



STEP
LAB

**Systematic
Transition**
from prison into
the labour market

Manual: Model of Guidance, Training, and Insertion into the labour market

IPS_Innovative Prison Systems

June 2024



IPS_Innovative Prison Systems developed this Guidance, Training, and Induction Manual as a partner in the project STEP2LAB: Systematic Transition from Prison into the Labour Market – No. KA220-VET-09CB2E38 and financed by the ERASMUS + programme.

ERASMUS + is an EU programme for Education, Training, Youth, and Sport (2014-2020). This publication has been accomplished during the project's lifetime and implemented with the financial support of the European Commission through the ERASMUS + programme. The STEP2LAB project is co-financed by the European Commission under the "KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training".

STEP2LAB aims to support industry actors to create effective and collaborative socio-labour reintegration roadmaps for prison inmates, particularly those individuals serving shorter sentences or at the end of the sentence. Moreover, the project targets a younger audience to capacitate and motivate them to pursue a professional career and follow a sustainable means of living.

Table of Content

Forward	2
Table of Content	3
Introduction	4
GUIDANCE: Chapter 1	7
Guidance on National Contexts for Training and Inserting Imprisoned Individuals into the Labour Market	8
The Legal Context of Training in Prisons	8
Objectives of VET Induction Courses	12
Ensuring Appropriate Target Group Selection	13
Implementation Guidance for VET Courses in the EU	14
TRAINING: Chapter 2	28
Benefits & Best Practices in EU VET Training Courses	29
VET Training as an Advantageous Use of Time in Prisons	29
Existing Induction Training Course Examples in the EU	31
STEP2LAB: An EU pilot demonstrating training best practice	34
Delivery Method	34
Feedback from Piloting	35
INDUCTION: Chapter 3	37
Case Studies: Success Stories from Training to Labour Induction	38
Addressing Employer Stereotypes and Inducting Ex-Offenders Without Stigma	38
Exerts from the Catalogue of Case Studies	38
Insertion Lessons Learnt from the Case Studies Catalogue	52
Benefits for Companies to Employ Justice-Involved Individuals	53
GTI Conclusions	56

Introduction



Gaining employment poses a key challenge to individuals trying to successfully achieve socio-labour reinsertion after serving a criminal sentence. According to research¹, working inside prison for private companies is an option, however, employers are often afraid of the prejudice associated with prison and inmates. A robust way to fight these misconceptions and prejudices is the dissemination of national context processes, good practices and case studies related to the guidance, training and induction (GTI) process implementation.



Guidance presupposes help and advice about the structures and practicalities of how education, or work, functions during and after prison, which is usually reinforced by relevant legislation. Understanding these functionalities is key to ensuring successful collaboration between prisons and industry professionals or private companies.



Training involves ensuring inmates acquire new (soft and in-demand industry) skills fundamental to successfully re-integrating into society, thus, facilitating their success both socially and in gaining employment upon release, and better safeguarding continued desistance from re-offending.



Induction relies on strong supportive collaboration with industry employers to ensure smooth personalised onboarding and support in work-life transitions for those entering employment upon sentence completion.

In light of the importance of sharing GTI processes, this **'Model of Guidance, Training, and Insertion (GTI) into the Labour Market Manual'** is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how vocational education and training (VET) programs can assist in re-integrating imprisoned individuals into the labour market.

¹ Duane, M., La Vigne, N., Lynch, M., & Reimal, E. (2017). *Criminal Background Checks Impact on: Employment and Recidivism*. Urban Institute, Elevate the Debate.

It includes practical guidance and examples to enhance the effectiveness of training and labour insertion initiatives within European Union (EU) prison systems and is thus divided into three main chapters, each focusing on different critical components of the GTI process.

Chapter 1 – GUIDANCE provides detailed guidance on the practical variations in national contexts when executing relevant training and inserting imprisoned individuals into the labour market. This chapter covers the legal framework surrounding prison training programs, the objectives of VET induction courses, the criteria for selecting the appropriate target groups, and implementation guidance tailored to VET courses within the EU.

Chapter 2 – TRAINING highlights the advantages of utilising VET training as a productive use of time in prison establishments and provides examples of existing good practices in induction VET training courses within the EU. This chapter also presents the STEP2LAB initiative, an EU pilot program showcasing good practices in training, along with effective delivery methods and feedback derived from piloting its programs.

Chapter 3 – INSERTION explores successful case studies and strategies for transitioning from training to labour market insertion. It includes GTI case studies highlighting success stories from training to employment, including career inspiration gained from the STEP2LAB course developed, and offers a conclusive summary of the findings and recommendations for successful GTI execution.

This manual is intended for employers, industry professionals and private companies, as well as policymakers, involved in training within the prison system, and in turn the socio-labour reinsertion of individuals. Through a detailed exploration of the critical GTI components, and successful examples of VET programs, including the STEP2LAB Computer Aided-Design (CAD) Induction Course, this manual aspires to contribute to more effective and transformative training initiatives for imprisoned individuals, ultimately aiding their transition back into the labour market and society.

01 Guidance



Guidance on National Contexts for Training and Inserting Imprisoned Individuals into the Labour Market

The Legal Context of Training in Prisons

While punitive “tough on crime” approaches to criminal justice have historically been a popular political approach to justify draconian criminal justice policies, empirical evidence demonstrates that the punishment of extended incarceration alone is not typically a sufficient deterrent², nor economically sustainable approach to, decrease recidivism rates. Compared to the general population, those who enter the prisons often have a lower level of education, and in turn higher levels of unemployment. Indeed, research demonstrated that up to 89% of those who return to prison are unemployed³, thus making education an indirect key factor in decreasing these return rates. Education and training are, therefore, not just a means of keeping the prisoner occupied, they can form a stepping stone in the pathway towards inclusion for inmates, who face social exclusion often before they enter the prison, as well as after they leave.

This is acutely reflective of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)⁴, which stipulate that “prison administrations and other competent authorities should offer education, vocational training and work” (Rule 4.2) to inmates, furthermore, “vocational training in useful trades shall be provided for prisoners able to profit” (Rule 98.2), namely to “maintain or increase the prisoners’ ability to earn an honest living after release” (Rule 98.1).

At the European level specifically, the European Social Charter (revised)⁵ sets out the right to work, and the right to vocational guidance, which inmates should not have to forfeit while in prison. Providing positive vocational learning environments is therefore imperative to support inmates in making good use of their sentences, creating a path for them to address gaps in their learning skills, and importantly, to improve their employability.

² Baumgartner, F. R., Tamira Daniely, T., Kalley Huang, K. et al. (2021). *Throwing Away the Key: The Unintended Consequences of “Tough-on-Crime” Laws*. Cambridge University Press – American Political Science Association, 19(4), 1233-1246.

³ Kimmitt, S. (2011). *The impact of community context on the risk of recidivism among parolees at one-, two-, and three- year follow-ups*. Ohio State University.

⁴ *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)*.

⁵ *European Social Charter (revised)*, 1996.

Employment is critical for a prisoner's reintegration into society. When an inmate is released from prison, employment is a critical factor as to whether they become a law-abiding citizen or go on to commit more crimes. Research shows that up to 89% of those who return to prison are unemployed⁶, thus making education an indirect key factor in decreasing these return rates. Education and training are, therefore, not just a means of keeping the prisoner occupied, they can form a stepping stone in the pathway towards inclusion for inmates, who face social exclusion often before they enter the prison, as well as after they leave.

