



B-COMPETENT: Boosting Competences in Penitentiary Staff in Europe

(Training needs assessment report - Greece)

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PART A: INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I. The Greek participation

After the initial request of the beneficiary organization to the expert to write a report including a preliminary analysis of prison staff training gaps and best practices identification in Greece, the delivery of 25 survey questionnaires and two Focus Group Meetings, and a preliminary contact with Professor Vassiliki Artinopoulou, chair of the Central Scientific Council for Prisons (CSCP), an advisory body of the competent for prisons Ministry of Citizen's Protection, the following options were open:

- a. the submission of an application of the beneficiary organization to the Central Prison Administration (General Secretariat for Crime Policy / General Director for the Administration of Custodial Institutions and Crises Management and General Director for Crime and Penitentiary Policy) or
- b. contacts with Prison Staff Unions (one of perimeter security staff and one for all other categories of staff working in prisons, custodial, asking them to disseminate the project and ask their members to facilitate it or
- c. contacts with the Greek Ombudsman, having the mandate to monitor prisons and other facilities for the deprivation of liberty, act as National Preventive Mechanism (NPM, according to the UN OPCAT) and to investigate incidents of staff arbitrariness, asking them if they are interested to make use of the questionnaire and organize the two focus groups during their visits.

The last option was chosen by the beneficiary organization and the Greek Ombudsman, as chair of the Association of Ombudsmen of the Mediterranean, has asked the General Secretary for Crime Policy to facilitate the work of the expert appointed by the beneficiary organization (letter of 28 July 2020). The Ombudsman is not involved in the project though, consequently a formal application was filed in by the expert to the competent General Secretary for Crime Policy, asking for permission to carry out the research.

II. Contacts with the Greek authorities and procedures followed for permission to conduct the research and collect data

Various meetings with the two General Directors and one of their deputies at the central prison administration followed to discuss how to proceed with the project (August 2020). The meetings were constructive in terms of exchanging information in a positive spirit and getting the assurance that they will propose for the approval of the research needed.

The expert also visited two prisons in Athens (one for men and one for women) to inform staff of the project and ask them if they are eager to participate. They were more or less positive.

In a new contact with one of the General Directors and his deputy, they said that they would respond centrally to the questionnaires and their response would be reviewed by the General Secretary for Crime Policy for approval before they send it to the expert. In addition to this material the expert suggested to organize one or two teleconferences with the participation of some prison staff members, particularly some of those who attended recently “train the trainers” courses and seminars, to staff the Greek Prison Staff Academy (planned to be established in the near future in the facilities of the Women’s Prison in Eleonas, Thiva, close to Athens).

After all, the expert was informed that the response of the General Secretary for Crime Policy was affirmative and that some of the information needed to draft the report (staff numbers, qualifications, distribution and education programmes) would be sent to him from the two competent General Directions. What was left to be arranged was how to organize the contribution of the questionnaires to staff working in the field. Three options were examined by the prison authorities:

Option 1: An application of the expert, individually to the directors of selected custodial institutions for permission to carry out the research followed by the respective Prison Councils proposals to the central administration and the decision of the General Secretary for Crime Policy. After the approval of each application the expert should communicate with each prison to conduct the research. It was a complex and time consuming process.

Option 2: The central prison administration would send the questionnaires to custodial institutions' directors, asking them to inform their staff of the research and invite those who agree to reply accordingly. The answers delivered by staff members would be collected by the central administration and forwarded to the expert. It was a convenient way to gather the necessary information, but without the experts personal control of the procedure, as everything would depend on other people's will and interest.

Option 3: The central prison administration would deliver relevant information to custodial institutions' directors, asking them to inform their staff of the research and organize in cooperation with the expert some meetings, either electronically or physically, of those who would be interested in the project. It was the best option in terms of convenience and experts' control of the procedure.

In all cases, the expert suggested that prison staff members of various professional categories, who have undergone training as trainers of the Prison Staff Academy which is planned to be established soon and / or who have been trainers themselves in seminars and other occupational training activities for prison staff during the last three - four years should be contacted for the research purposes.

The third option was finally chosen and on 4 September 2020 a document (no 3917/04-09-2020) signed by the General Secretary for Crime Policy was sent to all custodial institutions, informing them of the project and inviting staff to participate as described above. The agreement reached with the central prison administration is that the surveys and, especially, the focus groups would be organized with their support from the premises of the competent Ministry.

The central prison administration has provided information as regards staff numbers, categories and distribution as well as data for the prison population. No information has been provided as regards prison staff training, the reason given being that relevant data were scattered in various different offices. Some information presented in the following pages has been finally collected by the expert from other sources (official documents, other projects and research reports and press releases of the competent authorities).

The expert has been contacted by 23 prison employees, almost of all staff categories (administrative, scientific, custodial, perimeter security) who expressed in written (by e-mail) their consent to respond to the questionnaires and / or participate in focus groups. Additionally, some prison employees declared orally that they are interested in the research, but no written

confirmation followed. They were contracted again, asked to confirm their participation when the second notice for the research would be sent to them.

