

In recent years, several pilot grant projects focused on providing various services, social work, or some other kind of training, including job retraining, were carried out. These projects show promising positive practise on increasing chances of ex-prisoners' successful reentry/resettlement and possibly also desistance process (albeit this was not monitored in the projects, as desistance goes well beyond their duration). The rest of the section will discuss some of the notable projects, their focus, and outcomes. All projects were carried out by NGOs, often with cooperation with prisons.

RESTART II.

The project was carried out from October 2016 to September 2018 in three prisons and its main activities with ex-prisoners included addictology services, debt counselling, and basic social counselling (securing housing, employment, and retraining after the release). From 144 persons who entered the project 138 participated in debt counselling, 71 were retrained (20 in welding, 33 in logistics, and 25 in driving a forklift), only 10 participated in addictology services, 30 applied for assistance with housing, and 29 wanted help with finding a job. Pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys showed that participants regarded their situation as better in terms of housing and employment, and worse in terms of debt / enforcement proceedings (even though almost all the participants received debt counselling; this is because of the extremely strict Czech enforcement proceedings legislation that deduces most of the earned money, which tends to be very demotivating). Low participation in addictology services was caused by the fact that participants did not admit to themselves they have any drug abuse problems, even though case managers later found out that the opposite was true. Although it is unclear whether participants received adequate addictology services in prisons, it can be presumed that most of them did not, so the process of self-insight as a first step to drug abuse recovery was not initiated. The final report of the project offers a simple cost-benefit analysis showing that social cost of one inmate serving his/her sentence is approximately between €38 462 and €57 692 per year, meaning that if the project, which cost €330 269 per two years (€165 135 a year), managed to keep at least four persons outside prison for a year, it would begin to save social costs. It has been evidenced that the project supported 15 persons, who stayed in the project until its end, in their successful reentry/resettlement and these persons were not involved in criminal activity (at the time, this number should be regarded as a minimum as some persons cut the contact with service providers, but participated in activities so that their success may be simply unknown) (Kváča, Gottwaldová 2019).

***Změna je možná – chci změnu* (“A change is possible – I want a change”)**

This project was carried out from August 2016 to May 2019 in one prison and its main activities with ex-prisoners included addictology services, therapeutic services, debt counselling, legal counselling, general education (basics of finances and law), and basic social counselling (employment and retraining). From 211 persons who entered the project 164 received individual counselling, 158 received general education, 91 was retrained (all as call-centre operators), 100 received addictology services, 60 received law counselling, 80 took the opportunity to see therapist,

and 70 consulted their problems with a social worker. After the release, 65 persons received mentoring, 15 received individual law counselling, 14 financial counselling, 20 collaborated with a coach, 11 with a psychologist, and 16 received addictology services. The specific trait of the project was a call-centre built within the cooperating prison where the call-centre operator retraining took place and inmates could also work there. The retraining and employment benefited inmates also in terms of social skill, as they often communicated with persons outside prison, and, thus, the prisonisation effect decreased. Most of inmates and ex-prisoners who finished pre-intervention a post-intervention stated felt that their situation changed in a positive manner, especially in terms of employment, life motivations, housing, and mental health. The significant aspect of the project were also therapeutic communities in prison held by external therapists who managed to gain trust of inmates. The trust played an important role in continuity of services after the release. Again, there is a simple cost-benefit analysis, but this time almost three-year project cost €301 385 (€100 462 a year), meaning that it would be effective when at least two persons stayed outside prison, while the project managed to support ten persons who were desisting in the time of publishing the report. However the number of persons can be potentially higher since 41 participants were still waiting for the release, but they were working in call centre and receiving interventions (Kváča, Gottwaldová 2019).

Společně na svobodu ("Together to freedom")

This project was carried out from June 2018 to December 2020 in four prisons and its main activities with ex-prisoners included individual counselling (including housing, social assistance and other issues faced by inmates and ex-prisoners), debt counselling and basic social counselling (employment and retraining). The project was designed as a social experiment so there was an intervention (78 persons) and control (40 persons) group. From 78 persons from intervention group, 54 received housing counselling, 65 received employment counselling (10 were retrained in prison and seven were retrained after the release), and 29 persons were motivated to deal with drug abuse and had pre-negotiated addictologist, but only four of them began to cooperate with the service. The main emphasis was put on individual counselling and developing a plan that would guide ex-prisoner several days after his/her release and improve continuity of prison intervention. This approach is, according to the final report, effective as, on average, the employment rate of the intervention group was almost 30 %, while the control group had only over 15 %. Also, a standardised pre-intervention and post-intervention survey showed that participants from the intervention group regarded their situation as better, especially in terms of housing, employment, drug abuse, and financial management. Yet, drug abuse and absence of addictology services proved to be the main issue limiting further positive outcomes of the project. The cost-benefit analysis is, again, present in the project. This time it is set as usual cost for one ex-prisoner who relapses and is imprisoned again for 18 months. The calculation is €115 817. The cost of the project was €187 500, where cost for supporting one person in intervention group was €2 404. In this calculation, imprisonment of just one person is equally costly as providing social services and counselling to 48 persons. At the same time, if only two of ex-prisoners who receive support abstain from a criminal activity, the intervention is effective. The project managed to support 45 out of 78 persons: 29 exited the project before the end of intervention, but everyone received counselling and managed to achieve some results; five ex-prisoners

successfully finished the intervention and are staying outside prison; and 11 successfully finished the intervention and still cooperating with service provider, staying outside prison.

All the projects show promising good practise that has potential to improve the situation of ex-prisoners in the CR and are extremely effective in delivering the intervention. It is also worth keeping in mind that these are often pilot projects, and the interventions have a weak systemic support and are time limited due to the grant financing. Should the interventions have more stable financing and were regarded as a standardised method of working with inmates/ex-prisoners, the benefit would be dramatically higher.

Greece

Review of good practices, trainings, and projects

Kethea En Drasei (<https://www.kethea.gr/kethea/therapeftika-programmata/kethea-drasei/>)

KETHEA EN DRASEI is a comprehensive program consisting of counselling, treatment and social reintegration for former inmates who are drug users. Its programs prepare them to join a Therapeutic Community after their release (a Welcome Centre for Released Prisoners and a Rehabilitation Centre) or within prison (treatment, education, and training). Emphasis is given on people that also have a parental role and support not only to them, but also to their families or significant others. KETHEA is the largest rehabilitation and social reintegration network in Greece. It is also active in Livadia (Counselling Centre for adolescent and adult drug users) and provides a support program for people with problematic alcohol use. It runs since 1987 and targets Former inmates , Drug and alcohol abusers and addicts' families or significant others and their friends and relatives

Socrated 360

Socrates Software, working with probation and prison services and leading private companies, aims to empower individuals to take charge of their own growth, and find contentment. It has been developed to allow self-service for prisoners, providing continuous independent learning opportunities. With over 18,000 registered users across five countries, Socrates Software is making a difference in the justice sector, by providing a wide array of tools and support services. Worth-checking "Success Stories": <https://www.socrates-software.com/success-stories/>

ARSIS – Association for the Social Support of Youth

ARSIS NGO is specialized in the social support of youth in difficulty/ danger, who do not know how to properly exercise their rights. Their scope is the prevention of youth marginalization, the elaboration of policies which defend youth rights and the active social support towards disadvantaged young people. ARSIS operates in Athens, Thessaloniki, Volos, Alexandroupoli, Kozani and Tirana in collaboration with active members, volunteers, and young people. ARSIS is actively offering valuable psychosocial services to children and young people. Their support center is also approaching children who live or work on the street (children begging). Their campaigns, projects, actions, and internship opportunities are numerous. It targets Ex-prisoners & their families since 1992 and it is active in Greece Albania and Europe. It aims in provision of necessities (clothing, small furniture, household appliances) providing information about free services from which ex-prisoners could benefit, guide them through health care services and empowers participation in activities (workshops, language courses)

"CUP – Convicts Upskilling Pathways"

The Convicts Upskilling Pathways is a 36-month project funded by the EU's Erasmus + programme that aims to design and pilot training modules for the upskilling of women and men prisoners in 6 European prisons while also providing the necessary tools to evaluate the impact of these upskilling paths and promoting the social reintegration of prisoners.

Specifically, the project will aim to:

1. Design successful training modules (e.g. modules based on technical skills as a means of embedded learning for soft and basic skills) aimed at enhancing the medium and long-term employability of convicts and ex-convicts.
2. Promote an overall culture of evaluation: CUP aims to offer an evaluation kit that prison administrations and third sector organizations can use to measure the progress and the impact of their upskilling actions.
3. Develop a “Call to Action” advocacy strategy targeting policy makers and stakeholders to counteract stigma and a disabling environment for the social reintegration of convicts.

Freedom gate

Freedom Gate Greece" was founded in June of 2012 with a goal of fighting every form of social exclusion as well as promoting the psychosocial support of vulnerable groups such as prisoners, former prisoners, support network (children, families), offenders, correctional officers, policy makers. Actions focus on the support of prisoners' familiar environment with special care to underage children of the family, on rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders, on support programs for incarcerated parents and on research.

RE[ENTER]

The RE[ENTER] project focuses on the exchange of good practices concerning psychoeducational tools that have the potential to contribute to the capacity building of correctional staff (prison and probation officers, ONG professionals, volunteers) who work with offenders (both prisoners and ex-prisoners). Hence, this project aims to fill the gap that emerges from the lack of effective services provided to (ex-)inmates by sharing knowledge and experiences to map effective programmes and by training trainers in order for them to be able to implement those programmes.

Objectives

- To capacitate professionals working in prison and probation settings (prison and probation staff, ONGs, and volunteers) so that they achieve the necessary knowledge and tools to boost their efficacy regarding the reintegration of the offenders they work with;
- To explore innovative tools in the fields of psychoeducation, employment counseling, ethics, case management and supervision;
- To maximize the benefits of the training process for the prisoners;
- To exchange good practices among partners, and to provide more efficient, credible and valid services to prisoners and ex-prisoners;
- To develop and publish open access materials that would allow the professionals' working skills and performance towards offender reintegration;

EPANODOS

EPANODOS is the national official stakeholder under the Ministry of Citizen Protection for the professional and social support of former prisoners aiming to their social inclusion and rehabilitation. EPANODOS implements activities since 2007 for prisoners and former prisoners, recreational activities, educational and cultural activities, awareness to employers and companies for hiring former prisoners.

I INTEGRATE AS WELL

The project “I INTEGRATE AS WELL” was an 8 month project implemented by EPANODOS and implemented a series of measures to promote inclusion and integration of young foreign prisoners and ex-prisoners in Greek society. The project was funded by Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation (INEDIVIM).

N.E.S.T.O.R.

NESTOR is an ERASMUS+ Project on the topic of parenting training for parents in prison, especially father prisoners. The aim is to create and pilot test a national network of 30 parent schools in 20 Greek prisons with the participation of 300 father prisoners, which will serve to support the Greek Ministry of Citizen’s Protection Strategic Plan for the creation of an Academy of schools of parents in prison. The close cooperation with UNESCO’s Global Network of “Learning Cities” will ensure sustainable exploitation. By doing so, the NESTOR Consortium hopes to strengthen family ties of affected families; as well as contribute to the re-integration of incarcerated fathers in Greece and beyond. NESTOR employs a three step approach:

1. The development of a of tailor-made methodology for enhancing parenting skills of prisoners, with a focus on the father’s role.
2. Building a critical mass of key professionals and providing them with the skills and tools required to develop schools of parents in prison.
3. Establish and pilot a national network of schools of parents in prisons across Greece and assess its impact.

NESTOR will involve key professional; ranging from prison administrators, social services, educators and psychologists; throughout the process. NESTOR activities will focus on the national needs and requirement, to deliver a taylored toolkit and guidelines for greek prisons, while also ensuring general usability via participation in the Global Network of “Learning Cities”

ELGO DIMITRA & MINISTRY OF CITIZEN PROTECTION

Greek agricultural association implements activities for prisoners in prison camps, in order to produce agricultural products and to be educated in the agricultural sector in order to work in this sector after their release

Ireland

Successful projects and initiatives in Ireland in the field of social and labour market integration with prisoners and former prisoners are profiled below.

U-Casadh Project

Based in Kilkenny, U-Casadh (the Irish term for U-Turn) supports those on the margins of society who are at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system in Ireland to transform their lives around. U-Casadh provides a range of services including training and development, work experience opportunities and rehabilitation programmes to those who contact the service. It targets people at risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system in Ireland. It aims to provide a three-pronged approach to support those in their target group, including stabilising their behaviours, providing training and development opportunities and supporting those who are interested in becoming self-employed through social enterprises. The project runs since 1984. U-Casadh provides a range of wellness programmes to individuals, including counselling and therapy sessions, and health and fitness programmes. They provide a range of educational courses including Manual Handling, Safe Pass, Woodwork, Horticulture and Literacy. U-Casadh have grown from only supporting ex-prisoners aged over 24, to providing dedicated support to those over the age of 18. The centre helps ex-prisoners to develop successful social enterprises to support them over the long-term. Some of the funders of U-Casadh include The Probation Service of Ireland, The Department of Social Protection, Saint Stephen's Green Trust, The Department of Justice and The Health Service Executive. Some of the main partner agencies and services of U-Casadh include The Brothers of Charity, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, The Irish Prison Service, and The Peter McVerry Trust.

Bridge

The Bridge project works with adult males with a history of alcohol and drug addiction to help them to reintegrate back into society by providing important educational skills needed to thrive. An alternative to normal custodial arrangements, the Bridge Project aims to reduce the reoffending rates in males by offering an intensive probation supervision scheme, which is funded by the Probation and Welfare Service. Ex-offenders engage in community-based activities to discourage them from reoffending and to encourage them to decrease the effects of social exclusion. The Bridge project works to support ex-prisoners since 1992, to reintegrate back into their lives by providing them with a range of training opportunities, including HACCP, Safe Pass, First Aid, Communications & Maths. The Bridge project works closely with companies to provide ex-offenders with a range of skills that are in demand in Ireland, including tattoo artistry, street art and bicycle repair. The Bridge project helps individuals stay off drugs by offering work-placements provided that individuals are substance free.

IASIO Linkage Programme

The Irish Association for Social Inclusion Opportunities is a national community-based organisation which provides

support for adult offenders. The IASIO linkage programme offers community based and prison-based services to current prisoners and individuals who are engaged with the Irish prison services. IASIO provide services to people who are at risk of coming into contact with law enforcement officers. They support people with mental health issues, those who are socially excluded and those who are long-term unemployed to reintegrate with society. A rehabilitation and reintegration programme is a significant factor in enabling individuals to stay away from crime. Over 31,000 offenders have gained support through IASIO since its launch.

SAOL

The SAOL project helps to change the lives of female drug users and their children in inner city Dublin by educating on the importance of self-direction and self-reliance since 1995. SAOL offer the only all-Female Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation centre in Ireland. The aim is to provide a feminist-based, informed service to women who have experienced a history of domestic abuse, sexual assaults, substance misuse and gender-based violence. In 2019, SAOL provided 426 group sessions, including drama, creative writing, assertiveness classes and health & wellbeing groups. SAOL provide women with the resources that they required for their group sessions, including arts and crafts materials for these. The SAOL project helps females to gain qualifications on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Italy

Successful project in Italy in the field of social and labor integration of prisoners and former prisoners.

Cotti in Fragranza (<https://cottiinfragranza.com/>)

Cotti in Fragranza is a laboratory for the preparation of baked goods inside the Malaspina juvenile prison in Palermo, Italy, promoted by Social Cooperative Rigenerazioni Onlus. It targets young people, while in prison or even after completing their prison term, involved are the protagonists of all the choices, from product names to marketing strategies. This programme targeted young prisoners and former prisoners till 21 years old. It runs since 2016. Its objectives were to address the young prisoners or former prisoners with daily entrepreneurial choices such as the study of the market, improvement of the offer and marketing strategies as well as to foster social and labour inclusion. The activities of the programme are biscuits production with the support of a chef and educators, but also of solidarity wedding sweets with biscuits and catering services. The biscuits Cotti in Fragranza reach the fair trade stores, bars, and thanks to the support of Legacoop Sicilia Occidentale also the supermarkets of the large-scale retail trade. The programme allows former prisoners to keep on working on the project and to grow up professionally as it is becoming famous also in other countries. The project is promoted and supported by: Penal Institute for Minors of Palermo, Opera Don Calabria, Associazione Nazionale Magistrati, Fondazione San Zeno and Unicredit Bank.

Svolta all'Albergheria! Da Ballarò alle periferie per una Comunità Riparativa

“Svolta all’Albergheria” aims to initiate paths of social reintegration for prisoners (minors and adults) present in the prison facilities in Palermo. It is expected, in particular, the expansion of the business 'Cotti in Fragrance', which operates both within the Ipm Malaspina (laboratory for baked goods), and at a property located in the centre of Palermo in 'Casa San Francesco', where activities are carried out in the preparation of meals for catering: private events and canteens. It targets young Prisoners and former prisoners till 21 years old. the programme runs since 2020. The objectives are to restructure a part of the Casa San Francesco to expand the catering services (warehouse for storage and bathrooms) and to start an offer of tourist reception (setting up of 5 single rooms) and, on the other, create a new product to be marketed. The operation of the project is as follows: after a training phase on customer service and facility management for 60 prisoners of Pagliarelli prison and on the production of baked goods for 11 minors, it is planned to activate 20 work grants (9 for adult prisoners and 11 for minors). At the same time, it is intended to carry out 5 'Jail Career Days' meetings between prisoners and 150 companies that adhere to the associations present in the project (Confcommercio, Legacoop and Addio Pizzo) and to start 25 experiences of public benefit and / or restorative justice in urban regeneration activities and catering for fragile subjects. At the end of the initiative is expected to hire indefinitely 8 prisoners - 6 adults (table staff, kitchen, reception and general maintenance) and 2 minors (table attendant and assistant cook).

The project is promoted and supported by: 16 organizations: 2 cooperatives (1 as lead), 6 associations (including 2 trade, 1 odv and 1 aps), 1 religious institution, 5 public bodies and 2 for-profit organizations.

Fuori le mura (Outside the Walls)

It is a project for prisoners designed by the cooperative Prospettiva Futuro together with the interdistrict office of external criminal execution for Sicily, with the support of Fondazione con Il Sud.

It will be implemented after 2020 for three years, in prisons of Catania Piazza Lanza, Barcellona Pozzo di Gotto, S. Cataldo, and Gela, the penal institute for minors around Catania and also the Offices of External Criminal Execution of Messina, Catania, Caltanissetta/Enna and Palermo with the contribution of the Office of the Guarantor of Prisoners' Rights of the Sicily Region. It offers an innovative training opportunity in the field of solid waste collection and recycling to prisoners and former prisoners. The objective is to provide jobs opportunity for severely disadvantaged individuals and to improve social inclusion. It supports not only the social inclusion of prisoners in the labour market but also to understand the social planning.

INTRA: integrated actions for the transition to work of prisoners

The project "INTRA": integrated actions for the transition to work of prisoners", is an intervention of social inclusion and employment aimed at people subject to criminal execution, co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF), under the Regional Operational Program - POR Umbria, ESF "Objective Regional Competitiveness and Employment" 2007 - 2013. It was created to promote the improvement of social and working conditions of prisoners in the New Prison Complex of Capanne (Perugia), facilitating their access to the labour market through guidance, training, internship and counselling. It targets prisoners as well as former prisoners. The project objectives are to fully reintegrate into the labour market former prisoners thanks to the European Social Fund (ESF) as well as to train former prisoners, so that they do not return to delinquency, thus lowering the social and economic costs. The project runs since 2014 and it has contributed with concrete actions to reduce the risk of recidivism of former prisoners, who without a job are at risk of exclusion.

FUORI - La vita oltre il carcere (Life beyond prison)

The project "Fuori" is a project promoted by L'ArcoLaio with prisoners from the Syracuse's prison and targets prisoners and former prisoners. It is born from the need to encourage the social and work reintegration of prisoners and former prisoners through activities within the workshop "Dolci evasioni". The project focused on learning new professional skills and to spend them on the labour market once "outside" the walls to give full completion to the program of social and labour inclusion. The actions planned include initiatives aimed at raising awareness and involvement of the local community in order to disseminate the objectives of social and labour insertion outside prison.

Coast Revitalization

This project aimed at raising awareness towards the enterprises and employers of the Tuscan territory and it was followed by the training of tutors (about 20) to work on individual training/work paths and the search for companies

willing to collaborate in the project. The tutors previously trained, with the support of the Employment Services and the network of Job Centres, identified and supported the prisoners who were suitable to be initiated into experimental work placement. It targeted prisoners and former prisoners and run between 2002-2005. The project objectives are to provide job opportunities for severely disadvantaged individuals and to improve social and labour inclusion and to raise awareness of enterprises in the territory of Toscana to offer opportunities to disadvantaged people. Many people involved enriched their skills and some of their internships were transformed into permanent employment.

FIELDWORK

Cyprus

The Cypriot RECHANCE fieldwork was based on two structured online surveys, (i) “Needs analysis investigation, with former prisoners” and (ii) “Former prisoners’ needs analysis investigation, with social and educational stakeholders”, with the aim to explore and assess the level of skills related to personal development and society entry.

Stakeholder information and involvement

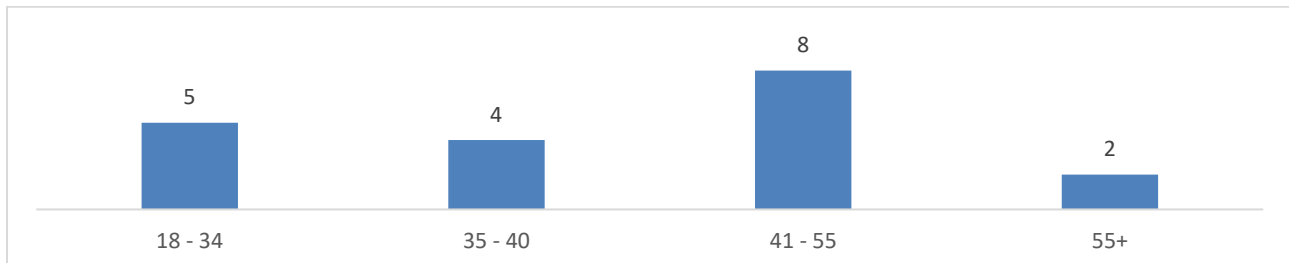
A stakeholder list with private and public actors working in the penitentiary field, mainly in the labour and social integration fields, was identified at Cypriot national level and were invited via email to contribute to the fieldwork. (see annex 1)

19 people participated, **100%** of respondents were former prisoners

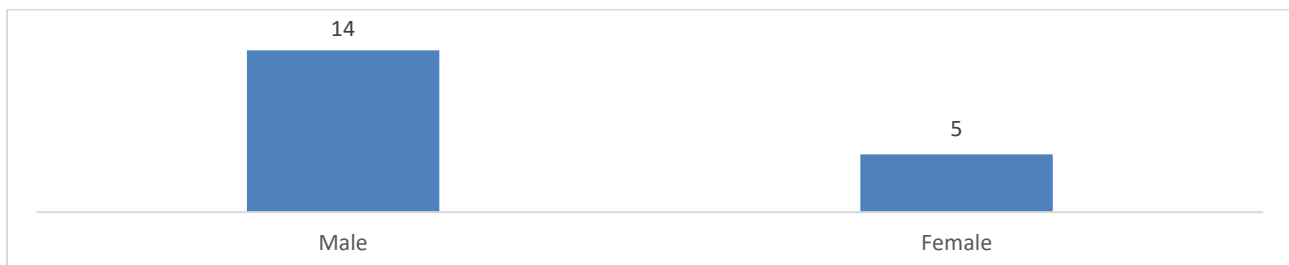
Personal information of former prisoners

The former prisoners who have answered to the questionnaires shared the following features:

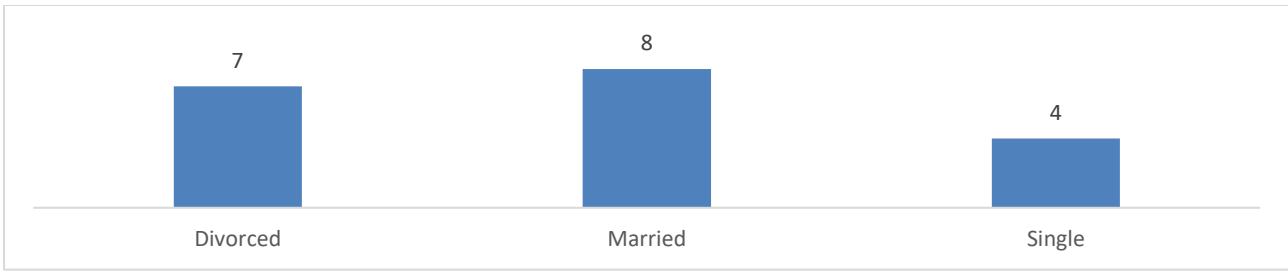
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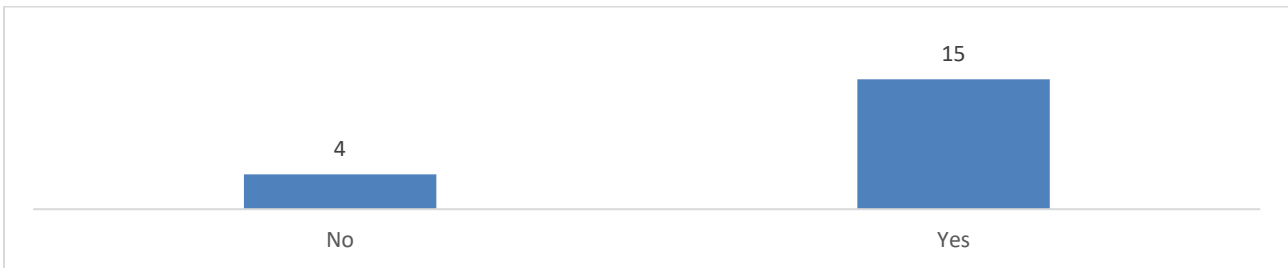
Gender:



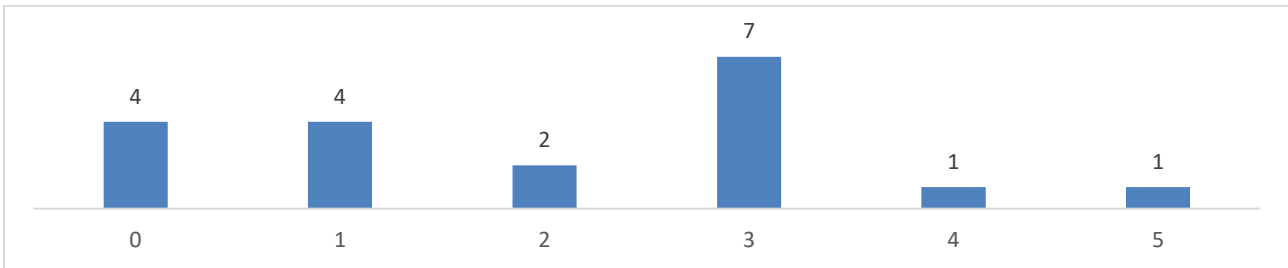
Marital status:



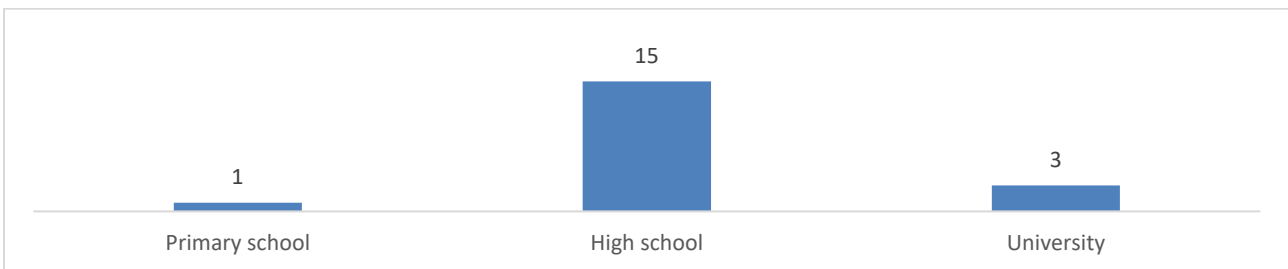
Parental Status:



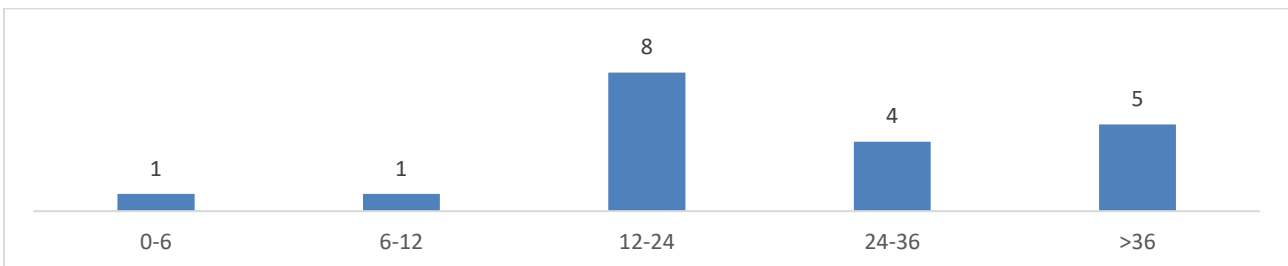
Number of children:



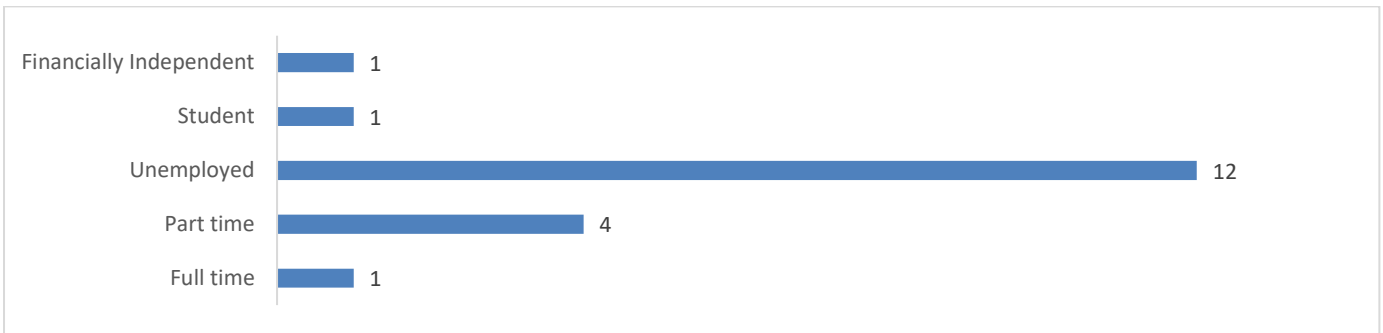
Education:



Time in prison:

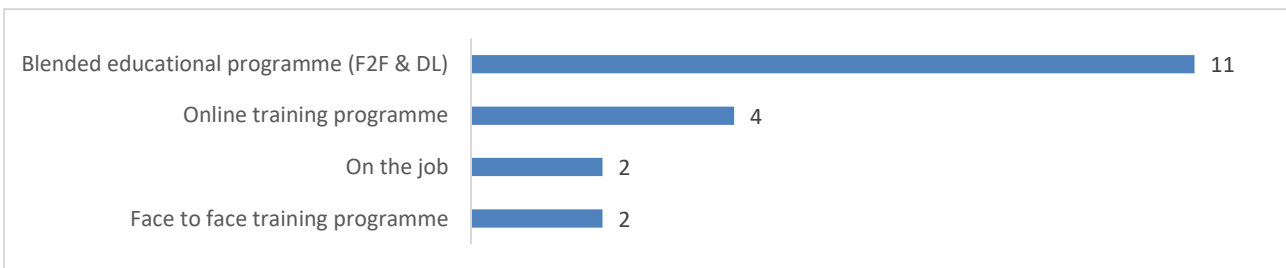


Work status before prison



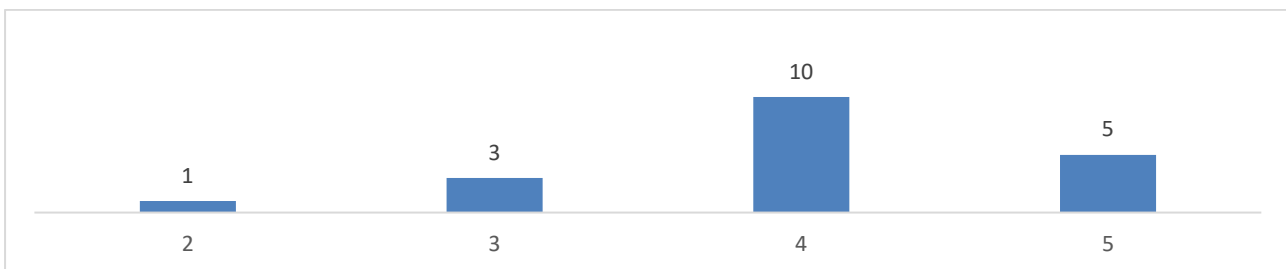
What type of training have you received within the last two years?