Within the consortium countries of the STEP2LAB project, each has successfully incorporated guidance in their legislation concerning inmates' right to education, training and work (see Table 1). Vocation Education Training (VET) courses are generally available to individuals within, and exiting, prison establishments or correctional institutions across the EU, as per the right in the European Social Charter (revised)⁷. However, within consortium countries, some key aspects vary based on the legislation and resource availability.

Table 1. *EU Legal Contexts – STEP2LAB Partner Countries*

EU Legal Contexts – STEP2LAB Partner Countries

In **France**, training is widely accessible and integrated into each stage of the detention process, with skills acquired by the means of diplomas and/or by keeping a personal skills booklet delivered by the Ministry of National Education (*cf. Article D. 311-6 of the Education Code*). Its purpose is to enable inmates to acquire the necessary skills, via obtaining recognisable certifications, to reintegrate into social and professional life (*cf. Article D. 435 of the Code of Criminal Procedure*). For adults, the Director of the specific prison and the DFSPIP (The Functional Directors of the Penitentiary Services for Integration and Probation) must propose activities to inmates (*Article 27 of the penitentiary law No. 2009-1436 of 24 November 2009*), with particular attention to those aged 18 to 21 years old, to encourage them to engage in training (*Article D. 521 of the Code of Criminal Procedure*).

⁶ Kimmitt, S. (2011). *The impact of community context on the risk of recidivism among parolees at one-, two-, and three- year follow-ups*. Ohio State University.

⁷ *European Social Charter (revised)*, 1996.

Within the **German** context, legislation regarding the availability of education and training in adult prisons falls within the *Prison Act 1976*¹⁵. The Fifth Title, ‘*Work, Basic Training and Further Training*’, entails rules regarding the allocation to economically productive work and further vocational training (*Section 37*); secondary modern school classes (*Section 38*) and free employment or vocational training to teach, preserve or promote skills and knowledge for earning a livelihood after release (*Section 39*). The Minister for Justice and Constitution, the Minister for Education and Science, the Minister for Labour, Women, Health, Youth and Social Affairs and the Employment Agency (now BAG), all support the prison in its efforts to implement vocational qualifications to prisoners.

In **Italy**, the availability of VET courses falls under the *Presidential Decree of 30 June 200 (Penitentiary Regulations, Article. 42 Vocations Training Courses)*. This stipulates that institution management must encourage the participation of inmates in vocational training courses, according to the needs of the inmate population, both Italian and foreign, and to the demands of the labour market. To this end, they promote agreements with the region and the competent local authorities. According to the last paragraph of *Article 21* of the same law, the courses may be held in whole or in part, with particular reference to practical exercises, outside the institutions to build the foundational links for later reinsertion. Institution management ensures that inmates are adequately informed about the courses and encourages their widest participation.

In **Portugal**, the Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services (DGRSP) is the body responsible execution of sentences, social reintegration and management of the education and prison systems. School education/training for Portuguese prison populations is ensured in all prisons under the terms of *Joint Dispatch No. 451/1999*, published in *DR No. 127 of June 1, 1999*. According to DGRSP, “*vocational training assumes special importance as an*

instrument promoting the social reintegration of prisoners and the consequent prevention of recidivism (...) the elaboration of a professional training plan is based on a diagnosis that takes into account the learning needs of the prison population and its profitability in a prison environment and, above all, in a free environment.”⁸.

In **Spain**, legislation concerning professional training for occupations within adult prisons falls under *Article 91 of the Criminal Execution Regulation*, which states, that to facilitate the social and professional reinsertion of the inmates, according to all that is provided by the current legal order, the teaching of specific professional training is promoted and encouraged. This will be ordered in the professional training cycles that are most suitable, depending on the sociological profile of those students, and the socioeconomic environment of each centre (prison) on which these courses are developed.

In **Romania’s** case, according to a Survey on Prison Education and Training in Europe general education is offered in nearly all (more than 76%) of prisons⁹. The training of inmates is carried out depending on their options and skills (e.g., through initiation, qualification, retraining, training, and specialisation programs), which are established by the penitentiary administration, in collaboration with the specialised staff of employment agencies, as well as with other accredited professional training providers. Funding related to professional training is provided by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly Persons, or the National Administration of Penitentiaries, and governed by the Law regarding the execution of the punishments and measures imposed by the judicial bodies during the trial, 2006.

⁸ DGRSP (2023): <https://dgrsp.justica.gov.pt/Justi%C3%A7a-de-adultos/Penas-e-medidas-privativas-de-liberdade/Atividades-desenvolvidas-em-contexto-prisional/Forma%C3%A7%C3%A3o-profissional>

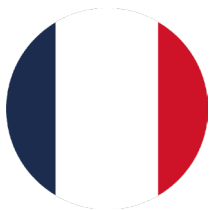
⁹ GHK (2012). *Survey on Prison Education and Training in Europe – Final Report Order 23 of the DG Education and Culture Framework Contract 02/10 – Lot 1.*

Objectives of VET Induction Courses

Upon comparing national contexts, the following key objectives emerged as essential to ensuring successful re-entry:

- Allocation of appropriate resources to market needs;
- Promoting the capacitation of personnel in specific industries;
- Providing new knowledge to the learners;
- Providing former inmates with jobs upon release; and
- Potentiating the social inclusion of individuals.

In terms of adherence to the above objectives, and in turn, allocating funding for specific induction courses that meet them, there are some differences across the consortium countries, which are summarised in **Figure 1**.



“...creating order, safety and security in the facilities by creating a more positive environment wherein prisoners can become more independent and self-sufficient.”

Greta du Velay



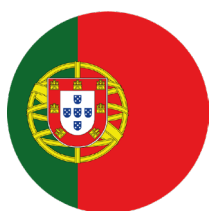
“...to furnish the prisoner with skill and knowledge to make him capable of earning a livelihood after his release or to preserve or promote such skill and knowledge.”

Section 37(1) of the Prison Act 1976 20



“...individual prison directorates choose autonomously to start a certain course rather than another, therefore, there is no national coordination of objectives between prisons.”

Marzia Fratini of the Department for Prison Administration



“...preparing the inmate for successful release, based on an assessment of the needs and risks of each inmate.”

Execution of Penalties and Measures Depriving Liberty (Law n.º 115/2009)



“...to provide former inmates with a job upon release, although especially in the case of young people it is often also a high priority to work on the acquisition of habits, the language, or the commitment to achieve their educational objectives (aspects that contribute to job success).”

Center of Initiatives for Reintegration (CIRE)



“...assisting the prisoners for their social reintegration and also to prevent re-offending.”

Law regarding the execution of the punishments and measures imposed by the judicial bodies during the trial, 2006

Figure 1. Consortium country differences in the objectives of prison training.