On 27 October 2020 the document no 18054/26-10-2020 of the General Secretary for Crime Policy was sent to all custodial institutions, informing their directors that interested staff members should send their responses to the survey questionnaires (translated in Greek by the expert and attached to the above mentioned document) directly to the expert by Friday, 30 October 2020, informing him of their availability to participate in two focus groups meetings by teleconference; one on Monday, 2 November 2020, for custodial institutions directors and heads of departments and one on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, for all other prison staff members. Answers to survey questionnaires were received from twenty six (26) prison officials and officers of all categories. Nineteen (19) of them consented to participate in the two focus groups, nine (9) and ten (10) respectively (according to the above mentioned criteria, related to their positions in the administrative structure of each institution). Six (6) and nine (9) of them respectively managed to attend the discussions in the two focus groups, held as planned, via teleconference, with the use of the skype for business platform by the expert, as it has not been possible to use an official platform of the GSCP. The first teleconference was completed in 90 minutes and the second lasted about two hours.

In general terms, the adopted in Greece research methodology deviates from the methodology suggested by the beneficiary organization, due to procedural particularities regarding the issuance of permissions granted to external researchers, as explained above.

PART B: THE GREEK PRISON SYSTEM

III. Prisons and prison staff in Greece

Custodial institutions in Greece are regional administrative units functioning at the level of direction, currently (since July 2019) under the control of the Ministry of Citizen's Protection. Their operation is coordinated by the General Director for the Administration of Custodial Institutions and Crises Management and the General Director for Crime and Penitentiary Policy. They are split into three main categories: general, special, and therapeutic. General custodial institutions are further divided to type A' (13 institutions, for inmates awaiting trial and for convicted inmates who serve prison sentences [imprisonment] for minor crimes [misdemeanours]) and type B' (11 institutions, for inmates convicted to prison sentences [confinement] imposed for more serious criminal acts defined as felonies, lifers included). There are special prisons including rural units (3), the central open productive unit (bakery), institutions for juveniles and young adults (4, one of them rural) and semi-liberty centres or departments (one, part of Thiva Prison for women, not operational). Women prisoners are held in one general type A' prison with a small unit for men, and in one general, type B' institution, which operates exclusively for women (juveniles included). Male juveniles (children 15-18 years old) are separated in one establishment (a general, type A' institution, which is partially a special, juvenile institution) and young adults (18-25 years old) are detained in three special institutions, one of them operating as a rural prison. Therapeutic institutions (3) are one Special Prisoners' Health Care Centre operating as a first aid and long care unit, one psychiatric hospital and one drug detoxification centre. Two custodial institutions are normally used for specific groups of offenders; the first for sex offenders and the second for drug offenders. One more prison is also partially used for sex offenders, separated from other prisoners.

Prison staff members are civil servants with the exception of the heads of perimeter security departments, who are police officers because no personnel evaluation procedures have been completed after 20 years of this service operation. Staff within the Greek General Secretariat for Crime Policy (GSCP) of the Ministry of Citizens' Protection which is also competent for the police (up to July 2019 prisons where regional services of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights) belong to three main categories:

- a) administrative officers, including technical and scientific staff (mainly social workers, psychologists, sociologists, doctors and nurses),
- b) custodial staff, uniformed and not-armed, supervising inmates inside prison establishments and
- c) perimeter security and escort guards, uniformed and armed, observing prison establishments, escorting transferred prisoners and assisting custodial staff in crises conditions.

Approximately 4,500 staff members were working in the prison estate in 2017-2018. About 4,000 of them were custodial and perimeter security and prisoners' escort guards, almost 400 belong to the administrative, including technical, personnel and about 120 were scientific staff members (social workers, psychologists, sociologists, doctors and nurses). On 11-12-2018 there were 2,694 certified positions for custodial staff, only 1,998 covered by appointed employees and 2,013 certified positions for perimeter security staff, only 1,747 covered. Custodial and perimeter security staff consisted 85% of the total number of prison actually employed (4,373 prison officers). The custodial staff/ prisoners' ratio was 1 / 5. According to May 2020 data, provided by

the central prison administration for the needs of the present report, the total number of certified positions was 5,590 and the number of employees actually working in all prisons was 3,980 (see table 1). In the last couple of years (2019-2020) nine (9) new employees have been appointed and 240 were working in prisons with renewed fix-termed contracts, expected to be renewed again. Moreover, procedures for the appointment of 258 new employees to staff a new, not operative yet, prison have been initiated.