Most of the respondents have received blended training programmes (58%) and online training programmes (21%). None of them have not received any training.

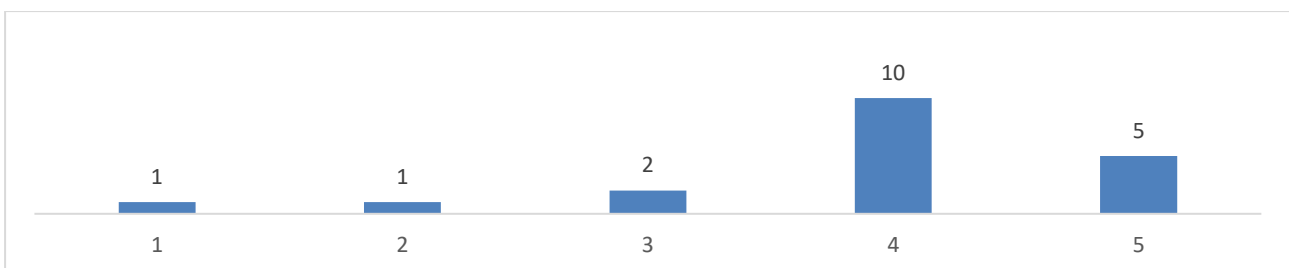


Please answer the questions below according to the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest):

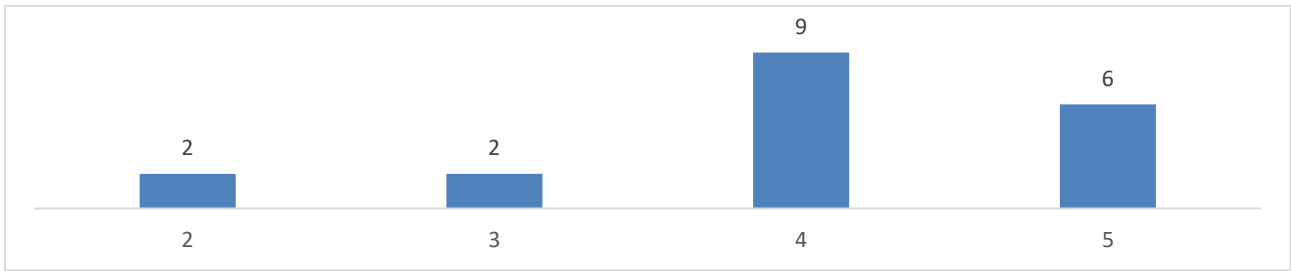
a. Training program that will improve my skills related to personal development and social participation is essential for me



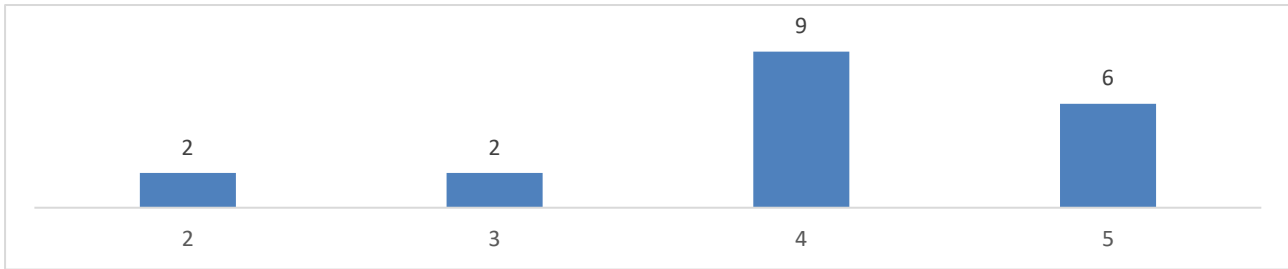
b. Training related to my personal development can help me restore my place in the society



c. Social Skills training will help me to get a job easier



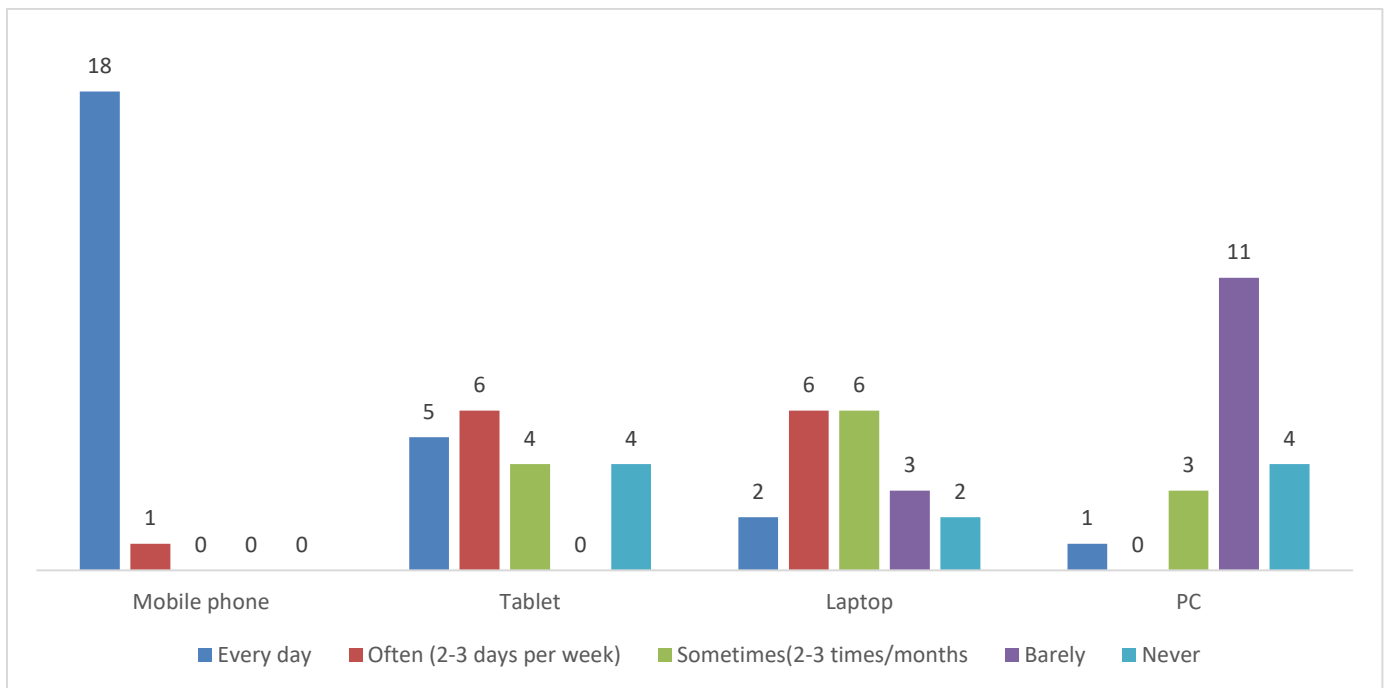
d. Training that can help my rehabilitation and social integration.



ICT skills

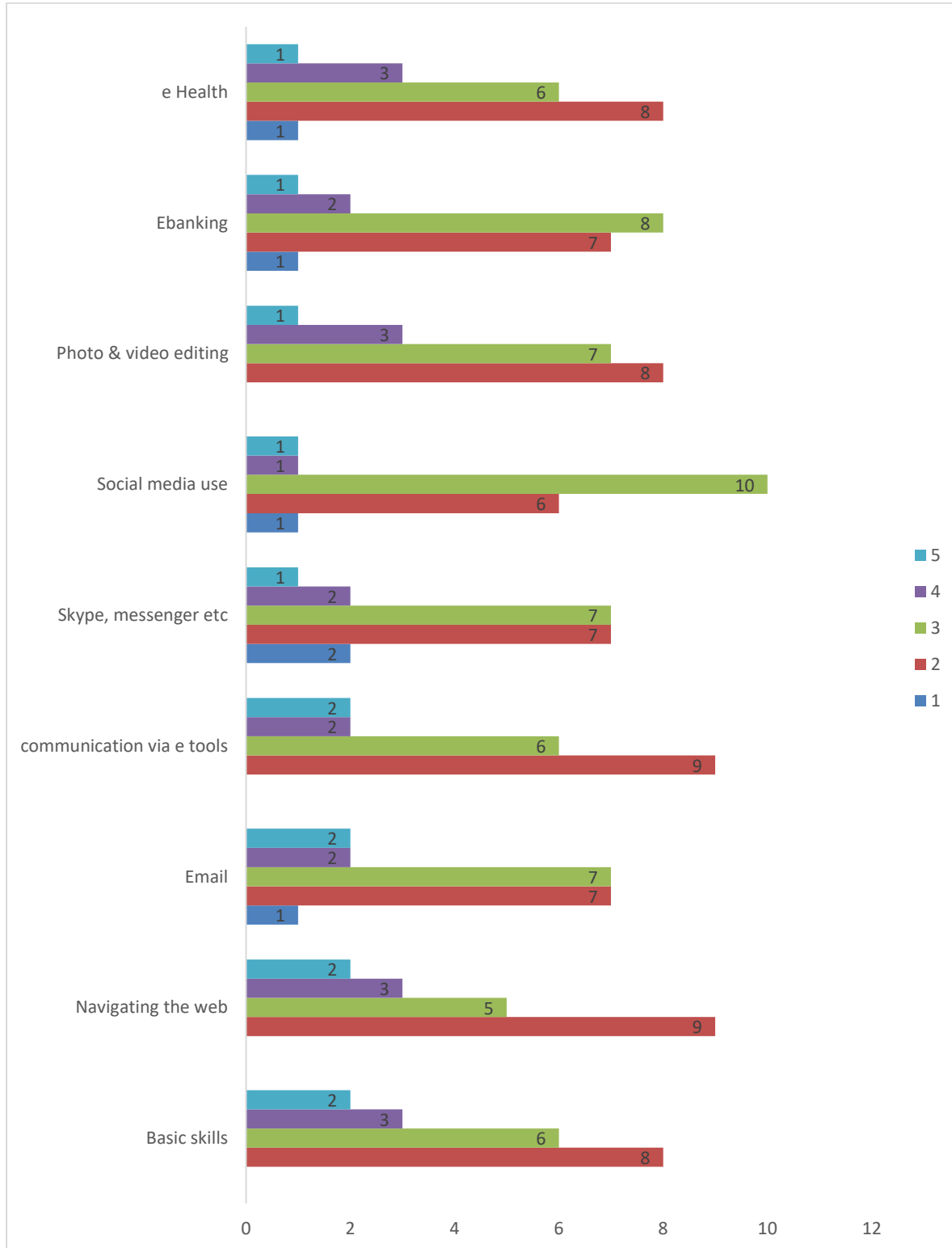
Which of the following technological devices do you have and how often do you use them?

All of the respondents use the smartphone every day; while the tablet is the least used device



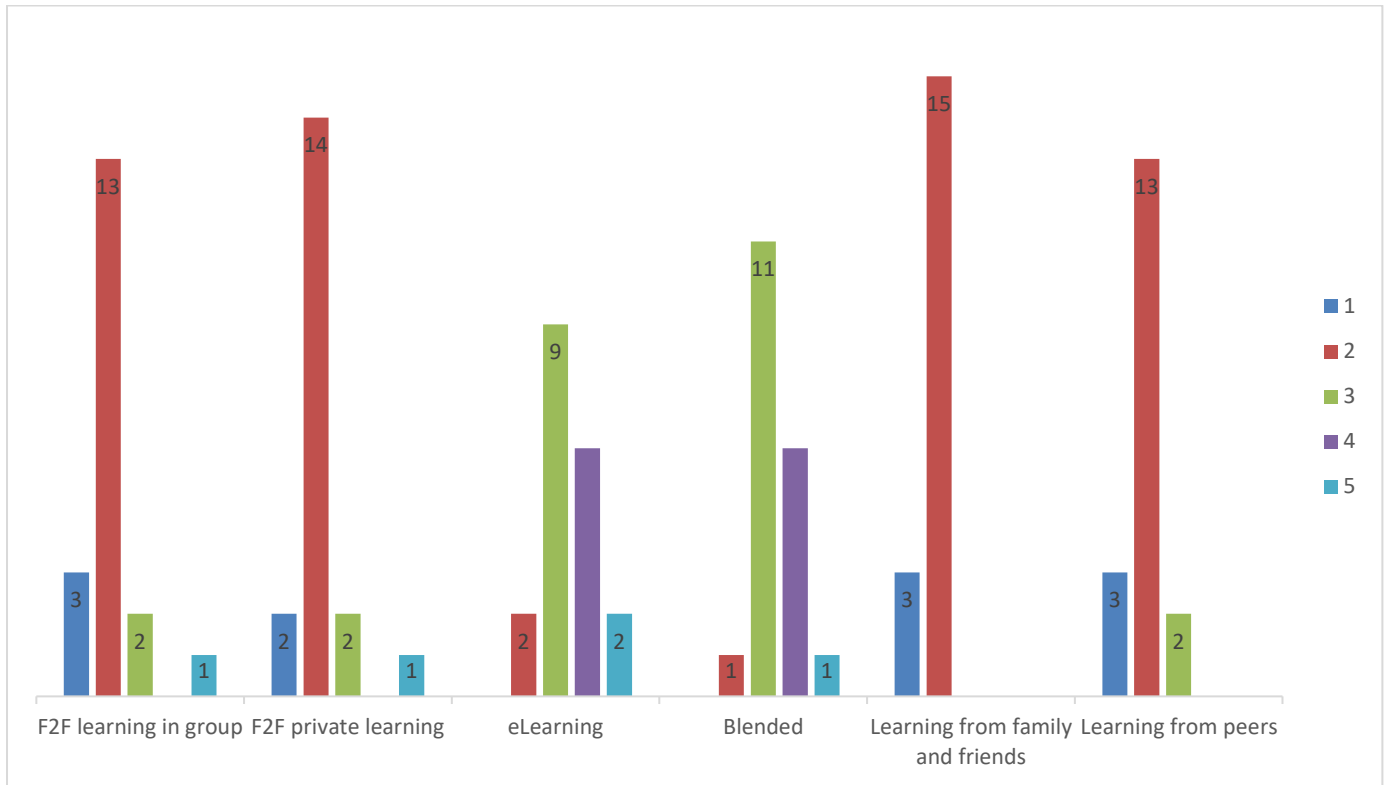
Learning needs

Most of the respondents (63%) consider among different ICT skills the most important one the social media, while navigating the web, communication via e-tools, Skype, messenger and health are considered the least important (47%).



Learning Methods

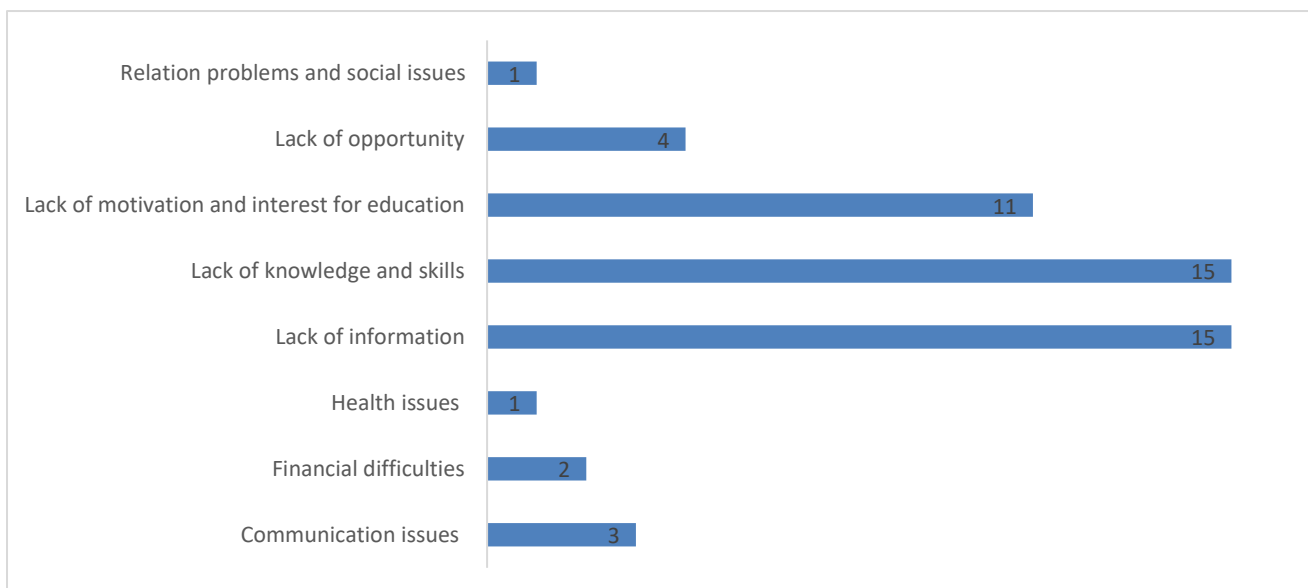
Most respondents (95%) prefer blended learning, while e-learning seems to be the least preferred (11%).



Common Obstacles for skills education and specific needs

In your opinion, what are the main obstacles that would make attending training for skills improvement feasible for you? Please mark 1 to 3 choices from the list below.

Most of respondents as obstacles for skills education find by 28% lack of knowledge and skills as well as lack of information. Nobody mentioned lack of time as an obstacle



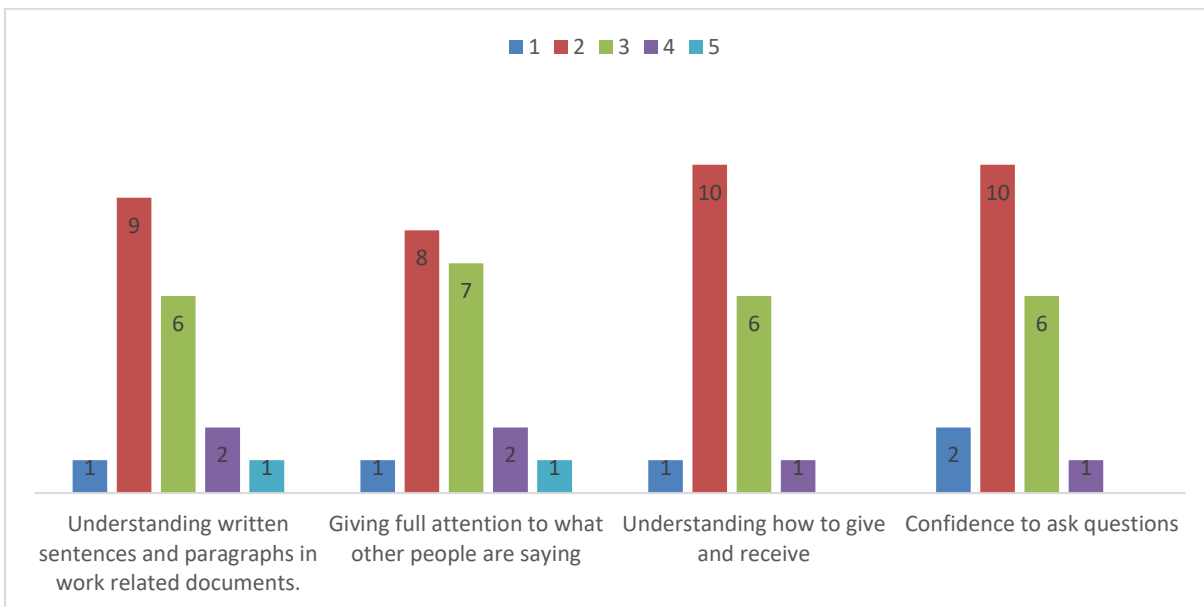
Please select up to 5 topics that reflect your training needs and the main focus of your personal Most of the respondents (95%) have chosen preferred training needs stress and time management and conflict resolution.



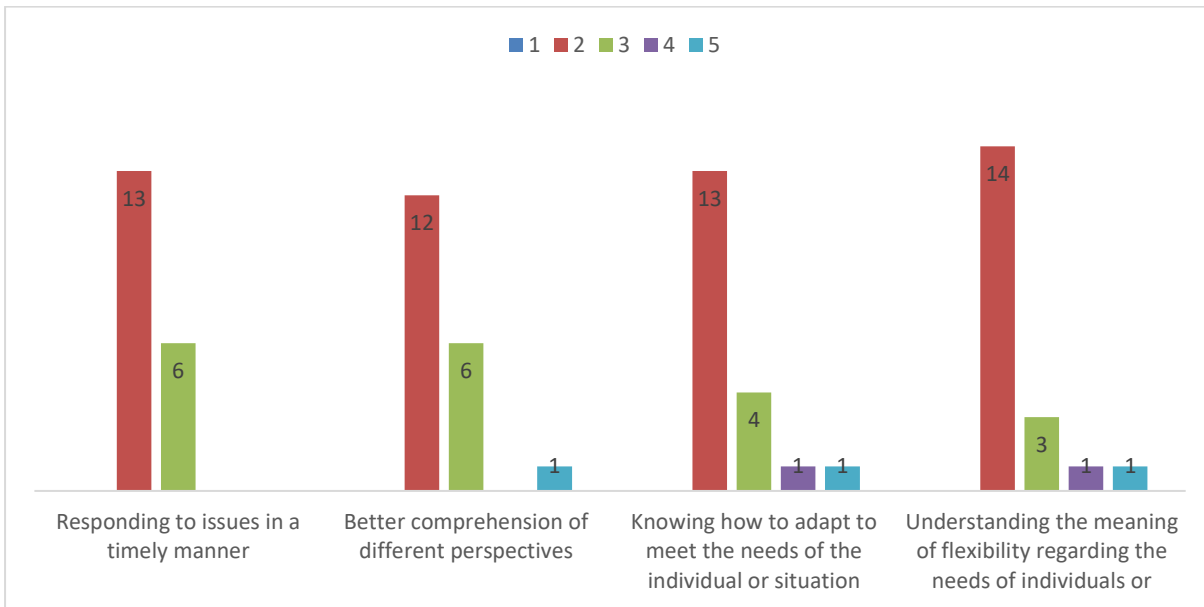
Identify the competences

Please rate your degree of knowledge/skill in each of the competencies sections below using a scale of 1-5 and the free text space to provide additional comments.

