

2019

PRISONERS' ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

EVALUATION OF THE PAC-LEARNING AREAS



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Colophon

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A consortium of 6 partners are formally involved in the European Prisoners' Active Citizenship (PAC) project:

1. De Rode Antraciet (Belgium, project coordinator)
2. Vrije Universiteit Brussel, PArticipation & Learning in Detention (PALD) research group (VUB, Belgium)
3. Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti (UISP, Italy)
4. Changes & Chances (The Netherlands)
5. Udruga Za Kreativni Socijalni Rad (Croatia)
6. Prison Education Trust (PET, The United Kingdom)

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Part 1: About the Prisoners' Active Citizenship (PAC) project

'We take citizens and turn them into prisoners and then expect them, with minimal preparation, to turn back into citizens again, with all the responsibilities this involves for themselves, their families and for others'
(Burnside, 2008: 8).

'There is a huge scope for prisoners to take on responsibility, engage in constructive work, and contribute to the life of the prison community'
(Edgar, Jacobson, & Biggar, 2011: 5).

'Prisoners' Active Citizenship' (PAC) is a 2-year project which has been funded by the European Commission under the KA2-programme (Erasmus+). It runs from December 2017 until November 2019. Four essential steps are taken:

1. At the start of the project, we aimed to provide insight into the concept of active citizenship and how it is currently implemented in European prisons. For more information, consult our research report 'Prisoners Active Citizenship: An Insight in European Prisons' (Brosens, Croux, & De Donder, 2018) [here](#).
2. Based on these insights, nine active citizenship learning areas are set up in five European countries. The current research report presents the results of the evaluation of these learning areas.
3. Setting up the learning areas gave the consortium practical experiences they could use to develop the toolkit 'Citizens Inside: A guide to creating active participation in prisons', which is available [here](#).
4. Based on both the research and practical experiences with setting up the learning areas, policy recommendations have been formulated, which can be consulted [here](#).

In this research report, we focus on the evaluation of the learning areas. Before providing details about the evaluation, we first want to underline that this research report considers prisoners as human beings. All people – including prisoners – are of equal value and deserve respect as human beings, irrespective of their race, nationality, gender, religion, disability, or differences in authority or status (Faulkner, 2003). Imprisonment is inevitably linked with the deprivation of liberty. Except for the rights linked to their liberty, prisoners preserve all their rights as human beings (Coyle, 2009). All other aspects of prison life should be as similar as possible to life outside prison (Van Zyl Smit & Snacken, 2009), what means that **prisoners** also have **rights concerning 'active citizenship'**.

This implies that prisoners should also be seen as potential 'active citizens'. Although the concept active citizenship is not used explicitly, this theme moves higher up European political agendas. For instance, article 27.6 of the European Prison Rules stipulates that '*recreational opportunities, which include sport, games, cultural activities, hobbies and other leisure pursuits, shall be provided and, as far as possible, prisoners shall be allowed to organize them*'. In addition, article 50 of the European Prison Rules puts: '*Subject to the needs of good order, safety and security, prisoners shall be allowed to discuss matters relating to general conditions of imprisonment and shall be encouraged to communicate with the prison authorities about these matters*' (Council of Europe, 2006). However, Inderbitzin and colleagues mention in their book chapter 'Leading by example: Ways that prisoners give back to their communities' (2016: 86) that '*we rarely hear about the good work being done in prison and those prisoners who have grown up, matured and changed their life while incarcerated*'.

1. Overview of the PAC-project

In the framework of the PAC-project, nine prisoners active citizenship learning areas have been developed and tested. The learning areas were implemented in five European countries: Belgium, Croatia, Italy, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Overview of the five countries in which the learning areas were implemented



1.1. Learning areas in Belgium

Contact person: Gino Campenaerts – De Rode Antraciet

Contact details: gino.campenaerts@derodeantraciet.be

Learning area 1: Peer-to-peer welcome team

De Rode Antraciet has set up a peer-to-peer activity in the prison of Beveren. In this peer-to-peer activity, a selected group of prisoners were responsible for welcoming and helping newly arrived prisoners within their new living environment. Prisoners explained to new prisoners how everything works within the prison, which services (e.g. psychosocial service, medical service, work) are available, how to contact those prison services, in which prison activities they can participate in, etc. To carry out this peer-to-peer activity, prisoners were guided by the Outward Bound School (i.e. an external facilitator that is specialized in training and coaching programmes) and the Department of Judicial Social Work of Beveren. During the learning area, a group of 9 prisoners was monitored and helped to improve their communication and team work skills, and became able to plan and execute a project. To address potential problems or questions, weekly meetings were organized so that prisoners could ask questions and express their concerns.

