

PRESS RELEASE

B-COMPETENT

Boosting competences in Penitentiary Staff in prison

**Final conference of B-COMPETENT project:
Fundamental rights of foreign prisoners and prison staff training. State of play,
critical aspects and reform proposals**

Rome, 15/12/2021 - The European project **B-COMPETENT. Boosting competences in Penitentiary Staff in Europe** marked its closure at the international conference held in Rome at **Spazio Europa** on December 14th.

The in-person and virtual event provided a fruitful opportunity to present the main achievements of the 2-year project and to pave the way for future discussion in the field of fundamental rights of foreign inmates.



Speech by Prof. Bifulco

The opening speech was given by the scientific Coordinator of the project, Prof **Daniela Bifulco** (University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”), who highlighted the rationale of the project, its main achievements, the obstacles posed by the pandemic’s outbreak, and called for a strengthened cooperation between the academic world and the penitentiary system.

Prof **Paola Maggio** (University of Palermo, Member of the 5th inter-ministerial working group for the implementation of the Cartabia Reform) delivered an insightful intervention

whose provocative title was “*Prison and Foreign Nationals: re-educational function or fiction?*”. In her speech she addressed the controversial principle of “**enemy penology**”, grounded on the idea that the Foreign National is an “enemy” and that his/her irregular situation requires an exceptional response from the penitentiary system for security reasons. Based on this approach, for example, the penal system refuses to explore alternative detention measures for foreign inmates.

The following intervention was given by Prof. **Silvia Talini** (University of Roma Tre and Delegate of the Justice Minister for the training of criminal enforcement personnel), who provided a clear snapshot of the Italian constitutional principles and values of the **equal dignity of persons** and the **re-educational function of the penalty**. In her reading of the Italian penitentiary legislation (Law 354/1975), she highlighted the urgent need for highly **qualified professional figures supporting the prisoners in the pathway to social reintegration** (cultural mediators,

psychologists, social assistants), for **enhanced professional interdisciplinarity**, for **better training methodologies**, for a **greater participation of external actors** in the training system of prison staff, such as universities, healthcare institutions, voluntary and non-profit organizations, and for **best practice sharing with European experiences** in the field of prison staff training.

Dr. **Alessandra Bormioli**, Deputy Director of Regina Coeli Prison, offered a practical perspective on what really means to be a foreigner in prison, based on her long experience as a Prison Manager. She drew the attention to the critical aspects, obstacles and barriers constantly experienced by Foreign inmates: self harm, solitude, poor communication with operators (different language, lack of mediators), reduced possibility of keeping visual and phone contacts with family members, lack of an external social and family network, coexistence with different ethnic groups.



Speech by Prof. Silvia Talini

The closing remarks on the conference were given by Dr. **Alessio Scandurra**, Coordinator of the National Observatory on the conditions of detention (Antigone association).



Project Team and Guest Speakers

B-COMPETENT, launched in September 2019 and co-funded by the European Union's Justice Programme, aims to improve the competences of the penitentiary staff in the field of human rights' protection, with a special focus on special needs and rights of Foreign Prisoners. Implemented by an international Consortium of partners from 3 countries (Italy, Spain and Albania), the project has developed an **in-depth research on training needs of prison staff in 6 countries** (Italy, France, Greece, Spain, Albania and Montenegro), an **online training course** coupled with **multilingual training materials**, **6 Train-the-Trainers**, an **animated guide** to the rights and needs of foreign prisoners, **awareness-raising events** in Italy, Spain and Albania.

The online course, **10 English Modules with multilingual subtitles** (English, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Albanian and Montenegrin/Serbian) will be freely available and accessible after the end of the project at www.bcompetent.eu/platform

Consortium members: University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" (Lead Partner), University of Barcelona – OSPDH, Fundació Bosch i Gimpera, Avokati i Popullit, Qendra Europiane/European Centre, Associazione Antigone, Prodos Consulting.

For more information about the project and its achievements visit www.bcompetent.eu or write to info@bcompetent.eu