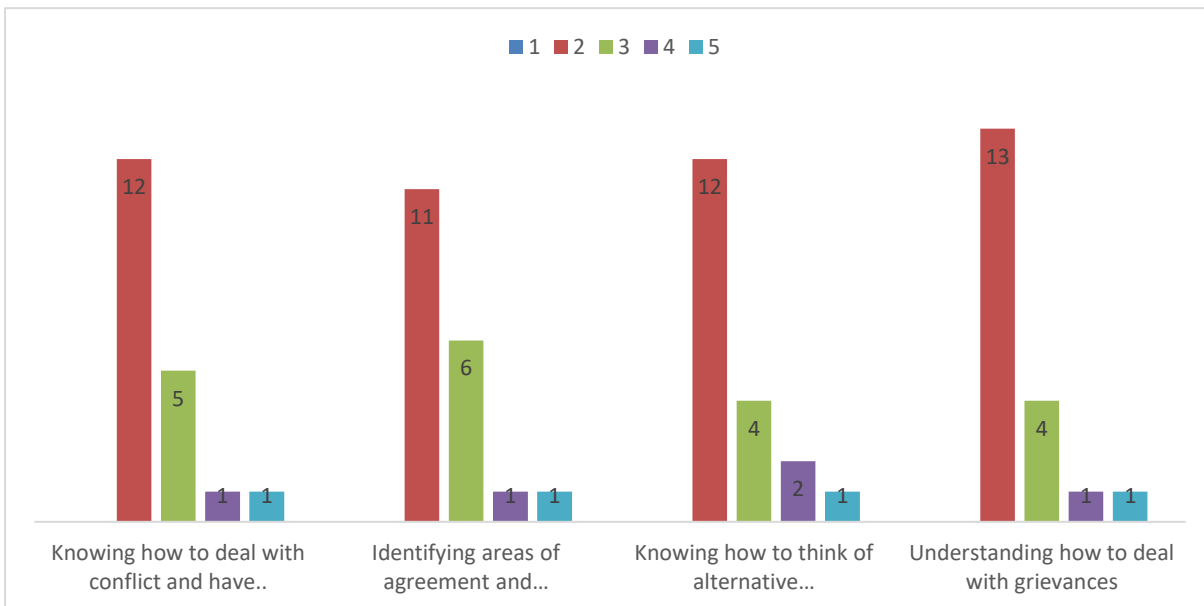
Communication



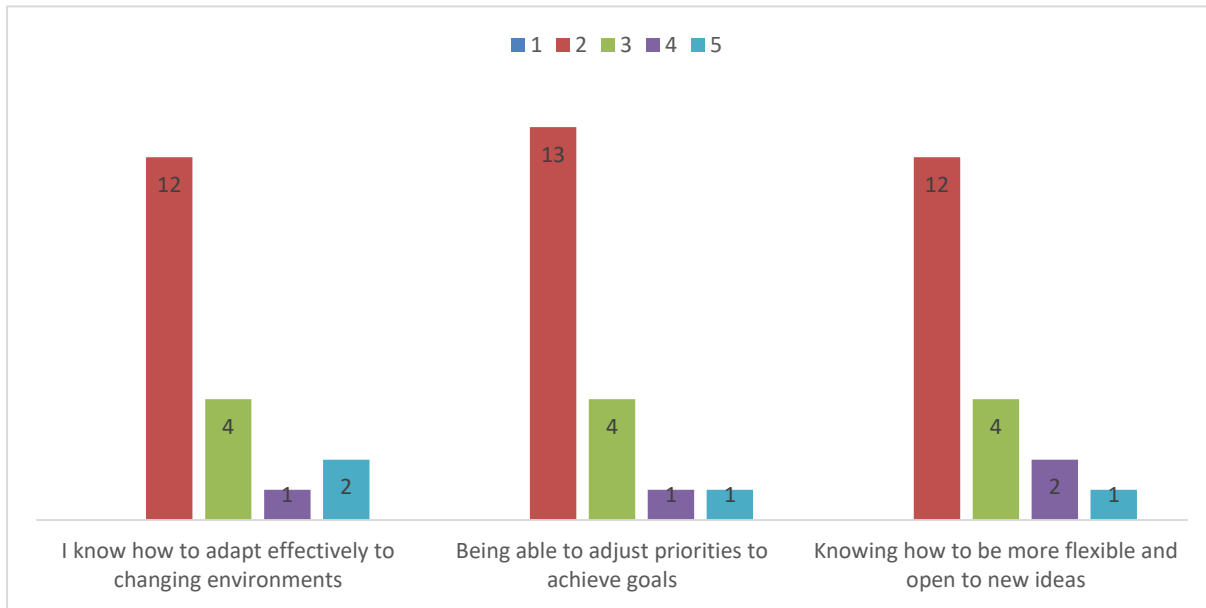
Interpersonal skills



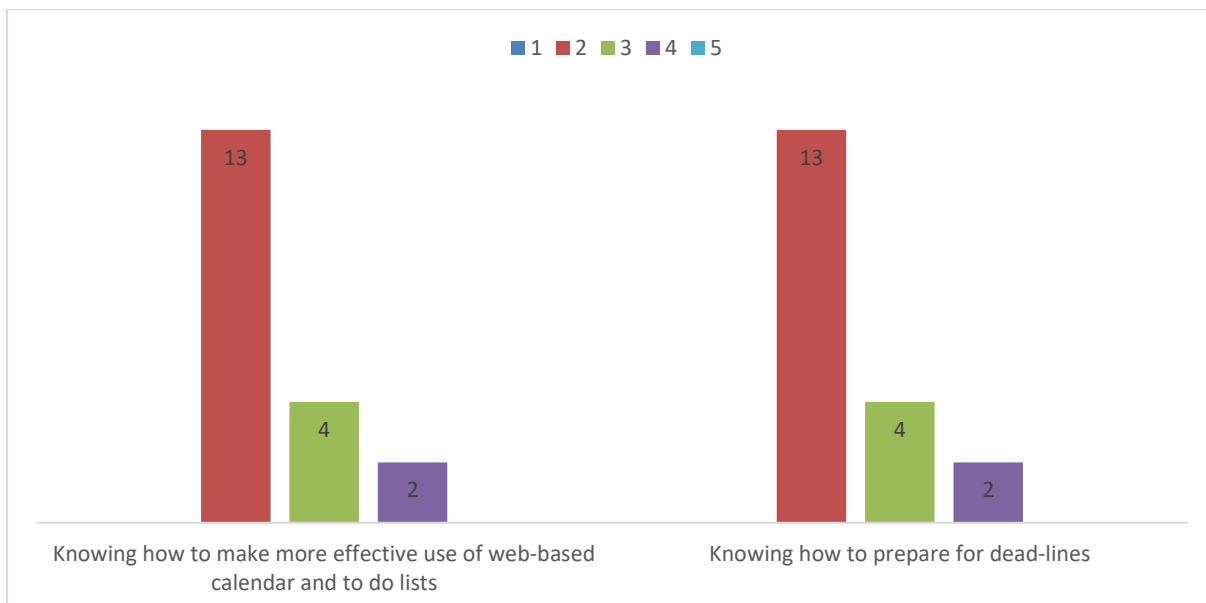
Conflict Resolution



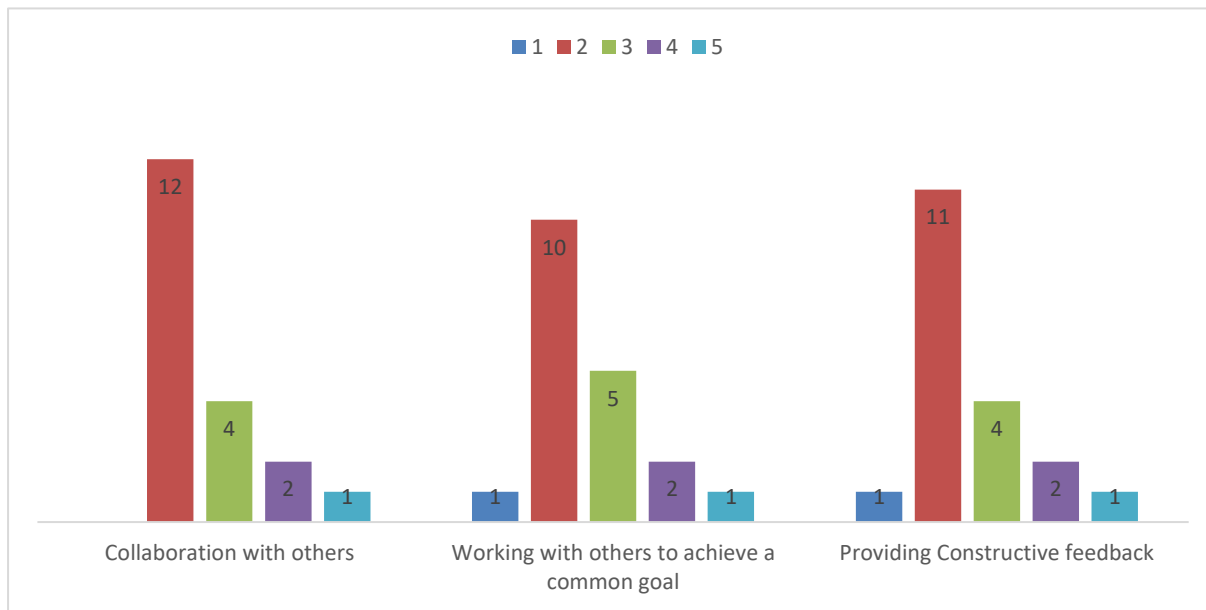
Adaptability



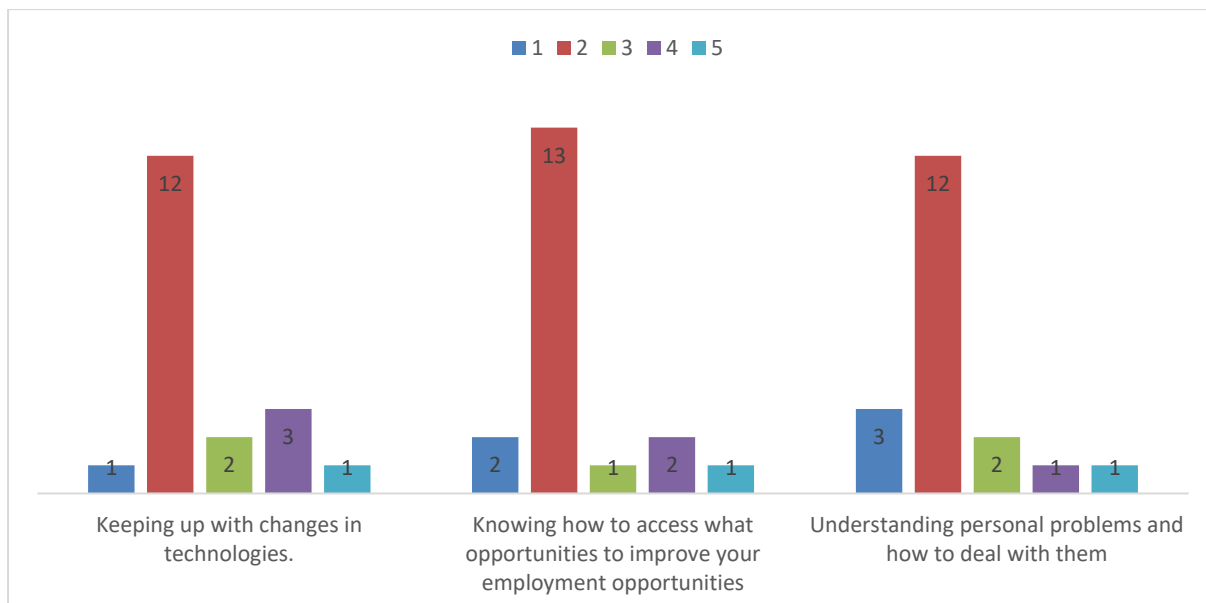
Time management and planning



Teamwork



Personal effectiveness



Focus group: Cyprus

Since the numbers of responders were not high and as we had access to key stakeholders we organized a focus group meeting to discuss the issue of educational needs of former prisoners via semi structured interviews. Several stakeholders have participated as the NGO working for former prisoners, the government prison officials and former prisoners.

The questions asked were:

1. What is the most common educational level of individuals
2. What training do they usually get and from where
3. Are there programs in Cyprus that have been done in the past with the aim of reintegrating people into society and their vocational rehabilitation?
4. What are the common problems faced by individuals in their quest for occupational rehabilitation?

The key points extracted for the focus groups were:

- The education level of prisoners is not very good
- The state penitentiary system is offering opportunities to inmates to finish high school
- Cyprus has one of the highest number of inmates taking educational classes in Europe
- Most of the training offered is to acquire practical skills
- Some prisoners have managed to get bachelor's degrees in various fields such as Law, Psychology, Business administration
- No program took place before to help them reintegrate to society
- Most common problems they face is the stigmatization
- There are government specific funds to help them acquire jobs they are not utilized
- End up as manual workers or in agriculture
- These is partly because companies do not want ex-prisoners to work for them as well as low self confidence form them

Recommendations

- Society needs to educate individuals and include them in society
- Companies need to be trained to accept prisoners to reduce prejudice And to accept prisoners to their reintegration
- Training programs to acquire skills such as conflict resolution and stress management do not come

Italy

Stakeholder information and involvement

A stakeholder list with private and public actors working in the penitentiary field, but mainly in the labor and social integration fields, was identified at the Italian level and invited via email to contribute to the research, through the spreading of the [needs analysis questionnaire](#).

Contacted Stakeholder

- Prison fellowship Italia Onlus (Roma)
- ASVOPE_Associazione volontariato penitenziario (Palermo)
- SEAC – Coordinamento Enti e Associazioni di Volontariato Europeo (Roma)
- Associazione Antigone (Sicilia)
- Associazione Liberamente (Cosenza)
- Associazione La Fratinità (Verona)
- Associazione di promozione sociale Inoltre (Albegnasego-Padova)
- Associazione VI Opera Onlus (Urbino)
- Crivop Italia ODV (Torino)
- G. V. V. – Gruppi di Volontariato Vincenziano – A. I. C. (Italia)
- Associazione Il Girasole Onlus (Milano)
- Cooperativa sociale SAMBAIA a r.l. (Casteldaccia-Palermo)
- Centro di accoglienza padre nostro (Palermo)
- Ufficio Inter-distrettuale di Esecuzione Penale Esterna (Palermo)
- Radio radicale - Radio carcere
- Impresa sociale Cotti in Fragranza (Palermo)
- Lisca Bianca (Palermo)
- Il Cammino Cooperativa Sociale Onlus (Roma)
- Associazione outsider ODV (Torino)
- Mozart 14 (Bologna)
- Acli (Roma)
- Caritas Diocesana - Ufficio Promozione Umana (Palermo)

The Italian RECHANCE fieldwork was based on two structured online surveys, (i) “Needs analysis investigation, with former prisoners” and (ii) “Former prisoners’ needs analysis investigation, with educational stakeholders”, with the aim to explore and assess the level of skills related to personal development and society entry.

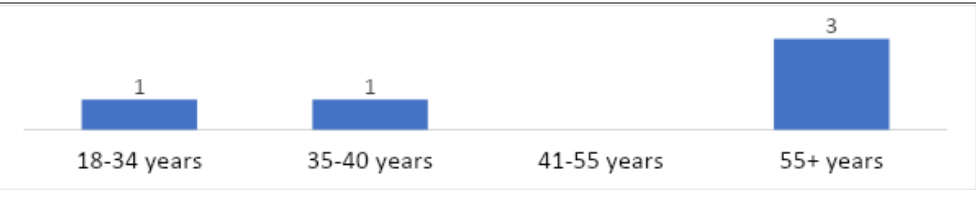

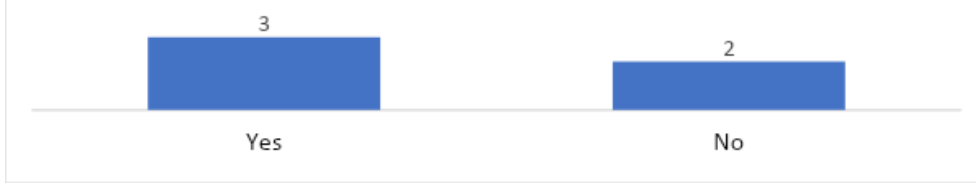
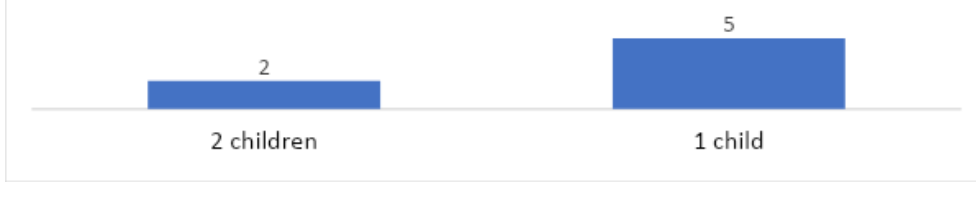
Stakeholder information and involvement

A stakeholder list with private and public actors working in the penitentiary field, mainly in the labour and social integration fields, was identified at Italian national level and were invited via email to contribute to the fieldwork. (see annex 1)

Twelve (12) people participated, 42% of respondents were former prisoners and 58% were educators/other professionals.

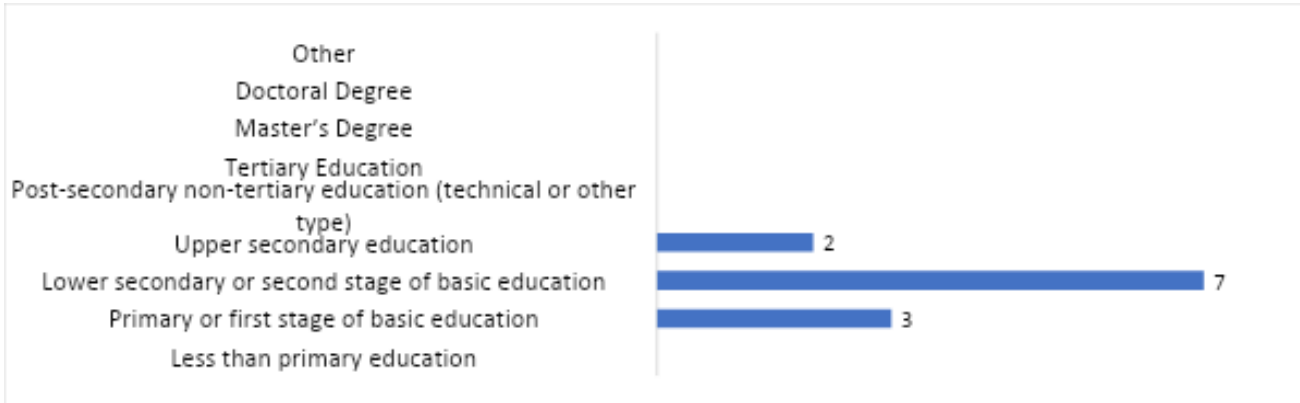
Personal information of former prisoners

The former prisoners who have answered to the questionnaires shared the following features:

Age	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age Group</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>18-34 years</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>35-40 years</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41-55 years</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>55+ years</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age Group	Count	18-34 years	1	35-40 years	1	41-55 years	0	55+ years	3
Age Group	Count										
18-34 years	1										
35-40 years	1										
41-55 years	0										
55+ years	3										
Gender	100% of MALE respondents										
Marital status	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Marital Status</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Divorced</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Single</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Married</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Marital Status	Count	Divorced	1	Single	2	Married	2		
Marital Status	Count										
Divorced	1										
Single	2										
Married	2										
Parental status	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Parental Status</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Yes</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Parental Status	Count	Yes	3	No	2				
Parental Status	Count										
Yes	3										
No	2										
Number of children	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Number of Children</th> <th>Count</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2 children</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1 child</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Number of Children	Count	2 children	2	1 child	5				
Number of Children	Count										
2 children	2										
1 child	5										
Time in prison	<p>The 5 former prisoners interviewed declared that they spent respectively: 3 months, 6 months, 2 years, 3 years, 6 years and 15 days.</p> <p>*Average: 23,5 months</p>										

Educational background

Most of the respondents (58%) have a lower secondary or second stage of basic education.



Before their prison time, most of the respondents were full time employed (40%).

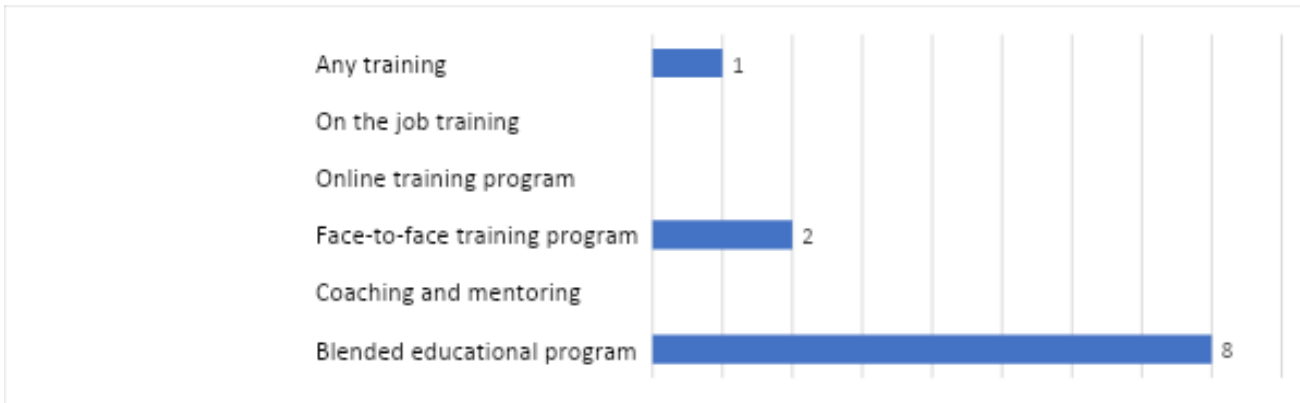


After prison time, currently most are unemployed (62%) and the rest (38%) are black market workers or beneficiaries of government aid.



3. What type of training have you received within the last two years?

Most of the respondents have received blended training programmes (73 %), face-to-face programs(18 %) and 8 % of them haven't received any training.



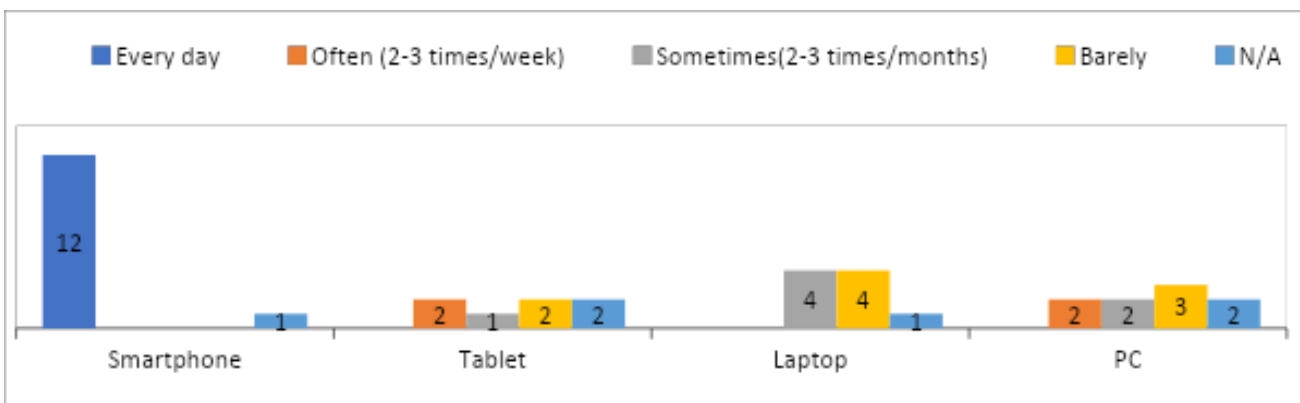
Please answer the questions below according to the scale from 1 to 5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest):



ICT skills

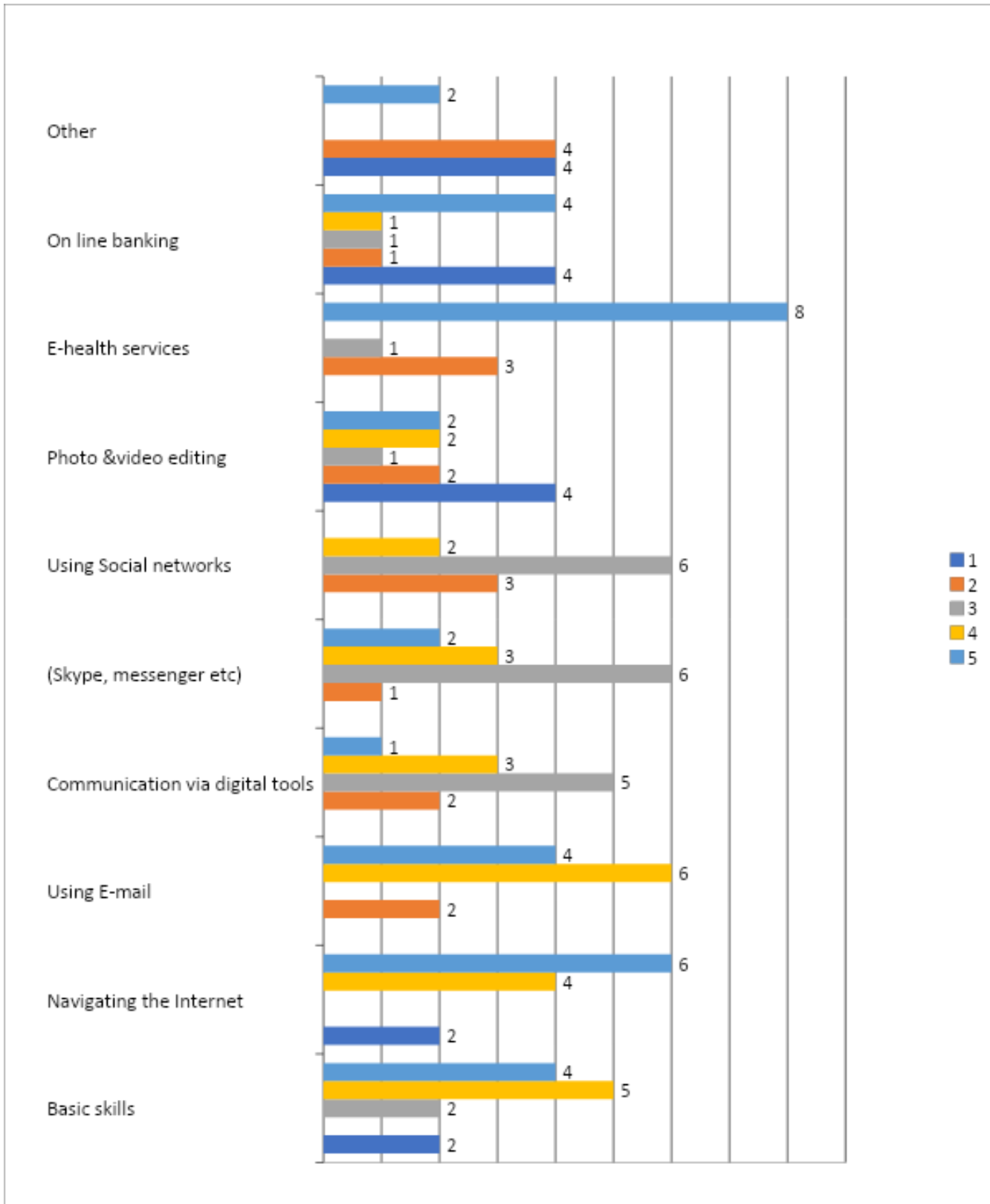
Which of the following technological devices do you have and how often do you use them?

All of the respondents use the smartphone every day; while the tablet is the least used device (17% barely, 17% never).



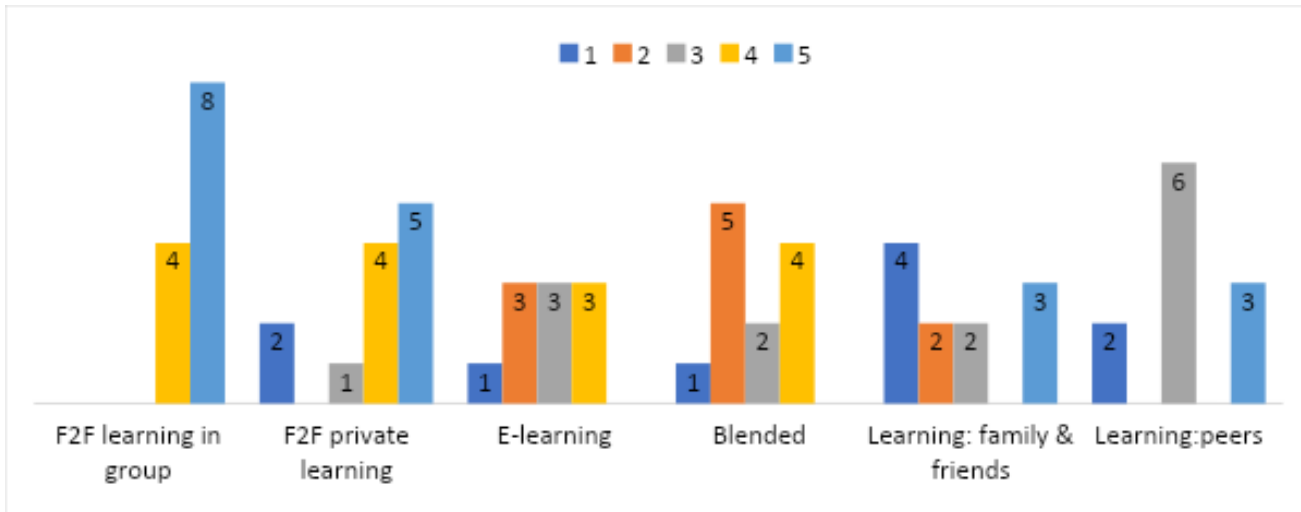
Learning needs

Most of the respondents (67%) consider among different ICT skills the most important ones: e-health services and navigating the internet; while basic skills (17%) are considered the least important.



Learning Methods

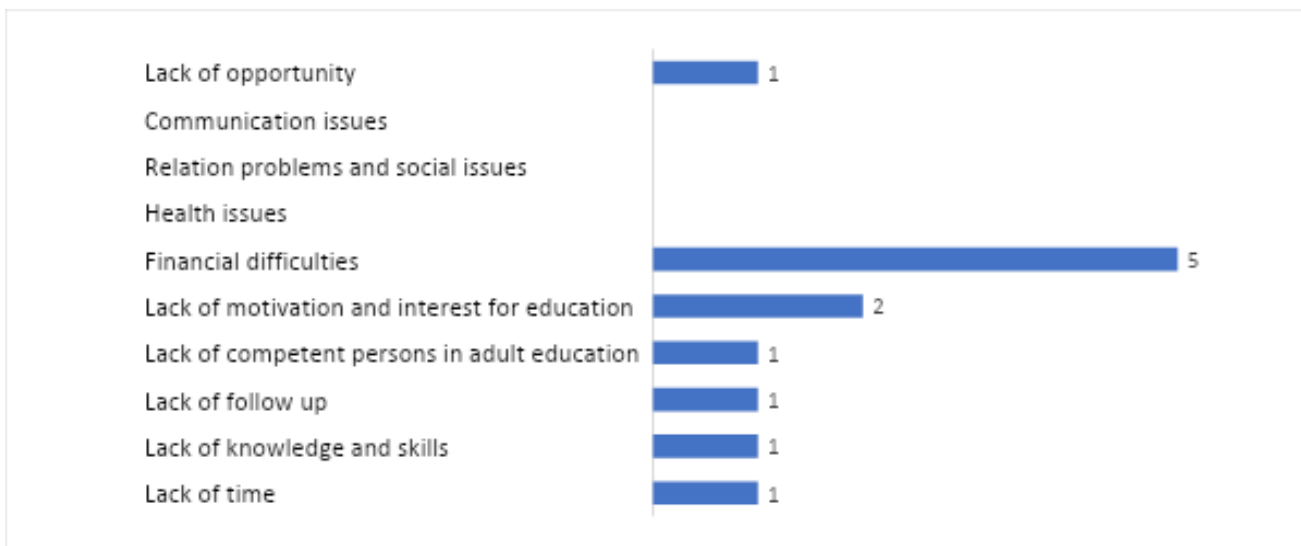
Most respondents (67%) prefer face-to-face learning, while e-learning seems to be the least preferred (8%).



Common Obstacles for skills education and specific needs

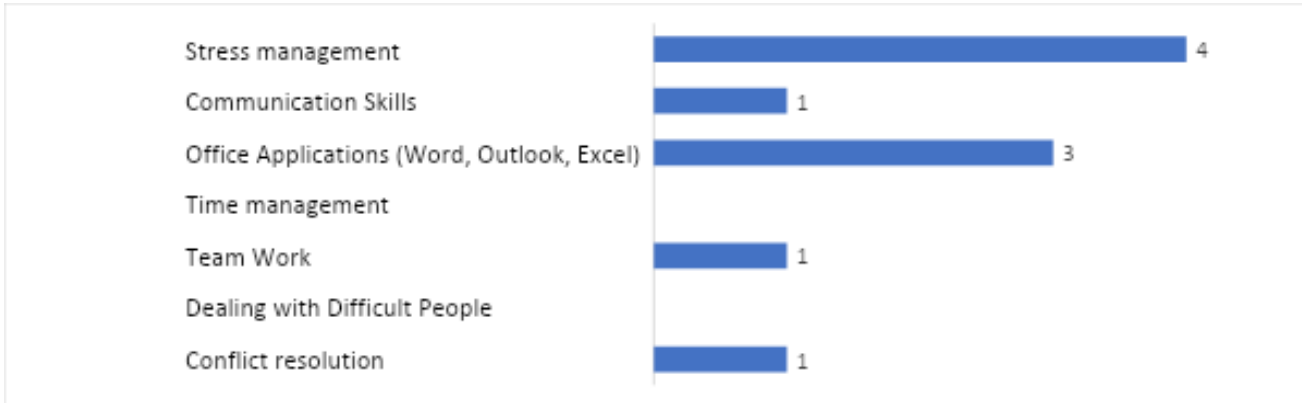
In your opinion, what are the main obstacles that would make attending training for skills improvement feasible for you? Please mark 1 to 3 choices from the list below.

Most of respondents (45 %) face financial difficulties, as obstacles for skills education; 18 % lack motivation and interest in education; 9 % each for the other options(lack of opportunity, lack of competent people in adult education, lack of follow up, lack of knowledge and skills and lack of time).



Please select up to 5 topics that reflect your training needs and the main focus of your personal

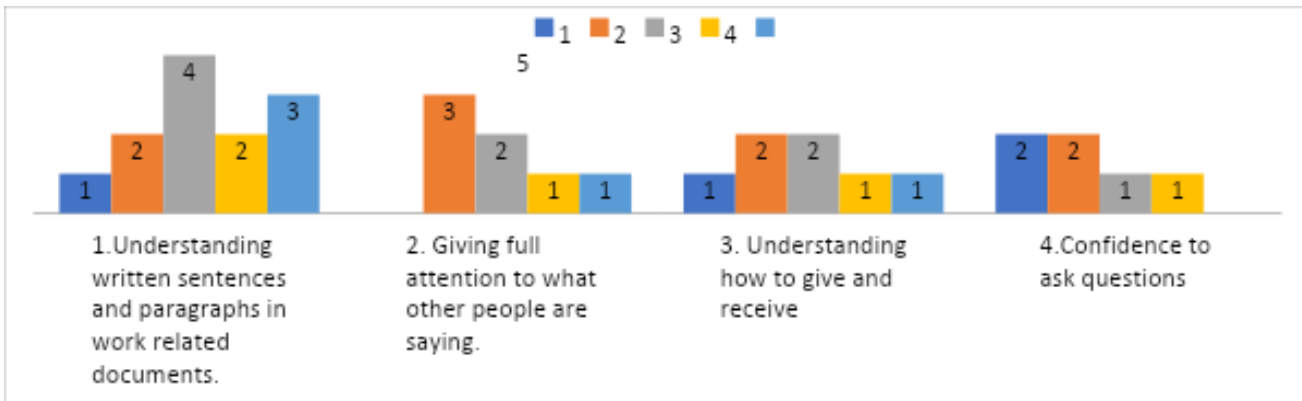
Most of the respondents (40%) have chosen preferred training needs stress management, 30 % enhancement of Office applications, 10 % each for the improvement of Communication skills, Team Work, Conflict Resolution.



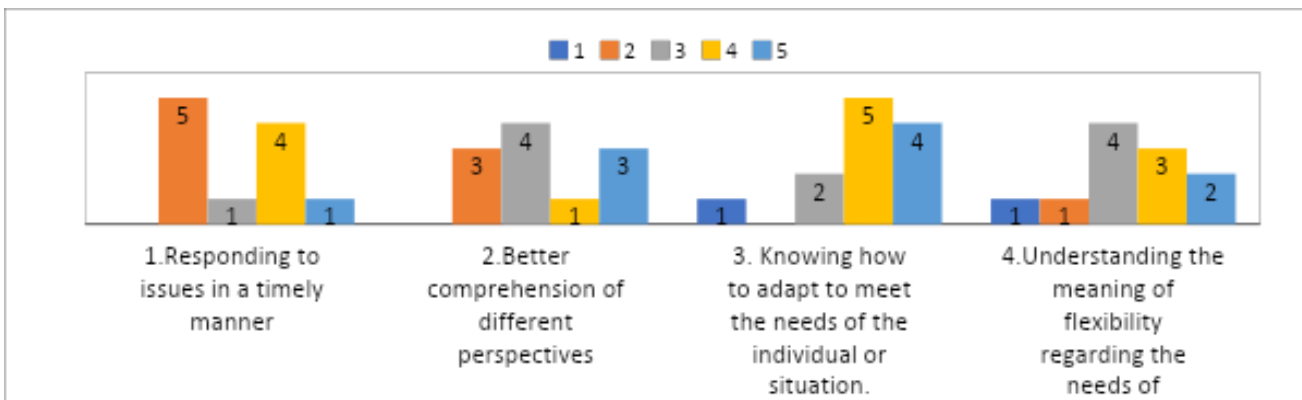
Identify the competences

Please rate your degree of knowledge/skill in each of the competencies sections below using a scale of 1-5 and the free text space to provide additional comments.