Ensuring Appropriate Target Group Selection

The target group for the induction courses within the consortium countries generally is all inmates who are motivated and meet the requirement (if any) to enrol. However, partner experts (in Germany, Italy, Spain & Romania) highlight that there is a recurring theme of younger inmates being more relevant targets. This is thought to reflect the debatable opinion that intervention earlier with youths “not only saves young lives from being wasted,” but also prevents the onset of adult criminal careers, in turn having a greater reduction of the ongoing burden of crime on society and taxpayers’ money¹⁰. This indeed is the thinking in Portugal, where young inmates (up to age 25) are particularly targeted for vocational training and education programs, as they are seen as having greater potential to benefit from these programs and to reduce their risk of reoffending^{11,12}. The programs are also open to adult inmates, but they may face more limited opportunities due to their age and sentence length. In France the reasoning is somewhat different; here, education in prisons is part of a lifelong learning process, as aforementioned, to enable all inmates to acquire the necessary skills to reintegrate into social and professional life (cf. article D. 435 of the Code of Criminal Procedure).

¹⁰ Greenwood, P. (2008). *Prevention and Intervention Programs for Juvenile Offenders*. *Future of Children*, 18(2), p185-210.

¹¹ Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services (DGRSP). (2023). *Education*.

¹² Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services (DGRSP). (2023). *Training*.

All detainees, therefore, have the right to access training, which can be basic (reading, writing, arithmetic), secondary or higher level and may lead to a diploma (certificate, baccalaureate, etc.). However, for juvenile detainees, compulsory schooling remains in effect during detention (as in Spain), and inmates must have a minimum amount of class time, making their training a priority. Other targets of prison training in France are illiterate people to limit recidivism and promote their social and professional reintegration, with the Department of Prison Administration estimating that the proportion of illiterate people among prisoners was 11 or 12% in 2018, compared to 7% in the general population¹³.

Implementation Guidance for VET Courses in the EU

The implementation of VET courses across EU prisons should be firmly grounded in aligned practices with the Nelson Mandela Rules, and European Social Charter (revised), as such, there are indeed commonalities between their execution. Nonetheless, differences also emerge due to a variety of contextual, practical and political factors that each country should introspectively consider.

For example, within the STEP2LAB consortium, several partners are themselves training organisations that provide VET courses or adult education to certain prisons (i.e., CENTIMFE, CIRE, IRFIP & Greta du Velay), however, each country further has differences about the governing bodies (i.e., Ministries, National Agencies or schools) that oversee educational courses and training. Regarding the delivery staff qualifications, the speakers and cooperation partners for the induction courses are generally school and university professors, and trainers, though there are some variations between staff qualifications requirements across EU countries. Most often these depend on the specifics of the courses being delivered. The structure of training courses in consortium countries varies greatly; in France, Germany, and Romania, they are fixed-structure¹⁴; in Italy, they are time-based¹⁵ and in Portugal, they are both module-based¹⁶ and fixed structures.

¹³ Observatoire International Des Prisons (2018). *Education in prison: crying needs*.

¹⁴ The course development is fixed, i.e. based on the completion of the modules in an orderly manner, usually with a time frame to follow.

¹⁵ The course development is based on developing all the activities within a specific time frame.

¹⁶ The course development is based on the completion of the modules, regardless of the order in which these appear.

Further to this there are country-specific variations dependent on education/training requirements, and the target group (adult vs. juvenile), which will be discussed ahead. The format of delivery is a further factor of disunion, with disparities in how materials are delivered – ranging from printed materials, to books, folders, electronically or via the internet (if access is available under security measures). Moreover, the physical training spaces wherein training courses are undertaken within prisons are similar across consortium countries; generally, they are within prison establishments, where available, however, there are some variations dependent on the course types, summarised to follow. The presence of evaluations, or a final examination, and in turn who provides such certification, is another point of variation. However, despite this, it remains a key factor in ensuring that the skills or qualifications gained through prison VET training will be recognised upon release and assist those in gaining employment to make a positive contribution to society and promote criminal desistance.

To demonstrate more specifically the assorted practical deviations between VET courses in EU prisons and highlight the diverse plethora of ways to successfully approach implementation, a summary of each project partner's country's approach is provided¹⁷.

¹⁷ A detailed, fully referenced, exploration of each approach can be found in this report: <https://www.step2lab.org/library.html>

Training Course Provider

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Employment, Training and Social Dialogue. National Education guardianship also oversees free courses offered by AUXILIA (a volunteer org.), plus there are CNED, AFPA and university distance learning services, for which inmates must pay.

Delivery Staff Qualifications

Teachers from the Ministry of National Education, trainers from AFPA (National Agency for Adult Vocational Training), trainers from GRETA (Grouping of Public Educational Institutions for Adult Training), local associations and private training orgs.

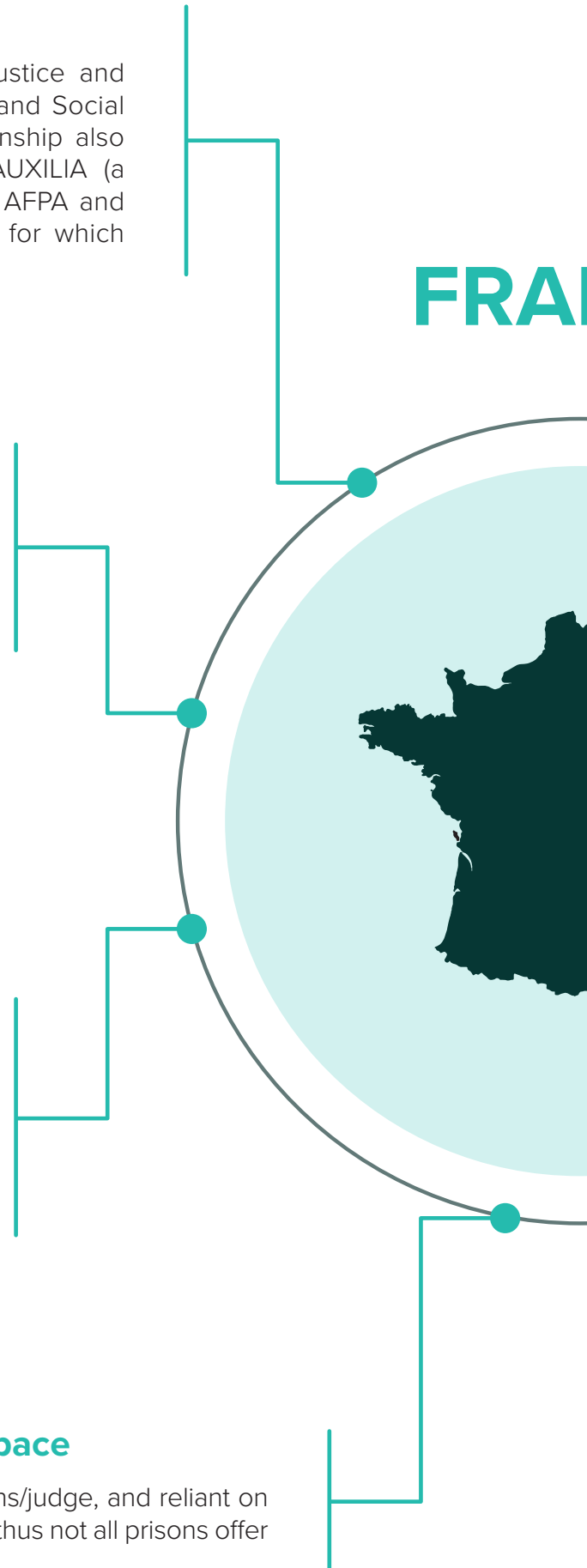
Training Course Length & Structure

Priority to shorter basic trainings, refresher courses and pre-qualification courses (due to low education levels). Modular courses (20-40hrs), which can be sequenced (100-150hrs).

