

Re-Integrating Ex-Offenders into the Labour Market

Learning from European Neighbours



Federal Ministry
of Labour
and Social Affairs



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Allan Mercer¹

1 THE EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROMOTING THE RESETTLEMENT OF (EX)-OFFENDERS

1.1 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EUROPE'S PRISONS

Prison Services throughout the European Union are stretched to the limit. There is an overall occupancy level, based on officially stated capacity, of 114%². In some Member States such as Greece and Cyprus, the corresponding figure is over 170% and in only nine of the 25 Member States is the figure less than 100%. The prison population has risen steadily over the last 10 or 11 years and throughout the EU, it is now 27.9% more than it was in 1995 which means that one out of every 800 European citizens is now in prison. A major factor in producing and maintaining these record numbers of inmates are high reconviction rates. It is difficult to find reliable and comparative data on reconviction rates however a recent UK study³ of all adults released from prison in the first quarter of 2003 shows that 58.9% were reconvicted in the following two year period. Whereas, the Netherlands⁴ seems to have one of the lowest rates but it is still 37% over a post-release period of four years.

1.2 THE EQUAL COMMUNITY INITIATIVE SEEKING NEW SOLUTIONS

Amongst all of the current EU Programmes and Initiatives, the 1281 Development Partnerships (DPs) launched under the Employability pillar of EQUAL offer the widest and deepest pool of experience that can be used to strengthen the employability of disadvantaged groups and thus,

¹ Consultant to the European DG Employment and Social Affaires; author of chapter 1 and 2

² Based on National Data, last updated on 10 December 2006, from the International Centre for Prison Studies at Kings College, University of London

³ Home Office Statistical Bulletin - Re-offending of adults: results from the 2003 cohort – November 2005

⁴ Recidivism following treatment; a statistical overview of criminal recidivism of former offenders under an entrustment order in the Netherlands - ISBN: 90-5454-613-1 - 2005

help to prevent offending and re-offending. Some 121 of these Employability DPs have piloted new approaches to working with (ex)-offenders through re-settlement support, aftercare or assisting inmates whilst in prison.

In the past, criminal justice and prison services have used other EU programmes to test new approaches and to promote mutual learning between peers in different Member States. These have included the AGIS Programme and a twinning Programme with 3rd partners operated by DG Justice, Freedom and Security and, in the case of DG Education and Culture, projects have been financed within the Socrates, Grundtvig and Leonardo Programmes. However, EQUAL as an ESF financed programme has provided a much more structured environment for the promotion of innovation and exchange – an environment that has been appreciated and well-used by the institutions and authorities of the penal systems throughout the EU. In total, the 121 DPs that are exclusively concerned with (ex)-offenders have received financial support from the ESF in excess of 170m €. Thus, they represent a very substantial European investment in the development and testing of innovative good practices.

1.3 THE THEMES BEING EXPLORED IN EQUAL

Table 1, below, represents an analysis of the main themes that are being addressed by 55 DPs that were selected, in 2004, to participate in the Second Round of EQUAL. These are projects that are dealing exclusively with issues relating to (ex)-offenders, as distinct from some other DPs that include (ex)-offenders within a wider range of target groups. As can be seen from the table, most DPs tackle several thematic priorities.

Table 1: Working with (Ex)-offenders – Thematic Overview (EQUAL Round 2)

Thematic priorities	DPs *Total=55	
	No	%*
1. Re-settlement support	50	91
2. Assisting prison inmates (<i>action within prisons</i>)	44	80
3. Differentiated focus on target groups	34	62
4. Cooperation arrangements, multi-agency working	31	56
5. Training and support for key operators	26	47
6. Preparation for self-employment (<i>incl. cooperatives</i>)	12	22
7. Work with/assistance to families	12	22
8. Awareness raising, lobbying, publicity	16	29

Now we take a look at the reality and illustrate these thematic priorities by the activities of a limited number of DPs, in most instances, one per priority. As readers of this magazine will be more familiar with EQUAL developments in Austria and Germany, these examples have been drawn from other Member States.⁵

1.3.1 RE-SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Almost all of the DPs have elements of re-settlement support in their work programmes and, in Finland, the **PoMo** DP has developed a comprehensive system of aftercare. Some 90% of young offenders were returning to prison after serving their first sentence but PoMo responded to this by creating an Intervention and a Support Programme. The supporters who work on both programmes include not only professional staff, such as qualified youth workers or social workers, but also mentors who might appear to be ordinary people, but in the course of their lives, they have all accumulated wisdom and experience that is invaluable to young offenders. Since many of the young offenders do not have adult males in their families or social networks and most of the professionals in the project are women, the majority of the mentors are male. The mentors' support in finding useful and fulfilling activities is vital because the unemployment rate in the area is around 20% and most of the young people cannot rely on a job to create a daily routine that will stop them from re-offending.

1.3.2 ASSISTING PRISON INMATES

Many of the DPs organise activities that focus on prison inmates and they try to respond to individual needs by establishing "Pathways" or "Routings", as the **MATCH** DP in the Netherlands calls them. Originally, the Work-Wise programme operated in 11 of the custodial institutions for juveniles but through its EQUAL activities all 13 institutions in the Netherlands are now involved in the MATCH DP. The programme is focussed on boys and girls aged 15 to 24, who have been placed in a custodial institution as a result of a criminal sentence or a supervision order removing them from their parents' care. When a young offender is placed in an institution, the programme usually starts in a closed setting but because all the institutions in the Netherlands are involved, the routings can be continued if the young person is transferred to an open institution. The programme has three routings that are followed simultaneously:

- *Work and Education* prepares young offenders to function effectively in a paid job by providing training and work experience placements and assistance in making an application for a job or work placement;

⁵ Further details about these and other EQUAL DPs working with (ex)-offenders may be found under Success Stories and Practical Examples at: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/activities/etq1_en.cfm

- *Living Independently and Coping with Leisure Time* assists juveniles and young offenders in creating a rhythm and a structure for their daily life, which reduces their chances of re-offending;
- *Creating a social network* provides intensive coaching in socially acceptable behaviour, relationships and social skills.

1.3.3 DIFFERENTIATED FOCUS ON TARGET GROUPS

The range of offenders for which EQUAL is catering can be seen by looking at the target groups of some of the DPs that are mentioned in this text. **PoMo** works with young offenders between 15 and 20 years of age and people under 30 years of age who are leaving prison. **MATCH** has adapted its Work-Wise programme for young short-stay detainees who spend between three to six months in an institution. In addition, training in self-esteem has been developed for young women prisoners, cognitive skills training was extended for would-be employees and a coaching system was created for ethnic minority offenders. MATCH is currently concentrating on the needs of young people with learning difficulties or psychiatric problems and on sex offenders and repeat offenders. In the case of **IMPACT** in England, its achievements with young people in the First Round of EQUAL are now being tested with older offenders, sex-offenders, black and ethnic minority and women prisoners. The target group for the **Balancing the Future** DP is again women prisoners and even more specifically, those from the Antilles who are now living in the Netherlands.

1.3.4 COOPERATION ARRANGEMENTS, MULTI-AGENCY WORKING

Coordinated approaches are of fundamental importance to the successful re-integration of offenders. If the many, different, individual needs of offenders are to be met and all the related problems resolved, there has to be close communication and collaboration between the prison and the outside world and between those agencies involved in the integration process or chain. Fortunately, these types of cooperative arrangements are greatly facilitated by the fact that partnership is a key principle in EQUAL, and in recognition of this, time and money is made available so that effective, working partnerships have been established.