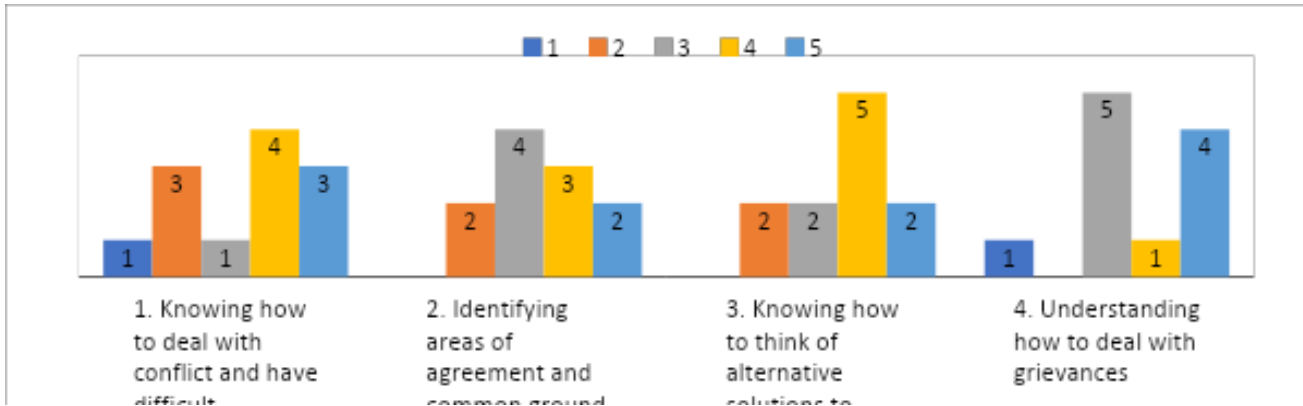
1. Communication



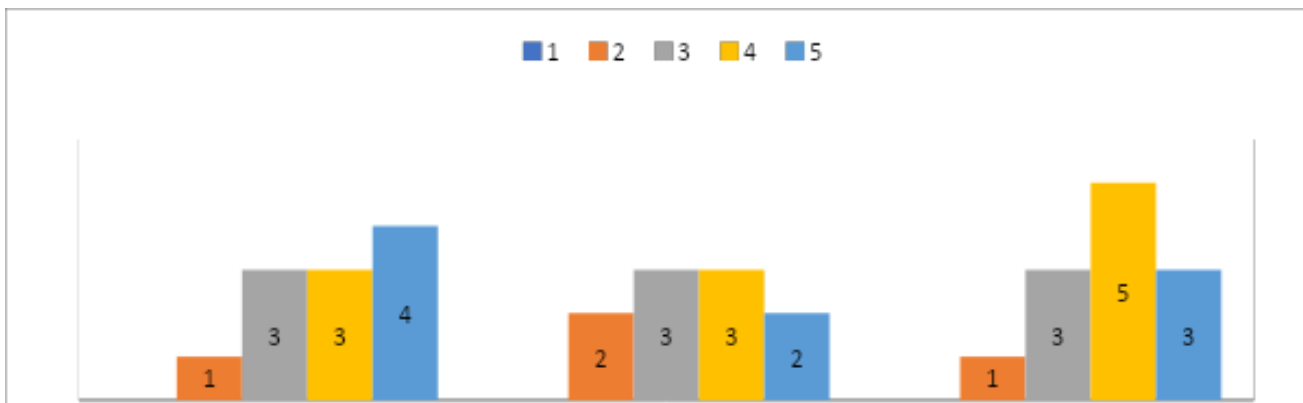
2. Interpersonal skills



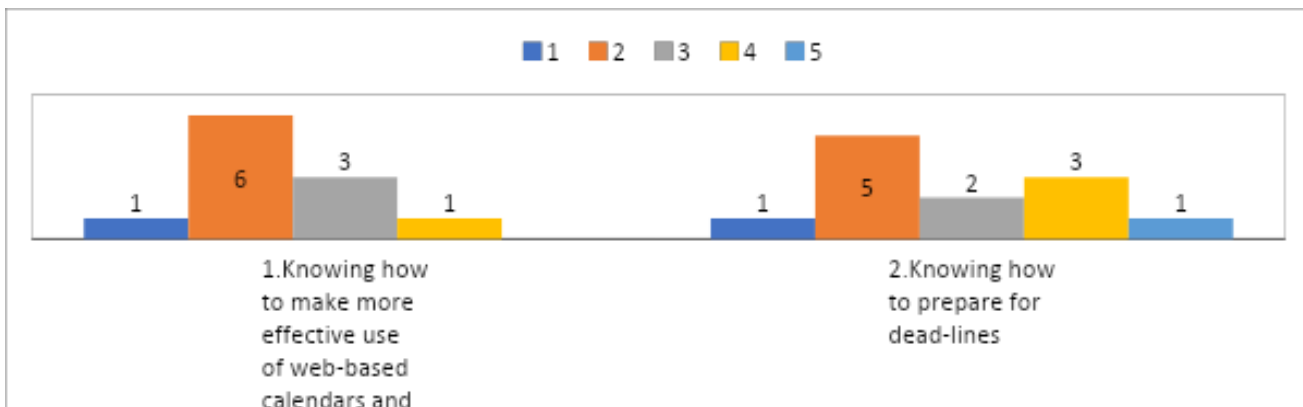
3. Conflict Resolution



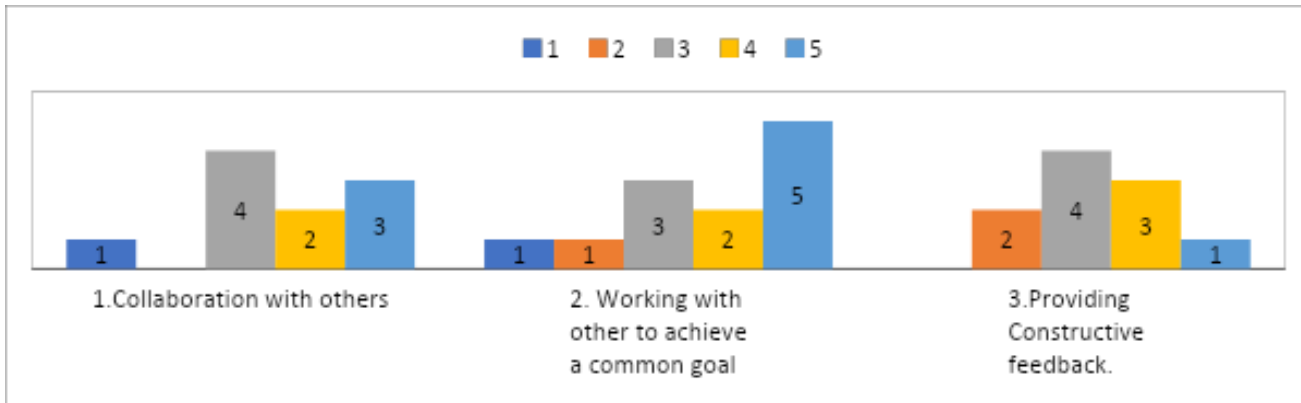
4. Adaptability



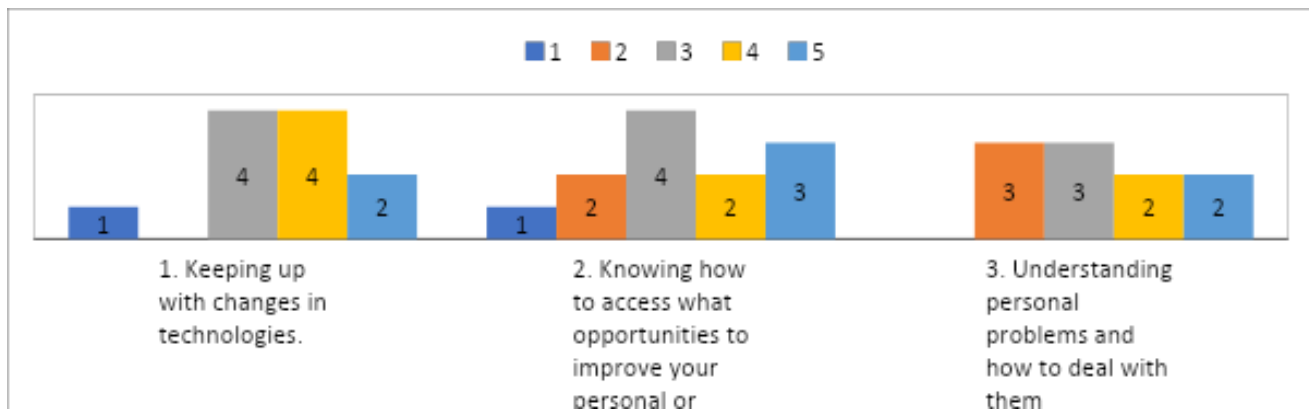
5. Time management and planning



6. Teamwork



7. Personal effectiveness



Conclusions of the Italian survey

The survey's results show that former prisoners and actors working with them are in need to improve certain skills and see the training programs, especially in a face-to-face format (individually or in group setting), as an opportunity for personal development, to acquire competences and to help the process of social reintegration.

The low education level of most of the respondents, the lack of motivation, the financial difficulties, even more in the context of the Covid-19 socio-economic crisis put obstacles in their access to the labour market, always more digitalized and competitive. These are some of the reasons why most of them are unemployed or work irregularly.

The analysis shows that former prisoners seem to be really interested in learning technical skills, such as e-health services, navigation on the internet and use of Office applications, but also personal skills in terms of stress management; on the other side they seem to be least interested about online banking and photo/video editing. Related to the health issues, they would prefer to learn more about vaccinations and addiction related issues.

Concerning the competences they already possess and the ones they need to develop or to enhance, it resulted from the surveys that:

- **communication skills** need to be improved, as they seem to not be able to pay attention when others are speaking and they don't feel confident in asking questions. At the same time they don't have problems with understanding working documents.
- **interpersonal skills** need to be improved, as they seem not to have the problem solving ability. At the same time they seem to be pretty flexible.
- **conflict resolutions**, they need to improve their ability to deal with conflict. At the same time they seem to be used to find alternative solutions.
- **adaptability**, they seem to own already competences, as they are flexible to alternatives and open to new ideas, what's challenging for them is the ability to set priorities.
- **time management** and planning, they don't have enough knowledge in preparing to do lists and using web-based calendars.
- **working with a team**, they seem to have a collaborative attitude, but it's hard for them to say their opinion and provide feedback.
- **personal effectiveness**, they would need to improve how to access what opportunities for their personal or professional development.

Bulgaria

To date, the results of 14 completed questionnaires have been taken into account. Unfortunately, with the help of the above-mentioned stakeholders, more than 100 questionnaires were sent electronically to ones with emails, and only 1 was returned electronically !!! You will see comments about this and other facts from the study in the answers to the specific questions with focus groups, but the roots can also be found in the descriptive part of the situation in Bulgarian prisons. We would like to express special gratitude to the employees of the probation services in Smolyan (Chepelare) and Ruse for their readiness to work in the conditions of restrictions related to the coronavirus.

For comparison on the prisoner profile as a whole and from our survey, we will apply information from a much larger survey conducted in 2017 as part of a project funded by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. <http://eu-ropе.bg/wp-content/>:

To the question "How would you define your ethnicity?" 73 the answers were "Roma", 6 - "Turk" and 3 - "Bulgarian", as those who define themselves as "Roma" are 89%, "Turk" 7.3% and "Bulgarian" 3.7%. 42.7% of the respondents indicated that they have primary education and 26.8% - basic education. Prisoners who indicated that they had no education were 23.2% (compared to 6% for the country) and only 7.3% - secondary education.

59% state that they do not spend any time on education. The remaining 40% confirm their participation in training programs, and 32% of all, even every day. All participants in these programs are under the age of 42, although prisoners attending school or other educational activities also have their sentences reduced, with two school days counted as three days' imprisonment.

46% of detainees spend their daily work. The remaining 54% either do not work or have indicated - "rarely". The age distribution of the respondents has no peculiarities in relation to the work performed.

- 1.1. 1 female and 13 male; 21% 18-34 years, 57% 35-40, 14% 41-55, 7% - 55+
57 % married
64% with kids from 1 to 6
From 6 months to 11 years for the last time in Reformatory institution
- 1.2. 21% less than primary
64% Basic education
7% Secondary education
7% High education
- 1.2.1. 21% Full time employed
79% unemployed
- 1.2.2. 14% Full time employed
86% unemployed



- 1.3. 42% face to face training (in prison schools)
- 1.4. As it was very difficult for most of them to answer to this wording of the questions, by the facilitators supportive questions were given
 - Providing vocational training to make it easier to find a job 64%
 - Psychological support and development of social skills for adaptation in the changed old environment 14%
 - Improving the educational qualification - ICT, foreign language (incl. Bulgarian)) 21% ICT skills
- 1.4.1. Smartphone 79% every day, 14% sometimes, 7% rarely
- 1.4.2. Tablet 7% every day, 7% sometimes, 7% rarely, don't have 79%
- 1.4.3. Laptop 7% every day, 7% sometimes, don't have 79%
- 1.4.4. PC 7% every day, don't have 79%
- 1.4.5. Navigating the Internet 14%
 - Communication 7%
 - Using Social Media 72%
 - On line banking 7%
- 1.4.6. Face to face in group 21%
 - E-learning 7%
 - Learning from family and friends 72%
- 1.4.7. Lack of follow up (no result from the training) 64%
 - Lack of motivation 28%
 - Lack of time 7%
- 1.4.8. Very difficult question for all except one or two participants. Most of them confuse concepts, due to ignorance of the definitions of these skills. As a whole soft skills are not so important for them but following their explanations Team work and stress management can be defined as leading.
- 1.4.9. Communication
 - Understanding written documents – 85% no knowledge, 7% good, 7% full
 - Attention to what people say – 21% partial, 50% some, 21% good, 7% full
 - Understanding how to give and receive – 50% partial, 21% some, 21% good, 7% full
 - Confidence to ask – 57% partial, 28% some, 7% good, 7% full
 - Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) – most of the participants are from Roma ethnical minorities in middle ages, recidivists with different crime profiles, practically completely illiterate not only in writing. The few things they know are expressed in prison jargon, which immediately distinguishes them, and for this reason even verbal communication with them is very difficult. the only form of training for them is present and even individual, but 90% of them lack motivation for any training.

1.4.10. Interpersonal skills

Responding on time – 72% good, 28% full ??

Comprehension of different perspectives – 21 partial, 50% some, 21% good, 7% full

Knowing how to adapt - 57% partial, 28% some, 7% good, 7% full ??

Understanding the meaning of flexibility - 50% partial, 21% some, 21% good, 7% full

Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) - we believe that self-esteem is inflated. We have been working with these people for a long time and the assessment is much more realistic. I.e. downloading one category down is a more realistic result.

1.4.11. Conflict resolution

Knowing how to deal with conflict - 50% partial, 21% some, 21% good, 7% full

Identifying area of agreement - 57% partial, 28% some, 7% good, 7% full

Alternative solutions – 64%partial, 28%some, 7% good

Grievances - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) – same as the previous question.

1.4.12. Adaptability

I know how to adapt - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% good

Able to adjust priorities - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

Be more flexible - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) - many confuse flexibility with lying, deception.

1.4.13. Time management

Web based calendar - 85% no knowledge, 7% good, 7% full

Deadlines - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

1.4.14. Teamwork

Collaboration with others - 72% good, 28% full ??

Working with others to achieve a common goal - 72% good, 28% full ??

Providing Constructive feedback - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) - many of the interviewees work in the gray sector of the economy, mainly in unskilled manual physical activities, which gives them the confidence to respond this way. However, placed in other - regulated conditions, they would hardly have such a high self-esteem. It can hardly be considered constructive feedback, the dispute with the employer regarding the work done and the payment.

1.4.15. Personal Effectiveness

Keeping with technologies - 85% no knowledge, 7% good, 7% full

How to access new opportunities - 85% no knowledge, 14% good

Understanding personal problems and how to deal with them - 64%partial, 28%some, 7% full

Comments from the facilitators (probation officers) – understanding? Maybe! But dealing – definitely NO.

Bulgarian Focus group recommendations for skills needs and training opportunities

Bulgaria is one of the first places in Europe in terms of overcrowding in prisons and in the number of convicts in prisons per 100,000 population. Prison stay is associated with a number of deprivations, beyond the restriction of freedom. Prisoners lose their jobs, their homes, and family and friendships are put to the test. The costs of criminal proceedings and the compensation of victims, combined with the low pay in prison (if the convict works at all) lead to deepening financial problems. As a result of stress and poor living conditions, the health of most prisoners deteriorates.

As the issue of focus groups and issues not only related to education appeared at the second partnership meeting (physical and psychological health, society, employment), the current version of the report has remarks and guidelines mainly related to educational needs, their form and content. The information in this section is subject to expansion and enrichment. The focus groups were conducted online during the regular three side meetings of the probation officers with former prisoners and members of our organisation.

"The majority of former and current prisoners are from ethnic minorities, completely or partially illiterate, who do not know Bulgarian not only in writing, but also have weak spoken. The vast majority have never had the need to create e-mail, most of them do not have the necessary equipment and internet."

"They themselves believe that the acquired work skills while working in their prisons is many times more useful and they would be included in professional training courses, but their educational status does not officially allow this. They rely on introductory training if they are hired."

"The problem with the education of the illiterate is primarily a problem of the Ministry of Education. There are no suitable programs for working with illiterate adults. Training in programs for 7-15 year olds has no effect. The presence of short-term sentences of up to one year makes it pointless to include in general education. "

"It is necessary, along with the existing schools, to build vocational centers, where everyone can learn certain professions at different times. Practice shows that many prisoners need not so much school attendance as literacy and vocational courses in training and vocational centers. A possible solution is the adoption of individual training programs, newly tailored to the size of the sentence."

"The situation in prisons and detention centers is such that neither the required distance nor the high level of hygiene required by Covid-19 protection can be observed. In Sofia Central Prison there is alarming data about the lack of systematic measures to protect the health of prisoners and staff against Covid."

"The dormitories are overcrowded, and some prisons and detention centers often do not have permanent access to running water and heating. Mass food is classified as poor quality and low in calories. It is practically impossible to provide food for people with special diets - vegetarians, vegans, people court special diets. There are no clear criteria for providing employment. There is practically no ventilation anywhere, and there is no division of prisoners into smokers and non-smokers."

General conclusions from the focus groups:

- The conditions in Bulgarian prisons have been subject of international. A report by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture of 4 December 2012 concluded that the conditions of detention did not meet the minimum requirements laid down in international law. Despite the state's efforts to improve conditions, especially relocation, food and health care, a curious case of refusing to extradite prisoners from Germany to Bulgaria, to serve sentences. Systematically, the problems look like this:
- Violence against and between prisoners and the persistent refusal of the competent authorities to carry out effective investigations into these cases;
- Overcrowding and obsolete and depreciated material base;
- Outdated criminal and disciplinary policy;
- Long periods of single isolation;
- Extremely low quality of medical care;
- Lack of any re-socialization policy;
- Lack of safe mechanisms for filing complaints and grievances;
- Lack of judicial control over the legality and validity of a large part of the acts of the prison administration;

- High levels of corruption among the administration in the majority of prisons.
- The lack of a gender approach in the regulation of the execution of imprisonment is probably due to the small share of women prisoners in the total number (about 4%). This leads to one of the main problems related to the geographical and social isolation of women prisoners in the only prison for women in Bulgaria.

Educational conclusions in RECHANCE project benefit: Based on the quotes above and personal impressions from the online focus group we suggest for successive educational course to be taken in the following considerations:

- Despite the various forms of training in prisons very low educational status of the majority of former prisoners
- Only face to face trainings with individual programs and/or support are recommended, detachment from the educational environment is medium and long-term and the group form of education is ineffective and even risky
- Basic level of ICT curriculum in accordance with the above point, and in the presence of material basal. In general, the Internet for the target group is a permissive luxury
- Former prisoners with secondary (and higher) and vocational education find employment relatively easily. Many employers are tolerant of such people, and of course there are exceptions.
- It is recommended that a basic language literacy course be held before the ICT course. Other soft skills courses related to improving communication, time management, aggression management and problem solving are also recommended. As well as career counseling, to determine interests and guidelines for certain sectors of the economy.
- According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education for the period 2010-2020, only 9 former prisoners have completed a formal form of secondary education in evening and shift schools in Bulgaria. Extremely low indicator. At the same time, more than 1,000 have attended vocational courses for various professions.
- It is necessary to work in prison to acquaint them with organizations providing various types of assistance after their release from prison, including education.

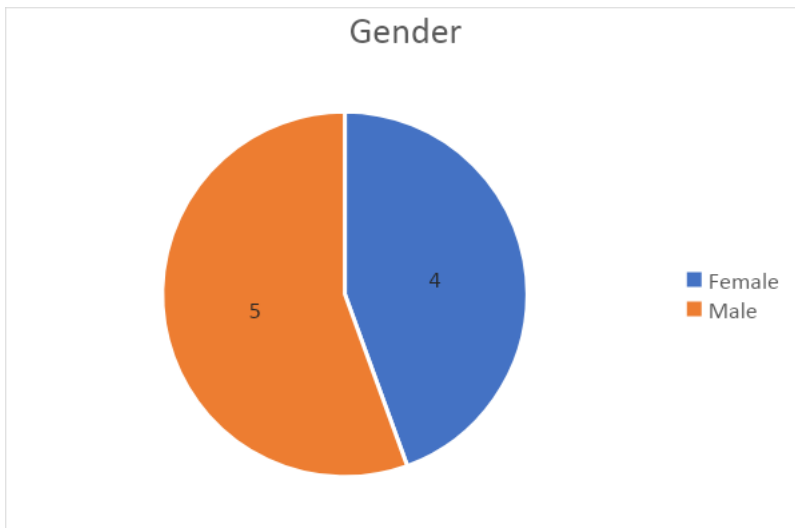
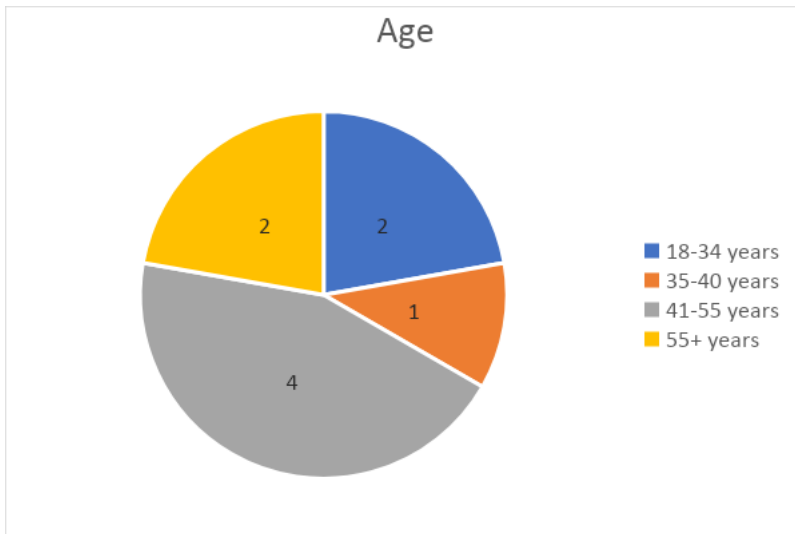
Czech Republic

Research findings from quantitative research

Demographic characteristics

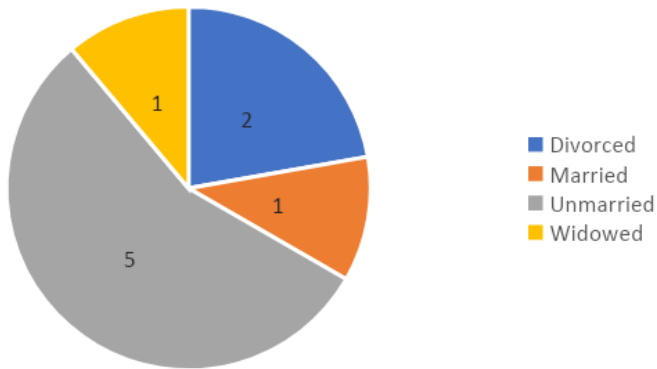
Most of the participants were at the age 41-55 years old, unmarried and having been in prison for more than 36 months.

N=9 participants in total.

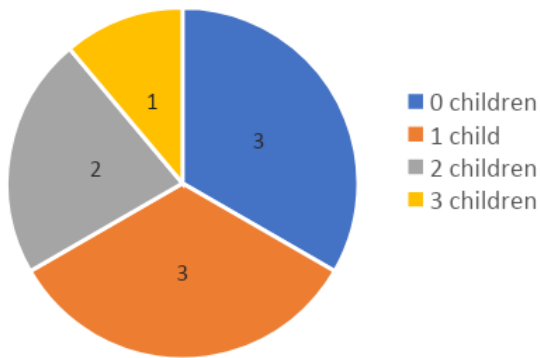




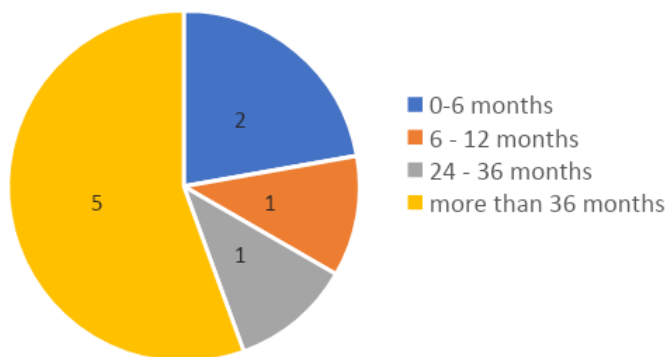
Marital status



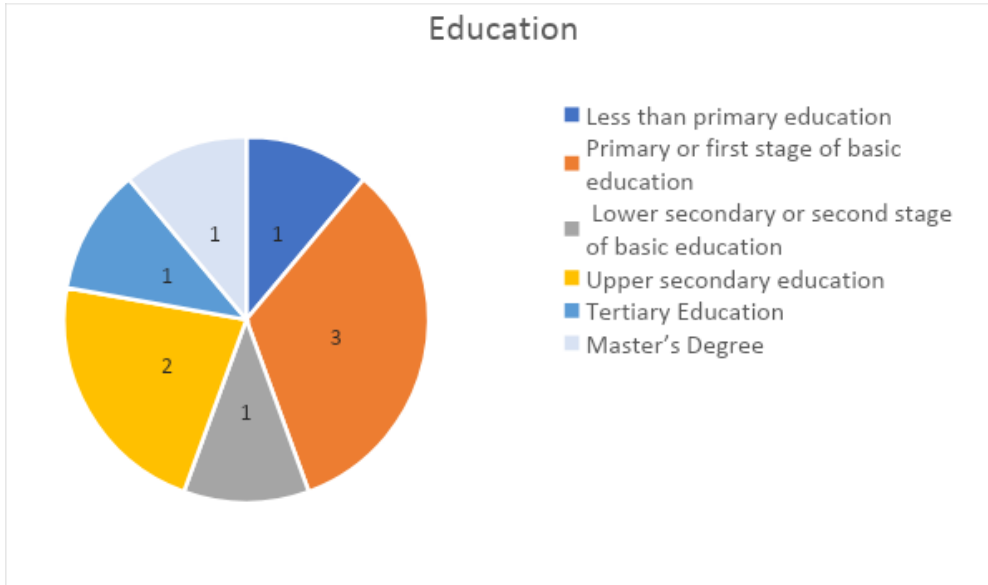
Number of children



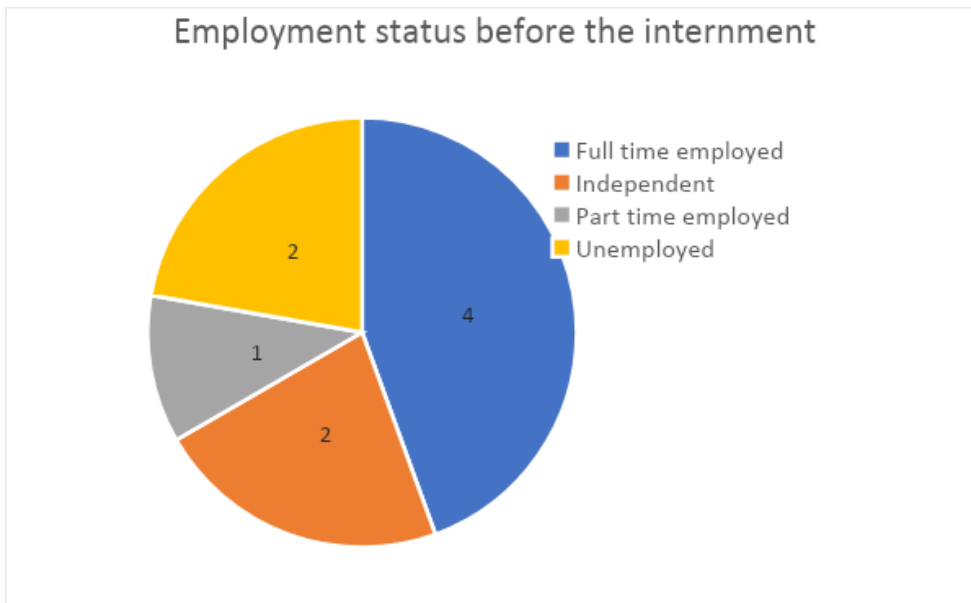
Time in Reformatory institution



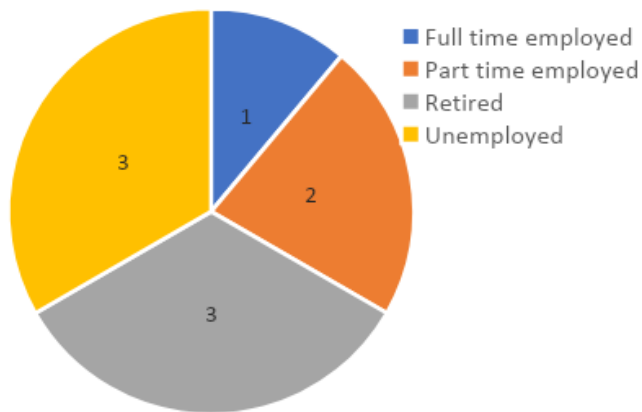
Regarding education and level, three of the participants have been in primary or first stage of basic education and two in upper secondary education. One participant reported not having completed any type of education while other participants have completed primary or first stage of basic education (n=1), lower secondary or second stage of basic education (n=1), tertiary education (n=1) and master's degree (n=1).