Min. 6-10hrs of lessons per week, with class sizes of 5-10.

Physical Training Space

Decided upon by the prisons/judge, and reliant on availability within premises (thus not all prisons offer the same trainings).



NCE

Materials Format

Mixed (pre-approved by prison director)- paper, computer based (without internet access, for security).

Assessment & Final Evaluation

Regular assessment is recorded in the general training course certificate booklet (delivered by the Ministry of National Education, cf. Article D. 311-6 of the Education Code) + final exam for diploma level courses.

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

Blocks of competencies are for diploma (certification) is delivered by the National Education or University.

Re-entry Success Factors

If the inmate has passed a training course while in prison, there is no mention on the diploma that this training was carried out inside, thus avoiding potential bias in future job applications upon release.

Training Course Provider

‘Section 148’ of the Prison Act 1976 stipulates that prison authorities should “co-operate with the associations and agencies of industrial and economic life” to promote vocational matters to inmates and assist them in procuring a job (e.g. public schools, certified training companies and Chambers of Commerce, in line with the Federal Employment Agency).

Delivery Staff Qualifications

Section 155(2) of the Prison Act 1976, states that that each prison will have the necessary qualified staff including (private) trade instructors and teachers (school and university professors), who must be registered trainers at the local Chamber of Commerce.

Training Course Length & Structure

Average course duration is 160 hours (incl. max. 80 hours for shorter courses, and max. 800 hours for longer courses). The maximum training hours per week for courses is 20 hours, with the average number of modules in a course if 4-5, delivered generally in 2 classes per week, totally an average 20 days to complete the course.

Physical Training Space

‘Section 149’ of the Prison Act 1976 states that prisons must make provisions for the necessary facilities and workshops for vocational trainings to take place (incl. static classrooms for practical industry specific exercises).

GERM



MANY

Materials Format

Training materials are a mixture of traditional (printed) resources, as well as delivered via technical new means to keep up with industry standards (e.g. online, virtual reality, modern communication media's etc.)

Assessment & Final Evaluation

Administered by the Chamber of Commerce, or examination boards at vocational training centres, i.e., external 'retrainees' come to the centre to take the examinations. Approx. 90% of the participants successfully pass examinations.

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

Skilled worker certification is identical to those in the private sector, and provided by Local Chambers of Commerce or Public Schools. The certificates do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the place of training, and thus about incarceration, protecting potential stigma upon release.

Re-entry Success Factors

- Modular or unit-based courses present a positive opportunity to ensure that inmates' sentence lengths, or transfer to another prison, do not prevent their completion of training.
- Motivating and training case managers (and staff) for the vocational reintegration of prisoners.
- Promote networking between the prison system and outside institutions, in particular with labour market actors.

Training Course Provider

Provincial Centres for Adult Education (ie., CPIAS - Italian state schools established by the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research) implement two levels of educational/training pathways for adults: 1st level courses through specific agreements with the relevant regions, local authorities and public/private entities, and 2nd level courses, including secondary education, high school diploma, and technical or professional training (incl. VET induction).

Delivery Staff Qualifications

To teach in penal institutions, it is necessary to apply and be included in the permanent lists and/or school lists of the regional school offices of the Ministry of Education.

Training Course Length & Structure

2nd-level educational pathways are divided into 3 didactic teaching periods, defined by the Teachers Commission in agreement with local bodies and training agencies. VET courses are approx. 500/600 hours (divided into theory and practice), generally with 2 classes per week, in a time-based structure, utilising experiential and narrative techniques.

Physical Training Space

Institution management provides suitable premises and equipment for training courses being delivered, such as classrooms or in the event of large numbers, theatre rooms. Practical industry skills that require specialist facilities are subject to strict approval.





Materials Format

Printed materials and books are the standard format, however, it is always necessary to make a formal request to the director so that they can permit the introduction of these materials. Inmates are not allowed to use electronic devices or the Internet in their training.

Assessment & Final Evaluation

There are examinations to complete courses, however, this differs between diploma/certificate types, with little specific information publically available.

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

All inmates receive certificates upon completion of training. If training is a vocational certification this is issues by the provider and usable in the labour market upon release.

Re-entry Success Factors

- Integration with the world of work, Le. training inmates in skills that will meet a community/business labour need.
- To support the process of empowerment with respect to the training pathway undertaken, the needs and interest expressed by the inmates themselves must be taken into account.

Training Course Provider

In coordination with DGRSP, professional training of prisoners is predominantly provided by the Protocol Center for Professional Training for the Justice Sector (CPJ), with additional agreements being established with other external entities for specialised professions. Additional provision fall under the Division for the Coordination of Prison Treatment Activities (DCATP), and the Competence Center for the Management of Programs and Projects (CCGPP).

Delivery Staff Qualifications

As of 1979, teaching was jointly assumed by the Ministries of Justice and Education. Those who deliver trainings in Portugal, are required to have a CCP (Certificate of Pedagogical Competencies).

Training Course Length & Structure

Average course duration is approx. 300 hours, with the minimum being 50 hours, and maximum 2170 hours. The average number of course hours provided per week for inmates is approximately 8 hours.

Physical Training Space

Physical training spaces are available within prisons (where available), and individuals can have training in specialised CPJ's facilities, depending on availability and approval.



UGAL



Materials Format

Predominantly delivered via print-based materials, due to security factors. Some institutions have specialised training facilities with IT approved computers, for which trainers must gain strict access approval.

Assessment & Final Evaluation

*Unfortunately, Portugal does not make public the examination specifications required for its training courses.

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

Certification for trainings in prisons are provided by the specific training organisations delivering the courses, in most instances this is CPJ or the Centro de Novas Oportunidades.

Re-entry Success Factors

Direct collaboration and communication between prisons and community-based industries and companies to ensure the smooth transition of released inmates into the labour market. E.g. 'The Prison Work Exchange (BTP) was conceived to organise online database that "allows the different Prison Establishments to inform and disseminate in real time, external requests for work to be carried out by inmates.

Training Course Provider

Penitentiary Employment and Job Training (TPFE), which is a part of the Ministry of the Interior. Induciton courses are also overseen by the National Agency, and backed by the Ministry of Education, and the Educational Committees of the Autonomous Communities. With opportunities also available via the National University of Distance Learning (UNED).

Delivery Staff Qualifications

For courses from the Spanish National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNCP). the regulations themselves establish the requirements for trainers depending on course. Others depend on specialised knowledge required to deliver the curriculum and experience. in training special populations (in prisons).

Training Course Length & Structure

The duration of CNCP modules are established by the service regulations themselves. In adult prisons, this may be 3-4 hours/day, 5 days/week (approx. 20hours/week), and for juveniles, 2.5hours/day, 5 days/week (approx. 12.5hours/week). in order to establish a routine of resemblance to a work week. Other trainings vary, depending on whether they are from the catalogue, or oriented towards CIRE activity (prison work) the courses can therefore last between 10 and 600 hours.