"In the prison of Beveren, the learning area is a peer-to-peer project where prisoners are welcoming other prisoners. [...] It is something that won't stop after the learning area. It will keep going after the PAC-project is finished through which its processes will become more structural embedded." (PAC-partner)

Learning area 2: Creation of a democratic, mini-society

In Belgium, De Rode Antraciet planned to create a mini-society within the women's department of the penitentiary school centre of Hoogstraten. The goal of this mini-society was that prisoners and prison guards were able to organize and participate together in prison activities (e.g. cultural activities, sports activities) and decide on topics peculiar to living together. Normally, in Belgium, prison guards have a security task, without being able to do or create things together with the prisoners. This learning area aimed to bring prison guards and prisoners together and make a difference regarding the welfare of both target groups. Weekly meetings between prison guards and prisoners were planned and a personal follow-up by an external process facilitator from Outward Bound School was scheduled. Unfortunately, the learning area was terminated prematurely as prison guards did not actively engage in the project, although this was essential for the success of it. Until the end of 2019, conversations were taking place with prisoners, prison guards, prison management,... to see what could be learnt from this learning area for the future.

"In Belgium it is all about the democratic system I think. It's about taking decisions. It's about being on the same level. It's about responsibility. It's about skills. It's about organization. It's about everything you would normally do in a normal society but than taking it up in a prison. It's all about that." (PAC-partner)

1.2. Learning area in Croatia

Contact person: Branka Peurača - Udruga za kreativni socijalni rad (Association for Creative Social Work)

Contact details: meliora052@gmail.com

Learning area: Restorative practices

In the prison of Zagreb, the Association for Creative Social Work organized a serie of interactive workshops of 15 hours to build prisoners' capacities to recognize potential conflict in their surroundings and to react constructively as peer mediators in non-formal processes. The workshops were structured as series of activities that included two-minutes mini-lectures, group discussions, role plays and small-group exercises. Through the prisoners' participation in the learning area, the feeling lived that the overall atmosphere in prison was improved, they actively contributed to the wellbeing of the prisoners and motivated other prisoners to acquire new skills to become peer-mediators.

"Throughout my workshops they [prisoners] got skills to use with other prisoners and with other people outside to act constructively when conflict occurs. Before the workshops, the only obvious options for them were fight or flight, and now they learned other ways for their active involvement in the conflict that is neither fight or flight." (PAC-partner)

"The guy in my cell keeps whining about his wife and children. I learned in the workshops to listen to him instead of telling him what he should have done differently." (Prisoner)

1.3. Learning areas in Italy

Contact person: Daniela Conti – Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti (UISP)

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Learning area 1: Dance and movement workshops

In the women's prison of Rebibbia, the Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti intended to continue and empower dance and movement workshops already present in prison, with the belief of their strong educational value. This dance and movement workshops aimed to empower female prisoners and to support their rehabilitation. Weekly workshops of different types and styles of dances were organized, with the aim to prepare a non-mandatory final show within the institute, open to citizenship. During the workshops, all

participants had the opportunity to experiment and learn different body expression tools and elements of dance technique. The dance activity did not only transmit to participants physical techniques, but involved them in a unique experience that enriched relationships, by breaking the barriers that prevent communication. During the whole learning area participants discussed and single out the topics to be developed, the dances to be performed and the music to be used. The group of participants was guided in this decision-making process by a keen attention to their emotions, by the experiences and history of each one of them, by their personal preferences and by the general characteristics of the group. The ability to share opinions and points of view, the capacity to make common decisions and take responsibility for the whole group was central.

"For me it [active citizenship] is connected with right, with civil right and human right. Doing sport is a right for everybody in each part of the world, but in prison it seems that you have no rights, in general. So by starting implementing this right, you can also pretend to be respected as person for all the things, so participation, be active in getting your voice about what you need." (PAC-partner)

Learning area 2: Managing a stable

In the male's prison of Bollate, the association Salto Oltre il Muro is working. They are affiliated to Unione Italiana Sport Per Tutti. This association is responsible for managing a little stable that holds horses and donkeys that have been abandoned or were confiscated from the underworld. Goals are: horse recovery, care activities with some of the prisoners, training them on how to deal and take care of the animals, aiming to increase the well-being of the participants through the relationship with the horses, and involve the prisoners in the maintenance of the premises. This learning area aimed to increase prisoners' participation in the association's activities introducing a pilot experiment to directly involve the prisoners in the decision-making process. In particular, prisoners were trained in stable management skills and involved in the management of a small budget to use for the animals care, the stable activities, maintenance, facilities and the management of the association. Next to that, prisoners involved in the learning area formed a committee, together with members of the Salto Oltre il Muro association, in order to develop the stable action plan, evaluate the priorities and decide how to use the available budget.