One such example is **Car.Te.S.I.O.** DP that created local networks called GOLs (Local Operatives Groups) in the Piedmont Region of the north of Italy. The 12 GOLs were formed in the geographical areas around each prison and brought together the Municipality, the Social Service Centre, Vocational Training Providers, Voluntary Organisations and representatives of the DP's partners. The DP was constructed in a way that maximised the chances of its model being mainstreamed. One of the most important players in this respect was Regional Office of PRAP (the National Department for Prison Administration) as PRAP brought on board the managers and staff of all the penal institutions and all the other offices and agencies concerned

with the administration of the criminal justice system in Piedmont. Another partner, the Regional Confederation of Cooperatives also had a very important role in raising the awareness of employers. The model developed by CarTeSIO that includes the training of operators, vocational training and “stages” for prisoners, support in finding housing on release and information desks in all prisons has now become known as the Piedmont model. In addition, in recognition of the value of the GOLs, the Provinces within Piedmont have taken on the role of coordination and are providing their secretariats and this ensures the continued sustainability and success of this cooperative model.

1.3.5 TRAINING AND SUPPORT FOR KEY OPERATORS

A Portuguese DP entitled **Managing Innovation in the Prison Services** has adopted an holistic approach to quality and change management. Its experience has shown that leadership involvement and training at different levels are the keys to sustaining quality levels and change. Thus it has developed a leadership satisfaction index and a management style assessment in order to enable its specific leadership training sessions to be tailored to the needs and requirements of the prison directors and the more senior prison warders. The Managing Innovation in the Prison Services DP has also developed instruments that help with the empowerment and personal development of prison staff. A corporate climate survey is now being regularly used, as are tools for measuring the motivation index of staff and specific training for all levels of staff is also being organised. In addition, Communities of Practice of professionals have been set up in order to promote the type of mutual learning and knowledge sharing that reinforces the social capital of the prisons and provides support systems for staff. The DP has found that in a change process, specific training on “what’s new?”, “what’s my role in it?” and “how to act” can sustain people's involvement and commitment.

1.3.6 PREPARATION FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT

The Italian **SALIS** DP is creating entrepreneurs from ex-offenders, as it sees this as being a way to avoid the prejudice of potential employers or work colleagues. Two of its partners CNA (the National Crafts Association and Confesercenti (the Association of Commerce, Tourism and Service Enterprises) have offices throughout the Province of Pescara that offer a variety of support services to entrepreneurs and micro-businesses. Each of these centres is now also providing guidance and entrepreneurial training to ex-offenders, and helping them with the design of their new enterprises and the production of their business plans. Another significant advance has been the establishing of a line of micro-credit that can be used by ex-offenders. The CNA in Pescara and the Province of Pescara are working with the Cooperativa Artigiana di Garanzia Futura and, also, FINART, which are two organisations providing loans and financial

guarantees to local artisans. Together, they have provided a fund of 50.000 euro to be used to cover guarantees with local banks, when ex-prisoners ask for a small loan.

1.3.7 WORK WITH AND ASSISTANCE TO FAMILIES

The **Balancing the Future – A New Challenge** DP in the Netherlands has been carefully constructed so that each partner brings specific expertise to the various aspects of the resettlement process. Apart from the support offered in prison, Zorgconcept (Care Concept) is responsible for employment-related support that includes job mediation, vocational training and education. Questions related to accommodation, which is a big problem for 40% of the women, are covered by Exodus, an NGO with considerable experience in the field of housing. A third partner, Humanitas, offers assistance with all aspects of family life and, particularly, childcare. This combined, intensive support represents a highly developed and specialised reintegration service that could not be guaranteed by the prison service or the probation department working alone.

1.3.8 AWARENESS RAISING, LOBBYING, PUBLICITY

The **IMPACT** DP in England identified the vital role that employers can play in the successful re-integration of offenders but, at the same time, employers were largely unaware of the untapped pool of workers represented by ex-offenders. IMPACT has developed two main tools to remedy this situation. A Portfolio of Achievement helps employers to understand more clearly what individual (ex)-offenders can offer to their firms or companies. This is a smart looking brief case with standard sections covering personal details, work and educational history of the offender and signed statements from a number of prison personnel and the individual offender that help to explain how his or her individual attitudes, behaviour and expectations have been changed by the learning opportunities and the support received during the time in prison. A second initiative has been an Employment Charter that is presented in two sections. The first part is a certificate that can be easily displayed in the foyer or reception area of the business concerned, which states both the Prison Service's willingness to share accurate information about a prisoner and the employer's willingness to treat such information in a confidential and sensitive manner, whilst appreciating the specific difficulties ex-prisoners face in the labour market. The second part is included in the Portfolio of Achievement, as a demonstration of the offender's willingness to openly disclose their criminal record to the employer and to abide by the employment terms and conditions of their future work place.

2 MAINSTREAMING THE NEW SOLUTIONS

Obviously the scale of investment and EQUAL's focus on innovation have generated a number of new approaches, which have the potential for dissemination and mainstreaming. National mainstreaming has been assisted by the establishing of strong networks of EQUAL projects working with (ex)-offenders in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom. These networks, often called NEONs (National EQUAL Offender Networks) for short, are also sharing their experience at a transnational level.

In terms of disseminating the lessons of EQUAL throughout the European Union, a Steering Group⁶ of ten Member States which are twinned with another 12 countries has designed a European Mainstreaming Programme.⁷ The first stage in this programme was an Exchange Event held in Lisbon during October 2006 when EQUAL DPs agreed on a set of topics to be presented at a subsequent Policy Forum, in Warsaw, on 21 and 22 June 2007. The intention of this Forum is to confront those individuals who are responsible for elements of penal and/or resettlement policies with the good practices that are emerging from EQUAL and to engage their interest in taking these forward. The three main themes for this Policy Forum are:

- **The 'holistic approach' to rehabilitation of offenders** - The partnership principle of EQUAL has resulted in many positive examples of structured cooperation between all those public and private bodies and NGOs that are involved in the process of resettlement. The fundamental message is that such approaches offer more effective and also less costly solutions than more traditional practices that are constrained by institutional boundaries and thus, often involve fragmentation of effort.
- **Using ESF as an agent of change: changing roles and building bridges** – Some of the innovations that EQUAL has generated are structural and relate to the management of change in prisons, the introduction of quality systems and the motivation of staff to adopt a more creative, pro-active attitude to the rehabilitation of inmates. Others are concerned with the development of new forms of education and training. Many of these initiatives involve opening up prisons to agencies and individuals, including employers, so that offenders are empowered and prepared to contribute to society on their release.
- **The benefits of European cooperation** – This focuses on collaboration between the various National EQUAL Offender Networks (NEONs) and other networks of projects working with (ex)-offenders. These transnational partnerships provide an effective framework for comparing, analysing and eventually transferring successful practices. Other activities focus on joint production – such as the setting up of a European

⁶ **Belgium (fr)** with Belgium (nl); **The Netherlands**; **Germany** with France, Czech Republic and Greece; **Luxemburg**; **Italy** with Sweden and Austria; **Portugal**; **Poland** with Lithuania and Finland; **Spain**; **UK(gb)** with Estonia; **UK(ni)** with Latvia, Hungary and Ireland

⁷ Further information about this mainstreaming programme may be found at:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/news/200703-offend_en.cfm

knowledge portal on rehabilitation issues or the development of a common European IT platform offering non-national prisoners access to learning opportunities which are recognised in their country of origin.

Up to now, issues related to prisoners' resettlement have not been strongly reflected at EU level, whereas the Council of Europe has already established a number of recommendations, the last of which being a set of European Prison Rules⁸. Despite the existence of this recommendation, the view expressed by DPs at the Exchange Event in Lisbon was that a set of European Union level guidelines for the re-integration of (ex)-offenders, based on those approaches that had been tried and tested in EQUAL, would have a more effective impact on existing resettlement policies and practices. The Policy Forum in Warsaw provides an opportunity to take this idea forward.

3 SUCCESS STORIES⁹

3.1 BABE

Bildung, Arbeit und berufliche Eingliederung im Nordverbund and e-lis

3.1.1 OVERVIEW

In the frame of the common initiative EQUAL, ICT (Innovative Communication Technologies) solutions became an important issue in the resettlement strategy of (ex)-offenders in Northern Germany. In the first period of EQUAL (2002-2004) the development partnership (DP) e-LiS (e-learning in prison; www.e-lis.de), developed e-learning infrastructure for the prison regime in order to give the offenders access to learning programs.