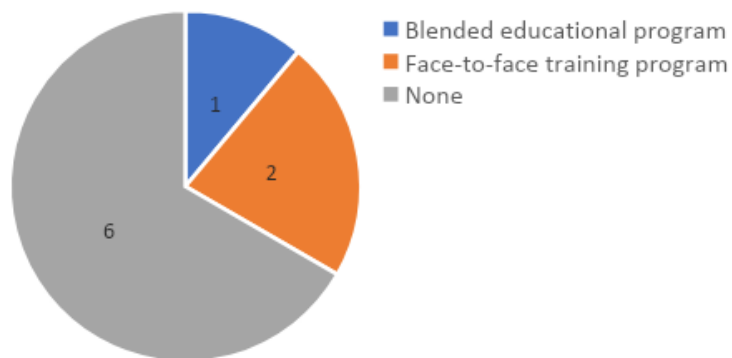
Regarding employment status before of the internment, most of the participants were full time employed (n=4), while currently most of the participants are either retired (n=3) or unemployed (n=3)



Employment status now



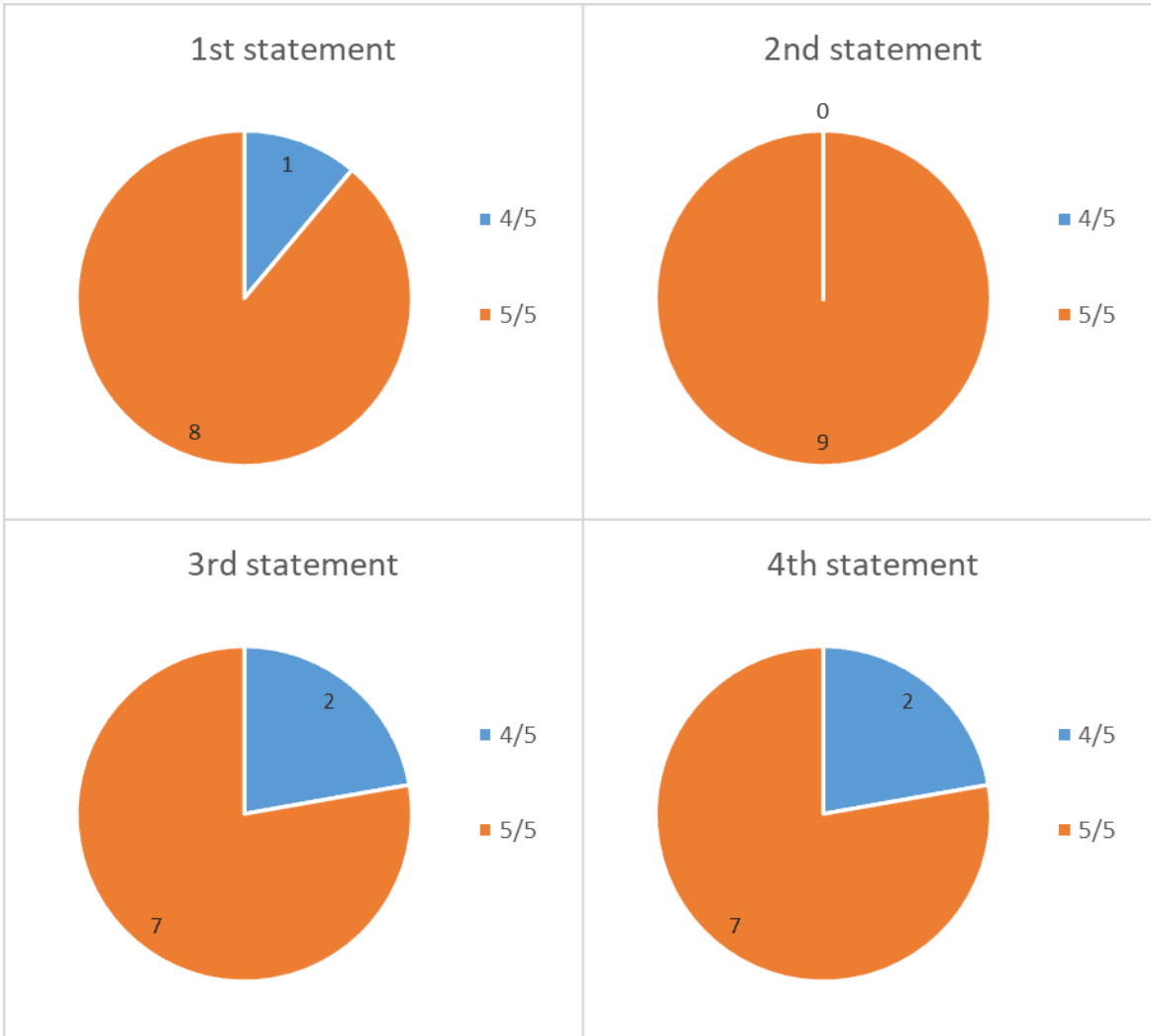
Type of training within the last 2 years



Statements regarding training

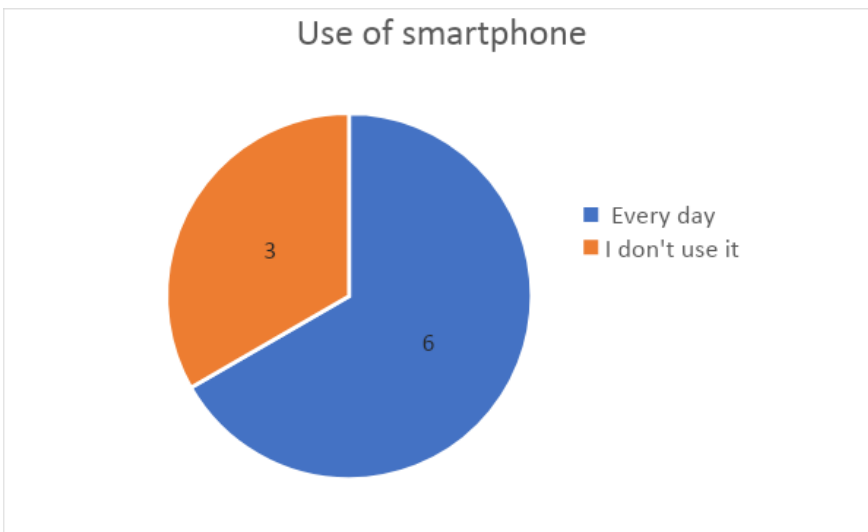
(1 = lowest, 5 = highest)

1. A training program that will improve my skills related to personal development and social participation is essential for me.
2. Training related to my personal development can help me restore my place in society.
3. Social Skills training will help me to get a job easier.
4. Training that can help my rehabilitation and social integration.

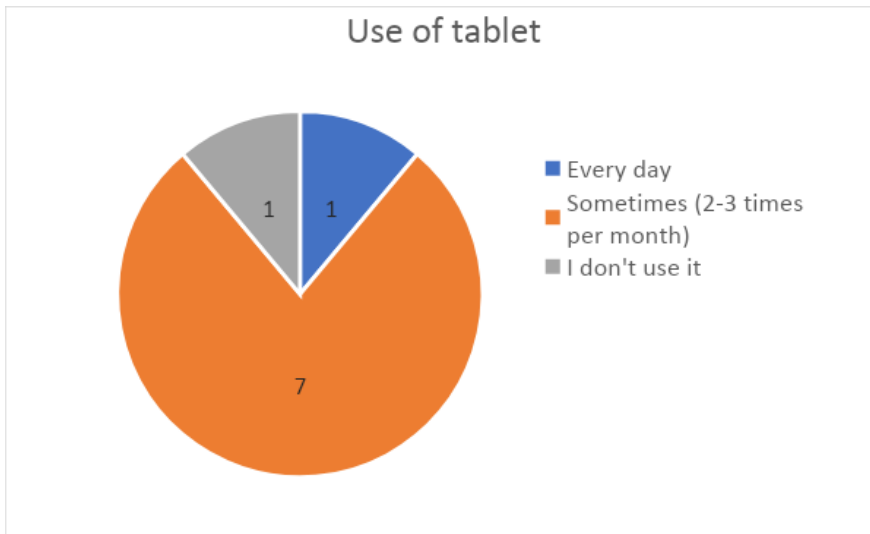


Use of ICT:

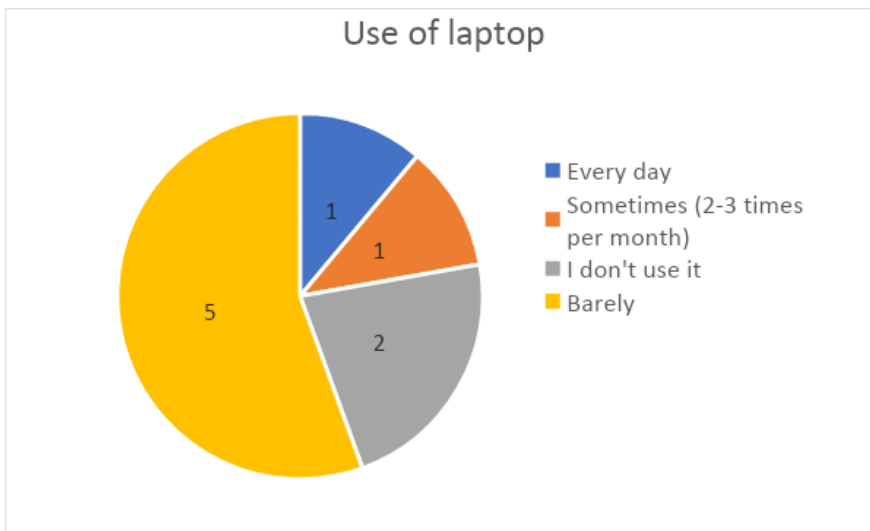
Smartphone



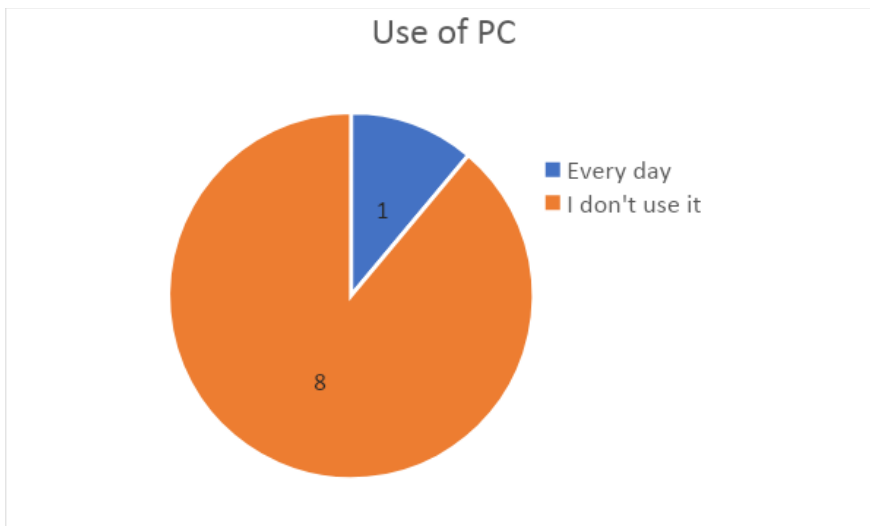
Tablet



Laptop

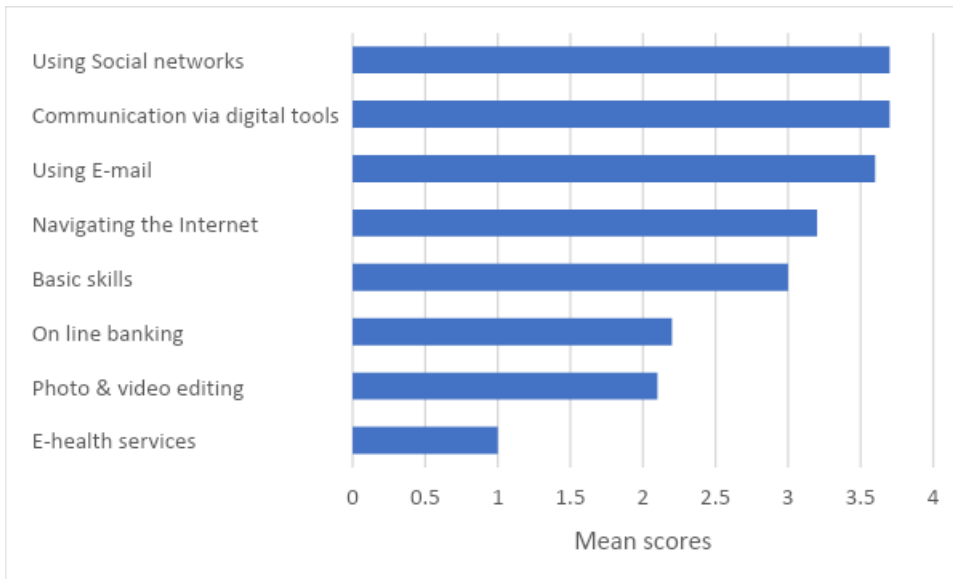


PC



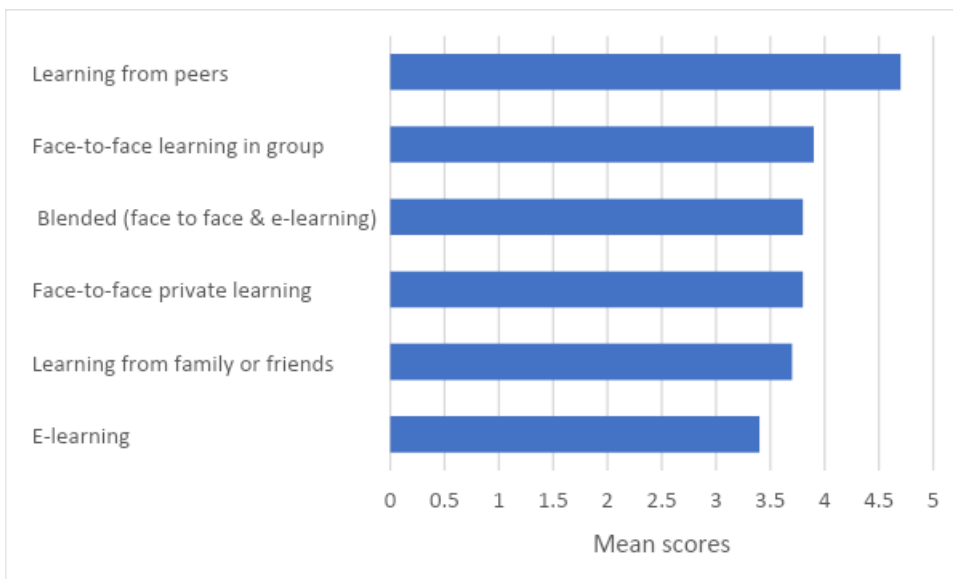
Most important ICT (information technology) related learning needs reported

(1 = lowest, 5 = highest):

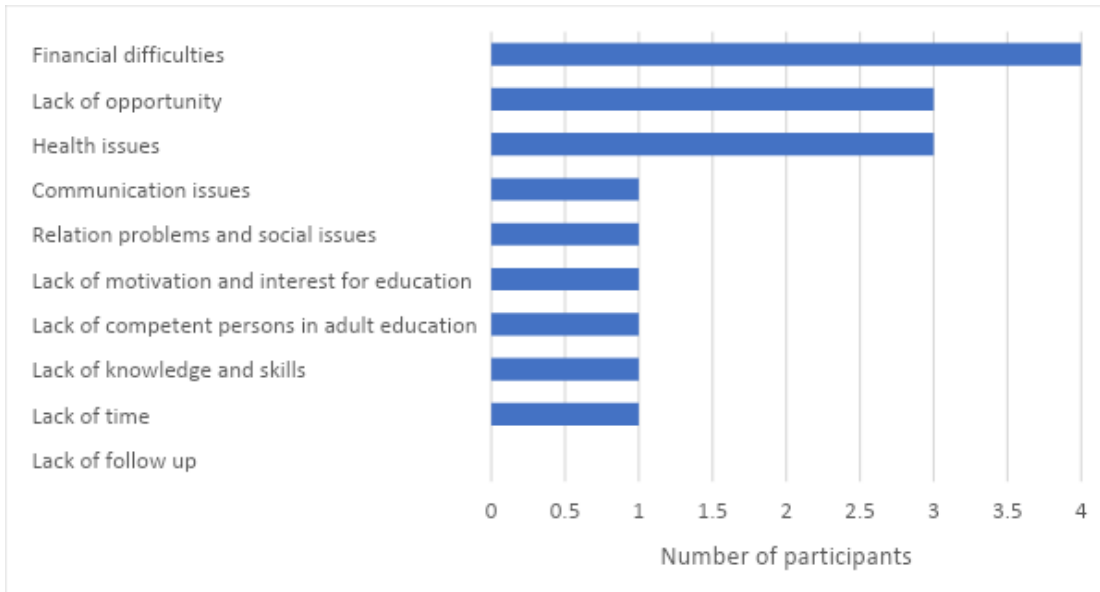


Preferred learning methods

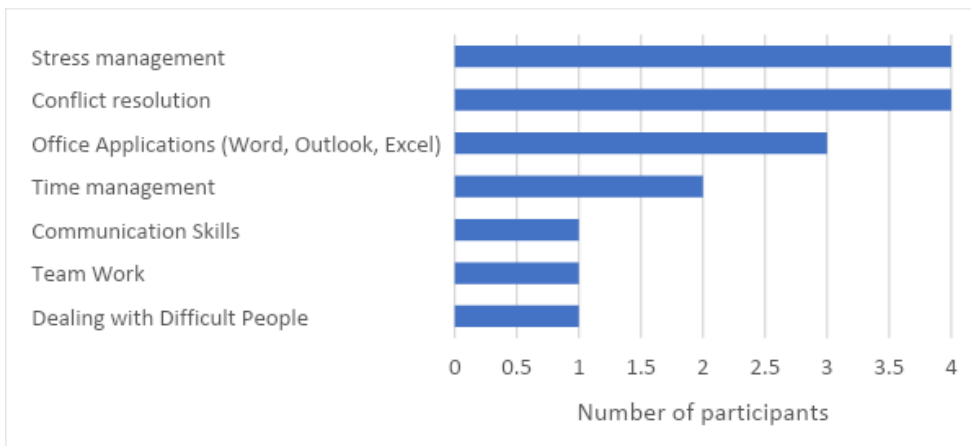
(1 = lowest, 5 = highest):



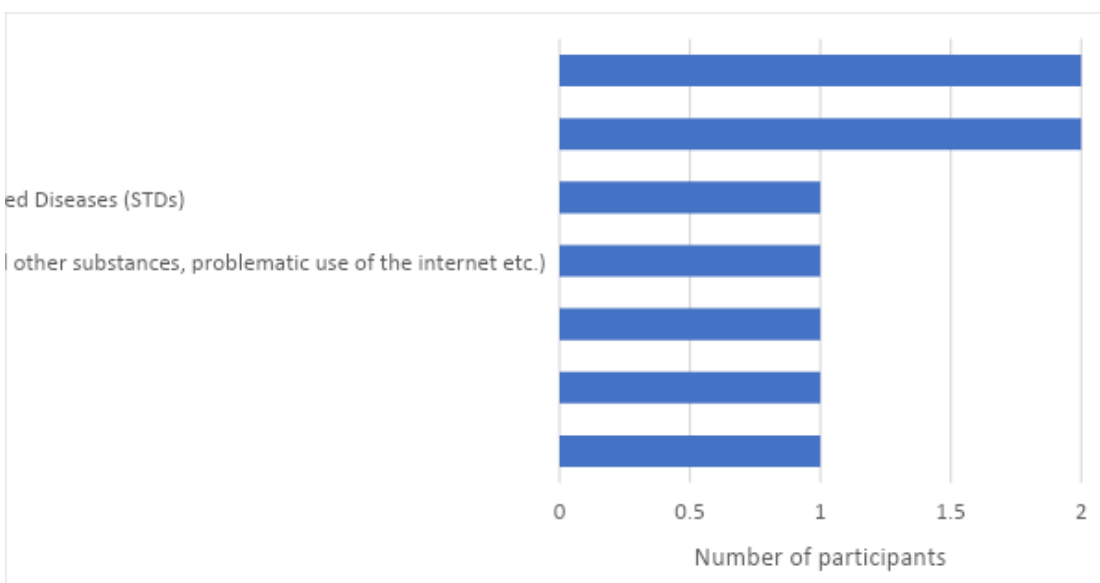
Reported main obstacles that would make attending training for skills improvement feasible:



Reported training needs

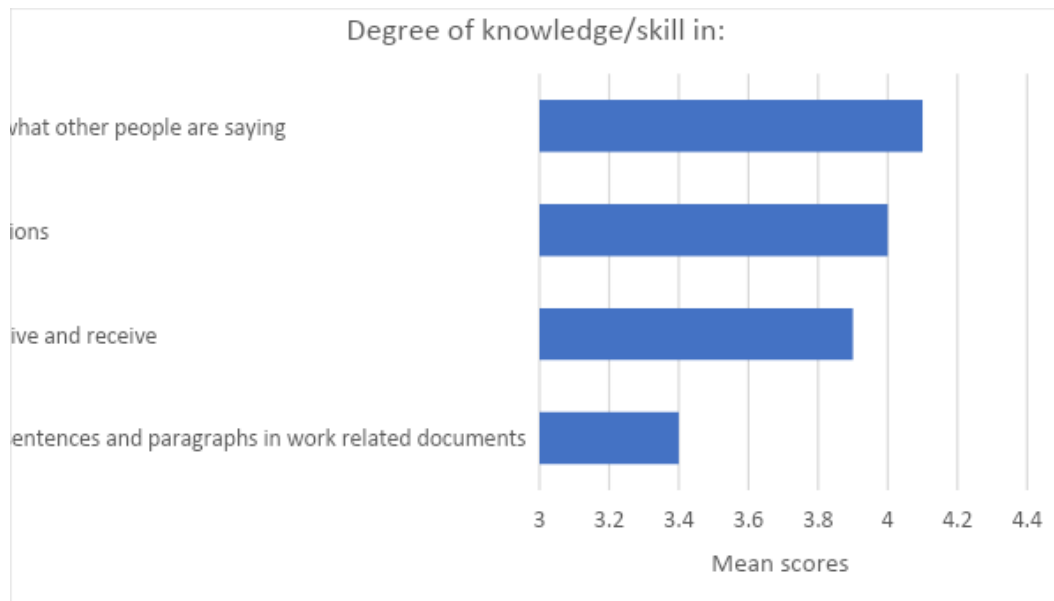


Training needs in terms of health care

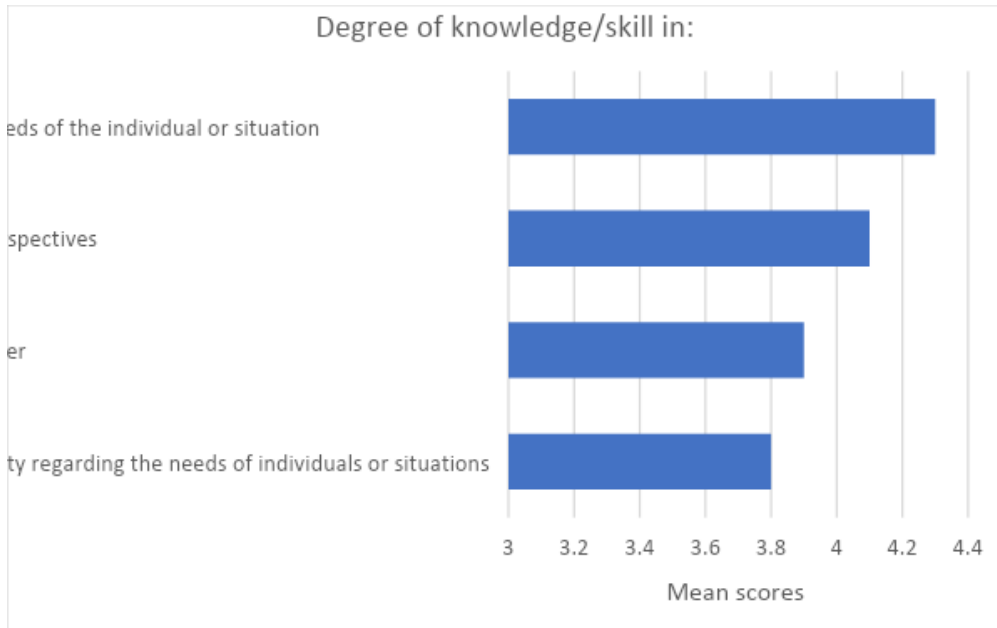


Reported degree of knowledge/skill in each of the competencies sections below:
 1 = No knowledge/skill
 5 = Fully knowledgeable/skilled – no/very little development required