"The contact persons of the riding school are people who transmit a great trust in life and I am very happy to be in contact with people who listen to us detained in our suffering. Since I have been attending this place, I have become another person. I'm calmer because the work that I do made me understand so many things, that I did not know before. In addition to my two horses, I deal with another horse, difficult for its past. I felt proud when I was assigned the task of taking care of it, because I understood that then, perhaps, I am not as mean as I think." (Prisoner)

1.4. Learning areas in The Netherlands

Contact persons: Ed Santman & Ankie Til – Changes & Chances

Contact details: edsantman@gmail.com & ankie.til@icloud.com

Learning area 1: Creating a magazine for new prisoners

A special section of the prison of Krimpen aan den IJssel is called the "De Compagnie". Prisoners are actively involved in running this section. Most of the prisoners are selected for this section because they have shown to be motivated to work towards a successful return into society. During the learning area, several sessions were organized. After explaining the concept of active citizenship to the participating prisoners, an open question was posed: "Can we come up with a project in this prison that is about participation and active citizenship and is of value for our society?". Thinking and developing a co-creative project was not an easy task. Their first plan was to develop learning materials for schools to prevent young people to make the wrong choices in their lives. After some discussion the plan changed to making a magazine for new prisoners to inform them about live in prison. An editorial board was formed. Many prisoners contributed to the magazine with stories, drawings and interviews. Also people from outside prison like lawyers, prison staff, probation officers and others became involved. The result is a very readable and professional looking magazine.

"Every time I start with this project, I just get the jitters in my belly. I just love it to be busy with the project. You're in a different world for a while. [...] This project has given me a good time. A nice place in my detention. A beautiful memory. I am very grateful for that." (Prisoner)

Learning area 2: Intergenerational, creative projects

Changes & Chances and the youth prison of Lelystad wanted to start an active citizenship project with prisoners and people living in elderly homes. Because of the vulnerability of people living in elderly homes, it was decided to work together with home-dwelling people aged 65 and over and bring the youngsters in contact with people from the outside. During an information meeting, the concept of active citizenship was explained to the older people and participating prisoners, expectations were shared, goals and sessions were planned, and the content discussed and agreed. In the beginning, eight prisoners participated. Six sessions were organized during which one prisoner worked together with one person aged 65 or over on activities such as cooking, making a chess game, design and lay-out a cover of a CD and different painting projects. In the end, six prisoners attended all the sessions. This one-on-one working was experienced as positive: open discussions, fun, curiosity, and clear goals made it nice and easy to work together. For some of the prisoners, short voltage curves made the work not easy, but they succeeded until the end. They were able to receive feedback, be aware of the different views and needs of others and were open to learn.

"For me it [active citizenship] all starts with being seen as a human being and being connected with the people around you and developing your own skills in which you are good, and to communicate and to provide the skills to each other, and equality, and being responsible and using your creativity to be a human being.

That's what it [active citizenship] is about for me." (PAC-partner)

1.5. Learning areas in the United Kingdom

Contact person: Rod Clark – Prisoners' Education Trust

Contact details: rod@prisonerseducation.org.uk

Learning areas 1 & 2: Prisoners' voices in improving educational services

In the United Kingdom, Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) ran workshops in both HMP Send and HMP Coldingley to gather prisoner learners' views on how to improve PET's service. The series of six workshops, across two prisons, sought to find out: (1) the reality of how PET's service was running in these prisons; (2) how people were finding out about PET and how well the brand was working, and (3) barriers to learning faced by people in prison.

Participants had the chance to ask questions about PET and offer suggestions and ideas. Often, they shared frustrations at the way things operated. PET invited staff members - who facilitated the courses - to take part in the discussions as well. Between each session, participants were given an exercise to do in their own time. Activities included finding solutions to common difficulties faced by people engaging with PET, commenting on the curriculum, peer research with people who did not engage with PET, designing a new poster, and scripting a new prison radio advert. Importantly, the workshops were run by someone who herself was a former prisoner, and now a successful graduate and charity employee. As the result of these workshops, PET has gained new perspectives into the reality of the perception of PET and the lack of availability of information. The charity is using these insights to redesign its prison materials, including producing new posters and leaflets for prison learners, and designing a new handbook aimed at prison staff.

"I felt like I'm making a difference. I got value out of it." (Prisoner)

"I have learnt that you [PET] are interested to know what we think." (Prisoner)

Part 2: Mixed-method evaluation

In this research, a mixed-method evaluation was used. First, a starting and ending questionnaire was used to monitor the process that prisoners who take part in the learning areas undergo. Second, in each partner country at least one learning area was selected to investigate more in-depth, implying that a group interview was conducted to get insight into the experiences of participants, facilitators and PAC-partners involved in the learning areas.