At the conclusion of e-LiS this structure was transferred in the Northern Alliance of RESO (RESO [resettlement] Nordverbund; www.reso-nordverbund.de), which is a network between justice administrations of several northern länders.

The DP-BABE (Bildung, Arbeit und berufliche Eingliederung im Nordverbund; www.prison-portal.de) originates in the second phase of EQUAL (2005-2007) as an extension of the former work with (ex)-offenders. BABE sets an ETE (Education, Training and Employment) frame for special target groups in the prison population in Northern Germany, and additionally offers an IT platform for interchange of knowledge and experience to institutions and NGOs working in this field.

⁸ Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules - Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 at the 952nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies

⁹ The following articles are written by different authors and describe success stories of the Development Partnerships involved

The overall frame is a knowledge management platform in which both the sub-projects of the DP and all the other German and European EQUAL DP's have the possibility to place and interchange their knowledge.

The final objective is to contribute to the creation of a common European IT-portal for interchange of experience, case studies, knowledge and e-learning software, accessible to European staff working with this target group.

3.1.2 FROM THE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP E-LIS TO THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE RESO

Providing the prison population with learning e-technology needs a proper collaboration between training agencies, educational institutions and prison regimes. General objective is to improve the employability of this target group on the labour market and minimise recidivism by optimising learning processes.

Within the largest DP of the first EQUAL period in Germany, e-LiS, comprising 32 sub-projects, new IT approaches were installed and tested in several prisons of Northern Germany supporting illiteracy, dyslexia, basic education, vocational training and further learning programs. In addition e-LiS aimed to increase the participation of offenders in learning programs, especially of those practically excluded from formation processes (for instance juvenile offenders through the creation of virtual classrooms and foreigners by providing learning material in mother tongue languages). An important and non trivial related issue is the requirement of absolute secure technology preventing the free access of the offenders to internet.

In 2005 seven German Länder formally established a cooperation frame RESO Nordverbund in order to further improve these under EQUAL raised e-learning structures. Beyond this, the Länder agreement aimed the further general development of education, training and employment by using common standards. The EQUAL DP-BABE, MEMBER and IMBIS were embedded into the resulting close cooperation. Apart from this, this interregional collaboration enhanced the output of the corresponding projects under ESF objective I and III.

For further details:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/data/document/etg1-off-ntn.pdf

Main tasks in the DP-BABE are educational planning and support in juvenile detention centres, rehabilitation and shelter programs, product development and design in prison industries, vocational training for long term offenders with special focus on building cleaning training, assessment and profiling for female offenders, and release and resettlement pilot approaches. All these sub-projects have published the knowledge generated in the course project realisation on a KnowledgePortal.

3.1.3 BABE: TOWARDS AN EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY

The cross over frame in the DP BABE is the KnowledgePortal developed by the Center for Computing Technologies at the University of Bremen. In organisations such as prisons, the dissemination and utilisation of knowledge is of special importance because executive-, support- and educational processes of particular complexity are subject to constant change. Demands on on-site employees increase with the development and the adaptation of new methods of treatment. Reasons for this are rapidly developing jurisdiction and increasing challenges of the labour market within the past couple of years.

The “management of knowledge” requires high willingness to learn and to change on the staff side. But at the same time it improves the quality of advisory- and servicing processes. Objective of the KnowledgePortal is to support staff in the generation and search for knowledge about penal and resettlement systems by the implementation/application/usage of an internet-based IT-system. Knowledge – and especially new knowledge – originates through cooperation and communication in the course of processing practical cases. The exchange of actual knowledge related to practical experiences establishes a dynamic, activity-orientated KnowledgePortal.

Numerous institutions and authorities involved in prison and probation regime submit their contributions for further development of the portal contents. Contributors are prison staff, educational and vocational training suppliers, administration officers of ministries of justice, probation offices and scientific representatives. An editorial team with expertise in the field maintain the portal structure and is also responsible for the receipt of new articles, moderation and quality of contents. Colleagues with expertise in this field who are keen on sharing their knowledge and experience are welcome to participate in the configuration and extension of the KnowledgePortal both as authors and as users.

The results achieved in the sub-project “Knowledge Management” are put into practice in the DP BABE, IMBIS, MEMBER, KILiM and ZuBiliS within the scope of the „National EQUAL Offenders Network“ (NEON).

As a first step towards an European observatory this KnowledgePortal becomes an European dimension by accumulating experiences and knowledge from other European DP in cooperation with NEON-networks, associations and federations. EQUAL has therefore importantly contributed to the establishment of a Community of Practice in this complex work area. The Community of Practice is the best method to support communication and cooperation between all employees involved in the penal system and to enhance work with prisoners.

3.2 MEMBER: TUNING UP VOCATIONAL PREPARATION IN PRISON TO PROVIDE EQUAL CHANCES FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS

Having a job is the most important factor in preventing re-offending, but ex-prisoners without vocational qualifications have extremely low chances of finding a job. Many young offenders have had no education or training beyond compulsory school and don't meet the requirements for access to vocational training or work. Getting caught in this vicious circle at such an early stage of their lives can have dramatic consequences for young offenders. However, a German EQUAL Development Partnership, MEMBER, has successfully piloted new forms of vocational preparation inside the prison that match the quality of programmes available to other young people in the outside world.

3.2.1 A NEW APPROACH TO VOCATIONAL PREPARATION

In 2005, more than 8% of young Germans did not obtain any formal qualification on leaving general education. While this figure has steadily decreased, from almost 10% in 2001, the chances of these young people accessing vocational training have further deteriorated during the same period. Only 14% of early school leavers entered the Dual Training System in 2005, compared to 19% in 2001.



Increased efforts have been made, in recent years, to improve the vocational preparation of disadvantaged young people who have not yet acquired those basic skills and competences that would enable them to enter regular initial training. In 2003, new regulations concerning preparation for vocational training were introduced into the German Vocational Training Act, that complemented existing legislation in the fields of initial training, further training and retraining.

These regulations are designed to promote a step by step process of qualification through short modules, which lead young people to the acquisition of vocational competences that can be certified and credited against subsequent initial training in a recognised training occupation. Qualification modules are currently being developed and tested by different providers, mainly outside but also within the school system, to cover a wide range of vocational fields. The Federal Employment Agency, which ensures funding for vocational preparation offered outside the school system, strongly supports the integration of qualification modules into these preparatory programmes and has issued guidelines for the implementation of such modules.

In the Federal State of Brandenburg and in Berlin, the MEMBER Development Partnership (DP) is one of the key actors promoting this new approach to vocational preparation.

3.2.2 Strengthening Personal, Social and Media Competence and Integrating Young Prisoners into the new approach



Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann (right) explaining MEMBER's activities to EU Commissioner Vladimir Špidla during his visit to the DP

A special feature of the DP is that five of its nine projects operate exclusively, or partially, within penal institutions. "There are many good reasons for this double-track approach", explains Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann, the coordinator of the DP's activities. "By working simultaneously both outside and inside the penal system we can more easily ensure equal quality of vocational preparation in the two contexts and facilitate transfer of good practice into the prisons. Conversely, vocational preparation in prisons must comply with the security and other concerns of the penal system and this framework creates, in a way, 'laboratory conditions' for testing new methods that can then be implemented on a larger scale".

Another innovative aspect of the DP is its particular focus on improving the new qualification modules through introducing essential elements that are not covered in their technical content. "Vocational preparation should include more than pre-vocational qualification in a specific occupational field. We also want to equip disadvantaged young people with the personal and social skills that they need to find their way into training or work, to stay there and to cope with change. The new media are particularly powerful tools for gaining such skills and developing media competence is therefore a thread that runs through all our projects" says Wilfried Hendricks, Professor at the Technical University of Berlin and Director of the Institute for Education in the Information Society (IBI) which is the Managing Organisation of the DP.