Table 1

Certified Prison Staff positions (total)	Employed prison officers (total)	Certified positions of custodial staff	Employed custodial staff	Certified positions of perimeter security staff	Employed perimeter security staff	Certified positions of all other staff categories	Employed prison officers of all other categories*	Total number of prisoners (16 May 2020)
5,590	3,980	2,674	1,734	2,012	1,616	904	630	11,334

Source: GSCP

*Other categories: prison directors, secretariat and financial department staff, social workers, psychologists, sociologists, doctors and nurses, technicians, agronomists, drivers etc.

All prison staff members are subject to the prison director, although in normal, daily conditions the director has no competence to order perimeter security staff to work inside the prison or custodial staff to assist in perimeter security duties. The only “areas” of duty they work together are in conditions of crisis or in procedural security work (searches) or in prison gate keeping.

One of the main characteristics of the Greek prison system is the over-representation of non-national prisoners, who approximate and sometimes exceed 60% of the total prison population, as it is shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2

Date	1/1/2014	1/1/2015	1/1/2016	1/1/2017	1/1/2018	1/1/2019	1/1/2020
Total number of prisoners	12,693	11,798	9,611	9,560	10,011	10,654	10,891
Number of foreign Prisoners	7,623	6,882	5,289	5,195	5,291	5,822	6,310

Source: GSCP

IV. Prison staff appointment and training

Prison administrative staff, including specialists (social workers, psychologists, sociologists etc., who belong to the scientific staff) are university or other, post-secondary education degree holders, who are appointed without getting any training as regards the penitentiary system and its administration, the social organization of prisons, prison staff professional role and ethics etc. They become permanent employees after they successfully complete a two-week introductory seminar, which is obligatory for all employees of the public sector and the subjects taught are the same for all civil servants, with no particular issues on prison particularities.

Custodial staff, the front-line personnel responsible for the daily supervision of inmates, secondary education graduates, should undergo introductory training at the beginning of their professional career, but after their appointment. The successful completion of this training is a presupposition for the completion of their “apprenticeship period” and their permanent appointment. The length of this training, lasting six months in the 1990’s, was continuously reduced due to lack of resources (initially to four, then to two and finally to one month), while some officers have not attended any courses at all for years, as the training school is not a permanent structure. The school operates irregularly, depending on the available budget funds and accommodation facilities. Currently, the establishment of a permanent institute (Academy) for the training of prison staff is underway and 75 prison employees have been trained in three circles to be trainers by the Technical Assistance Programme of the Austrian Ministry of Justice on the Reform of the Greek Judicial System.

Perimeter security guards, the armed body of the prison administration, should attend a two month basic training school. Actually they are being educated and trained by the police in order to use the weapons provided to them.

Both prison staff categories (custodial and perimeter security officers) must be secondary education graduates, but 20% of custodial staff members και 25% of perimeter security staff are holders of tertiary education diplomas (June 2019 data).

Since there is no standard requirement to have an introductory training scheme on prison work for all categories of prison staff, different staff groups do not share a minimum common knowledge for the standards of their job.

The law provides also for life-long training but no such schemes were in place for years. After a long period of training inertia, in October and November 2016, and throughout 2017 and the first semester of 2018, several training seminars have been held, to tackle the lack of education in the past. Employees who had never attended introductory training courses were selected to join the 2016 programmes (in some cases many years after their appointment), while the 2017-2019 courses attendees participated in the training seminars voluntarily, after a call issued by the (then competent) Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights.

The more recent issued tender for the appointment of new prison staff (2016) established new standard requirements for custodial and perimeter security officers, common for both staff categories: a. (main) Vocational Training Institute of Technical School Certificate with specialization as security officer b. (auxiliary) Vocational Training Institute of Technical School Certificate with specialization as guard of museums and archaeological sites, c. (further auxiliary) any other certificate of secondary or post-secondary education regardless of specialty. Contrary to previous staff recruitment and selection procedures, only candidates residing in specific regions of the country are profiting from additional bonus points granted for “locality” based criteria, while the fulfillment of military duties, i.e. in the Special Army Forces, is not taken into account. A number of positions were reserved for candidates belonging to specific social groups (according to the number of family members and particularly children, disabilities, origin, and, also, place of

residence). Specific requirements are candidates' height, health condition, sports performance, scores in psychometric tests etc. Contrary to the past, the selection was made by the National Independent Authority for the Selection of Staff, a long-time consuming option which seems to be abandoned in future staff recruitment procedures (it has been declared that the next call for new appointment will be excluded from the formal procedures, followed in 2016 and still pending).

The 2006 Rules for the Operation of Perimeter Security Service provide that the minimum requirements for the appointment of external guards are Greek citizenship, secondary education certification, age up to 30 years, good physical health, high readiness and sensibility. Candidates are examined by an ad hoc selection committee, and the appointment of those selected follows the successful completion of a two-month basic training programme, attending a School run by the (then competent) Ministry of Justice, with the cooperation of the Police as regards training in the use of arms, self-protection and self-defense techniques. Similar requirements, with the addition of previous service in special military forces were considered in previous years for the selection of custodial staff. The latter should attend also, immediately after appointment, an introductory training programme, obtaining the status of the permanent prison officer when they successfully complete it.