1. Quantitative evaluation of the learning areas: Starting and ending questionnaires

The participants of the learning areas on active citizenship were monitored by means of starting and ending questionnaires. When a learning area started, all participants from that learning area were invited to fill in the starting questionnaire. At the end of the learning area period the participants were also invited to fill in the ending questionnaire. Some of the learning areas continued after the period which was foreseen for the development and implementation of the learning areas in the PAC-project (i.e. six months).

1.1. Aim of the quantitative evaluation

The following research questions guided the quantitative evaluation of the learning areas on prisoners' active citizenship:

- 1) What is the profile of prisoners taking part in the learning areas?
- 2) Start of the learning areas:
 - a. What motivates prisoners to take part in the learning areas?
 - b. What do prisoners expect at the start of the learning areas?
- 3) Process of the learning areas:
 - a. What is the general satisfaction of prisoners of participating in the learning areas?
- 4) Results of the learning areas:
 - a. What are the results for the prisoners of participating in the learning areas (e.g. their quality of life, feeling involved in prison life)?

1.2. Methods: Process of administering the starting and ending questionnaires

The process of administering the questionnaires consisted of four steps:

- 1) The partners of the PAC-consortium developed the starting and ending questionnaires. The starting questionnaire consisted of 11 questions, the ending questionnaire of six questions.

- 2) The starting and ending questionnaires were both translated into the languages of the local partners of the PAC-consortium: Croatian, Dutch, English and Italian. The translations of the questionnaires were done by the partners of the PAC-consortium themselves.
- 3) The starting questionnaires were distributed to the participants at the start of the learning areas, on paper. The starting questionnaire was accompanied by a privacy and protection information sheet to inform respondents about the aim of the research, by who the research was conducted, what would happen with the data collected and how the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) would store the data. All prisoners who started participating in the learning areas filled in the starting questionnaires (N = 78).
- 4) When the learning areas were (almost) finished, the local partners handed over the ending questionnaires to the participants, again on paper. We received 50 ending questionnaires, reaching a response rate of 64.1%. The other 28 prisoners did not fill in the ending questionnaire as they were released from prison, stopped with participating in the learning area, did not see the added value of filling in the questionnaire, were transferred to another prison or wing, prison guards did not open the cell doors of the prisoners at the moment of the data collection, etc.

Figure 2. Total number of starting and ending questionnaires

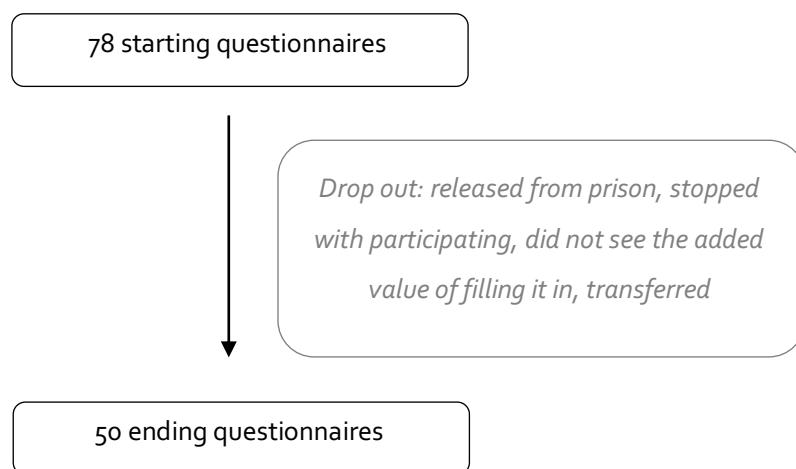


Table 1 provides an overview of how many participants of each learning area filled in the starting and ending questionnaire, as well as the gender of the participants. The learning areas are named according to the name of the prison where the active citizenship project took place.

Table 1. Number of starting and ending questionnaires per learning area and gender of the participants

LEARNING AREA	Participants starting questionnaire (N)	Participants ending questionnaire (N)	Gender participants
Peer-to-peer welcome team (BE)	7	6	Male
Creation of a democratic, mini-society (BE)	9	0	Female
Restorative practices (HR)	11	7	Male
Prisoners' voices in improving services 1 (UK)	7	5	Female
Prisoners' voices in improving services 2 (UK)	8	5	Male
Managing a stable (IT)	11	9	Male
Dance and movement workshops (IT)	14	9	Female
Intergenerational, creative projects (NL)	7	6	Male
Creating a magazine for new prisoners (NL)	4	3	Male
TOTAL	78	50	

1.3. Topics explored in the starting and ending questionnaires

The starting questionnaire was composed of four parts:

- 1) *Some general background questions about the participants* (e.g. gender, year of birth, nationality, legal status, time in this penitentiary facility).
- 2) *Involvement in prison life*. To measure this, we based ourselves on the pyramid of citizen participation (Brosens, 2019; Brosens et al., 2018). First, prisoners were asked about their actual level of involvement in prison life and could choose between five answer categories (1 = I am informed, 2 = I am consulted, 3 = I am involved, 4 = I am collaborating together with staff, and 5 = I have power). For each answer category, an explanation was given what was meant. In a second question, prisoners could indicate their desired level of involvement in prison life, using the same answer categories.
- 3) *Motivation to participate in the learning area*. Seventien different motives were presented to the respondents and they were asked to indicate how important each of these motives were to participate in the learning area. They could rate the importance of each motive on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = not important to 4 = very important. The motives included in the starting questionnaire are partly based on the research of Brosens, De Donder, & Verté (2013) and Manger, Eikeland, Diseth, Hetland, & Asbjørnsen (2010), supplemented with the motive 'It is a chance to get my views heard'. Besides, an open question was asked to gain insight into what respondents expected from the activity.

- 4) *Prisoners feelings the past month*. In total, 22 statements were given to the respondents. They were asked to indicate how often they felt as described during the past month on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = I didn't feel like this at all to 4 = I always felt like this. The first 12 statements were part of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Two subscales were made within this GHQ: anxiety and depression (α To = .841, T_1 = .688) and social dysfunctioning (α To = .866, T_1 = .810). The other ten items were added based on a discussion with the PAC-partners. Among those items, one additional scale was created, including four items: voices heard (α To = .873, T_1 = .911). The other statements did not form a scale.

The ending questionnaire was composed of three parts:

- 1) *Involvement in prison life*. The same questions were used as in the starting questionnaire.
- 2) *Satisfaction with the activity*. Two questions were posed under this topic. First, 14 items were used to measure participants' satisfaction with various aspects of the learning area. Respondents could rate each item using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. These statements are partly based on the research of the European FORINER project (Brosens, Croux, & De Donder, 2017), and partly on a discussion with the PAC-partners. Secondly, an open question was asked to see how satisfied participants were from the activity. In the results, these statements are presented in the parts about satisfaction, improvement of skills, and preparation for life after imprisonment.
- 3) *Prisoners feelings the past month*. The same as in the starting questionnaire.

Both the starting and ending questionnaire ended with the following question: "Is there anything else you'd like to add? Please note it down". We will also describe these answers in 'Part 3: Results'. The starting and ending questionnaire of the same respondents could be linked as they got a unique code which was filled in on top of the questionnaires. All quantitative data were analysed by means of SPSS 25.0. The results need to be interpreted with caution because of the low number of participants involved in the learning areas (N = 78 at To and N = 50 at T1).

2. Qualitative evaluation of the learning areas: group interviews

2.1. Aim of the qualitative evaluation

In each participating country two learning areas were set up (with the exception of Croatia where one learning area was developed and implemented). One learning area in each partner country was selected and investigated more in-depth by means of a group interview. The selection of a particular learning area does not mean that this was the best learning area. For the selection of the learning area in each partner

country no selection criteria were applied, rather practical reasons (e.g. having access to the prison) were more decisive for the selection of the learning areas.

The aim of the qualitative evaluation was to get insight into the experiences of prisoners, facilitators, PAC-partners and/or participants from the outside regarding developing, implementing and participating in the learning areas. The following questions guided the qualitative evaluation part of the learning areas:

- 1) Start of the learning areas:
 - a. How is the implementation of the learning areas experienced?
 - b. How are the prisoners informed about the learning areas? What are their experiences about this?
 - c. What are the expectations of the prisoners, facilitators, PAC-partners and people from the outside at the start of the learning areas?
- 2) Progress of the learning areas:
 - a. What are the positive and negative experiences of the prisoners, facilitators, PAC-partners and people from the outside with regard to the learning areas?
- 3) Results of the learning areas:
 - a. What is the added value of the learning areas for the prisoners themselves, the prison and the society?
 - b. What are the future perspectives of the learning areas?

2.2. Methods: Process of administering the group interviews and topics explored

For the evaluation of the learning areas, eight group interviews were conducted to gain insight into the experiences of the prisoners, facilitators, PAC-partners and people coming from the outside with the learning areas. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of participants of the group interviews per learning area.

The partners of the PAC-consortium developed the interview scheme in English. Each PAC-partner translated the interview scheme into the language of his country (i.e. Croatian, Dutch, Italian). Both the interview scheme for the prisoners and the facilitators discussed the following topics: (1) informing prisoners to get involved in the learning areas, (2) expectations at the start of the learning areas, (3) how the learning area progressed over time, and (4) the added value of participation in the learning areas. Additional topics were discussed during the group interview with the facilitators about the implementation of the learning areas and the future perspectives of it. In each partner country, the group interview was conducted by one of the PAC-partners or the facilitators involved in the learning areas. All the group interviews took place in the language of each partner country involved.