Physical Training Space

There are classrooms for different training specialities, most of them approved by the National Employment System, to carry out courses from the official qualifications catalogue.



AIN

Materials Format

Course materials are generally printed, with some books available depending on delivery needs, and minimal use of electronic/online delivery methods, due to security requirements.

Assessment & Final Evaluation

For those in adult prisons, exams are taken during the course, and if it is an official CNCP, course, usually there is an official examination in order to obtain the certification. Juveniles are also evaluated with exams and education behaviour (with reports every 3 months for preparedness for re-entry).

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

Certification is provider-dependent, which can range from the employment service itself for official courses in the National Institute of Qualifications, external companies, or CIRE (STEP2LAB's Spanish Partner), the minimum attendance for all courses is 75% in order to obtain a certificate, to ensure validity.

Re-entry Success Factors

- It must be guaranteed that work is done in parallel to solve their “structural” problems (housing, addictions, mentalhealth etc), in order to be able to concentrate on finding work and, above all, maintaining it.
- Transition companies in which inmates are “accompanied” in their first job after prison, also improves the opportunities.

Training Course Provider

Provided by either the National Agency for Employment, the National Administration of Penitentiaries or other natural or legal persons. VET courses specifically are organised by the National Employment Agency, and are always planned in the Annual Professional Training Plan of the Ministry of Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

Delivery Staff Qualifications

The Ministry of Education provides qualified teachers from the local community to come inside prisons to deliver classes, with some trainings also delivered by the prison staff (educators, psychologists and social workers) employed by the Ministry of Justice.

Training Course Length & Structure

Initiation courses on average last 180 hours, Level I-360 hours, Level II-720 hours, and Level III-1080 hours. The average number of modules on a training course is 10, with the minimum being 6 for lower-level courses, and the upper limit of 12 modules for higher levels. On average the number of classes per week is 5.

Physical Training Space

Training courses are held in the existing available spaces in penitentiaries, as well as at authorized providers of professional training, and in other specially designed spaces, based on agreements concluded with collaborators from the community.



ANIA



Materials Format

Only printed materials are utilised in delivering training courses, again, due to security regulations and resources needed to clear other types of materials.

Assessment & Final Evaluation

There are examinations/evaluations to successfully complete courses. These are course-dependent, but generally, inmates must take two exams: one theoretical, and one from the practical side.

Quality Criteria & Assurance - Certification

Certification is provided by the Ministry of Education, and the issuing institution is the National Employment Agency (ANOFM). In order to obtain certification upon course completion, the minimum promotion grade is 5, and the attendance criterion is at least 75%.

Re-entry Success Factors

A higher level of transparency of procedures and course practices would be beneficial in order to decipher best practices and identify areas for improvement.

02 Training



Benefits & Best Practices in EU VET Training Courses

VET Training as an Advantageous Use of Time in Prisons

The empirical evidence demonstrates that working to remain occupied has fewer benefits and less of a positive impact than working to achieve a qualified job (after completing the sentence)¹⁸. Vocational training programs, therefore, are a key tool for successful re-entry, as they aim to provide inmates with skills to find a job and earn a living wage within industries with high labour needs. Studies have long shown that inmates who receive vocational training, not only find employment but are more likely to stay out of prison. In two studies: 1) inmates who earned a vocational certificate in prison had 52% less recidivism within five years of release, and 2) the rate was 62%¹⁹. Compared to inmates who did not earn a VET certificate, in 18,414 released inmates, those who earned a vocational certificate were 15% less likely to be re-incarcerated after two years²⁰. Further, research has shown that participation in vocational training reduced recidivism by 9%²¹, with two meta-analyses revealing: 1) inmates with vocational training are 36% less likely to be re-incarcerated, and 2) they are 28% more likely to be employed²². A further review by Davies and colleagues²³ found that correctional education (academic or vocational skills) reduced recidivism in adults, operationalised as reductions in rearrests, reincarcerations, technical parole violations, and parole incompletions), as well as an improvement in post-release employment, plus reading and math scores.

¹⁸ Society for Human Resource Management (2019). [2019 State of the Workplace](#).

¹⁹ Kelso Jr., C. E. (2000). Recidivism rates for two education programs' graduates compared to overall Washington State rates. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 51(2), 233-236.

²⁰ Moore, M. W. (2001). Analysis of the impact of inmate programs on recidivism. Florida Department of Corrections, Bureau of Research and Data Analysis. Tallahassee, Florida.

²¹ Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs: Implications in Washington State. Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

²² Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. N. (2013). Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education – A meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults. RAND Corporation.

²³ Davis, L. M., Steele, J. L., Bozick, R., Williams, M. V., Turner, S., Miles, J. N., ... & Steinberg, P. S. (2014). How effective is correctional education, and where do we go from here? The results of a comprehensive evaluation. Rand Corporation.

Given the existing success of education and vocational training in improving such outcomes, the priority moving forward with VET courses within prison populations, however, needs to be keeping them relevant to resource needs in varying industries, and of interest to inmates, to ensure their uptake and their beneficial impacts on recidivism²⁴. According to a study from the European Cooperation Network of Employment Services (EURES) in 2022, EU countries have severe occupation shortages in skilled trade areas, including bricklayers, carpenters and joiners, metal working machine tool setters and operators, plumbers and pipe fitters, building electricians, welders and flame cutters, as well as concrete placers and finishers²⁵. Some EU countries have capitalised on these shortages – prison services and private industries in need of manpower, have collaborated to equip inmates with skills and competencies to create effective models of induction training for socio-labour integration for inmates.

²⁴ Alós, R., Esteban, F., Jodar, P. & Miguélez, F. (2015). Effects of prison work programmes on the employability of ex- prisoners. *European Journal of Criminology*, 12(1), 35-50.

²⁵ EURES (2022). [EURES Report on labor shortages and surpluses 2022](#).

Existing Induction Training Course Examples in the EU

Portugal: 'Technical Drawing'

Within the Portuguese context, expert partners CENTIMFE share an example from the Agência Nacional para a Qualificação e o Ensino Profissional (ANQEP) modular induction course on Technical Drawing titled: 'Desenho técnico - normas, traçados e projeções'. The induction course, inclusive of 50 hrs training, has the following learning objectives for participants to achieve:

- Handle the equipment and materials used in drawing;
- Perform tracing of the most common geometric figures in technical drawing; and
- Perform part representations and dimensioning.

Topics covered include: 'preparation of the designer's workstation', 'geometric constructions', 'schematic representation', and 'basic rules of dimensioning'. Topics are presenting in a logical, progressive manner so as participants can continually build upon their foundational knowledge in the area when moving through the induction course. Upon completion, this modular induction course counts as 4.5 credits towards achieving a full qualification in the following career paths: Ironcrafter, Goldsmith Technician, Mechanical Construction Designer, Mechanical Milling Machine, Civil Locksmith or Metallurgy and Metalworking Industrial Planning Technician.



Image source: Vektor3D Systems LLP

Spain: 'Welding'

Within the Spanish context, expert partners CIRE highlight an example for a Professional Certification in Welding titled 'Soldadura con electrodo revestido y TIG'. This course is in the sector of mechanical manufacturing and installation industries in manufacturing, assembly and repair, and consists of 2 core competencies for participants to achieve, which also equate to the 2 course modules:

- Perform electric arc welding with coated electrode: 400 hours, 5 units, and
- Perform arc welding under shielding gas with a non-consumable (TIG): 370 hours, 5 units.