V. Training programmes content and staff training needs

The last up to now “introductory” (24 days / 132 hours) training, organized in 2016 for prison officers who were working for years with no particular training, included two main parts; (a) theoretical education (penitentiary system and enforcement of custodial sentences, occupational integration of custodial and perimeter security staff in the professional environment, treatment of prisoners and problem solving, prison security and safety, crises management, prison hygiene) and (b) operational education (security, self-defense and self-protection, use of weapons and chemicals (for perimeter security staff), key public order and security issues in intelligence, searches, hostage taking situations. In addition to these thematic areas and topics, training included individual tactics and physical education.

Two more seminars were offered in repeated circles to various groups of prison employees in the subsequent years (2016-2019). They were organized and conducted by the (formerly competent for prisons) Ministry of Justice in cooperation with the Training Institute of the National Centre for Public Administration. The first one is entitled “Mental Health and Crisis Management in Prisons” and the second is about “The role of prison staff in treatment and reintegration of prisoners”.

The first seminar includes presentations on topics such as the social organization of prisons and the characteristics of prisoners, mental health and prevention of self-harm, inter-culturalism and cultural diversity, management of serious incidents.

The themes presented in the second seminar are prisoners' rights and their protection, the importance and the process of reintegration, vulnerable groups of prisoners, the role of the family, dealing with stigmatization and social marginalization.

Employees (custodial and perimeter security staff) who attended the 2016 training evaluated the programme answering a questionnaire distributed to them upon the completion of the training. In their majority these trainees have completed secondary education and have short or medium term working experience in prisons (up to five years). They expressed the view that training was useful and that its content was satisfactory but the training material delivered to them (mainly prison rules and regulations) did not cover fully their needs. They welcome training closely connected with their daily work, bridging theory with practice. They ask for more training opportunities not only for themselves, but also for their more experienced colleagues. It seems that such training is needed to achieve a change in staff professional culture and mentality. Custodial staff employees prioritize first aid and self-defense training, while perimeter security staff consider that the use of weapons and escorts procedures are more important issues. Both categories of prison staff are interested in prisoners' psychology, while custodial staff emphasize training on prisoners' and personnel protection issues. Trainees who attended the same seminars at a later stage referred, also, to serious guidance and leadership problems in some prisons and emphasized that there is a huge need of employees for psychological in-service support.

Additionally, a questionnaire has been drafted in late 2016 by a prison director and member of the Central Scientific Council for Prisons, to investigate the frequency and quality of prison staff education and training, as well as to record prison employees proposals on the duration and content of initial and further training etc. The questionnaire has been forwarded to the directors of all custodial institutions, asking them to invite all prison staff members to fill it in. It is not known how staff became aware of this experimental survey, if they were instructed to respond etc, but two hundred and forty (240) employees, 173 men and 67 women, from sixteen (16) custodial institutions, from all staff categories (88 custodial staff officers, 70 perimeter security guards, 54 administrative officers and 28 scientific staff members) answered and returned the questionnaire. The majority of them (51%) believe that the level of their knowledge is "very good", although 67% have attended no more than one education or training programme. They suggest that introductory and life-long training should include:

- Escapes analysis
- Self-defense, self-protection, martial arts, control and restraint techniques
- Intercultural, religious and cultural issues
- Crisis management, hostage taking, prisoners' disturbances and riots, escapes
- Intelligence and investigation processes
- Prison management and high rank officers / staff relations
- Information technology, use of cameras
- Exchange of knowledge and practices with other services on a national and international level
- Body searches, searches in cells and other areas
- Prison regulations and relevant legislation
- Sociology, Criminology
- Law for civil servants
- Drugs detection and control
- Foreign languages, such as Albanian and Russian
- First aid in accidents and emergencies
- Actions and procedures in cases of fire and natural disasters

- Radicalization, radicalized prisoners identification and treatment
- Practical training
- Criminal Law
- Penitentiary Law
- Psychology of prisoners
- Psychology of staff
- Psychological tests, burn out.

Custodial staff preferences include crisis management, hostage taking situations, prison disturbances, riots and escapes, searches, prison rules, penitentiary law and prisoners' psychology. Perimeter security staff prioritize escorts of transferred prisoners, driving vehicles, tackling ambushes, engagement in incidents with use of arms, use of weapons, shooting, use of restraint equipment, sticks, handcuffs, chemicals, radios etc. Prison administration officers are mostly interested in training on contracting with providers, other financial issues, prisoners' file management, criminal procedure and execution of sentences issues. Finally, scientific staff focus on social interventionist and therapeutic programmes, as well as criminal procedure and execution of sentences issues.