In ideal circumstances, the group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As in most of the partner countries official permission is required from the Ministry of Justice to bring a recorder into prison and it could take weeks to months to get permission, it was not possible to record all the group interviews with the prisoners. As the group interviews took place in the language of the partner country, summaries were made by the moderator and/or note-taker in English. To write the summary, a template was made by the researchers of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) where the moderator and/or note-taker had to answer each question (based on the recording), provide quotations and had to try to make sure that the experiences of all participants were being heard. Two group interviews were transcribed verbatim based on the recordings. Also, additional information (e.g. minutes of an interim meeting with prisoners, reflections of a facilitator that guided a learning area) was provided of three learning areas. The group interviews and the additional information were analysed thematically by means of the qualitative analytic software programme MaxQDA.

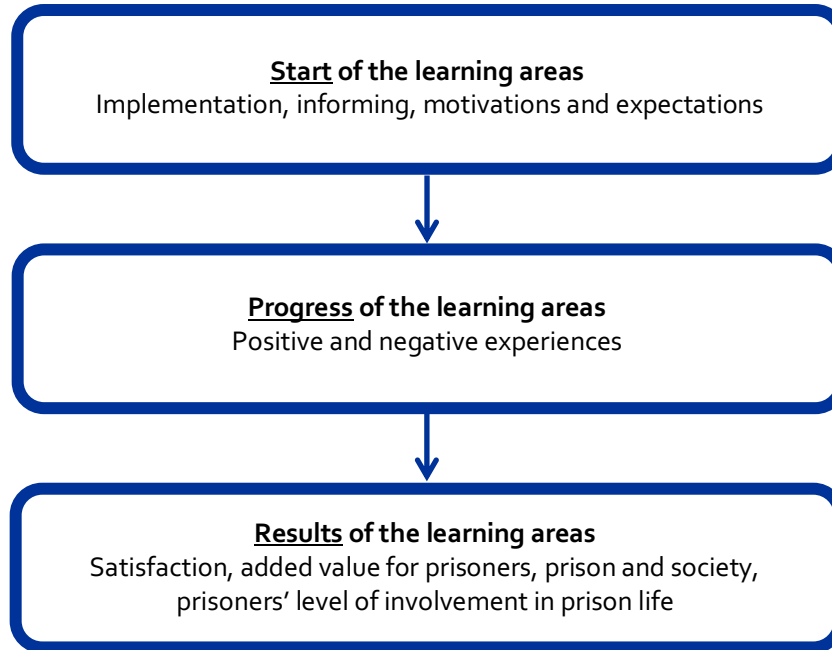
Table 2. Overview of the group interviews per learning area

LEARNING AREA	Group interview: prisoners	Group interview: PAC-partners/ facilitators/ people from outside	Summary or transcribed verbatim	Additional information
Creation of a democratic, mini-society (BE)		X (n=3)	Transcribed	
Restorative practices (HR)	X (n = 7)		Summary	X
Prisoners' voices in improving services 2 (UK)	X (n = 5)		Summary	
Managing a stable (IT)	X (n = 9)		Summary	X
Dance and movement workshops (IT)	X (n = 5)		Summary	
Intergenerational, creative projects (NL)	X (n = 7)	X (n = 9)	Summary	X
Creating a magazine for new prisoners (NL)	X (n = 1)	X (n = 1)	Summary	
PAC-consortium		X (n = 7)	Transcribed	
TOTAL	34	20		

Part 3: Results

In this part, we present the results of the mixed-method evaluation of the learning areas. Besides the profile of the respondents, we evaluated three major parts which are presented in figure 3.

Figure 3. Overview of the results of the mixed-method evaluation of the learning areas