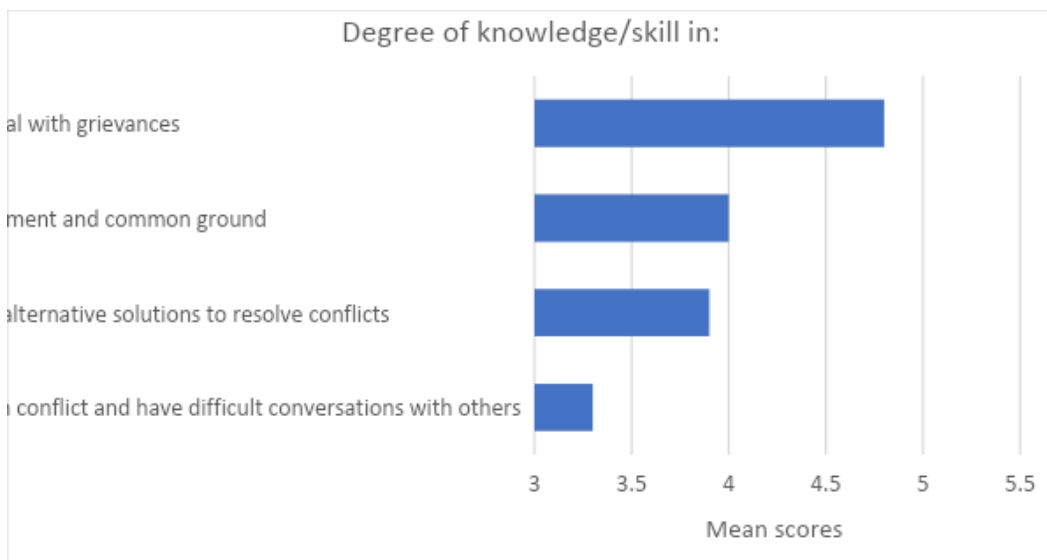
Communication



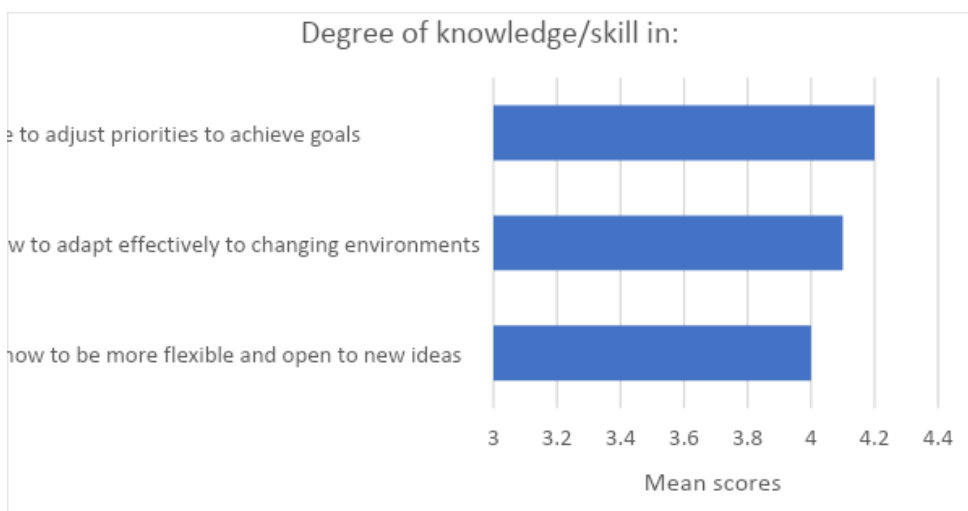
Interpersonal Skills



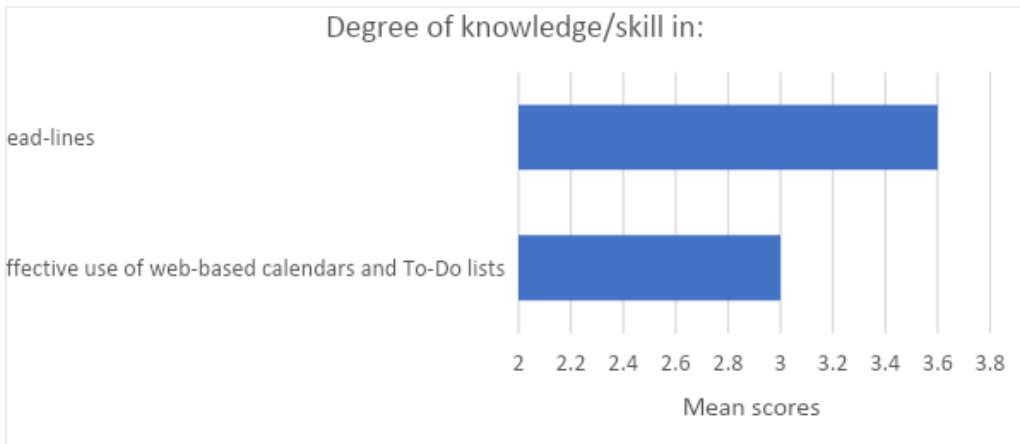
Conflict Resolution



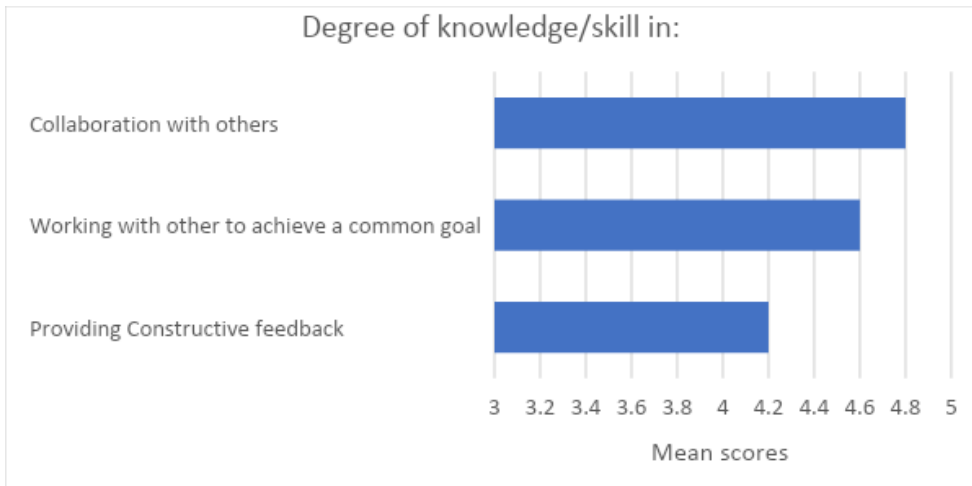
Adaptability



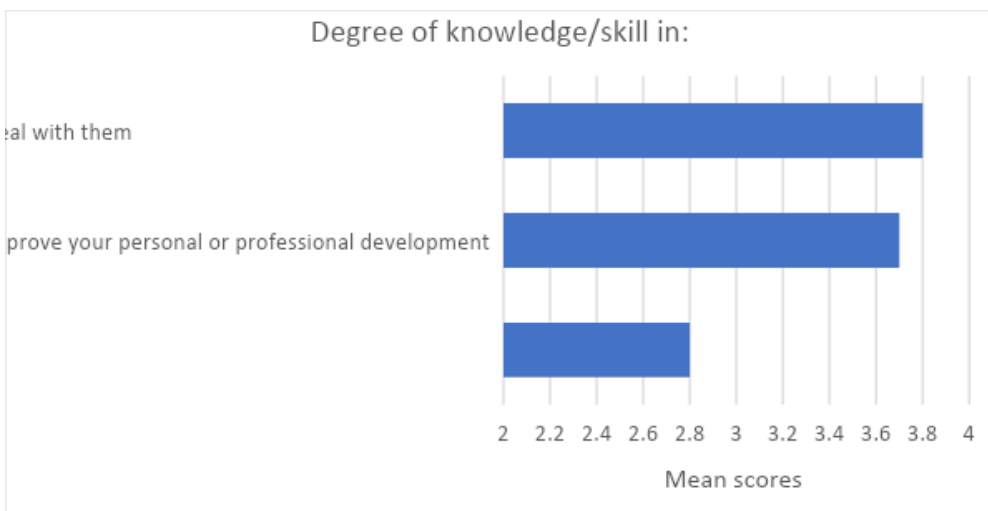
Time Management & Planning



Teamwork



Personal Effectiveness



Conclusions

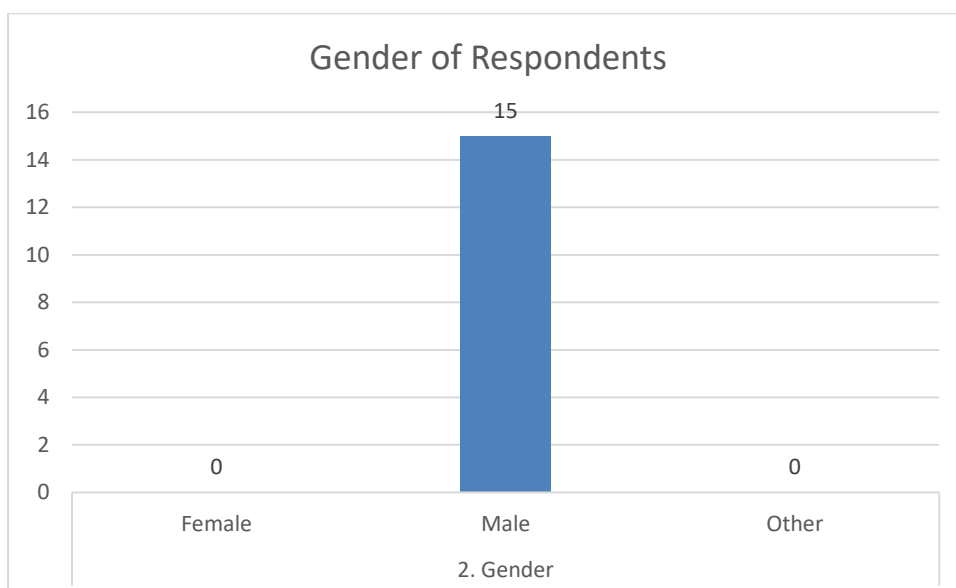
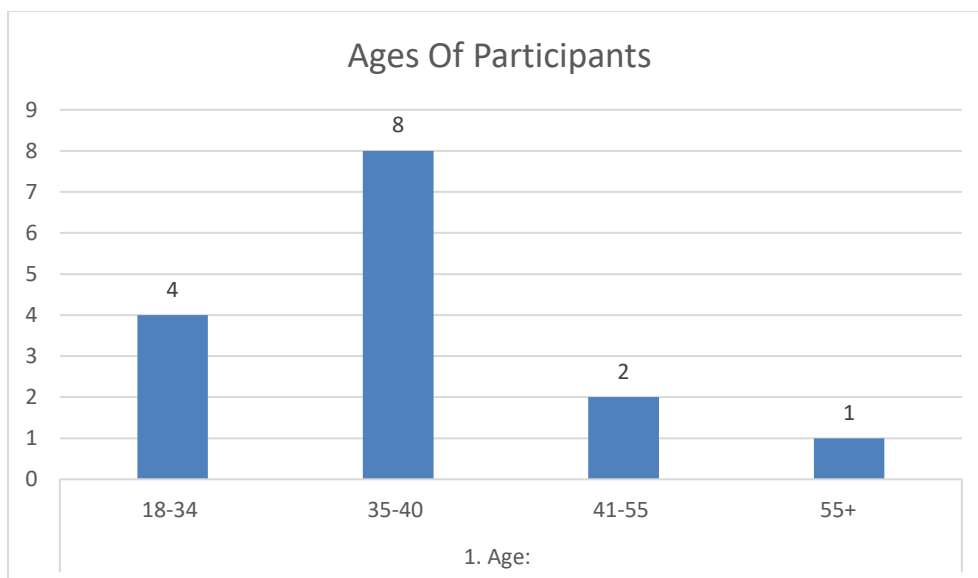
- Majority of the participants are in need of receiving proper training or education and seem to have positive attitudes towards it, either through learning from peers or by a face-to-face training in groups. All participants agreed that a training related to personal development will restore their place in society.
- Regarding the use of ICT, not all of the participants were familiar with using at least one technological device. On a daily basis, they use mainly smartphones.
- Among the most important ICT skills were use of social media, communication via digital tools, use of e-mail, navigating the internet and basic skills.
- Among the main barriers for attending a training course, were reported financial difficulties, lack of opportunities and health issues.
- Four out of nine participants reported the need for training in stress management and conflict resolution. Other needs were MS Office application training, time management and communication skills.
- Regarding health-related training, participants were interested mainly in receiving training regarding healthy eating, smoking cessation.
- Concerning the skills and competences that they already have and those that need to develop, it resulted from the survey that:
 - Communication skills need to be improved in terms of exchanging oral information to each other and understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
 - Interpersonal skills need to be enhanced in terms of responding to issues in a timely manner and being more flexible on the needs of individuals or situations.
 - Regarding conflict resolutions, participants reported high skills in understanding how to deal with grievances and identifying areas of agreement and common ground, while training need was reported in terms of knowing how to think of alternative solutions to resolve conflicts and knowing how to deal with conflict and have difficult conversations with others.
 - Adaptability constitutes one the characteristics they already have.
 - Time management is a skill that participants are merely capable of. Knowing how to adhere with deadlines and how to make more effective use of web-based calendars and to-do lists demands even better organizational skills.
 - Collaborative skills allow already them to work together as team towards a common goal but also to provide constructive feedback.
- Personal effectiveness motivates participants to keep up with continuing technological changes and take advantage of these opportunities to improve their personal or professional development.

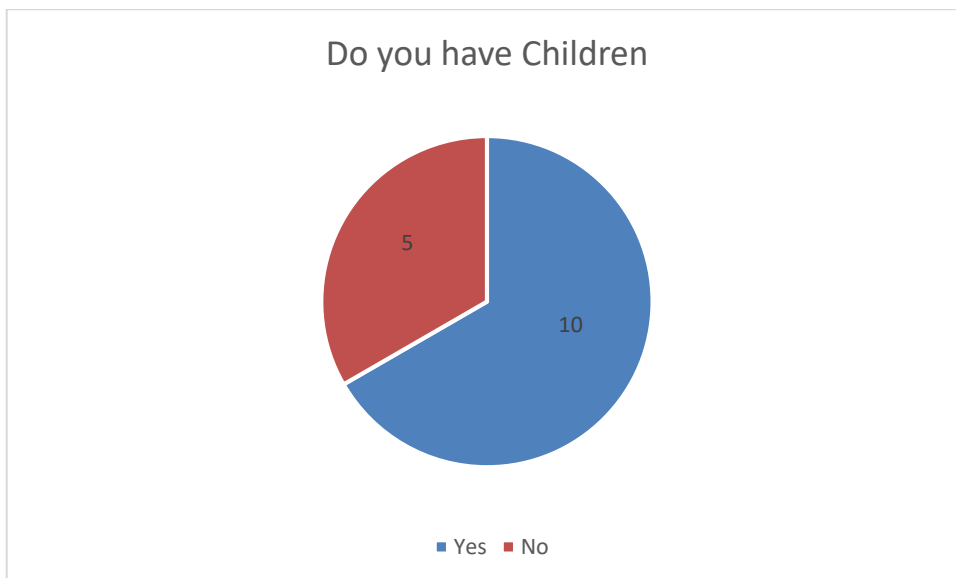
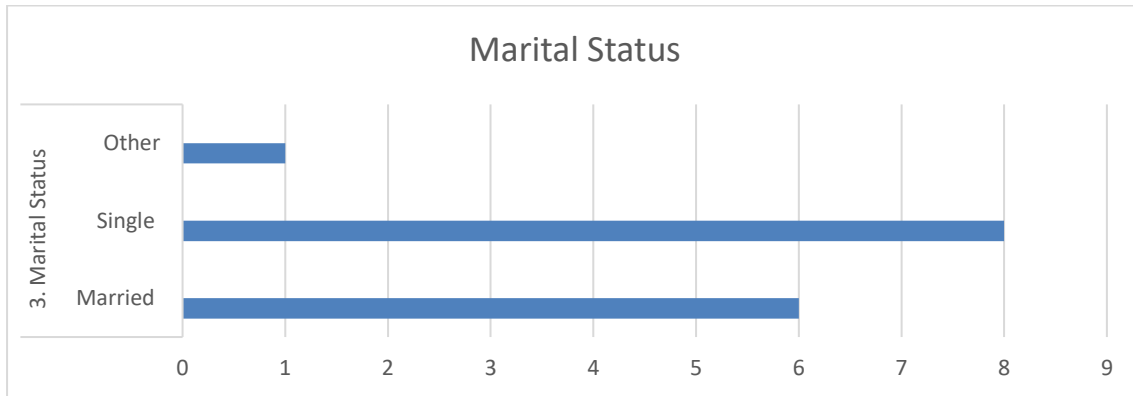
Ireland

As part of the RECHANCE research process, Spectrum Research Centre conducted surveys and interviews with both former prisoners and frontline workers, especially those working in community organisations supporting the social, education and employment engagement of the target group. The aim of this field research was to explore the challenges that ex-prisoners face and identify the key training and social support needs of the project's target group.

Stakeholder information and involvement

Fifteen (15) ex-prisoners participated in the survey activities and 4 frontline professionals participated in the interview process. Given both the COVID-19 situation in Ireland and more importantly, the motivation and educational disposition of the target group, the surveys were conducted on a one-to-one basis via telephone or in person with the support of the frontline professionals as the online survey format was not suitable.

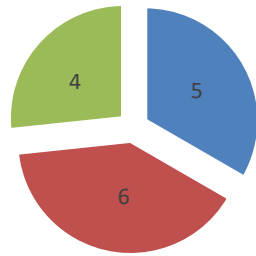




Of the respondents with children, their family sizes range from 1 child to 6 children; and it is noted that all children are within the same family unit.

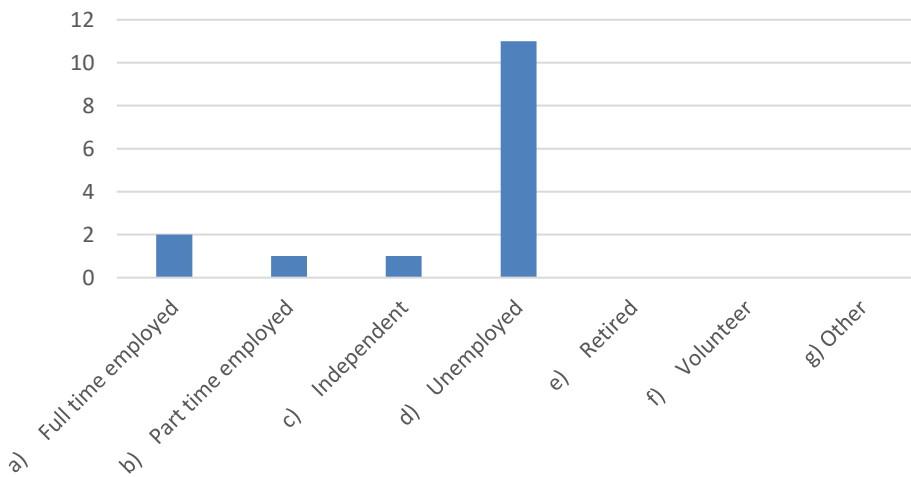


Level of Educational Attainment

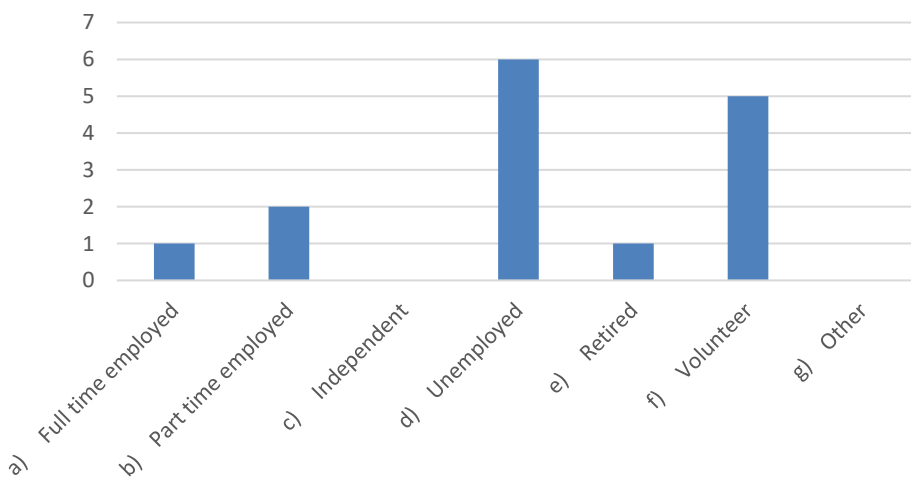


- Less than primary education
- Primary or first stage of basic education
- Lower secondary or second stage of basic education

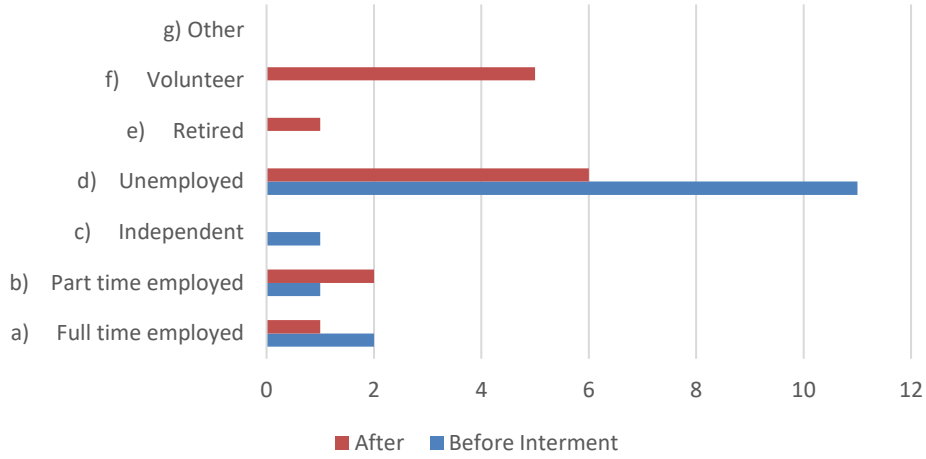
Employment status before the interment



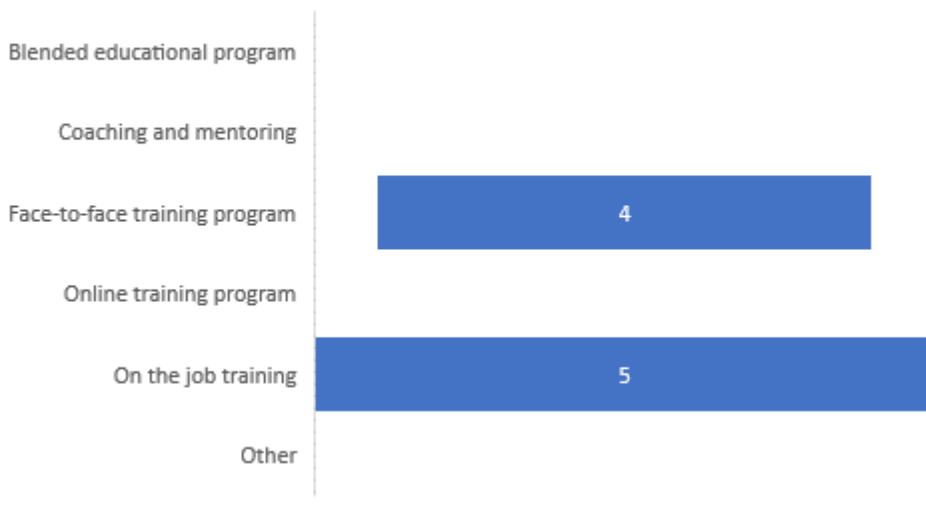
Employment Status Now



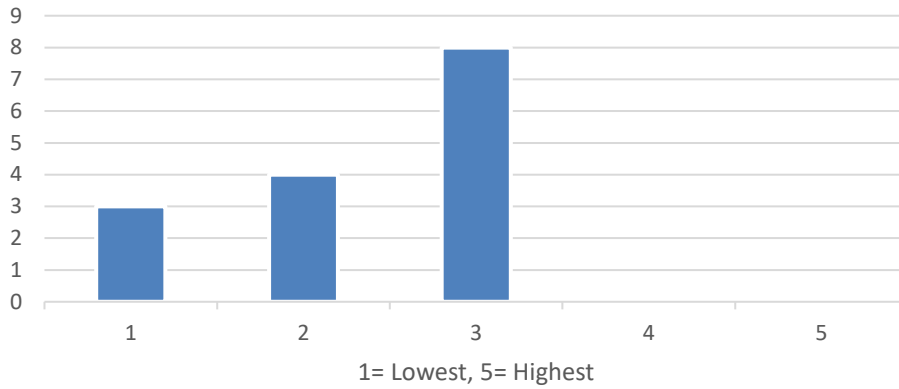
Employment Status Then vs Now



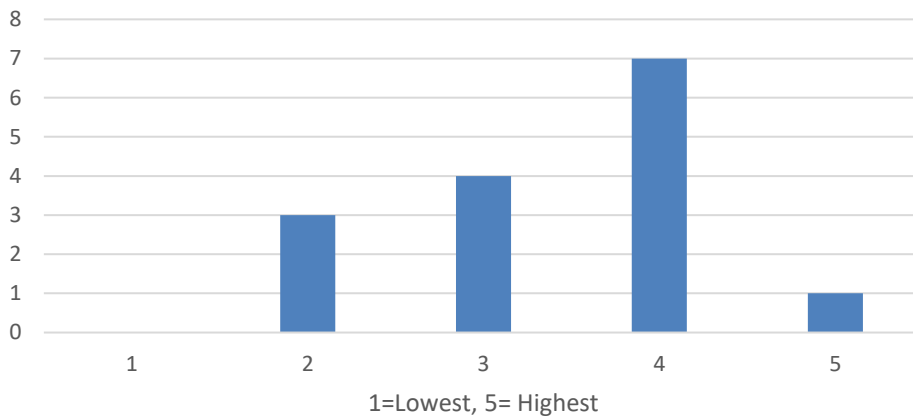
Training recieved last two years.

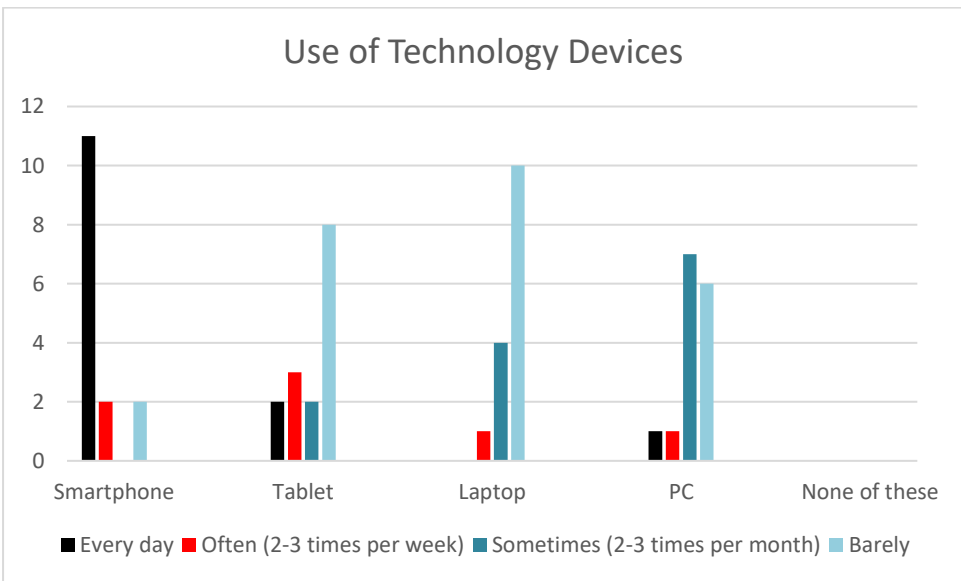
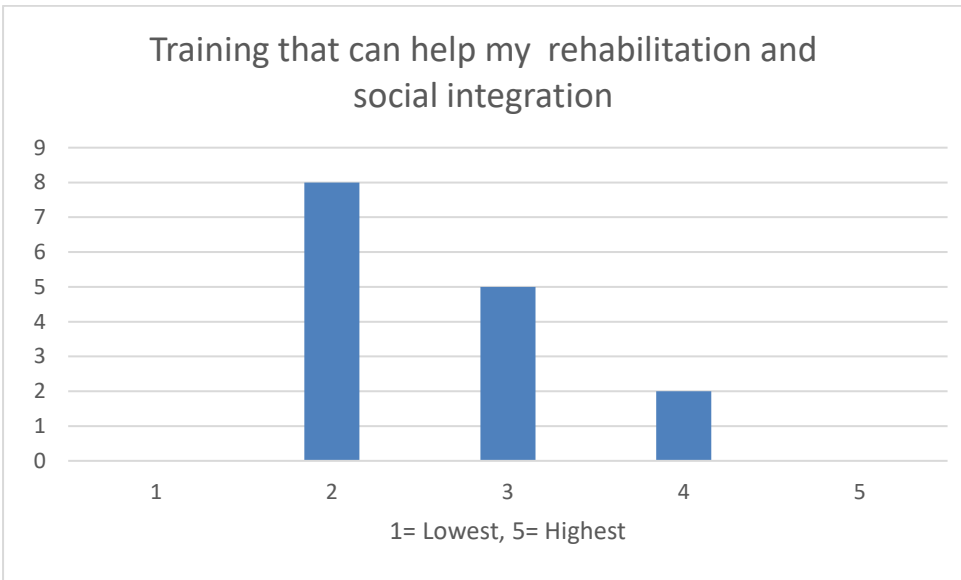
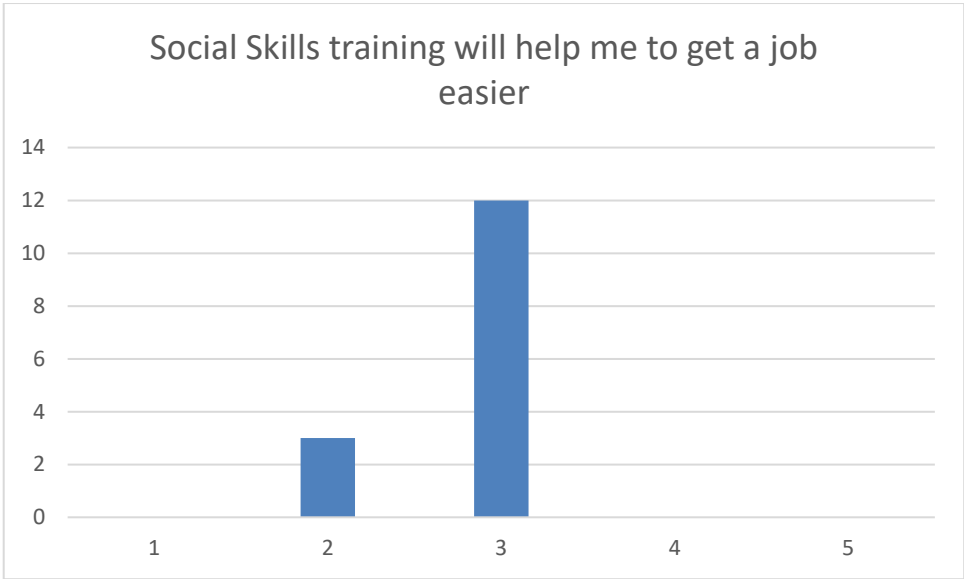


Training programme that will improve my skills
related to personal development and social
participation is essential for me

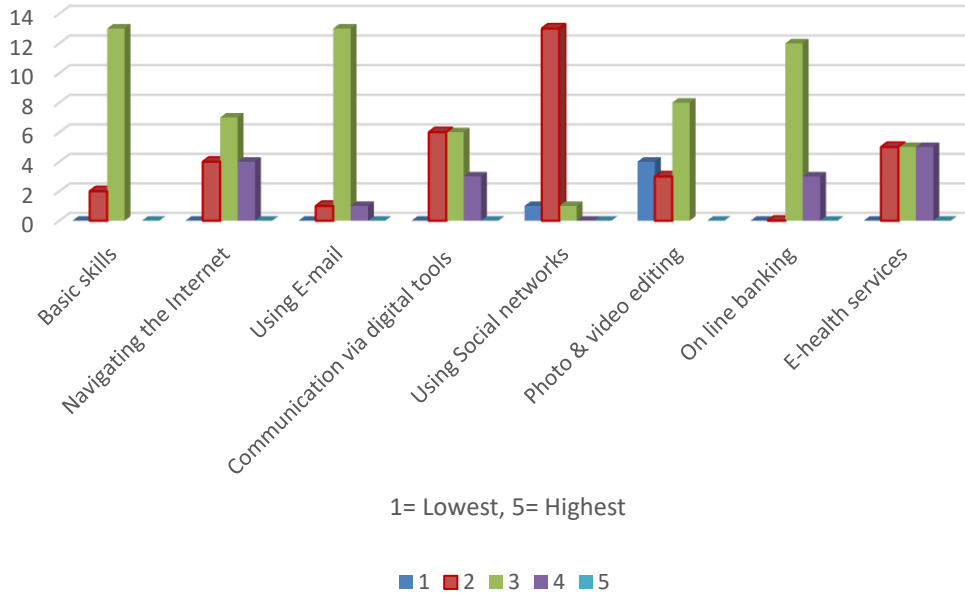


Training related to my personal development can
help me restore my place in the society

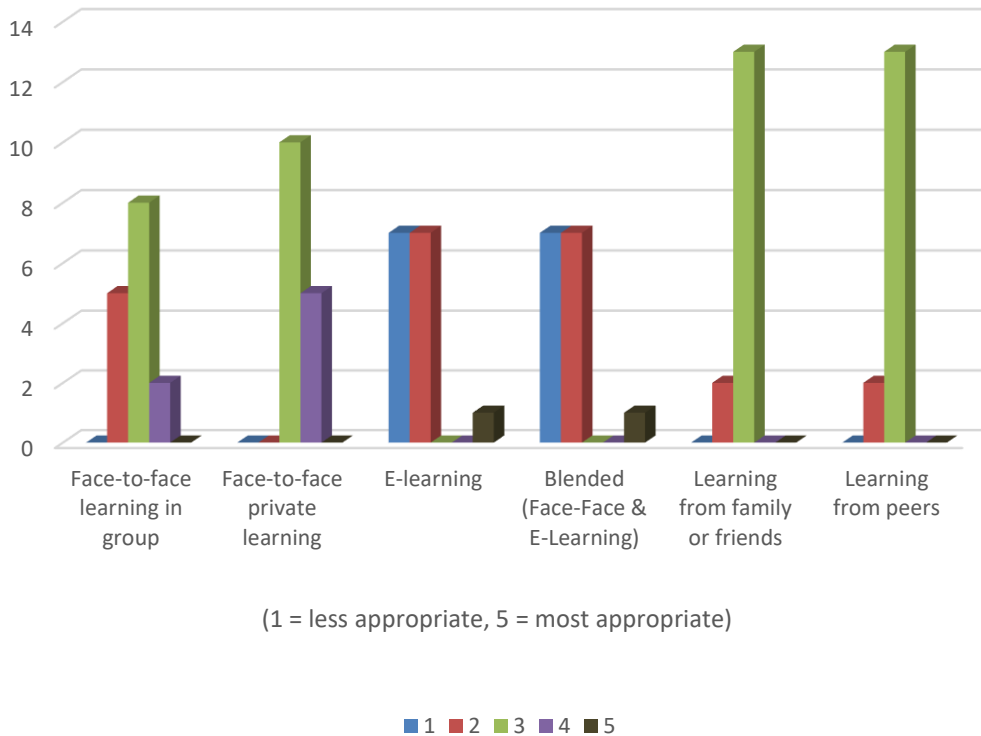




What are the most important ICT related learning needs for you?

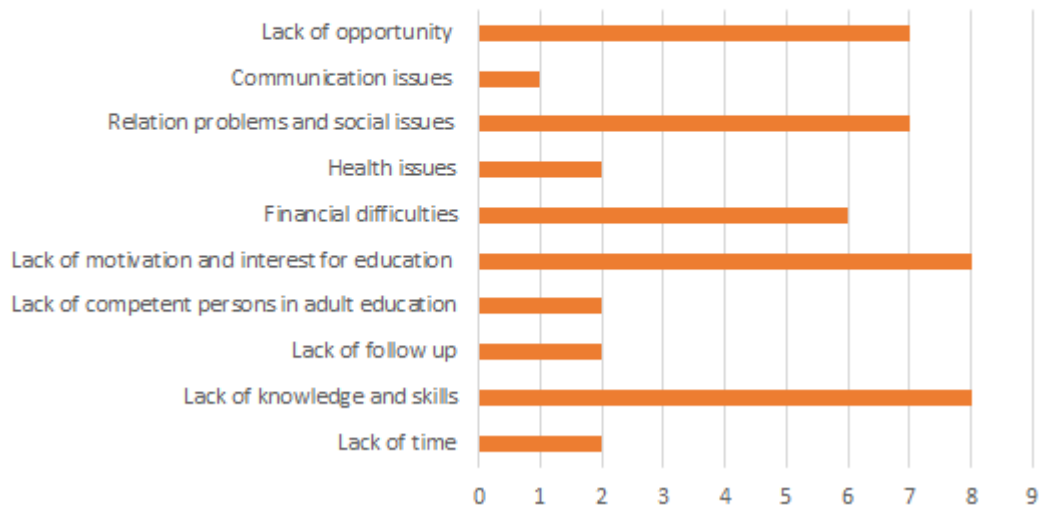


Preferred Learning Methods.