Unions of employees have also submitted proposals on staff education and training issues. The Greek Union of Prison Staff consider that training should be restructured and combine security, humanitarian and social issues. They also suggest that training should start within four months after appointment and last six months, as it happened from 1923 till the 1970's. In their proposal they include a human resources development scheme with five ranks and they adopt the following five wider training subject areas:

1. Security measures. Physical and dynamic security. Theory and practice including crises management, drugs, and incidents analysis.
2. National, European and international penitentiary rules, especially Council of Europe and United Nations documents.
3. Health and hygiene issues, focusing on infectious diseases.
4. Psychology and Psychiatry. Positive listening, counseling, stress, loss and trauma management, interpersonal relations, communication skills, mental disorders.
5. Sociology and Criminology. Causes of crime and its socio-economic background, sociological aspects of addictions and detoxification programmes, characteristics of the prison population, social reintegration programmes, alternative sanctions and measures
6. Self-defense.

The Union also suggests that additional courses on other topics such as martial arts and foreign languages should be offered on a voluntary basis (taken into account for career development) and that special training is needed for prison staff working with particular groups of prisoners (juveniles, women, mentally ill, long-termers).

The Union of Perimeter Security Staff have drafted a proposal for a 3-days life-long operational training, including three main areas, namely self-defense, self-protection, and use of fire-arms and defensive shooting.

Finally, health care staff working in prisons (especially psychologists) have proposed, in addition to other training topics, a special training targeted to their professional needs and duties (conducting research for prisoners' psychopathology, intervening in personal crisis situations, preventing self-harm and suicide, using psychometric tests and risk assessment tools etc.).

As the analysis of the training needs for the prison staff in the 2017 "Report regarding the terms of reference for technical assistance to the Greek Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights on providing expertise in the area of enhancement of the human capacities in the penitentiary system of the Technical Assistance on the Reform of the Greek Judicial System concludes, "there is a growing interest and mobility on prison staff training issues. Professionals' proposals do exist and the central prison administration has planned and organized new training programmes. There is a need, though, to develop staff recruitment policies and reconsider and reorganize both introductory education and on-going training for prison officers, establishing a stable, permanent educational structure and producing structured education programmes and courses as well as training curricula and manuals. Such an endeavor should be consistent with basic national, European and international principles defining the reintegrative mission of the prison service, underlining the social role of prison staff and guiding a human rights-based prison management.

Furthermore, the partial funding of studies in the Undergraduate Programme "Public Administration" of the Hellenic Open University for twenty prison officers has been announced in 2018, also for custodial and perimeter security staff. Other seminars and training events have been also conducted recently, in some cases for all categories of prison staff (stress and burnout, Islam culture, prevention of radicalization), prison scientific staff (motivating prisoners for their reintegration) or front line staff – custodial and perimeter security officers (fire-fighting, crisis intervention readiness) etc. The general impression given after all, is that these efforts to offer training opportunities to prison staff are not organized according to a specific central plan, but that they are the result of personal initiatives and contacts with eager people, organizations, services and institutions.

In June 2019, a study for the establishment and operation of the Greek Prison Staff Academy, refers that although in the post-2015 period totally 4,234 prison employees attended various continuous training programmes, 169 prison officers, members of the custodial staff, had got no training at all. In the same study it is stated that there is an urgent need to cover educational needs of 1,074 custodial staff members and 473 members of perimeter security departments, as well as 236 employees of other categories, administrative (including scientific) prison officers. In other parts of the same study numbers differ, depending on whether they refer to staff already employed or to future expected appointments.

The most recent official information, coming from the website of the competent Ministry and the GSCP (a 4 August 2020 press release) refers to 2019-2020 staff training activities:

- (a) a three-year agreement with the Hellenic Red Cross to train the prison staff in prevention and control of emergency health issues (first aid) and the provision of psychosocial support,
- (b) three "train the trainers" seminars in the framework of the Austrian Technical Support for the Reform of the Greek Judicial System, for 75 prison employees, trained to instruct their colleagues,

- (c) eight training seminars for custodial and perimeter security staff in i) prisoners' mental health and crises management and ii) prisoners' treatment and rehabilitation, organized in cooperation with the Training Institute of the National Centre for Public Administration,
- (d) one seminar on the prevention and control of radicalization in cooperation with the Austrian Technical Assistance for the Reform of the Greek Judicial System and
- (e) one seminar entitled "Strengthening Law Enforcement Agencies to Recognize and Combat Radicalization and Extremism", in cooperation with the Center for Security Studies.

PART C: PRESENTATION OF SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES AND FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSIONS FINDINGS

VI. Preliminary observations from contacts and preparations to conduct the surveys and the focus groups

The main research, as indicated by the beneficiary organization, included a number of surveys, with six different questionnaires, designed either for prison officials holding positions at the central prison administration as well as custodial institutions managers (directors) and heads of departments (custodial, administrative, social work and perimeter security) or for all other categories of prison staff, uniformed (unarmed or armed) or not (see Part B, III, above). The separation of prison staff to civilian and not-civilian (i.e. military or police staff) adopted in the project, is not applicable in Greece; all prison employees are civilian staff, with the exception of the heads of perimeter security departments who are police officers. All respondents to the questionnaires and focus groups participants are working in custodial institutions, as central prison administration officials did not expressed interest to be involved in the research activities.