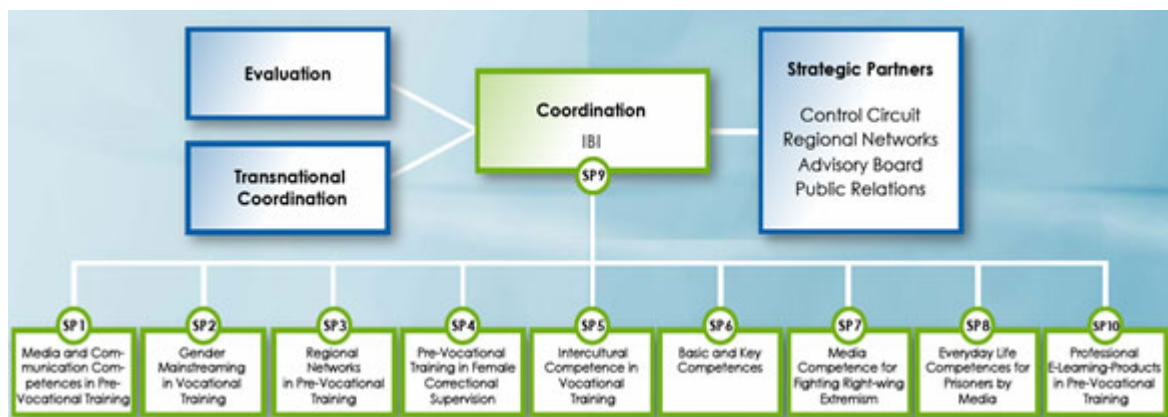


Wilfried Hendricks, Director of IBI

MEMBER promotes a broad concept of vocational preparation that is geared to subsequent initial training but, which also develops young people's capacity to adapt to changing requirements in the training market and the world of work. By closely associating a number of penal institutions with its work, the DP seeks to ensure that the quality of vocational preparation

for young people in prison is equal to that of their peers and also that it provides a stable bridge to sustainable training on their release.

To develop and implement this approach, IBI brought together a wide range of strategic partners, including the relevant Ministries of the Federal States of Brandenburg and Berlin (Education, Employment, and Justice), the Regional Employment Agency and a number of other organisations. They are all involved, in various ways, in the MEMBER Steering Committee, the Advisory Board and in the thematic working groups that ensure networking between the different DP activities and also support the mainstreaming of the DP's outcomes. The work of the DP is organised in nine different sub-projects (SPs), whilst the overall coordination is ensured by IBI.



3.2.3 ADDRESSING THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF YOUNG OFFENDERS IN VOCATIONAL PREPARATION

Developing equal opportunities for all young people in vocational preparation and integrating the use of ICT into the new qualification modules is a common transversal objective in all sub-projects. However, each of the five projects operating in prisons (SPs 4 – 8) also reflects a distinct aspect of competence development amongst young offenders and some examples of this work are described below.

3.2.4 INDIVIDUALISING PRE-VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR YOUNG FEMALE OFFENDERS

This project (SP4) has introduced a flexible approach to offering a vocational perspective to young inmates of the women's prison in Berlin. The relatively small number, and the relatively short sentences, of young female offenders make it difficult to bring them together in continuous learning groups that have homogeneous needs and interests. MEMBER has developed and tested a new modular training concept which enables the young women to enter the programme individually, at any given time. The first step of this programme is a personal assessment and

diagnosis which then provides the basis for the establishment of an individualised learning plan. The learning modules are complemented by work experience placements in the prison's workshops. This approach requires considerable coordinating abilities and a strong commitment on the part of the prison staff. MEMBER has therefore organised training, advice and coaching sessions to help the staff to prepare, implement and evaluate the individual learning plans. This has also led to a new cooperative project with the prison for young male offenders in Berlin, which enables both young women and young men to learn about, and tackle, gender stereotypes and role models through a common website (see SP 5 below).

The products of this project comprise curricula and back-up resources in the form of print and IT materials on selected themes including methods of competence assessment, media competence, anti-racism and communication. These outputs were complemented by several tools that facilitate the involvement of prison staff at all levels such as an outline of framework conditions and work processes, and others including the use of video and audio, case study and portfolio approaches that have mobilised them for the development and implementation of new qualification modules.

The new concept has proved successful. Two thirds of the 30 young women who participated in the project in 2006 found a job in the prison companies or went on to further training, whilst the other ten participants were released or transferred to another prison. The individualised training programme has now been introduced as a central feature of vocational preparation in the prison that will continue after completion of the MEMBER DP.

3.2.5 DEVELOPING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

This project (SP 5) covers considerable new ground. "Until recently, work on intercultural issues has not been given much attention in this institution, although more than half of the 600 young people who are in here are from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds," explains Birgit Lang from the MEMBER team in Berlin's youth prison. "Now we have a clear strategy to foster training and learning through multicultural learning groups". This approach seeks to integrate new aspects into the prison's vocational preparation and training programmes. These novel elements are intercultural learning modules that are used for instruction in social studies, a German language course for Germans and non-Germans, workshop projects and role playing in multi-cultural teams. In addition, preparatory work has started for the training of Intercultural Peer Mediators who will help to reconcile the conflicts that can arise in the learning groups.

A particularly forceful and successful element of the project's work on media competence has been the creation of a Hip-Hop platform and its rap band "GittaSpitta". This platform offers the young prisoners an appropriate medium for self-presentation and for self-expression through words rather than through violence. "Sometimes a small pebble can set a huge landslide rolling. The landslide I'm talking about is not one of stones but one of words, but I can say these words are stronger than stone", states Sascha G., one of the band members who sets his feelings to music. The platform also has a clear vocational component, as through its CD and video productions it provides practical experience related to professional training and occupations in the field of "Music and Event." This is a sector in which the traditionally strong and rapidly expanding creative industries of the Berlin-Brandenburg region offer new opportunities. GittaSpitta has already gained some publicity outside the prison both during and after its performance on the International Days against Racism and Discrimination, in March 2006 and in March 2007.



GittaSpitta rappers are effective communicators

However, the project's work is not confined to its activities within the prison walls. "Our whole approach is based on intensive cooperation with teachers from the vocational schools in Berlin and with other groups and organisations outside the prison that can contribute to our work", says Klaus-Dieter Vogel, the prison's course coordinator, and he also adds that "we intend to transfer our training kit to the vocational schools and for many of them the new forms of vocational preparation and the use of qualification modules are a new field in which they have very limited experience". Close working links are also maintained with the MEMBER sub-project 1 which produces modules and teaching and learning materials to develop media and communication competence in the pre-vocational training offered in two large districts of the Brandenburg region.

Strong links have also been forged with the MEMBER project on Media Competence for Fighting Right-wing Extremism (SP 7). "We have a number of common interests", explains Judy Korn, who works on this sub-project. "Over several years we have observed a growth in violent offences that have a right-wing extremist motive, often combined with overt racism. The situation in prisons provides a fertile breeding ground for such attitudes which increasingly intersect with a manifestation of religious fundamentalism. The curricula and materials that we produce help teachers and trainers to argue with extremist positions and are therefore welcomed by operators in the prisons, especially as they are well suited for use in intercultural training for young offenders."

3.2.6 USING IT-MEDIA TO INCREASE EVERYDAY LIFE COMPETENCE

Within this project (SP 8), experts from the MEMBER team, teachers and instructors operating in prisons and the young people with whom they work jointly test and use learning software that helps young ex-offenders prepare for their release. Entitled "KiA - Kompetent im Alltag" (capable of coping with everyday life), the new software includes modules for competence development in nine different fields, such as work with a computer, contact with public authorities, job-seeking and house-hunting, handling financial issues and the use of spare time. It builds on similar work initiated under the ADAPT and Employment Community Initiatives which preceded EQUAL, e.g. on the results of the Telis project. "The 'Telis' software provided a good starting point, but it was mainly aimed at adults and we had to make it suitable for work with young people. Its content was predominantly based on text, whereas KiA works with a wider range of media," explains the project leader, Sabine Schuller. KiA is complemented by a "Media Kit", which contains games and visual models that support the use of the software.