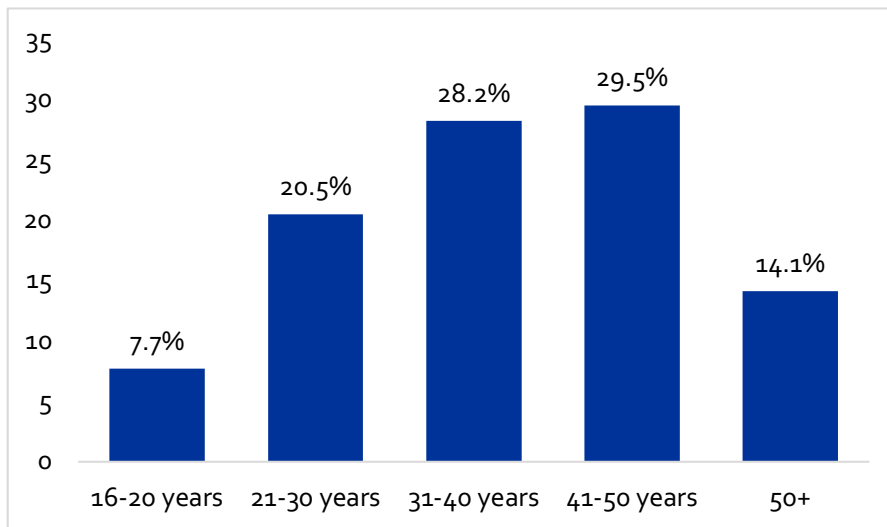


1. Profile of the participants involved in the learning areas

1.1. Individual characteristics

78 prisoners started participating in one of the nine learning areas. 29 were female (37.7%) and 48 male (62.3%). One respondent did not fill in the question about gender. Their mean age was 37.9 years. The youngest participant was 16 years and the oldest one was 64 years. The learning area in Lelystad (the Netherlands) was the only one in which juvenile prisoners were included. Only 7.7% of the participants was between 16 and 20 years. Most prisoners were between 31 and 40 years (28.2%) or between 41 and 50 years (29.5%) (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Participants' age (N = 78)

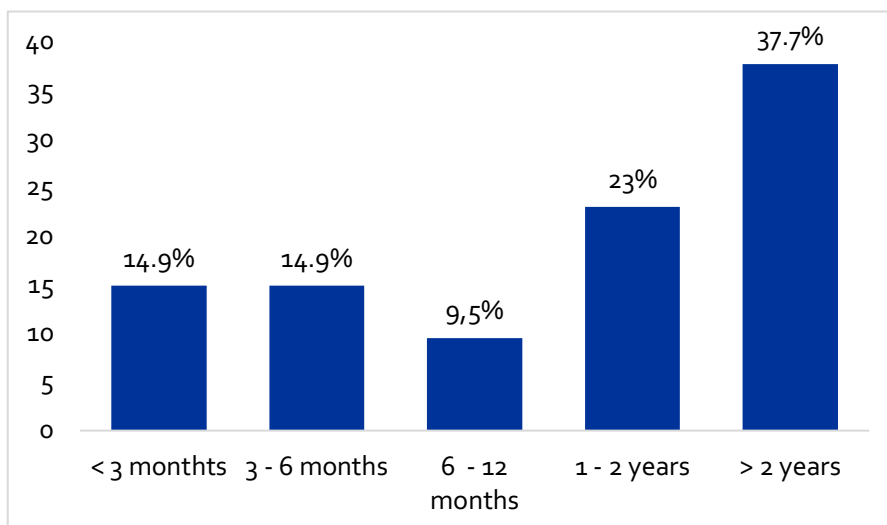


Prisoners with 18 different nationalities were involved in the learning areas. The Italian (N = 17), Croatian (N = 12), British/ English (N = 12), Belgian (N = 11), and Dutch (N = 9) nationalities were most frequently represented, which is not surprising as the learning areas took place in Italy, Croatia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

1.2. Prison-related characteristics

The majority of the participants of the learning areas were convicted (92.2%), while only a minority (7.8%) was awaiting trial. As can be deduced from table 3, 22 prisoners (29.8%) were in the prison where the learning area took place for less than 6 months. Seven prisoners (9.5%) were there between 6 and 12 months. The majority of the participants were in that particular prison for more than one year (60.7%).

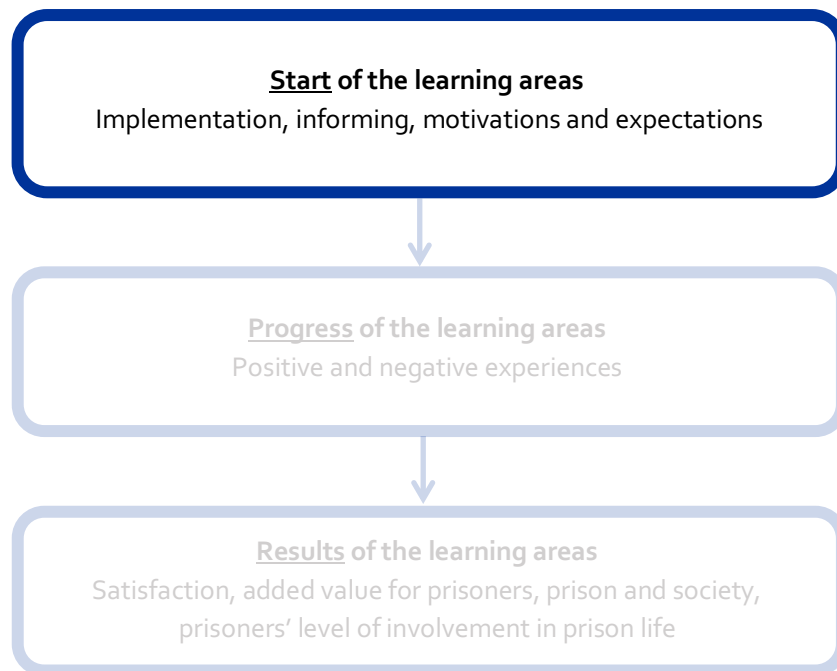
Table 3. Respondents' length of stay in the prison where the learning areas took place (N = 74)



2. Start of the learning areas

During the evaluation of the learning areas, we focused on different aspects related to the start of the learning areas that were set up in the framework of the PAC-project.