Main Obstacles for attending training for skills improvement

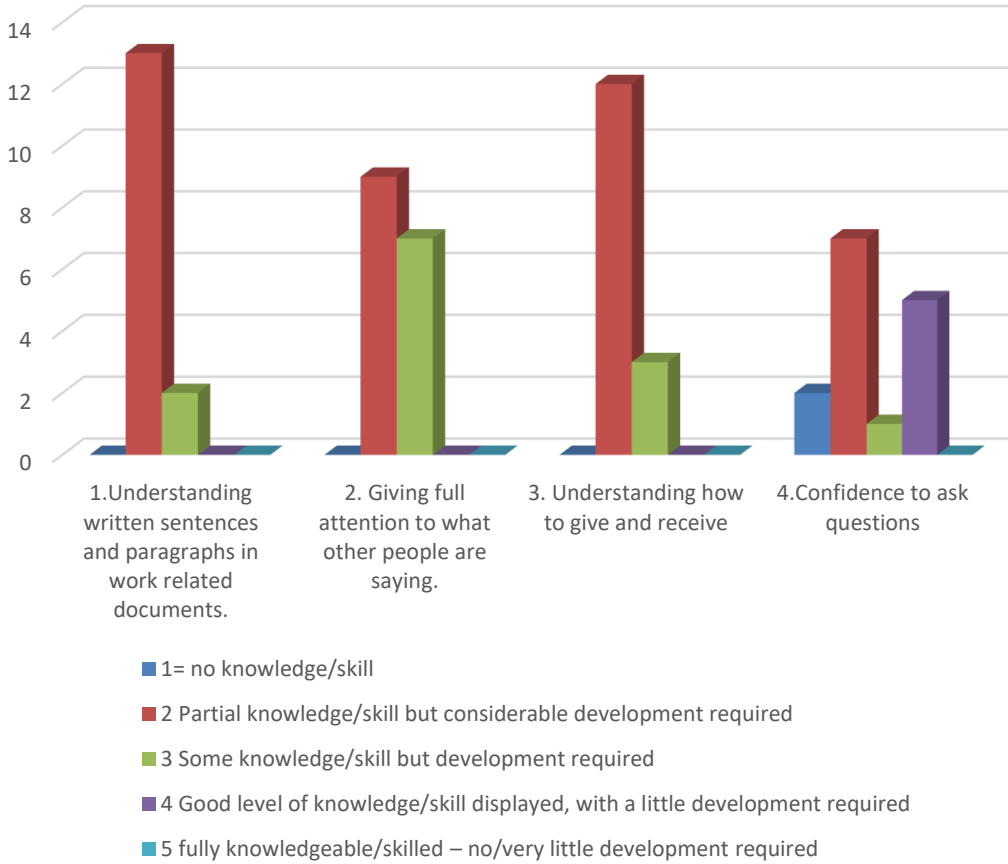


Topics that reflect training needs and the main focus for their personal development

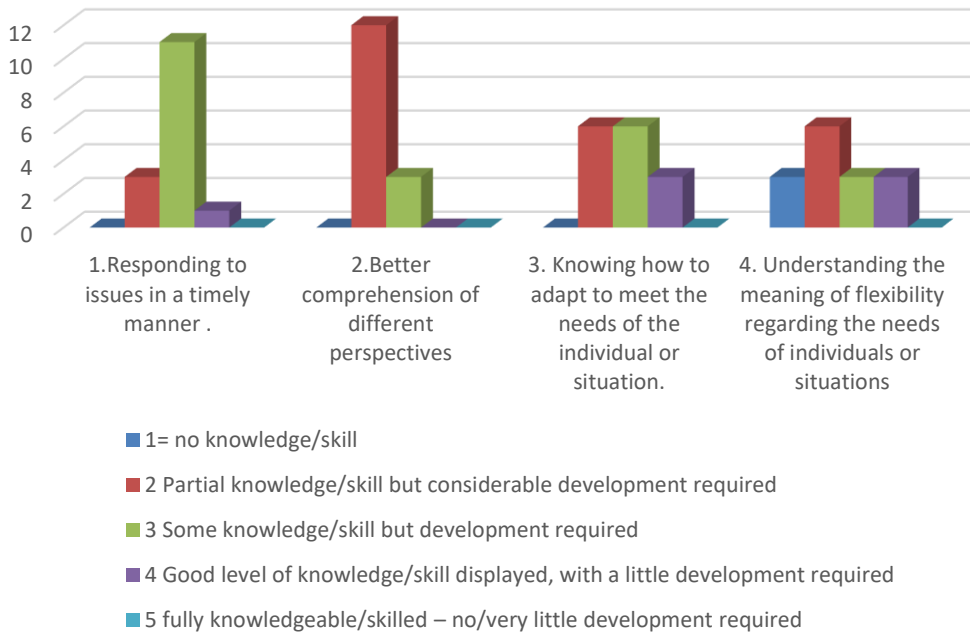




Communication

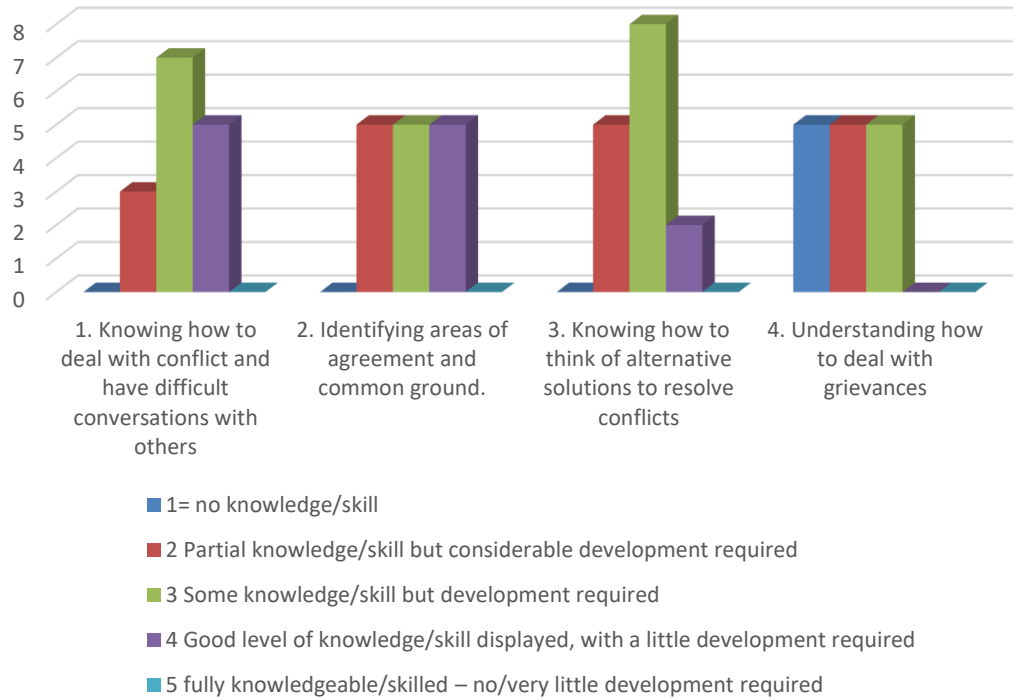


Interpersonal Skills

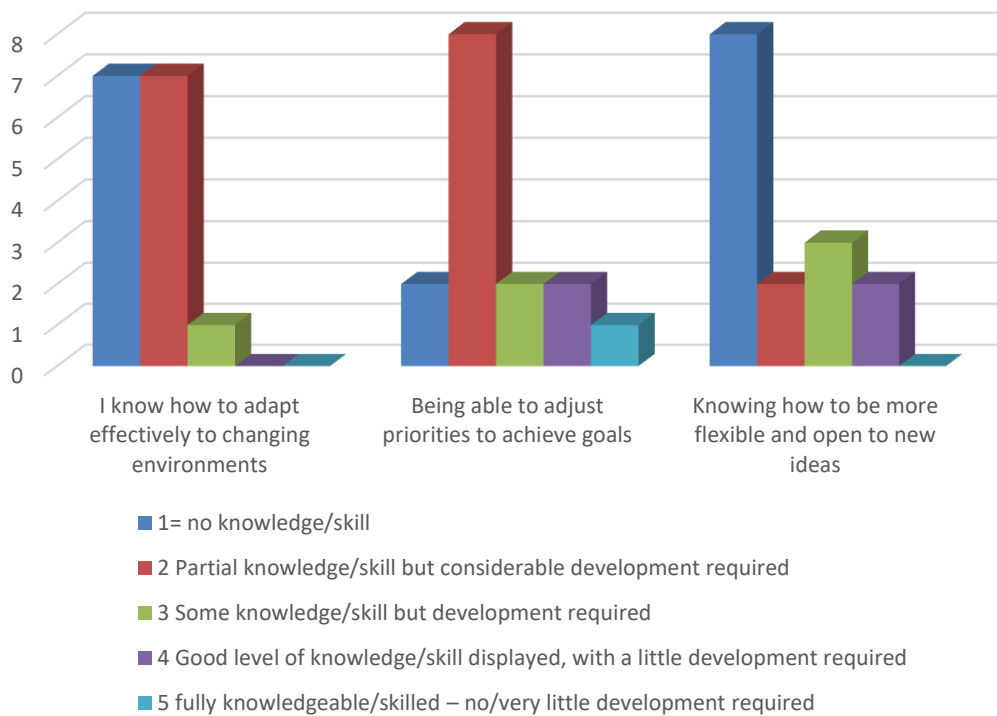


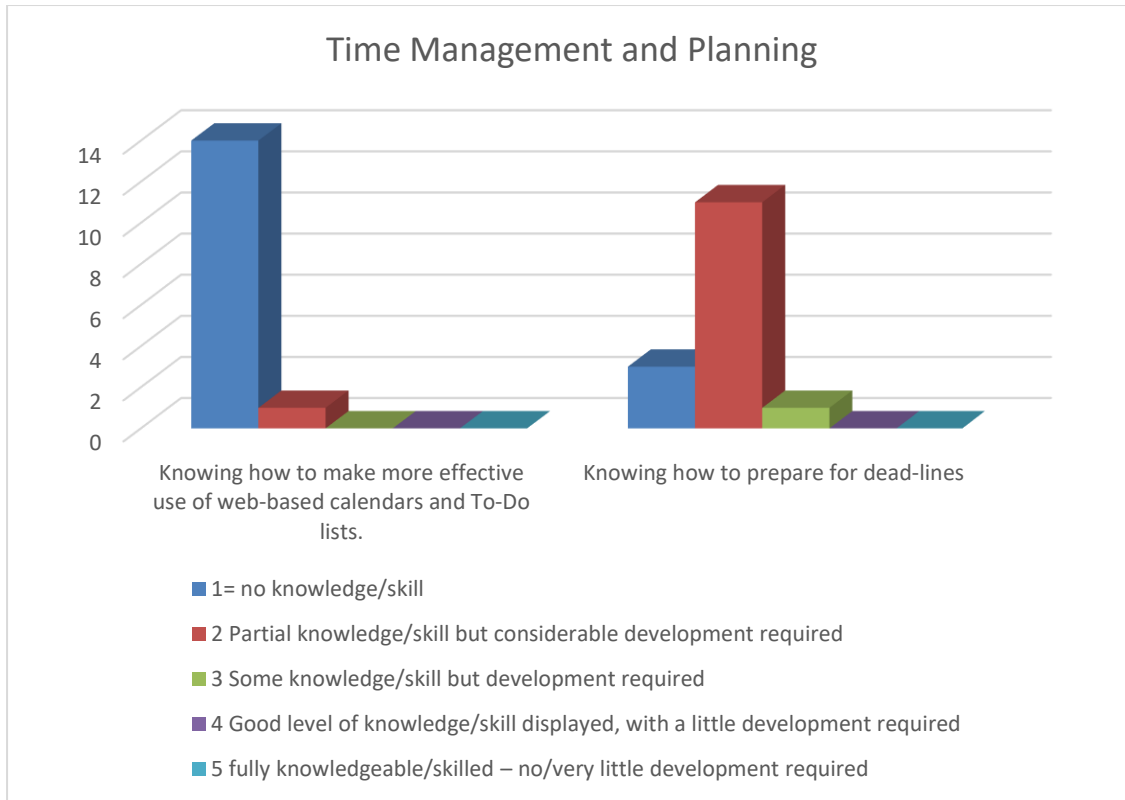


Conflict Resolution



Adapatability





Additional Contribution from Stakeholders

In our conversations with the professionals working with former prisoners in community and supported employment settings, the key considerations that they must take on-board when working with this target group are that, in some cases, their clients are often actively managing recovery from addiction, family breakdown, trauma, and societal stigma which affects their sense of worth and self-esteem. Many of these barriers have a negative impact on their motivation for and ability to enter the labour market and in some cases sustain employment opportunities. Having a prison record also has a negative effect on their ability to access education and employment opportunities as there is still a lot of stigma in Irish society about ex-prisoners. It was noted that many of their clients use smart mobile phones. However they often have very poor ICT skills often without email addresses or access to a PC with internet, so this will need to be carefully considered as part of the RECHANCE curriculum design process; it was felt that self-directed e-learning will not yield positive results for this target group.

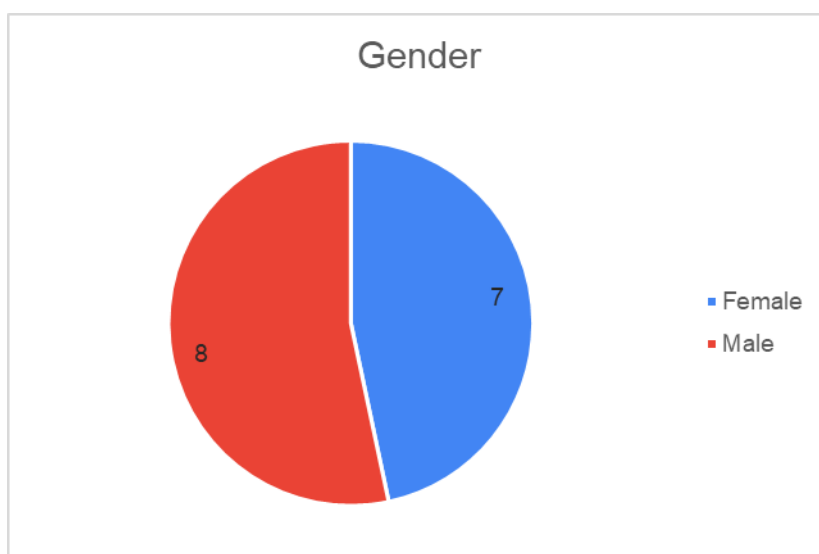
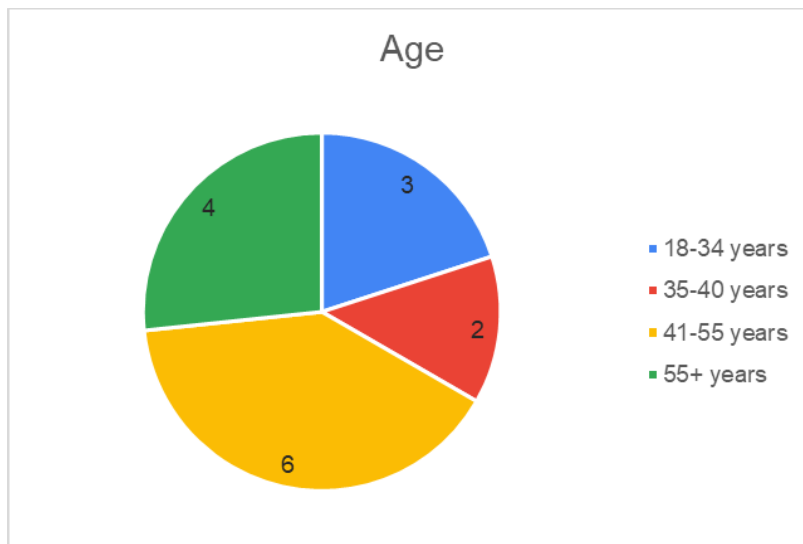
There are a number of support services available at community level, but often ex-prisoners are unaware of these and are fearful of reaching out and engaging with these supports; more needs to be done in this area.

Greece

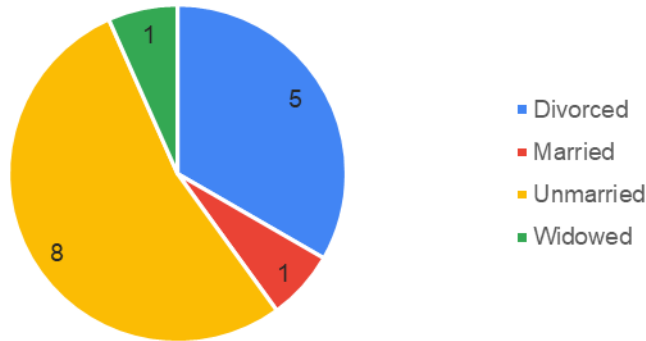
Demographic characteristics

Most of the participants were at the age 41-55 years old, unmarried and having been in prison for more than 36 months.

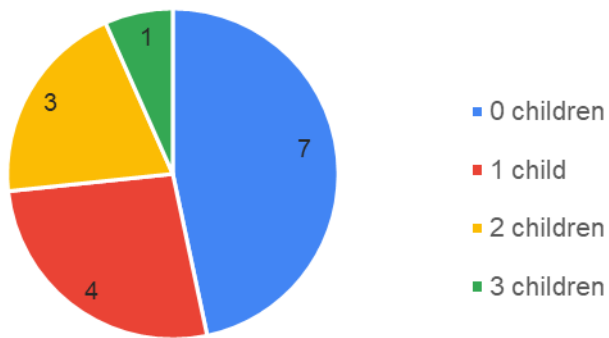
N=15 participants in total.



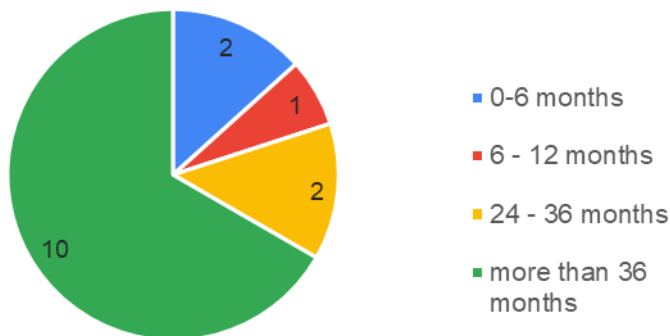
Marital status



Number of children

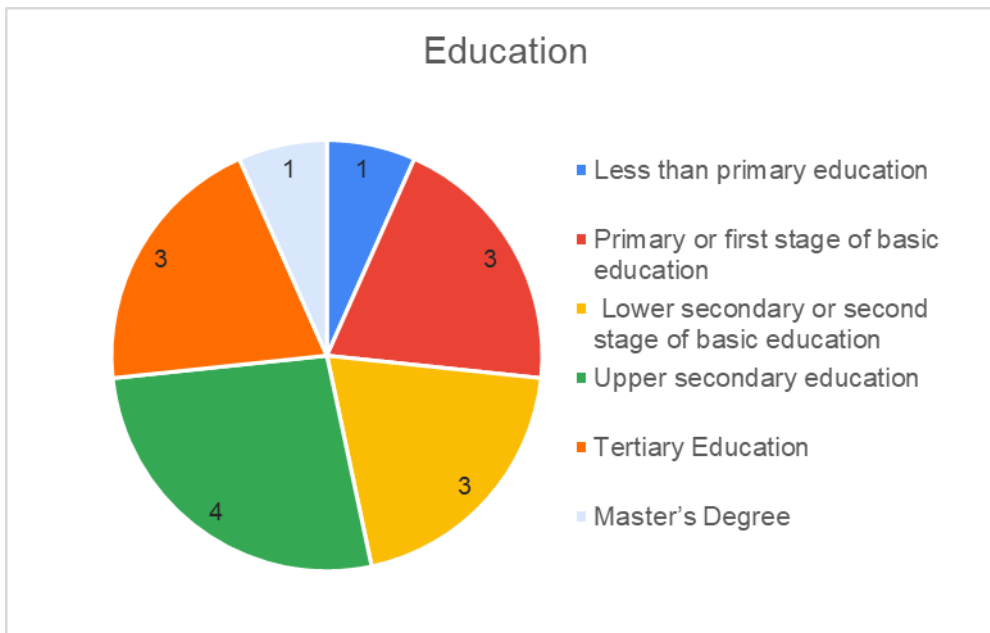


Time in Reformatory institution

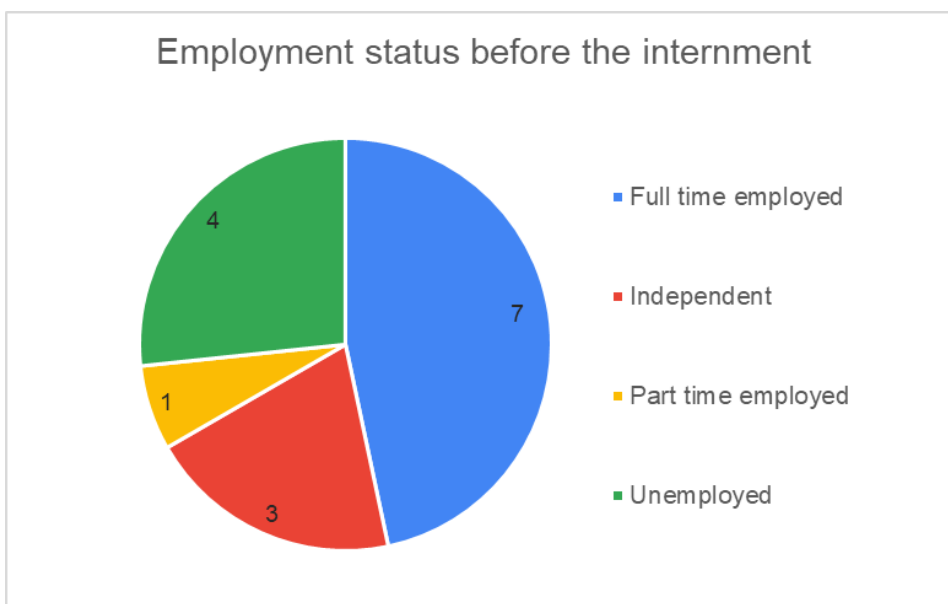


Regarding education and level, three of the participants have been in primary or first stage of basic education and four in upper secondary education. One participant reported not having completed any type of education while other participants have completed primary or first stage of basic education (n=3), lower secondary or second stage

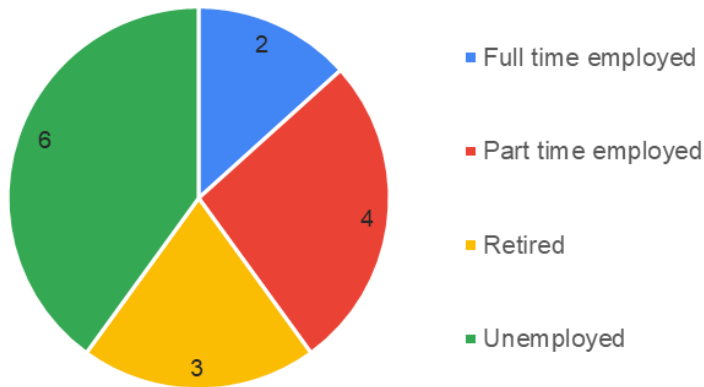
of basic education (n=3), tertiary education (n=3) and master's degree (n=1).



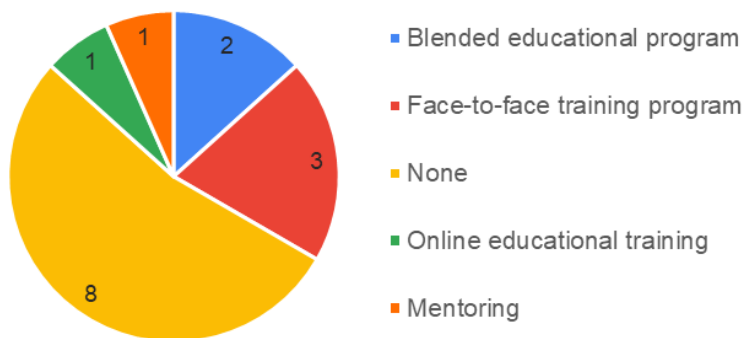
Regarding employment status before the internship, most of the participants were full time employed (n=7), while currently more than one third of the participants are unemployed (n=6).



Employment status now



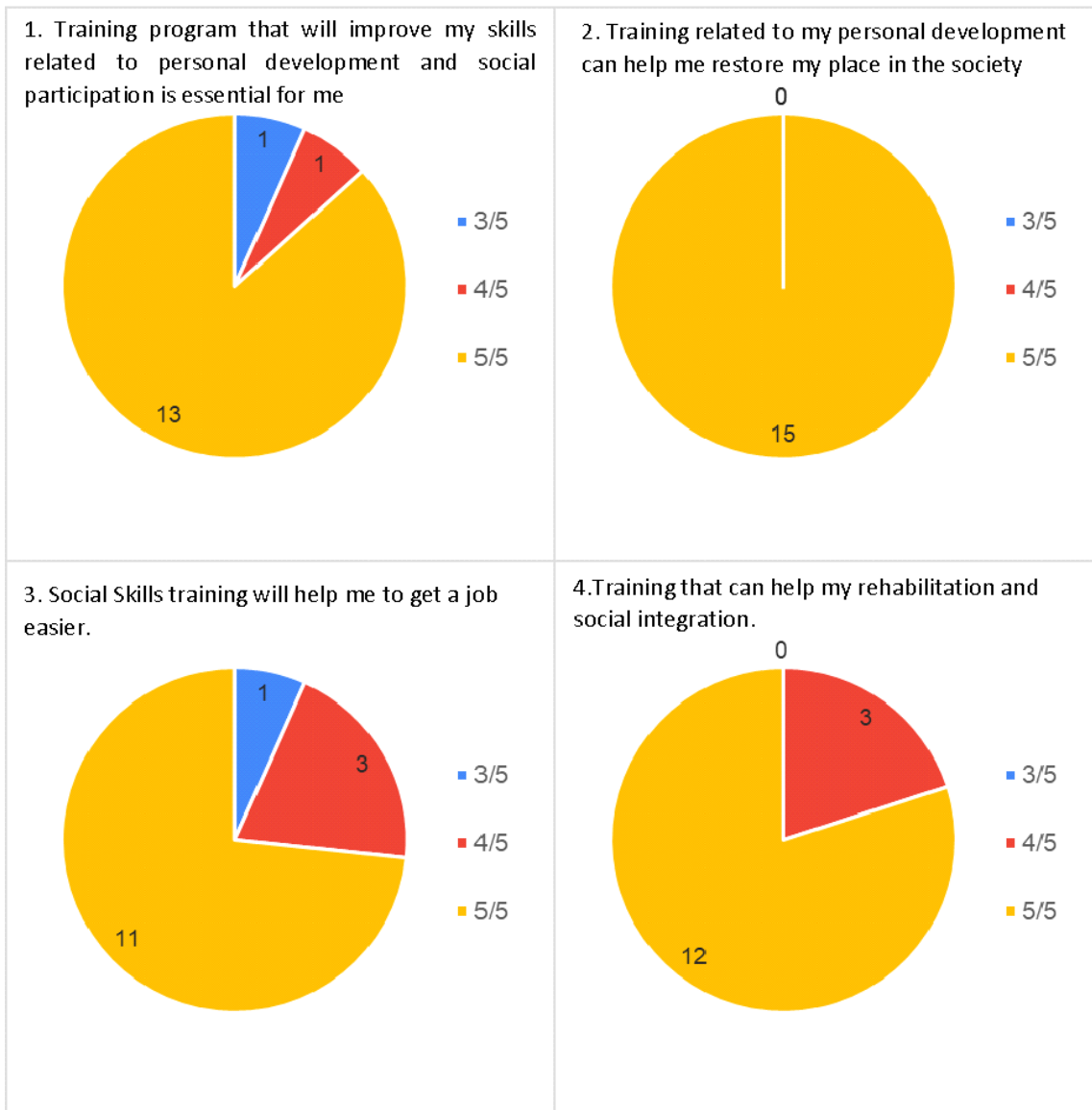
Type of training within the last 2 years



Statements regarding training

(1 = lowest, 5 = highest)

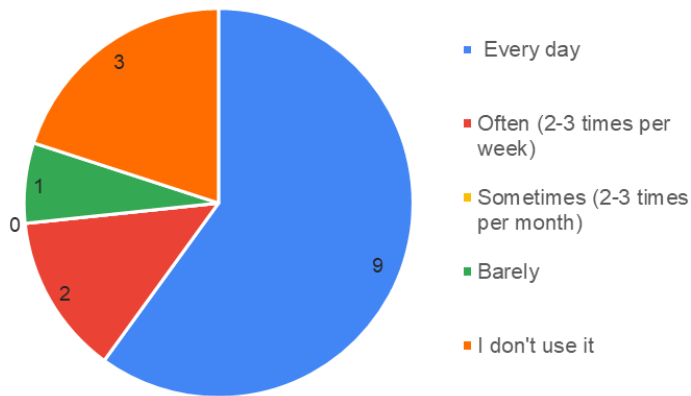
1. Training program that will improve my skills related to personal development and social participation is essential for me
2. Training related to my personal development can help me restore my place in the society
3. Social Skills training will help me to get a job easier.
4. Training that can help my rehabilitation and social integration.