Project activities are closely coordinated with the joint development and use of IT-based learning systems that take place within the framework of the "RESO-Northern Alliance" (RESO-Nordverbund), which emerged from work in EQUAL round 1 and in which the Ministries of Justice from seven Federal States in the northern part of Germany cooperate on education, training and labour-market programmes for the social integration of offenders.

3.2.7 DISSEMINATING MATERIALS, TOOLS AND INFORMATION ON SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE THROUGH WEB-BASED ACCESS FOR TEACHERS, TRAINERS AND MULTIPLIERS

Outcomes of MEMBER are made widely available and disseminated in different ways. All products resulting from the work of the individual sub-projects are accessible through the results page of the DP's website, including printed and electronic materials, curricula and training concepts, tools, recommendations and reports and information on the nature of the innovations that have been introduced by the DP. The products are categorised by the different target groups to whom they are addressed including young people inside and outside the penal institutions, pedagogical staff in prisons, teachers and trainers in schools and vocational preparation programmes, multipliers and decision makers. This helps interested users to navigate through the wide range of products easily and to identify quickly those that are most relevant for their own work.

In addition, MEMBER offers, through its web-based portal, access to other electronic materials that it has found to be useful in vocational preparation programmes. These also complement the resources that MEMBER has developed.

Finally, MEMBER is engaged in close cooperation with a specialised publishing house on the development of e-learning modules that are tailored to the needs of disadvantaged young people in vocational preparation programmes (SP 10). As a result of this cooperation, many of the outcomes and experiences of the DP will also be made available through the ever growing e-learning market.

3.2.8 TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

The MEMBER sub-projects are actively involved in the Hugin Transnational Partnership (TP), together with DPs from the Netherlands, Malta, and Poland. All partners share a common interest in improving the life chances of young people who have not had access to initial education and training and of those who are remanded in custody or may be at risk of offending. Cooperation in the Hugin TP focuses on the joint development and transnational transfer of products that address four practical thematic aspects: recruiting-retention-motivation, new approaches to embedded learning, the use of DVD media and IT-Portal solutions.

In addition, MEMBER is a partner in the new German NEON (National EQUAL Offender Network) which includes all German DPs working with ex-offenders. NEONs have also already been launched in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. These networks build on the experience of cooperation between "ex-offender" DPs in the first Round of EQUAL and have established a stable platform for increasing the impact of DPs in Round 2. Several other Member States including Italy, Poland and Portugal have also created similar networks. These NEONs are now collaborating transnationally so that they can more effectively exploit European experience for their own work in their respective national contexts.

The new transnational cooperation provides a linchpin for implementing the European Programme for Mainstreaming the outcomes from EQUAL in this thematic field. The most recent milestone in this programme was the EQUAL Policy Forum on (Ex)-offenders that was held in Warsaw, on 21 and 22 June 2007. The MEMBER DP contributed to the Passport to Freedom Conference in Lisbon, in October 2006, which brought together 55 DPs to gather evidence of the successful practices that have been tested in EQUAL, which formed the basis for recommendations presented at the Policy Forum in Warsaw.

Three Important Lessons from MEMBER

The operators in the MEMBER team believe that:

- "Cross-linking our approach to improving young people's personal and vocational competence within prisons with our work outside has generated advantages for both

sides: for young offenders, because they become familiar with new processes similar to those that they will experience after their release; and for those concerned with introducing new forms of vocational preparation into the education and training system, because they benefit from the transfer of tools and materials that we were able to test under experimental conditions in the penal institution;

- A key to the success of our work in prisons was the offer of training and support to prison staff, and their full involvement from the beginning. In the future, such training should be compulsory;
- The networking of regional and local actors has been crucial in establishing common standards and ensuring regional coherence in implementing the new qualification modules for vocational preparation, both within the penal system and outside."

3.2.9 CONTACT

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http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/practical-examples/employ-07-member_en.cfm#_ftn1

3.3 ZUBILIS

Zukunft der Bildung im Strafvollzug des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen und Mabis.net

3.3.1 OVERVIEW



The level of the education and training of most prisoners in Germany is below average and this parallels the situation in other EU Member States. Many of these prisoners have an accumulation of serious disadvantages including drug addiction or psychological problems.

Research and experience consistently confirm the strong correlation that exists between the overcoming of these disadvantages and the successful rehabilitation of the ex-offender. Yet, during their custody, many prisoners do not have access to opportunities to develop the capacities and competencies that they will need after their release if they are to be successfully re-integrated into social life and a labour market that has an accelerating pace of change and a rising demand for new types of skills.

The European Employment Guidelines place a strong emphasis on reinforcing social inclusion and preventing exclusion from the world of work. In its Recommendation ([2004/741/EC](#)) on the implementation of Member States' employment policies, the Council stresses, in one of its specific recommendations to Germany, the need to "...improve education levels of the workforce and ... to increase participation in lifelong learning, especially for the low-skilled..." Ex-offenders clearly represent a vulnerable group that would benefit from policies addressing this need.

During the last 30 years, North Rhine-Westphalia, which is the largest of the federal states of Germany with more than 18 million inhabitants, has been successful in creating a wide range of education and training opportunities for detainees. However, two issues have given rise to further concern:

- Firstly, much of the training provision in prisons is either geared to traditional vocational sectors that offer only limited, labour market prospects, or else it is not flexible enough to respond to the rapid changes in the world of work;
- Secondly, assistance during the period of detention is often not sufficiently well articulated with after-care support in finding employment. Ex-offenders face difficulties in making contact with services and labour market actors and/or they run the risk of dropping out of training if they have to complete their course after release.

Therefore, new policy priorities are now focused on adapting education and training to changing labour market needs and on linking vocational preparation with new forms of after-care that

enable ex-offenders to continue their training on release and also facilitate their placement in a job.

The EQUAL [ZUBILIS](#)¹⁰ Development Partnership (DP) plays an important role in putting these priorities into practice. Coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, the DP involves almost all the groups of 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, including:

- The Ministry of Education, vocational training centres, and a range of organisations specialising in course development and certification with a particular focus on modular learning, e-learning and the use of ICT;
- Key actors in the labour market, such as the Federal Agency for Employment, or employers who participate in the DP through the regional Association of Chambers of Craft and the Association of German Agencies for Temporary Employment representing more than 900 temporary employment agencies;
- A number of pilot prisons that were selected to reflect the specific situation and role of different types of penal institutions, and the state agency responsible for the administration and supervision of the prison system.

Together these partners offer a comprehensive package of complementary expertise and competence which also provides a strong basis for mainstreaming the outcomes of the DP.



Wolfgang Wirth, coordinator of ZUBILIS

ZUBILIS started in July 2005 and will operate until the end of 2007. This period will also be marked by policy debate on the reform of the federal structure in Germany, which includes a proposal to shift the responsibility for the regulatory framework of the penal system from the national level to the level of the individual federal states. As a corollary, prison practices may change and come under tougher scrutiny in terms of their costs, including those related to the provision of training and


resettlement support. For Wolfgang Wirth, who coordinates the work of the DP and heads the *Task Group on Criminological Research* at the Ministry of Justice, the challenge is quite clear. *“The regulations of the prison system require that the enforcement of sentences must enable prison inmates to live their future lives without re-offending. Qualification and access to employment are crucial factors in the reintegration of ex-offenders. All our analyses and experiences show that the provision of training and placement support not only benefits the detainees but also our society. It*

¹⁰ The acronym ZUBILIS stands for **Zukunft der Bildung im Strafvollzug** (Future of Training and Education in the Prison System of North Rhine-Westphalia)

significantly reduces the risk of recidivism and this can save considerable costs” he explains, emphasising that “we are not social romantics. We are aware that we will have to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the new approaches that are being developed and piloted through ZUBILIS”.