Upon completion, this professional certificate is listed to be directly linked to a variety of related occupations or jobs, some of which include:

- TIG Welder
- Handheld, Oxycutter
- Plasma metal cutter
- Hand-held Welders and flame cutters
- Thermal spray operators
- Electric arc welders, general
- Electric resistance welders
- Welders of high-pressure piping and vessels
- Welders of heavy metal structures



Image source: Vektor3D Systems LLP

Germany: 'Industrial 3D Printing'

Within the German context, partners KIMW have provided an overview example of their course for the qualification of 'Process Manager for Industrial 3D Printing'. The course is delivered over 20 days (4 weeks), divided into 4 blocks of 5 working days each, and broken down into 8 hours/day = 160 hours total.

Overall, the objective of the course is to enable participants to define, design, plan, realise, monitor and optimise the process of 3D printing independently. Key quality assurance aspects are covered throughout the course, including topics such as:

- understanding the parameters that are responsible for moulded part properties and indicators;
- test plans (their characteristics and scopes, i.e., strength, media/temperature resistance, surface quality); and
- component faults.

The course is balanced by many practical exercises and by the inclusion of further external experts from industrial practice to ensure the participant receives deep insights and career-relevant guidance.

For a full description of the German Industrial 3D Printing course (including responsibilities, structure, procedure, course content, quality criteria and assurance, and applicable documents), please contact KIMW Qualifizierungs GmbH (NGO)²⁶.



Image source: Vektor3D Systems LLP

²⁶ KIMW Qualifizierungs GmbH (NGO) - www.kunststoff-institut.de

STEP2LAB: An EU pilot demonstrating training best practice

STEP2LAB presents itself as a strong example of the GTI practice in prison establishments.

This Erasmus+ project focused on the guidance of young individuals involved in the justice system, training them on the topics of Technical Drawing, CAD, and the various contexts wherein they could apply such knowledge and skills in the labour market. These training sessions took place in Portugal, France, Romania, Italy, and Spain, and achieved the participation of 291 individuals and 30 organisations.

Delivery Method

The STEP2LAB method was delivered over four separate training stages:

- 1. Presentation of the STEP2LAB initiative and the opportunities for training to youngsters:** this reached 60 individuals, in the above-mentioned countries, and aimed to present the initiative, inspire participation, and allow individuals to freely register for the STEP2LAB Technical Drawing course.
- 2. STEP2LAB Technical Drawing course²⁷:** This had a total of 159 participants over two modules delivered face-to-face: Module 1, which focused on the Introduction to Technical Drawing and Module 2, which delved further into Computer Assisted Drawing software and how individuals can use what they've learned to create an object²⁸.
- 3. STEP2LAB: Train the Trainers E-learning course²⁹:** This had a total of 72 professionals involved, supplying them with key pedagogical information and materials to successfully deliver and replicate the STEP2LAB Technical Drawing course with juveniles. This course can be found in Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, German, Romanian, French, and English.

²⁷ The CENTIMFE partners in Portugal had an extra session where they worked with a 3D printer with the young individuals and let them create an object by themselves – which was not possible in all the countries, because of specific prison regulations.

²⁸ The CENTIMFE partners in Portugal had an extra session where they worked with a 3D printer with the young individuals and let them create an object by themselves – which was not possible in all the countries, because of specific prison regulations.

²⁹ This course can be found here: <https://step2lab-correctionslearning.talentlms.com/index>

4. Catalogue of Case Studies³⁰: This catalogue serves as an exemplary demonstration of the participants' endeavours within the STEP2LAB initiative, emphasising their efforts to transition into the labour market. It has been disseminated to 30 organisations, in the aforementioned countries, to illustrate how the principles and practices of the STEP2LAB initiative can be adopted and replicated.

Feedback from Piloting³¹

The overarching goal of the first pilot '**Presentation of the STEP2LAB initiative and the opportunities for training to youngsters**' was to introduce the STEP2LAB project to the target group (juvenile incarcerated individuals) and gauge their interest in enrolling in the STEP2LAB Technical Drawing course³². Overall, the findings of this pilot underscored a **notable level of interest** in the STEP2LAB Technical Drawing Course, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and commitment observed across diverse participant profiles. In Romania, 92% of the participants showed eagerness to participate in the pilot training course for technical design. In Portugal, 92.3% of participants were keen on gaining knowledge about technical design/drawing and attending the STEP2LAB pilot training course. In Italy, 50% were interested, while in France, all participants expressed interest in entering the STEP2LAB course. This initial piloting³³ successfully served as a foundation for which to build interest and establish participants for the next STEP2LAB piloting phases.

The '**STEP2LAB Technical Drawing course**' built upon the initial phase of the initiative, providing incarcerated individuals with tools to learn Technical Drawing and CAD, via 2 core modules covering both theory and practical exercises. Most participants reported that the course met their objectives and expectations. In Romania, participants had strong positive feedback, recommending the course to a wider audience. They described it as "*a useful, beneficial, interesting, and effective course*", and "*a course for which there is increased interest.*" They highlighted that the course presents valuable skills for the future and is attractive to learners.

³⁰ This catalogue can be found here: https://www.step2lab.org/uploads/1/4/4/7/144711219/pr3_case_studies_catalogue_ips_rework.pdf

³¹ Currently, the STEP2LAB: Train the Trainers E-learning course is ongoing, hence it's not possible to share complete feedback. An updated GTI manual will be published when ongoing piloting is completed.

³² It is noteworthy that the Italian pilot underwent slight modifications due to a shift in the target group. Specifically, since the Italian partner IRFIP doesn't have contact with prison establishments, they delivered their pilot within their organisation and with students.

³³ Spain's data is not available as of the 25th of June 2024.



Figure 2. Objects Portuguese Participants made through the STEP2LAB course.

Additionally, in Portugal, there was an additional Module 3 focused on using a 3D printer (see Figure 2), allowing participants to create and keep pieces they designed on SolidWorks (the CAD software taught in core modules). Portuguese participants described the course as “very useful” and suggested that more class hours, greater availability of teaching rooms, and monetary incentives could boost their motivation and enhance the course’s success.

03 Induction



Case Studies: Success Stories from Training to Labour Induction

Addressing Employer Stereotypes and Inducting Ex-Offenders Without Stigma

According to empirical research³⁴, employers or private companies often perceive prison services and inmates with stigma, stereotypes, and prejudice; this is often due to a lack of knowledge, information, and experience with this population. However, it must be considered that there are many reasons why a person can end up in detention and that the causes can often be traced back to conditions depending on the people who committed the crime. In other words, disadvantaged living conditions, bad family influences or even lack of family network, social exclusion, lack of opportunities and difficult and harmful living contexts are just some of the factors to consider when dealing with a prisoner. Therefore, regardless of the weight and severity of a crime, the public perceptions of offenders are often negative, a perception which is carried with ex-offenders even after the end of their sentence or detention. Dismantling prejudices and removing stigma is possible but requires work and knowledge of each experience. Furthermore, to make this happen, it is necessary to give the individual a chance, to provide them with equal opportunities to rebuild a life on the outside. Working towards reintegration means giving individuals the opportunity to continue their lives in a more positive direction when they return to the community. A large part of this begins with acquiring professional skills via training in prison, and, in turn, reintegrating successfully into the world of work, although complex, is essential for the sentence to be educational.