Informal discussions with prison employees who accepted to participate in the survey responding to the questionnaires and / or joining the focus groups, while their answers and interviews were expected, showed that new training courses include topics such as the European prison rules and prison staff work standards, but although more recently appointed employees profit from them, “continuous training” for older and more experienced staff members is insufficient and more efforts are needed to integrate these standards into the professional culture of prison staff. In addition, daily communication between staff and foreign prisoners takes place mainly with the assistance of other prisoners who know both Greek and the language spoken by prisoners on a case-by-case basis, and secondly in English when both, officers and prisoners can fluently use it, communication of prisoners with both their relatives and the consular authorities is promoted by prison staff if prisoners so wish. Finally, the salaries of prison staff in Greece, especially after the long term financial crisis, have been reduced and are hardly sufficient to meet the needs of employees and their families and this cannot attract new properly qualified staff, although increased unemployment makes prison work a “forced” choice for the unemployed.

VII. Responses to the survey questionnaires

As mentioned above (see Part A, II) 26 prison staff members from twelve different custodial institutions responded to the survey questionnaires. More specifically, eleven (11) of the interviewed persons were prison directors and heads of prison departments (administrative, social work and custodial) and fifteen (15) were prison staff of other categories (including 4 social workers, 3 psychologists, and 3 sociologists). All participants are working in closed custodial institutions, no open (rural) prisons employees answered questions or discussed in focus groups. The survey consisted in 6 questionnaires, grouped in three pillars, namely prison staff, prison staff training and staff working specifically with foreign inmates (the last category, though, does not exist in Greece).

According to answers to Questionnaires 1 and 2 (for prison managers, directors, and heads of departments), in none of the custodial institutions where respondents work the ratio of prison staff and the number of prisoners is the indicated by Rec. 1999 (22) of the Council of Europe. The small number of participants who responded to the relevant question (five) referred ratios of 1/5 or 1/7

instead of the 1/3 European standard. In one case it was clarified that at night there is only one guard to observe 120 cells with approximately 360 prisoners. This is the outcome of the combination of prisoners overcrowding and services understaffing. As regards the general education of prison staff, the evaluation seems to be positive, with answers ranging between 3 and 5 (6 = very adequate).

Respondents are not competent either for the selection or for the training of new prison staff (these are decided, organized and carried out centrally, not at the level of each custodial institution). Answering to questions on this issue, they explained that more or less “typical” qualifications (level of studies, knowledge of foreign languages, sports performance, place of residence etc.) are decisive in successful appointment applications, while more substantial criteria such as integrity, humanity, cultural sensitivity, professional capacity are not taken into account.

Respondents unanimously agreed that trainings are not organized at suitable intervals, although one of them realized that the training programmes she has attended are “not so few”, listing seven training programmes she attended from 2011 up to 2020. Another responded noted that the trainers are either academics and doctoral degree holders, or professionals. Seven of eight respondents expressed the view that economic resources spent for staff training are not sufficient, the eighth avoiding to answer the question.

Prison employees not performing managerial duties were asked to respond about training courses and their content (questionnaires 3 and 4). Eleven of the totally eighteen respondents (mainly perimeter security staff) stated that they received training when they were appointed. Some of the respondents explained that this training took place with delay (some years after appointment) and others clarified that the training they refer to is not the special introductory training for prison staff, but general, obligatory training courses offered to all employees appointed in the public sector. Six of them stated that they attend training courses regularly, delivered at suitable intervals. Only three of the totally eighteen respondents evaluate these trainings as not sufficient, the usual response being “appropriate” and four employees considered that these training courses do not help them to tackle problems and issues arising from their work experience (scores: 1 and 2, usual score: 4, highest score: 6, not chosen by any respondents).

According to the majority of respondents, the training curricula do not contain courses or presentations on the international and regional human rights instruments and standards, especially the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment and the European Prison Rules (nine responses – seven respondents replied positively) neither on the ethical rules for prison staff, specifically of the European Code of Ethics for Prison Staff (eleven responses – four other respondents replied positively). On the contrary, they include instructions of rules concerning respect for plurality, non-discrimination against any prisoners on the basis of race, color of skin, language, national or social origin, association with a national minority, birth or other status, or on the basis of the type of offence alleged or committed by a given prisoner, etc. (ten responses – four other respondents replied negatively).

A blurred picture emerged also as regards answers in questions on training for socio-cultural aspects and cultural diversity management (eight positive answers for socio-cultural issues and six positive answers for cultural diversity – no positive answer was found as regards political

geography issues in totally sixteen questionnaires). One respondent clarified that the courses she attended included general cultural diversity management issues, not focusing on prison particularities.