3.3.2 INTEGRATING PRISON EDUCATION, PREPARATION FOR RELEASE AND AFTER-care

ZUBILIS is the latest element in a comprehensive strategy of articulating the broad spectrum of education and training opportunities that exist in the prisons of North Rhine-Westphalia with new approaches to the effective employment integration of ex-offenders. This strategy is based on three pillars:

- Work on the first pillar started in 1998 with the launch of **MABIS**¹¹, a programme for market-oriented employment preparation, which provides individualised vocational or employment guidance, and initial contact with potential employers, during the final months of the inmates’ periods of detention. The European Union supported the development of this programme through the EMPLOYMENT-Integra Community Initiative;
- The second pillar, **MABIS.NeT** () , was established during the period 2002 to 2005 to complement the MABIS programme through the creation of a state-wide network of after-care agencies that liaise closely with the MABIS counsellors in the prisons and ensure continuity of training, placement and other resettlement services for ex-offenders after their release. *MABIS.NeT* was implemented as a Development Partnership during the first round of EQUAL;
- **ZUBILIS**, the third pillar, will underpin the continuing operation of *MABIS* and *MABIS.NeT* and, in particular, focus on new approaches to adapting the training provision in the penal system to changing labour market needs and the new skills required. It will also explore new job opportunities that could be created through close cooperation with temporary employment agencies.

The combination of these three pillars constitutes the lynchpin for the further development of an integrated rehabilitation policy in North Rhine-Westphalia but the success of this policy depends on effective cooperation between different partners. In addressing participants at the annual *MABIS.NeT* conference in 2004, Wolfgang Gerhard, who was then Minister of Justice, underlined that *“the penal institutions cannot shoulder this task alone, as their responsibility*

¹¹ **MABIS** - Marktorientierte Ausbildungs- und Beschäftigungsintegration für Straftlassene

formally ends at the moment of the prisoner's release. We need the support of 'external' agencies including, in particular, the key actors in the labour market".

3.3.3 THE SYSTEM IS NOW IN PLACE

The *MABIS* programme is currently operating in 11 of the 37 prisons in North Rhine-Westphalia. In each of the 11 prisons a (team of) **MABIS counsellor(s)** is in place to work out, together with each willing prisoner, an individualised support plan involving guidance on suitable training opportunities and possible placement in employment after release. The counsellors also have a crucial interface function in ensuring effective links with **after-care agencies** that were established by **MABIS.Net** in seven regions of the state. Different types of private providers played a central role in piloting these new agencies, including NGOs and trade union and employers' organisations. They have knowledge and expertise in both the world of prisons and the field of employment, unlike most other labour market intermediaries with whom they cooperate closely. They are thus particularly well placed to offer advice and services to ex-offenders, training providers and employers, to help to normalise the situation of ex-convicts during the first six months after their period of custody and to prevent drop out from training or work. The effective networking contacts that exist between the regional agencies make it possible to ensure that this resettlement support is also available to the large number of individuals who, after having served their sentence, decide to move away from the location of their previous imprisonment. The Ministry of Justice has now decided to mainstream this network in co-operation with key labour market actors including the State Agency for Employment.

However, successful reintegration into employment does not only depend on effective support systems for the transition from prison to work. It also requires access to skills and qualifications that have a real market value. The primary aim of *ZUBILIS* is therefore to **increase the relevance of education and training provision for ex-offenders**, by modernising its content and methods of delivery, in close cooperation with employers and other labour market actors. Activities until the end of 2007 will focus on three main areas:



Learning in Hövelhof, one of the prisons involved in ZUBILIS

- Increasing the media competence of teaching and training staff in the penal system and developing media-supported programmes for prison inmates that offer a combination of vocational and basic educational qualifications;

- Adapting existing vocational qualification programmes for use in prisons, through modular design and certification of learning units and the introduction of e-learning;
- Mobilising, and capitalising on, relevant expertise available outside the penal system, e.g. from temporary employment agencies and research organisations.

In all three areas of work, special attention is being devoted to the particular situation and needs of female offenders. This issue is also a common thematic priority for the Transnational Partnership, [TIP – Transitions in Prisons](#), in which ZUBILIS cooperates with DPs from the Netherlands, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

3.3.4 OUTCOMES AND LESSONS LEARNT

Successful placement in employment is the strongest lever for preventing recidivism. This is demonstrated impressively by the outcomes of a sample survey conducted amongst ex-offenders who had enrolled in a vocational preparation programme during their period of custody. Within the four years after their release, 80% of those who remained unemployed after completion of their course lapsed back into offending and were re-arrested. In contrast, the corresponding figure for those who found employment in the field in which they had been training was only 33%. Amongst those who had failed the examination or had discontinued their course, the rate of recidivism was 90% for the unemployed, against 65% for those who had found a job. In presenting the results of this survey, Wolfgang Wirth concludes that *“these figures confirm the importance of placement support during the preparation for release through MABIS, and of the after-care services that are offered through MABIS.Net. The provision of training opportunities alone is not enough – the determining factor in re-integration is sustainable placement in employment”*.

MABIS achieved a placement rate of up to 50% amongst more than 4.000 prisoners who have participated in the programme to date. For adult participants more than 80% of these placements lead to employment in the primary labour market and most of the rest to some form of education, training or work experience programme. For young people almost two thirds of the placements relate to training or work experience, but more than one third have resulted in a job in the primary labour market.

The large majority of those who call on the services of the MABIS.Net after-care agencies are ex-offenders who did not find access to employment or training through the MABIS programme or those who had dropped out of an initial placement. During the period 2003-2004, 85% of 1100 individuals who were “registered” with the after-care agencies after their release from prison¹² were facing these



A MABIS.Net counsellor and her client

¹² In addition, MABIS.Net provided support to more than 500 prisoners **during** their period of detention.

problematic situations. For half of this large group of clients, the agencies were able to offer job or training opportunities. While help in providing placements appears to be the most frequently requested form of support, it is not the only one. More than one third of the clients also required other types of assistance to enable them to stabilise their life situations during the first difficult six months after custody. These included job coaching, help with social or health issues, solving housing problems or advice in dealing with debt and other financial matters. Only 16% of all participants abandoned the after-care programme and this is a testimony to the relevance of the assistance that it offers.

MABIS.NeT also developed and tested a number of tools based on electronic data processing to facilitate the placement process for ex-offenders, including data bases on those suitable training opportunities within the penal system or in public training institutions, a diagnostic tool to help in establishing meaningful profiles of applicants and the “JobExplorer_{MABIS.NeT}”, an instrument to match individual profiles with the entry requirements for available jobs or training. These tools, which are already in use in several prisons, are at a stage when they can be implemented more widely.

3.3.5 MAINSTREAMING THROUGH NETWORKING AND WIN-WIN EFFECTS

From the outset, provision for the transfer and mainstreaming of good practice was an inherent element of *MABIS*, *MABIS.NeT* and *ZUBILIS*. All three programmes were designed to underpin a policy for the employment integration of ex-offenders that drew on a state-wide endeavour to promote closer cooperation between different relevant actors in the fields of criminal justice and the labour market. This concern for coordination is strongly reflected in the composition of the partnerships that were set up to implement these programmes. A further point of concern was the fact that innovative measures to tackle an entrenched problem like the social and vocational rehabilitation of ex-offenders take time to make an impact and even more time to ensure that their impact is sustained. Delivering *MABIS*, *MABIS.NeT* and *ZUBILIS* in progressive stages has appeared to be an effective approach, as it has enabled all of the different agencies and actors that are involved to advance at the same pace and to consolidate their outcomes at the end of each stage before moving on to the next.

One of the most significant mainstreaming activities was the establishment of “regional reintegration fora” to intensify collaboration between prisons and relevant labour market actors. These were launched in the catchment areas of all seven *MABIS.NeT* after-care agencies and during the period 2003 – 2005, almost 400 key actors and stakeholders became members of these fora.

The regional reintegration fora had positive repercussions on networking between the field operators involved in *MABIS.NeT* and these network links created “win-win” situations for the different actors which, in turn, encouraged and enhanced the wider transfer of successful practices. Two examples illustrate these positive effects:

- The first relates to the successful placements of *MABIS.NeT* clients. Only 5% of these placements were attributed exclusively to action by the public services and 47% exclusively to action by the after-care agencies. However, the remaining 48% of placements resulted from cooperative action between the *MABIS.NeT* aftercare agencies and the local public employment services. Thus, the activities of these agencies contributed significantly to easing the work of the public placement services;
- The second example concerns support in solving other reintegration problems such as difficulties with vocational orientation and qualification, financial and housing matters or drug issues. Depending on the nature of the problem, a solution could be found in 25 to 60% of all cases, but where the after-care agencies cooperated with other specialised services the success rate was two to three times higher than in situations in which the agencies operated on their own.