Exerts from the Catalogue of Case Studies

The [Catalogue of Case Studies](#), developed under the STEP2LAB project initiatives, showcases how training and education in the prison context can benefit individuals to pursue further training, and in turn gain employment. It serves as an inspiration for employers to ‘not judge a book by its cover’ and be open to inducting individuals previously incarcerated into their workforces. The overarching aim of the Catalogue was to collect and analyse case studies demonstrating successful GTI processes.

³⁴ Winnick, T. A., & Bodkin, M. (2008). [Anticipated stigma and stigma management among those to be labeled “ex-con”](#). *Deviant Behavior*, 29(4), 295-333.

In the catalogue, case study information is systematically standardised and presented based on key selection criteria to document the key GTI aspects, achievements, challenges, and impact of training, to serve as a valuable resource for learning and knowledge sharing. Selection criteria included: 1. Social responsibility; 2. Innovation; 3. Sharing and collaboration; 4. Communication; 5. Effectiveness; 6. Attractiveness; 7. Real and scalable applicability (which can be explored in more detail within the catalogue itself). The present catalogue includes 20 success stories, implemented by companies and private industries in response to providing a framework for effective prison work strategies between prison services and industry.

The STEP2LAB partners shared this catalogue with prisons, companies and relevant stakeholder organisations to raise awareness on how these initiatives can be collaboratively undertaken successfully, as well as how industry employers can benefit from skilled, trained and motivated workers. The feedback received confirms that when success stories are elucidated, employers and industry professionals agree on the importance of offering individuals previously incarcerated a second chance and found it interesting to see different examples of how communities are working for the betterment of individuals who are in contact with the justice system.

A selection of 6 example case studies that have been extracted from the catalogue as examples can be found to follow.



FRANCE

This individual had a lack of family support growing up, and thus fell into the wrong delinquent crowd. His goal to become a gangster, lead him to make trouble at school, repeating several years. As a teenager he began stealing, with minor warnings from police, however, was then in and out of prison from 18 years of age for car theft, burglary, and armed robbery. In prison, he decided to become an accountant, and with training support, passed his level 3 diploma in accounting. This led him to a job with the Mission Locale, as their accountant for a year, upon release. Here, he was inspired to become a youth worker, helping others like him, and since becoming director of the youth centre. During this time, he also went back to study, inspired by the opportunity his prison training provided him, and completed a degree in Sciences of Education. He now lectures at schools of social work, police commissions, and prison, talking about his journey, thanks to the prison training opportunities he was given.

Case Studies & Success Stories

“Today I’m the one with the most diplomas in my family. I was a failure at school and now I’m a university teacher. I was a prisoner, now I work in prison. The police used to run after me, now I run after them to give them training”

France

Achieved a Level 3 Diploma in Accounting while in prison and was able to avoid re-offending by finding a job



Went to become a youth worker and the director of a Youth Centre. Completing a Degree in Education Sciences, now lectures a master’s course in safety prevention policies at university, and teaches in social work schools, prisons, and more



ITALY

This case study highlights the success of a 26-year-old from Guinea. When arriving in Italy this individual found himself mixed up in drug dealing and use, leading to financial and legal difficulties. He was close to entering prison; however, he was able to avoid a custodial sentence after meeting people within IRFIP (STEP2LAB's Italian partners), who provided him with baking, pastry, and pizza-making courses, which he attended for two years. After this, he was able to attend an internship in Rimini in important hotels, strengthening his knowledge, and today he lives and works in Milan in the catering industry!

Case Studies & Success Stories

“Never be afraid of change and to trust others”

26 years old - Italy

Successfully completed IRFIP's cooking courses after getting into legal difficulties for drug dealing and use



Lives and works in Milan in the catering industry



PORTUGAL

This case study is from Portugal, and tells of the success of a 20-year-old from Cape Verde who completed our very own STEP2LAB training course! This individual came to Portugal at age 10 to live with his grandparents, however, he ended up in a prison establishment. Here he completed his level 2 education, with no infractions on his record. This led him to be selected as a candidate for the STEP2LAB induction course on computer-assisted drawing (CAD).

After struggling to stay motivated through some of Module 1's theory, but with positive support from the trainers he reached the practical elements, wherein he got to 3D print a miniature surfboard for his final project.

Case Studies & Success Stories

“The trainer was excellent, knew how to adapt the topics to our reality, and was completely available to ask questions and doubts. I’m looking forward to the next modules”

20 years old - Portugal

Successfully completed the
STEP2LAB 3-module course



Engaged with a positive learning
experience, finding motivation to
learn more



SPAIN

The case study is from Spain and covers the success of a 24-year-old individual, of Senegalese origin, who had learning difficulties throughout his early and secondary school years. He had initially completed a course to become an assistant waiter at a semi-public centre, but then spent 2 years in different juvenile centres, before coming to an adult prison. Here, his work plan included training and job search assistance, which resulted in him gaining employment at a reinsertion company looking for a waiter. His motivation to continue in the hospitality industry however diminished, and he quit to pursue further training. With assistance he enrolled in an air conditioning installation training course, alternating between theory at the installers' guild and work at a company in the field. He completed his traineeship in November 2023 and is now continuing to work for the same company. Now that's a success!

Case Studies & Success Stories

“I took one step back to take two steps forward”

24 years old - Spain

Designed a work plan in prison focusing on training and job search, which allowed him to reintegrate by working in the hospital sector. Later undertook technical training in air conditioner installation to pursue his interests



Found a traineeship leading to an employment contract



ROMANIA

This individual, who is 45 years of age, graduated from 11 classes and is professionally qualified as a water and gas installer. Over the years, he was employed both legally and without legal forms in Romania, as well as in other nations like Spain, Holland, and England. He had his first contact with the judicial system in 1997, and he is currently in a penitentiary serving a sentence for theft. During the execution of his sentence, the individual has gained a professional qualification as a mason, painter, and wallpaper.

This training course was carried out through a project with European funds, accessed by a private company, and has allowed him to certify the abilities he had learned. This official certification will be extremely helpful for gaining employment after release, as he plans to move to France to work in construction.

Case Studies & Success Stories

“Never give up, tomorrow the sun may rise on your street too”

45 years old - Romania

Completed a 720-hour training programme gaining professional qualifications in masonry, painting and wallpapering after a sentence for theft



Plans to work in construction in France after his sentence

INTERNATIONAL

The background was not divulged in this success story, however, the individual self-describes their background before going into prison: “Many years ago I was rather immature and selfish, and lacked any sense of direction. With a mind filled with negativity and alcohol, I did something unkind and thoughtless.” They described what drew them to the programme was “the sense of accomplishment and self-worth you get from helping another living creature find a life of happiness, security, and comfort.”

Acceptance into this programme allowed them to move into a cell with another inmate handler, which afforded them the opportunity to “live and breathe dog training 24 hours a day”, a welcomed focus. They were in the Pen Pals programme from July 2007 until October 2014 while serving their (7+ year) sentence. In that time, they worked successfully with close to 40 dogs.