Evaluations on sufficient skills provision to prevent radicalization, racial hatred, xenophobia, cultural divergences and fights differ enormously. One respondent considered that this training aspect is covered in an excellent manner (: 6), two respondents stated that it is covered “poorly” (: 1), four preferred to give the second best grade (: 5), three more preferred “3”, three more chose “2” etc.

As mentioned above, there is no prison staff working especially with foreign inmates (questionnaire No 5). All prison officers deal with prisoners regardless of their cultural identity. Two respondents, though, chose to answer this questionnaire, explaining that daily communication between prison staff and foreign prisoners who do not speak Greek or English is facilitated by prisoners who understand one of the two languages.

As regards answers to the last (sixth) questionnaire, where prison employees were asked to express their views on skills and qualifications necessary to work in prisons, they mentioned such as: communication skills, counseling, sensitivity, patience, active listening, human rights, legal knowledge, criminology, prison organization and prisoners’ subculture issues, multiculturalism, crises management, prisoners’ family relations, foreign languages spoken by prisoners (i.e. Arabic, Russian etc.).

Six (of eleven) respondents stated that **prison employees are paid as professionals and seven answered that salaries are not adequate** to attract and retain suitable prison staff.

The majority of the respondents (six in ten) also answered that the training courses they receive do not include specific guidelines on rules regarding respect for the majority, non-discrimination against any prisoner on the basis of race, skin color, language, religion, association with a national minority, birth or other status, etc. Most of prison employees have answered that they receive training on social-cultural aspect training (eight in eleven) and cultural diversity management (six in eleven). One positive answer was found as regards training on political geography issues. A negative image appeared in prison employees’ answers based on their work experience concerning the level of the training courses they have attended, as two in ten answered that it is “not sufficient” and four stated that it is just “sufficient”).

VIII. Discussions in focus groups

Six prison officials (three directors, two heads of custodial staff departments and one head of a social work department) participated in the first focus group interviews, conducted on Monday, 2 November 2020. Three more officials (two prison directors and one prison director deputy) failed to join the teleconference coordinated by the expert either due to technical problems or due to their position related obligations. Nine prison employees (three sociologists, two psychologists, two administrative officers, one social worker and one perimeter security officer) participated in the second focus group, conducted on Tuesday, 3 November 2020, again with teleconference. The discussions in the two groups differed, according to the guidance of the beneficiary organization, in the way questionnaires delivered to various categories of prison staff differed too.

The discussion in the first focus group followed the topics of questionnaires 1 and 2, while the second focus group dealt with issues included in questionnaires 3, 4 and 6 (as explained above, questionnaire No 5 is not relevant in Greece, as there is no prison staff specifically assigned to foreign prisoners).

Participants in the first group confirmed that the proportion between prison staff and the total number of prisoners is inconsistent with the provisions of Recommendation 1999 (22) of Council of Europe. Explaining their evaluation about the issue, they referred to the combination of two long standing problems of the Greek prison system, namely overcrowding, with prisoners unequally distributed in the 34 custodial institutions, and serious understaffing, resulting from recruitment restriction policies in the period of public debt crisis but also from staff retirements, resignations etc. They added that lack of staff results in prison employees performing not only their own duties, but covering, also, other prison service needs (i.e. custodial staff covering posts of nurses or administrative posts etc). They also said that the staff / prisoners ratio should not be the same in all kinds of custodial institutions and that variations should be made according to the special characteristics of each prison (architecture, treatment needs of different categories of prisoners etc.).

Discussing on the level of general education of prison staff, interviewees said that it is sufficient and as time passes it is continuously improving, as many prison officers (custodial and perimeter security staff) are overqualified. It was mentioned, though, that adequacy of prison employees varies according to the category of staff they belong and that it is not determined just from education, but it is also a matter of motives, personal skills and abilities etc. “One should love his /her work”, as one of the participants said.

The adequacy of salaries to attract and retain suitable prison was a controversial issue. In addition to the generally negative expressed view that “salaries are disproportionately low”, considering the demanding nature of prison staff work, and do not suffice to cover prison employees and their families’ needs, it was noted that ones’ personal opinion depends on the situation of people interested to find a job and their position in or out of the labour market.

Participants are not competent to select new prison staff, so they could not discuss on values, criteria and skills taken into account in staff selection procedures. They just commented that professional determination, personal stability and experience are very important qualifications for prison staff.

The co-operation of prison staff with governmental or non-governmental organizations is considered very important. “Prisons are living organizations” and co-operation with other public services and the civil society is mutually beneficial, contributing in prisoners’ social reintegration. It was also mentioned that co-operations should be initiated and proceed selectively, and that other services and organizations are welcome to offer their experience and expertise in commonly defined areas of intervention.

Interviewees are not competent to provide prison staff with training or vocational education before appointment or during their professional career, so these issues were not discussed in the focus group. Reference was made, though, to the frequency of trainings (they should be conducted regularly and more often) and the number of attendants (which should be in smaller groups, with less than 25 employees).