Based on conclusions from these networks and similar arrangements, *MABIS.NeT* prepared a proposal on Guidelines for Effective Networking between Actors in the Fields of Criminal Justice and the Labour Market. This proposal has now been reflected in a new decree of the Ministry of Justice to secure the funding of measures for the vocational reintegration of (ex) prisoners that build on, and develop, the structures piloted by *MABIS.NeT*.

Drawing on the accumulated experience of *MABIS* and *MABIS.NeT*, the *ZUBILIS* DP will seek to develop the quality of networking between these actors and strengthen their cooperation with providers and experts in the field of vocational training.

3.3.6 CONTACT

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www.zubilis.de

Links to EQUAL database descriptions: MABIS.NeT
 ZUBILIS



3.4 IMPROVING THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF (EX)-OFFENDERS: SEVEN GERMAN STATES SIGN AN INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR JOINT ACTION

The German e-LiS Development Partnership (DP) was launched in 2002 to promote the employability of ex-offenders and to prepare them for their re-integration into the job market. The DP involved six Northern States (Länder) of the Federal Republic of Germany¹³ and was based on 32 separate but inter-related projects. It focused on new forms of learning and support that facilitated access to marketable training qualifications, covered existing gaps in provision and stimulated the motivation of the participants. One of its most significant innovations was the use of information and communication technologies in prisons, including the introduction of e-learning, and this raised particularly sensitive problems for the penal institutions involved. Though it was not initially conceived as a National Thematic Network, e-LiS actually fulfilled many of the functions that are attributed to EQUAL NTN, by:

- identifying policy gaps and needs that are reflected in the work of the DP's projects and attracting the interest of relevant policy makers in all the Länder;
- designing and implementing from the DP's outset a clear strategy for horizontal and vertical mainstreaming;
- creating links and organising exchange and transfer of experience and good practice between projects working on similar themes;
- providing a platform for effective dialogue between those who were implementing the projects and those who were responsible for developing policies for the re-integration of ex-offenders.

Thus, the experience of the e-LiS DP offers a stimulating example of a thematic network that combined both a sectoral and a geographical dimension to achieve horizontal and vertical mainstreaming effects. One of its outcomes is described below.

¹³ Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Schleswig-Holstein.

3.4.1 THE RESO-NORTHERN ALLIANCE – A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION



One important outcome of the networking activities has been the adoption of a formal agreement by the Ministries of Justice of the federal states that participated in the e-LiS DP and, in addition, by the State of Lower Saxony, bringing up the number of Länder to seven. This agreement was concluded in March 2005 and resulted in the establishment of the “RESO-Northern Alliance” (RESO-Nordverbund), which is a structured framework for cooperation between the administrations of justice in the fields of education, training and labour-market programmes for the social integration of offenders.

The approach that led to the formation of the Northern Alliance was presented at a transnational EQUAL conference, in Berlin in October 2005. Hildegard Jansen from the Department of Employment and Social Affairs of the federal state of Bremen has been involved in this process from its beginning. In addressing the 200 participants Jansen said, “this agreement was the logical consequence of more than two years of successful work in the e-LiS partnership. Experience from e-LiS has demonstrated how education and labour market measures can be effectively combined to foster the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.”

She then went on to explain that, “these successful approaches must now be transposed into general practice throughout our penal systems. The creation of the Northern Alliance opens up new opportunities for sustainable cooperation and joint further development that will improve the delivery of our rehabilitation policies”. The conference brought together representatives of the Ministries of Justice and other relevant Departments, prison services and more than 30 DPs from twelve EU Member States, to discuss “New ways for a sustainable re-integration of offenders”.

The members of the Northern Alliance have made a firm commitment to engage in coordinated action to improve the employability of prison inmates, and to promote the exchange of experience and transfer of good practice between the relevant institutions in the justice and penal systems. The key objective specified in the agreement is “to develop and validate common standards for the successful educational and vocational integration of ex-offenders”. Drawing on outcomes and recommendations emerging from the e-LiS DP, the Northern Alliance has agreed to cooperate on establishing such standards for a range of interrelated thematic areas, including:

- the combination of relevant assistance and employment measures inside and outside the penal institutions, as part of an integrated support system;
- the introduction of modular, flexible and individualised education/training processes, based on a common approach to individual assessment and profiling;
- the joint development and use of IT-based learning systems;
- ensuring the labour market relevance of education and employment offers in prisons;
- the development of an agreed system for the re-integration of ex-offenders after their period of custody.

The members of the Alliance have also agreed to coordinate their action in initiating the necessary legal changes and creating favourable framework conditions for their work in the above thematic areas. Decisions are made by a consortium of high level representatives of the Ministries of Justice and are then implemented by the permanent Steering Group of the Alliance which also comprises representatives of all seven Länder.

Each of the participating Länder has taken a lead role in one of the thematic areas, and/or a responsibility for particular tasks in the organisation and management of the Alliance. These tasks also include cooperation with EU Member States and non-EU countries. “Transnational exchange and cooperation is a very effective way of reducing the time and resources that are required for new developments” says Jürgen Hillmer, who coordinated the transnational work of e-LiS. Hillmer highlights the fact that “through our EQUAL partnerships we have now established contacts with several dozens of projects across Europe, all working on thematic issues similar or complementary to ours. We want to set up a European Network of all these initiatives. One of the contributions of the Northern Alliance to this network will be the development of a Knowledge Portal to collect and update relevant national and European experience and make it easily accessible to all members”.

Since its creation, the RESO Northern Alliance has attracted considerable attention from other parts of Germany and some of the other nine Länder that have already indicated their strong interest in cooperating, and sharing experience, with the Alliance.

3.4.2 TACKLING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYABILITY ACTION IN PRISONS

Right from its start, e-LiS adopted a networking approach that enabled it to make optimal use of its resources in finding solutions to those problems that were common to all the six Länder. Two main problems had to be addressed:

- **Lack of adequate provision and resources for the re-integration of ex-offenders into employment.**

Ex-offenders are one of the “hardest to place” groupings but are not a priority target group for active labour market measures. “Most of the inmates in our prisons still lack

individual competences that are important for vocational and social re-integration and this hampers their chances of living their future lives without re-offending. Recidivism and exclusion from employment represent a high cost for our society that may well exceed the cost of preventive education and labour market measures”, explains Jürgen Hillmer. At the beginning of the DP’s activities, only a very small minority of people in custody had access to educational and training provision that was adapted to their needs.

- **Difficulties of reconciling new flexible processes of individualised learning with the rules and the contextual conditions in prisons.**

The introduction of IT-based learning must comply with strict security regulations in the penal institutions. e-LiS found that there were no “jail safe” learning platforms and software programmes available on the open market, which met these regulations. Thus, such platforms and programmes had to be developed and also, prison staff and trainers, who were not yet familiar with new IT-based approaches, had to be trained in their use.

The e-LiS DP tested responses to these problems through its extended network of projects, each of which had a particular focus on one or more specific aspect(s). This approach enabled every actor in the network to draw on, and benefit from, the experience of all the projects. Now, the combined outcomes from these projects provide a comprehensive and validated model of good practice that is applicable across all of the participating Länder.

The RESO Northern Alliance provides the framework for implementing and enhancing the lessons learned from e-LiS on a larger scale. Its work is a practical response to the European Employment Guidelines which place a strong emphasis on reinforcing social inclusion and preventing exclusion from the world of work. In its Recommendation ([2004/741/EC](#)) on the implementation of Member States’ employment policies the Council stresses, in one of its specific recommendations to Germany, the need “to increase participation in lifelong learning, especially for the low-skilled, SME employees and older workers.” Though they are not specifically referred to in this recommendation, prison inmates are part of the target group that is most excluded from the process of lifelong learning.