Case Studies & Success Stories

“I learned so much through the programme. One of the most important is letting go of the old, selfish mindset and opening up my heart and thoughts for others”

International - Virginia, USA

Participated in a programme to train, socialise, and provide care for homeless dogs from local animal shelters



Became a professional member of the Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) and is working as a mentor trainer in the Pen Pals programme

Insertion Lessons Learnt from the Case Studies Catalogue

In all the cases presented, common aspects are evident in terms of the effects of training, beyond the acquisition of competencies or certifications; the importance of links with the actual labour market, both inside and outside the prison establishment; and the importance of the process of guidance, training and accompaniment of the inmates, both during their stay in prison and on their release.

It's further apparent that one of the main functions of the time incarcerated is to ensure that people with judicial measures leave the prison establishment with a 'personal project' that takes them away from their previous life and safeguards that they contribute new positive values to society. As always in education and training, the results are not immediate (in terms of employment being gained), however, the collateral impact of soft skills and confidence in individuals is apparent in all case studies.

A key impact seen from the case studies that took part in the STEP2LAB training on CAD demonstrates how training can generate interest in inmates to pursue a new path, not only in the acquisition of skills, but also in terms of the motivation to build a better future, avoid recidivism, generate positive expectations, and show their relatives that they are "capable". Successful training is therefore not only a measure to increase employable competencies in inmates, but also a form of empowerment, to boost their self-esteem; it is the possibility of reorientation towards a new sector.

It is evident from the case studies showcased, that vocational training allows inmates to not only learn a trade but importantly lay the foundations for building a new future with the hope of achieving professional development and reintegration into society. The stories collected show us how dignity and hope for those who have made mistakes and want to start again are indispensable and underline how necessary professionalisation, awareness-raising of companies, strengthening of collaboration networks and organisation of activities are.

Benefits for Companies to Employ Justice-Involved Individuals

The employment of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals not only facilitates their reintegration into society but also offers significant business incentives for companies. For example, various countries provide different forms of support and financial benefits to encourage this practice.

In Italy, while there are no specific financial benefits exclusively for hiring individuals previously incarcerated, general incentives for hiring unemployed and young people can apply to recently released offenders³⁵. These incentives include:

- **Social Security Exemptions:** Employers can benefit from exemptions on social security contributions for hiring unemployed individuals, which can include recently released offenders.
- **Subsidies for Youth Employment:** Incentives aimed at promoting the employment of young people may also apply to young individuals previously incarcerated, reducing the cost burden on employers.

Portugal offers specific incentives for companies that employ incarcerated individuals, particularly those in an open regime, as well as those who hire previously incarcerated individuals. These include:

- **Exemption from Social Security Payments:** Companies that hire inmates in an open regime can be exempt from paying social security contributions for up to 36 months³⁶.
- **Contrato-emprego (Employment Contract):** Administered by the Institute of Employment and Professional Training (IEFP), this program provides financial support to employers who sign open-ended or fixed-term contracts of at least 12 months with previously incarcerated individuals. This support can cover a substantial part of the employment costs, encouraging companies to offer stable job opportunities to formerly incarcerated individuals³⁷.

³⁵ <https://www.peoitaly.com/blog/article/23/employer-benefits-in-italy.html>

³⁶ <https://files.diariodarepublica.pt/2s/2001/06/143000000/1031510316.pdf>

³⁷ <https://iefponline.iefp.pt/IEFP/medida/contratoemprego/descContratoEmprego.jsp>

Apart from country-specific financial incentives, hiring formerly incarcerated individuals can bring additional benefits, such as:

- **Resolve skills shortages and mitigate recruiting costs:** Engaging in recruitment within prison populations, including individuals nearing release, offers a strategic solution to skills shortages while also reducing initial recruitment and hiring expenses. By leveraging the talent pool of incarcerated individuals who have undergone education and training during their imprisonment, employers can significantly lower costs associated with advertising and candidate screening. Many correctional facilities provide comprehensive industry-level skills training, enabling participants to obtain professional qualifications of considerable utility or, at the very least, a robust foundational basis for subsequent on-the-job training.
- **Diversification of the workforce:** the employment of formerly incarcerated individuals aligns directly with inclusivity and diversity mandates. This practice fosters a workplace environment enriched by varied perspectives and experiences, enhancing organisational awareness of inherent biases, and prompting critical self-reflection and dialogue within the company. Moreover, the inclusion of individuals with diverse backgrounds can drive innovative business transformations by introducing new ideas and approaches, ultimately strengthening the overall adaptability and creativity of the organisation, thus serving as a catalyst for progressive change and sustained competitive advantage.
- **Enhanced Company Reputation:** Companies that engage in social responsibility initiatives, such as hiring ex-offenders, can improve their public image by demonstrating a commitment to social equity and rehabilitation, positioning themselves as leaders in corporate social responsibility. This can foster increased customer loyalty, and attract socially conscious investors and partners, ultimately bolstering the company's market position and long-term sustainability.
- **Dedicated Workforce:** Formerly incarcerated individuals, when given the opportunity for employment, often exhibit a high level of motivation and dedication. Their strong commitment to their jobs is frequently driven by a profound appreciation for the chance to reintegrate into society and make positive contributions. As such, this gratitude translates into exceptional work ethic and reliability, as these individuals strive to overcome past challenges and demonstrate their value in the workforce.

“92% of employers say diverse recruitment has enhanced their reputation, helping them win new contracts”

MoJ UK

Additionally, the presence of such dedicated employees can inspire a culture of perseverance and resilience within the organisation, ultimately contributing to its overall success and stability.

Evidently, by taking advantage of these financial benefits and broader advantages, companies can fulfil their moral and civic responsibility and make a significant social impact, all while gaining economically and growing their businesses.

“When I first started employing people from prison my biggest concern was what people would think – and that’s not just colleagues I work with, but also our customers. Far more people come to our shops because of what we do and see it as a really positive thing.”

James Timpson, Chief Executive of Timpson

(Timpson has 1600 shoe repair shops across the UK & Ireland, with 10% of their employees recruited from prison)

05 GTI Conclusions



GTI Conclusions

This GTI aimed to analyse and present best practices regarding the collaborative framework between prison services and private organisations in preparing candidates for socio-labour reinsertion into specific industries. The research conducted by the consortium focused on understanding the implementation of vocational education and training (VET) induction courses in partner countries and reviewing standardised, certified training programs. By comparing national approaches to training, incorporating case studies of existing induction courses, and collecting data through discussions with justice and prison-related contacts, the consortium was able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the key processes for successfully developing and piloting their own STEP2LAB induction course, namely in CAD.

Based on the guidance, training examples and STEP2LAB piloting the consortium has surmised that the 4 key conditions for successful socio-labour insertion of inmates back into the community rely on implementing training that:

1. Meets the labour market current training needs and aligns with current skill shortages;
2. Promotes networking between the prison system and labour market organisations;
3. Addresses inmates' interests to ensure engagement; and
4. Uses a modular or unit-based structure to ensure completion.

Overall, the collaborative efforts between prison services, private organisations, and vocational training institutions showcased in this manual highlight the importance of equipping incarcerated individuals with industry-specific skills and knowledge, ultimately facilitating their successful reintegration into society and promoting desistance.



STEP 2 LAB

Systematic Transition
from prison into
the labour market

This document reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