Regarding the specific skills, roles and tasks of prison staff, officers perform custodial and perimeter security duties, administrative and financial work, counseling, social and psychological support, educational and recreational activities, rehabilitation for drug addicted prisoners (social workers, psychologists, sociologists), medical and nursing services, technical support, agricultural production organization and control (in farm prisons) etc. Teachers, educators and therapeutic staff covering educational and rehabilitation needs of prisoners and many doctors offer their services as visitors. Cultural mediators and interpreters do not exist.

Training programmes are evaluated with anonymous surveys upon their completion but it does seem that any revision follows according to these evaluations, participants said. All of them agreed that economic resources provided for training are not sufficient.

In the second focus group the interviews started with a discussion about introductory training and continuous training courses. One of the participants stated that for perimeter security staff, the only uniformed and armed body of the prison service, introductory training is absolutely obligatory. One sociologist and one social worker, initially appointed as custodial staff members, added that they also attended introductory training. Another sociologist, appointed to staff a special drug detoxification center for prisoners, said that he also attended introductory training, focused on the therapeutic approach of the center. All other participants explained that no introductory training is provided, neither to administrative staff, nor to specialized staff (psychologists, sociologists, social workers). The obligatory introductory training for all employees of the public sector is not adequate for their work as prison officers. As regards continuous training, participants said that either they have never received any training adjusted to prison particularities or that some seminars are offered rarely. Although they contribute in prison employees' interaction and communication as well as their contact with new ideas and development of new professional mentalities, they are not sufficient.

Such training courses contents initially do not seem to meet prison employees training needs and expectations, participants said. While training procedures proceed, it seems that the initial negative attitude of many prison officers is changing to a more positive direction.

About the content of the training courses, interviewees said that they include instructions in the international and regional human rights instruments and standards, but only in a partial and fragmented way, with too many information shared in a very limited time. They underlined that not only the content, but also the context and the way these issues are presented is crucial, to attract the interest of prison officers, touching their attitude to see themselves as employees whose rights are neglected and the risk of professional burnout is overlooked.

As regards the inclusion of specific instructions in the rules concerning respect for plurality, and non-discrimination against any prisoners, on any basis, participants referred to some of the training programmes, saying that they, indeed, provide for such issues. Nevertheless, they emphasized that wider changes in the working environment and the conditions of work are needed if one expects this training to bring new approaches and ideas. Prison officers who get the message of plurality and non-discrimination work with colleagues who ignore these dimensions of their profession. To be effective, this training should be obligatory and available to all prison officers, and in-service

training should be encouraged, taking advantage of many employees' qualifications and experience.

Some of the participants referred to the last period of the "ad hoc" operated School for the introductory training of custodial and perimeter security staff (Autumn 2016), where human rights education was included, but none of them attended this circle of education. Other programmes, attended by some of the interviewees, include prevention of radicalization and violent extremism related human rights issues.

Participants said that there is not staff assigned to work especially with foreign prisoners. One of them noted that in the juvenile offenders' custodial institution he is working at, more than 99% of the prisoners are foreigners. The composition of the population of this particular institution results in staff work almost exclusively with non-national prisoners, but this is an administrative choice, not an official penitentiary policy and the staff does not get any specific training on foreign prisoners, their rights and needs, and cultural diversity.

Interviewees specified a long list of skills and knowledge they deem essential for working in prison. These skills and qualifications are good knowledge of the field, specialization, integrity, resilience, cooperation, determination, orientation, humaneness, open mind, good physical condition, initiative, adaptivity, active listening, empathy, ethos and so on so forth.

In participants' views, salaries are far from adequate or satisfactory to attract and retain in service suitable prison staff. Although all prison employees, uniformed or not, are civil servants and are paid accordingly, there is no financial motive for people looking for a job to apply for appointment in prison, as they can have similar salaries in other positions, without the difficulties they are asked to deal with performing their duties in prison. The motive is the status the civil servant, namely a permanent job position, not the salary. Municipal police officers, appointed in prisons in the context of public services staff mobility schemes, succeed to return to their previous jobs. Medical staff positions, repeatedly open for appointment, are not covered. Officers not performing custodial and security duties are excluded from special benefits and allowances etc.

PART D: CONCLUDING REMARKS

IX. Some suggestions

The research of various reports, the surveys and the interviews, although conducted with a small number of prison employees, revealed that in many aspects prison staff training needs are huge, and there are many gaps in both, introductory and continuous training. Preparations to establish a permanent educational structure, an Academy for Prison Staff is a necessary step to put in context and organize prison employees education and training, which, in their views, should be obligatory and life-long.

Empowerment, encouragement and support of staff, as well as revision of appointment qualifications and procedures and salaries policies are deemed priorities to counter the current situation of prisons understaffing with inadequately educated, overworking and low-paid-and-motivated staff.

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