Use of ICT:

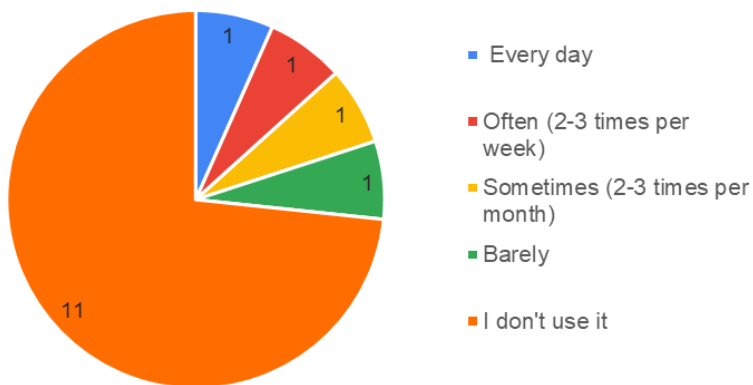
Smartphone

Use of smartphone



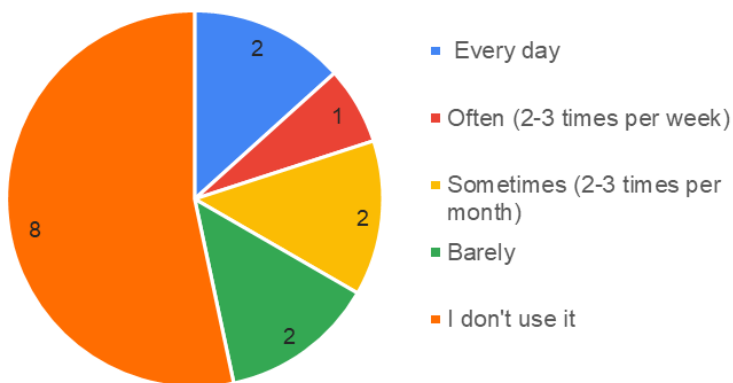
Tablet

Use of tablet

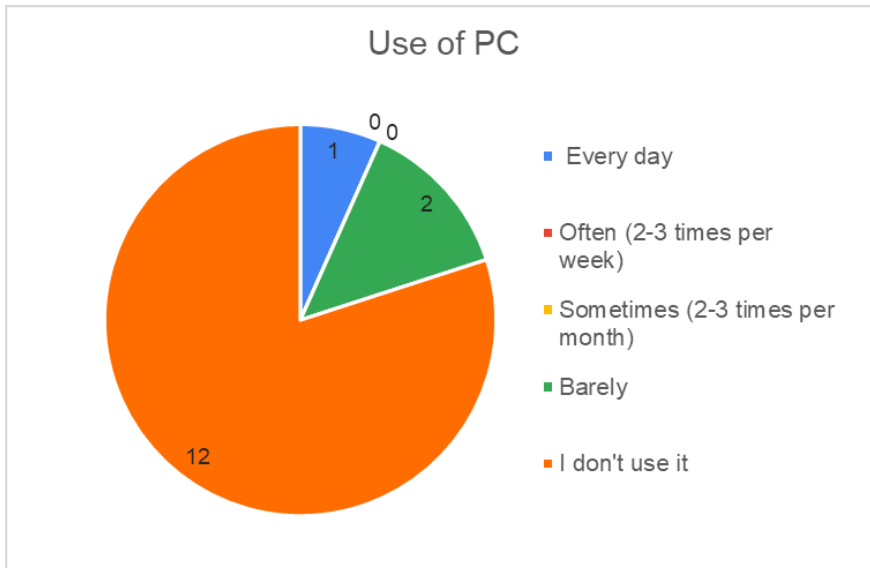


Laptop

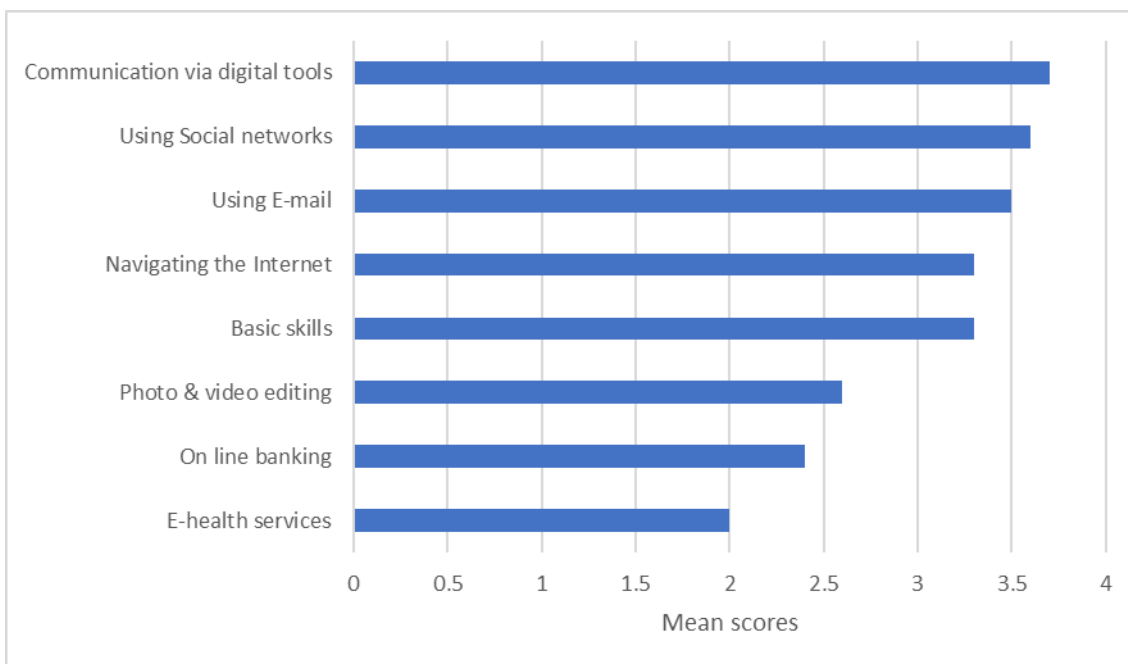
Use of laptop



PC

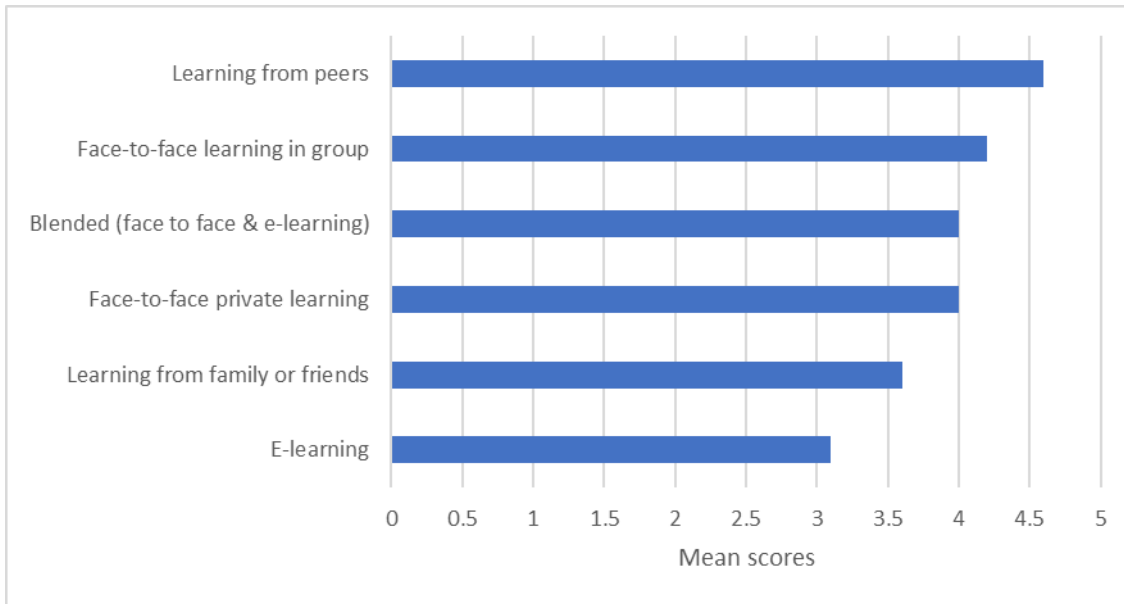


Most important ICT (information technology) related learning needs (1 = lowest, 5 = highest):

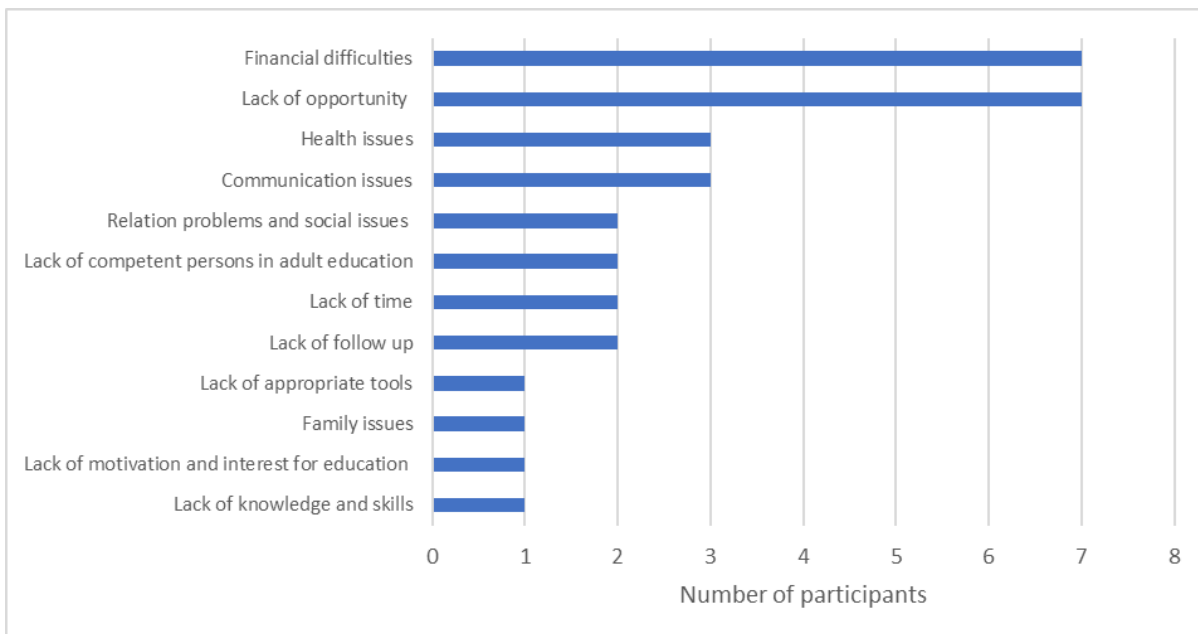


Preferred learning methods

(1 = lowest, 5 = highest):



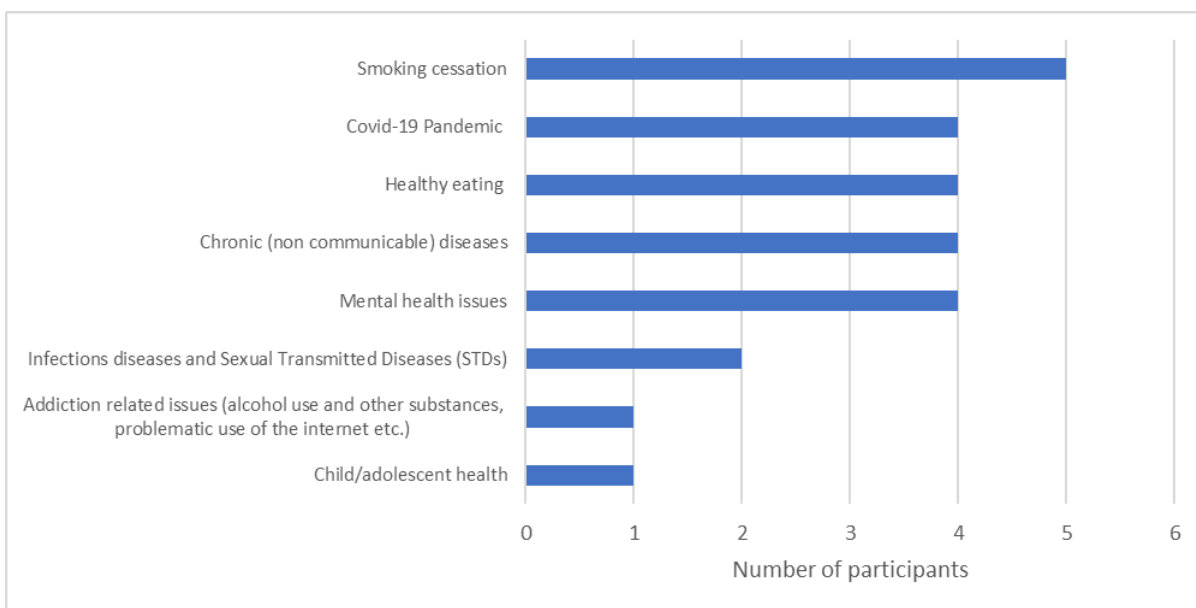
Reported main obstacles that would make attending training for skills improvement feasible:



Reported training needs



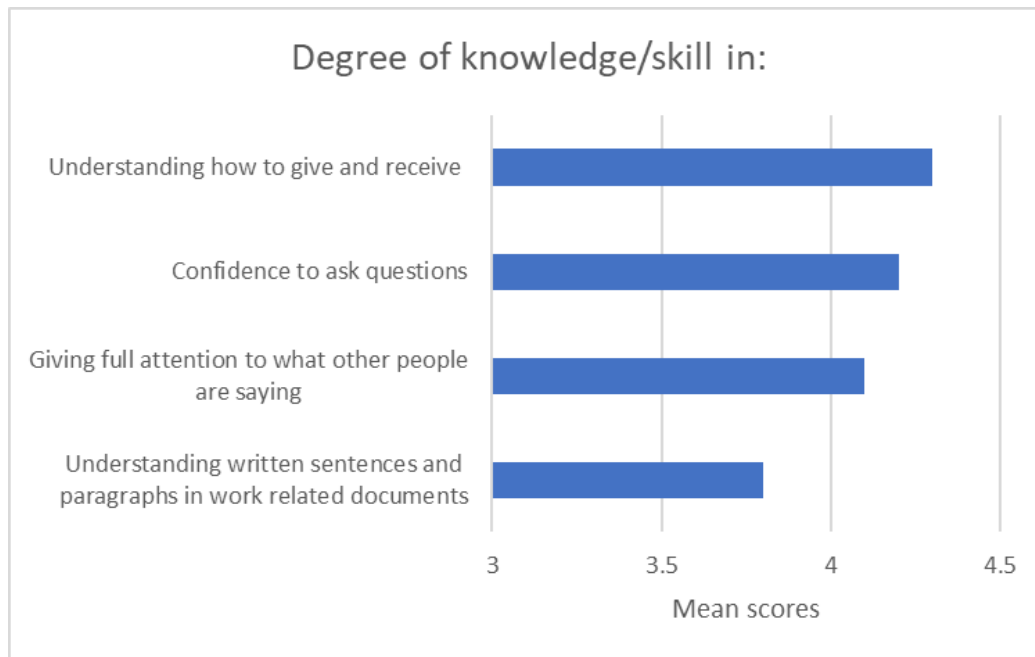
Training needs in terms of health care



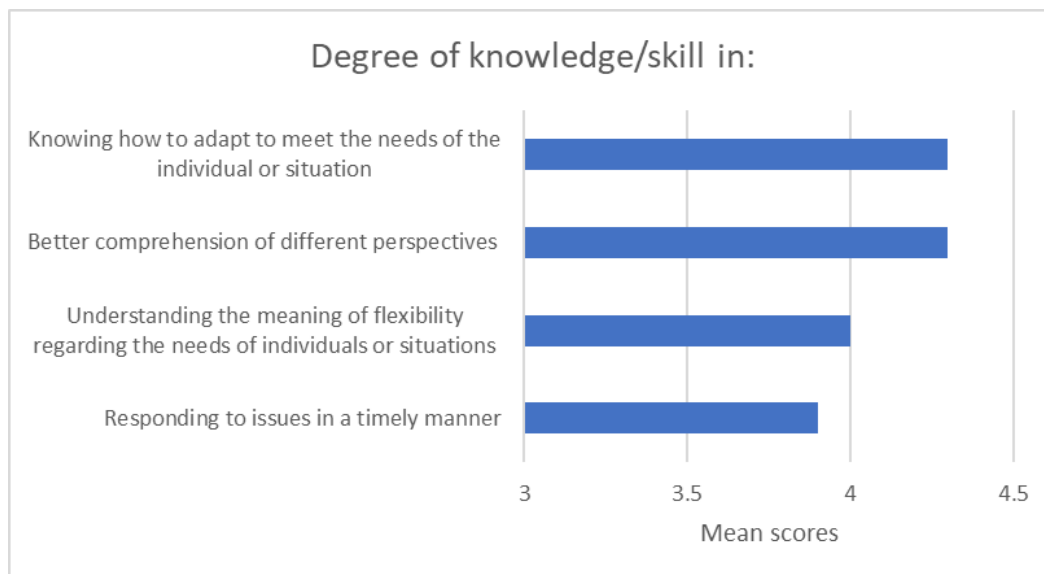
Reported degree of knowledge/skill in each of the competencies sections below:
 1 = No knowledge/skill

5 = Fully knowledgeable/skilled – no/very little development required

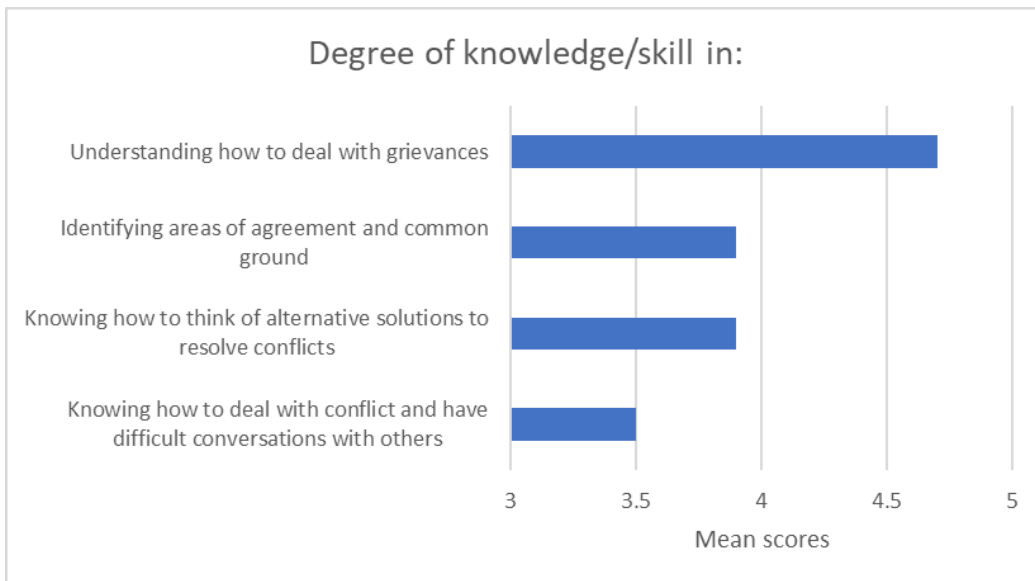
Communication



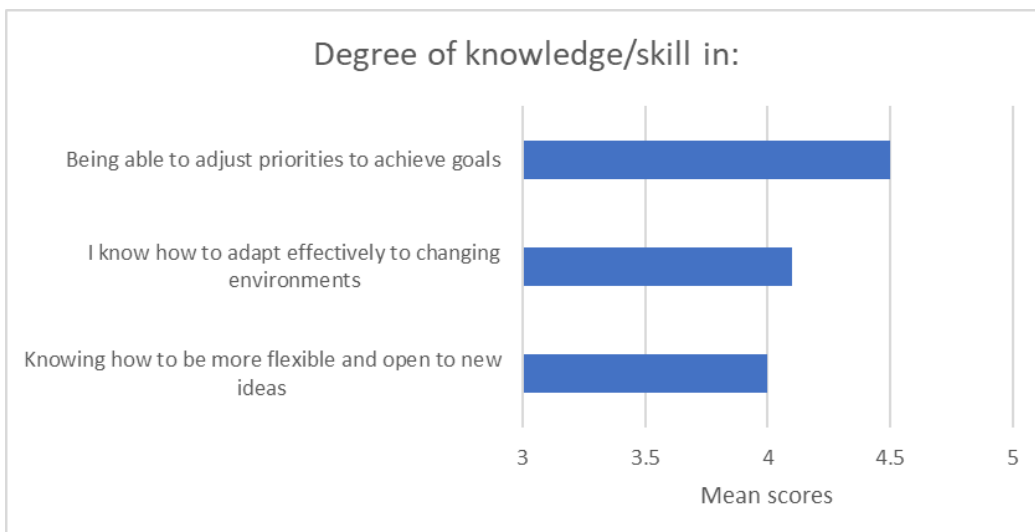
Interpersonal Skills



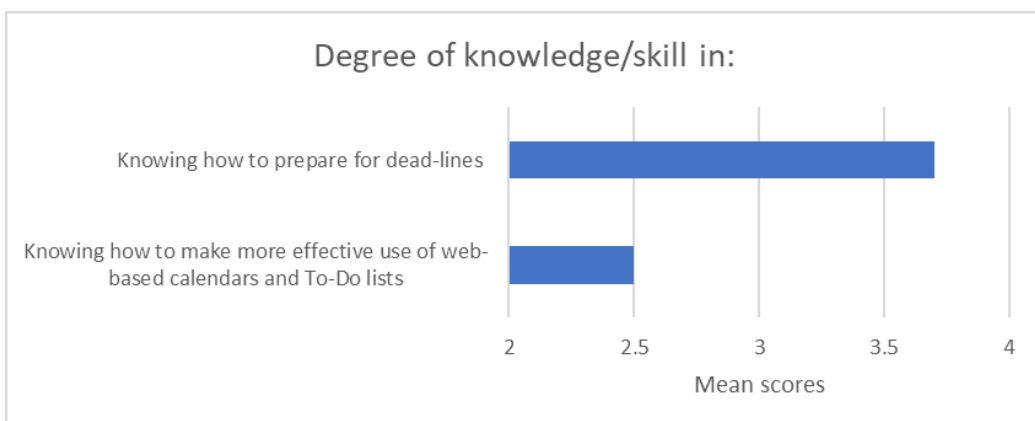
Conflict Resolution



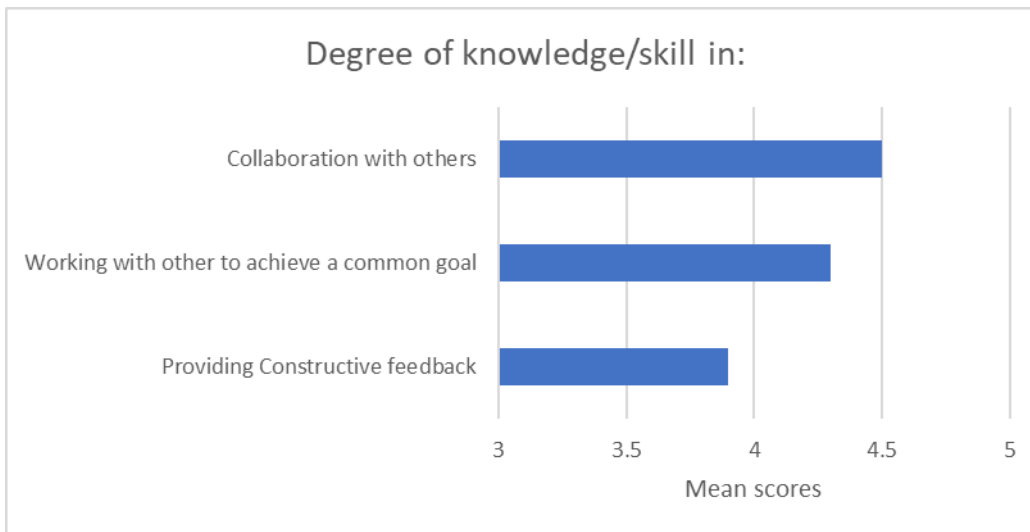
Adaptability



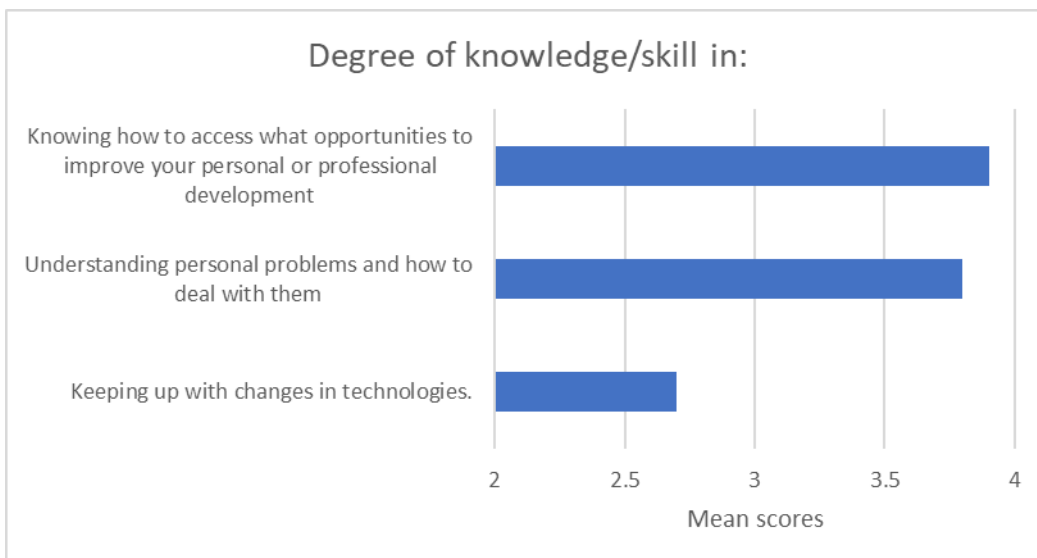
Time Management & Planning



Teamwork



Personal Effectiveness



Questionnaire Analysis

- All participants agreed that training related to personal development will restore their place in society. Participants reported that a training program which will improve their skills is essential for them, especially social skills and skills related to personal development.
- Regarding the use of ICTs, not all the participants were familiar with using at least one technological device. In their daily routine, it has been observed that they mainly use smartphones.
- Participants reported that communication via digital tools, use of social media, use of e-mail, navigating the internet and basic skills are the most important and fundamental ICT (information technology) related learning needs.

- Most of the participants are in need of receiving a training or education and seem to have positive attitudes towards it, either through learning from peers or by face-to-face training in groups. Learning from family or friends and e-learning as well was also considered as a preferred and convenient learning method.
- Among the main barriers for attending a training course, were reported financial difficulties, lack of opportunities, health issues, communication issues, relation problems and social issues
- Nine (9) out of fifteen (15) participants reported the need for training in stress management and conflict resolution. Also, it has been stated the need for MS Office application training, time management and communication skills.
- Regarding health-related training, participants were interested mainly in receiving training regarding smoking cessation, COVID-19 pandemic, healthy eating, non-communicable diseases and mental health issues.
- Concerning the skills and competences that they already have and those that need to develop, participants reported that:
 - o communication skills need to be improved in terms of understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents and in giving full attention to what other people are saying,
 - o interpersonal skills need to be enhanced in terms of responding to issues in a timely manner and understanding the meaning of flexibility regarding the needs of individuals or situations,
 - o regarding conflict resolutions, participants reported high level skills in understanding how to deal with grievances. They reported need for training in identifying areas of agreement and common ground, knowing how to think of alternative solutions to resolve conflicts and knowing how to deal with conflict and have difficult conversations with others,
 - o regarding adaptability, participants reported that they already acquire adaptability related competences,
 - o in terms of time management and planning, participants seem to be medium-skilled, in knowing how to make more effective use of web-based calendars and to-do lists,
 - o concerning teamwork, participants reported to be medium and quite high-skilled in collaborating with others, in working with other to achieve a common goal and in providing constructive feedback,
 - o a far personal effectiveness concerns, participants need to improve their skills on how to keep up with changes in technology.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The research carried out under the RECHANCE project about the legislation and training context in each partner country, shows that former prisoners as the primary target group of the project and the related professionals as well (social workers, adult educators, supporting professionals) are rarely satisfied by the governmental policies and strategies. The social re-integration and rehabilitation of the former prisoners in Greece is a major social issue that

has only partially been addressed. Former prisoners need to be supported in the most fundamental pillars of their life after their release, as they are expected to adapt their whole life in a constantly changing life rate. In this present report, certain life sectors have been featured as the most important and urgent field that need to be reinforced, in order to achieve regular reintegration of former prisoners in the social environment. Education is a key- area that plays a huge role, when it comes to the rehabilitation of the confined people. It has been stated that most of the people have been through a confinement regime, appear to have lower educational background in comparison to the general population. The most important point in regards to education is that the educational process addressed to prisoners and former prisoners reflects a significant social investment for both the correctional system and the society. More particularly, through the quantitative research conducted for the RECHANCE purposes, the majority of the participants responded that they consider that they should get education concerning the use of digital media and ICT skills. In general, education stands for a necessary institution that creates added value for the former prisoners themselves and, in effect, for all of us. Through education, therefore, the prisoner ideally develops, keeps his mind active and his spirit alive with the major aim of acquiring skills and qualifications for his professional rehabilitation.

Taking this into consideration, it is obvious that the former prisoners need to be encouraged by the state and responsible institutions to participate in education and training activities. Thus, the opportunities they receive are often limited and therefore they are marginalized from the educational field because of their lack of resources.

The former prisoners after their release usually are summoned to fight to reciprocate to the direct needs of their life. Consequently, they usually seek to ensure their living and nutrition needs and vocationally rehabilitate, to be able to have a standard quality of life. Although, as it has been already mentioned, the vast majority of these people are facing unbeatable obstacles and difficulties in finding a new job. In the time of economic crisis, especially for a person that tends to be considered as “socially stigmatized”, rehabilitation becomes even more difficult. An additional barrier to the educational and vocational rehabilitation of former prisoners except for the social stigma and the marginalization they face in their everyday lives, concerns the physical and mental health problems. Physical and mental health status of prisoners and former prisoners is influenced and deteriorated by various factors, such as political, social, economic, environmental and institutional factors. The recently released former prisoners do not have sufficient access to medical services and their health status is often inadequate. Special reference needs to be done about the mental health of these people; there is no doubt that former prisoners continue to need support after release. In Greece, this after-care structure is staffed by volunteers and affiliated collaborators, who cooperate with prison social services and offer counselling, vocational training, basic financial support, and a short-term housing, to facilitate the social reintegration of prisoners and ex-prisoners.

In this spirit, there is a long way to achieve a regular reintegration and rehabilitation process for all those who have been into a confinement and imprisonment regime. Although, the starting point to the substantial change is the adoption of contemporary and human-centric methodologies focusing on the legislation and the education institutions:

- The establishment of new training programmes is the initial recommendation. The introduction of blended and distance learning programmes should be also adopted.
- Provision of educational and training programmes in regards with the acquiring of ICT skills for beginners (MS Office applications use, getting familiar with the social media for educational and social purposes) and advanced level.
- Development of innovative digital products customized to the special educational needs of these people and proper training of the adult educators in order to reciprocate to their special characteristics.

Conclusion

The majority of the RECHANCE partners agreed that the ex-prisoners have poor educational attainment levels, they often lack the skills required to access labour market opportunities, have low self-esteem and weak knowledge to manage to find work. Moreover the stigma and the stress most of the time made them feel isolated and excluded from the society. Therefore the RECHANCE research and literature review analysis showed that the prisoners should be equipped with essential skills during their sentence, such as work skills and connecting with members of the wider society, such as those who offer mental health services and substance abuse support, health support, self-esteem skills etc. Taking all the above into consideration and after the evaluation the RECHANCE consortium suggested that the former prisoners need more education in the below fields:

Work Skills

- Time management
- Conflict Resolution
- Teamwork
- ICT Skills
 - o Navigation on the internet
 - o Office applications
 - o Photo/video editing
 - o Use of social media
 - o Communication via digital tools

Personal Skills

- Stress management
- Health issues
 - o Vaccinations
 - o Substance abuse
 - o General health
- Stigma
- Communication skill
- Self-esteem skills
- ICT Skills
 - o E-health services
 - o Navigation on the internet
 - o Online banking
 - o Photo/video editing
 - o Use of social media
 - o Communication via digital tools

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