3.4.3 CREATING CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

Establishing sustainable cooperation to implement new approaches to the rehabilitation of ex-offenders does not only require good coordination and effective mechanisms for exchange between the operators. “In the successful step forward from the e-LiS Development Partnership

to the RESO-Northern Alliance three factors were absolutely crucial “, emphasises Hildegard Jansen, namely “actively building a relationship of mutual trust between all key actors; identifying, and focusing on, common interests; and developing a considerable degree of perseverance and staying power to overcome possible setbacks”.

The EQUAL partnership concept, on which e-LiS was built, helped to meet these requirements. Involving all primary stakeholders, in particular the Ministries of Justice, in defining the problems to be tackled and making decisions on possible solutions created a climate of trust. This climate made it possible to move, in a relatively short period of time, from initial ideas about the creation of a structured cooperation framework towards the actual formation of the Northern Alliance. In summer 2003, the first step of this process was a stock-taking of the available education and training offers for people in custody and the roles of the relevant providers. Based on this analysis and proposals from e-LiS, a working group involving representatives of the Ministries of Justice was set up in spring 2004 to develop common basic principles for cooperation that led to the formal agreement on the Alliance in March 2005.

Thus, preparatory work on the creation of the Northern Alliance was an essential element of the mainstreaming strategy of the e-LiS network and proceeded in parallel to the activities of the 32 e-LiS projects. Whilst the problem of financial resources for the future hung over this whole process like the sword of Damocles, the early focus on mainstreaming provided sufficient time to tackle the issue and now the continuation of the Alliance’s activities has been secured.

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3.4.5 PRISON INMATES IN GERMANY CATCH UP WITH THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

The e-LiS Development Partnership (DP) has demonstrated how prisons take advantage of the opportunities that the use of computers offers for learning and teaching, in order to prepare ex-offenders for their way back into work and everyday life outside the civil penal institution. The DP operated from June 2002 to May 2005 and linked together more than 30 individual projects in a network spanning six Northern federal states (Länder) of Germany. It involved 19 prisons which were carefully chosen to reflect the specific situations and roles of different types of penal institutions, a number of training providers and organisations specialising in the fields of course

development and delivery, and two universities that provided expertise in the development of a learning platform and the piloting of this platform in the prisons.

3.4.6 E-LEARNING TO HELP EX-OFFENDERS MEET NEW REQUIREMENTS ON THE JOB MARKET

Through developing, testing and operating a common learning platform, e-LiS has laid solid foundations for the introduction of new forms of computer-based training into prisons. “Just like everyone else, prisoners need a high level of media competence to meet the new requirements of the labour market”, says Wilfried Hendricks, Professor at the Technical University of Berlin and Director of the Institute for Education in the Information Society which played a leading role in promoting IT-based learning in the prisons. He is convinced that “if we really want more prisoners to acquire such competence, they must learn to learn with computers. Also, our penal system can no longer ignore the internet and we must train prisoners in the use of this medium.” The new platform for e-learning is based on the open source software ILIAS, which was modified and further developed by the TZI Center for Computing Technologies at the University of Bremen to respond to the specific requirements of the penal system. Managed by TZI, this platform is now accessible to prisons in all the Länder that were involved in the e-LiS network. It offers learning modules, that can be used online and an overview of all the learning software that has been tested by e-LiS for use in prisons. These modular educational/training programmes make it possible to meet the different needs of the heterogeneous group of prisoners, including young people and adults, women and men. Teachers and other members of staff have been trained in its use and in some jails inmates have completed their first training units using the platform. “We want to address primarily slow learners and people with other learning difficulties. We have also found that young people, in particular, respond very well to these new offers”, explains Elisabeth Theine from the Ministry of Justice of Brandenburg. The networking approach in e-LiS lubricated the exchange and transfer of experience between the different prisons, which was essential in ensuring that the common learning platform suited their individual situations. Building on the results achieved so far, the next steps will be to permanently anchor the use of the platform in all the prisons in the six Länder and to strengthen its response to gender specific needs.

3.4.7 RECONCILING NEW APPROACHES TO IT-BASED LEARNING WITH THE CONSTRAINTS OF THE PRISONS

The introduction of e-learning in prisons raises sensitive questions about the safe use of such new technologies in a secure environment. e-LiS addressed these concerns by developing and piloting a closed intranet providing protected access to the learning platform. “e-LiS offers a very differentiated multi-level security concept that takes account of the diverse situations in different prisons and enables specific rights of access to be defined for each individual inmate”, explains

Professor Jürgen Friedrich of the TZI. The development of approaches to e-learning that are appropriate for use in prisons has also been a central theme in the transnational partnerships in which the e-LiS network was involved. Most of the transnational partners had a very similar point of departure, that is described by Walter Hammerschick of the Vienna Institute for the Sociology of Law and Criminology who coordinated the work of the Telfi DP in Austria: “For a long time, the idea of allowing access to an IT network from jail was perceived as incompatible with the nature of penal institutions. We had to tackle problems that related to the particular conditions of imprisonment, such as security issues and specific legal requirements.”

Positive experience from the e-LiS network has nourished expectations that these problems can now be overcome. Some prisons have already progressed with “internet simulations” and further work concerns the establishing of a technological infrastructure that enables the controlled use of selected web pages as a learning medium in a way that complies with the security regulations of penal institutions.

3.4.8 MANAGING THE PROCESS OF INNOVATION

Responding to technological and security requirements was not the only challenge for the e-LiS network. Loading the learning platform with relevant content and acquainting teachers, trainers and prison staff with the new methods of teaching and learning, which are inseparably linked to its use, were equally important pre-conditions.

3.4.9 IDENTIFYING, ADAPTING AND TESTING SUITABLE LEARNING MODULES AND SOFTWARE

Four e-LiS projects, including specialised university institutes and training providers in three different federal states, worked together to feed the learning platform with relevant content. The first step in this process involved an analysis of the needs of those 23 projects in the network that were set up to provide ICT based training for different groups of prisoners and for trainers or other staff. This was followed by market research on existing learning software that could be adapted to meet these needs and also to enable secure and cost-effective links to be made between the education and training bases in the prisons concerned. The outcomes of this research are contained in a database of suitable education software and modules that are available on the market. Appropriate software and learning materials selected from this database were then tested in real situations and adapted for practical use in, and by, the prisons.

3.4.10 TRAINING TEACHERS, TRAINERS, TUTORS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF STAFF

All key partners in the e-LiS network were convinced that the introduction of new methods of learning and training in prisons could only be successful if these methods were accepted and supported by informed, motivated and qualified staff. Therefore two of the e-LiS projects, again

from different federal states, cooperated on a programme for in-service staff training. This programme was aimed not only to develop the IT- and media-skills of teachers and trainers who are involved in prison education but also to provide information for, and foster competence building amongst, all those who might play an active role in the implementation of the new approaches. Activities included running courses and workshops, offering tele-learning modules and on-line tuition and organising structured exchange between actors from all e-LiS projects on a range of topics, such as

- didactical and technical aspects of IT and media based learning and teaching,
- content management,
- profiling and assessment practices,
- methods of tele-tutoring,
- project management and team building,
- network and security issues,
- evaluation and quality management.

Further information and training activities were focused on issues related to the practical implementation of the EQUAL principles of Gender Mainstreaming, Empowerment and Transnational Cooperation.

Conclusions from the e-LiS evaluation confirm that e-learning for prisoners is most successful in situations where periods of self-study are allied to cooperative or group learning and that the active involvement of trainers/tutors is crucial, including their on site presence at several stages of the learning process. The evaluation also emphasises the need to further clarify the demands on, and the roles of, these tutors and to assist them in the use of didactical approaches that take account of the specific target groups and learning environments in prisons. The lessons learned from the piloting of different methods and tools for in-service training within the e-LiS network now provide a substantial pool of practical experience that will guide future development work in this field.

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