Figure 5. Situating 'start of the learning areas' within the framework of the study



2.1. Implementation of the learning areas

During the group interview with the PAC-partners we asked them how the implementation of the learning areas in their country went. They experienced the implementation overall as a challenging and time-consuming process. Attention needed to be paid to (1) convincing professional stakeholders in the (local) prisons, (2) the involvement of prisoners in co-creating the learning area, and (3) finding the right facilitator. We provide more details about each of these aspects below.

Convincing professional stakeholders in the (local) prison is necessary, but takes time

A first essential aspect for implementing the learning areas, turned out to be the involvement of professional stakeholders in the local prison. For that reason, several **meetings** were organized with different professional stakeholders responsible for and/or working in the prison, such as the ministry of justice, the prison governors, activity organizers or prison guards. Those meetings were organized to see whether there was support for the idea of setting up an active citizenship activity in prison, to present and discuss the PAC-project and the design of the learning area. Discussions were held about what these stakeholders thought about the idea of active citizenship, the learning area itself, what was needed to

successful implement it, which challenges would come across, etc. Providing a clear picture of the learning area, timing and how the evaluation would be done seemed to be important. A change of the prison director in some of the prisons involved made this more difficult.

Actively involving these stakeholders and getting their **support** was considered as a **precondition** in setting up active citizenship activities in prison by the PAC-partners. When there is, for instance, support from the prison government, they can help in convincing prison guards about the value of active citizenship in prison. However, getting the support of professional stakeholders was quite challenging in some learning areas through which it became a time-consuming process. In the words of one of the PAC-partners:

"But when it comes to experiences, how to implement this sort of thing [active citizenship activity], it is a very delicate process because I had to convince them [i.e. other people working in prison] first of the idea of active citizenship. I had to convince the prison staff of the importance of this and that was quite something to be honest."

Also changes in prison management, misunderstandings between NGO's, the ministry of justice, etc. had a negative influence on the (speed of the) implementation of the learning areas through which it sometimes became a time-consuming process.

In one of the Belgian learning areas, the PAC-partners thought that they had the support of the prison guards. However, during the progress of the learning area, it turned out that there was not enough support from the prison guards, through which they had to break down the learning area. Also in the Italian learning areas, having and maintaining support of the prison guards was quite challenging, as these latter experienced an increased workload and did not understand why such activities were organized. Nevertheless, creating support and involvement for the active citizenship activities in prison was not always challenging. For instance, in the UK:

"PET was also lucky to have the support of the staff because PET is a charity that funds people so a lot of people feel like they own PET depth gratitude. The educational staff has something like 'this is PET, we are going to do something for them'. Everybody has to be there and they were." (PAC-partner)

Also in another learning area, a PAC-partner expressed to work well together with one prison guard who was responsible to follow-up the learning area. Before the start of the learning area, the PAC-partner presented the plan to this prison guard and asked that person what she thought about it, if it was feasible, how the prisoners are going to react if they are confronted with this situation or that situation. Also after

the learning area, this prison guard was involved in discussing how the learning area went, which was appreciated by the prison guard.

Involving prisoners in co-creating the learning area increases their level of involvement

Besides professional stakeholders, also prisoners can actively be involved from the beginning. In a minority of the learning areas, **prisoners were actively involved in co-creating it from the start** through which they had an important say in how the learning area would look like and evolve over time:

"That is also an important thing. We did not start by saying what they [prisoners] should do, but we asked them what they wanted to do and how we could contribute to the road they wanted to go. So it is really together, bringing a wish and some expertise together and create something together. That's the idea."

Another PAC-partner added: "That's a sign of active citizenship, co-creation." (PAC-partners)

For instance, in one of the learning areas the local PAC-partner explained the idea of active citizenship to the prisoners. Afterwards, prisoners were invited to brainstorm about what they could do in their prison. The PAC-partner indicated that he found it important to ask the opinion of the participants and involve them in co-creating the learning area: *"I thought, since this is a project about active citizenship, it should not be me bringing ideas but it should be us."* Also another facilitator involved in this learning area indicated that it is important to involve prisoners in co-creating the project: *"During our first meeting, I immediately involved three prisoners because indeed, I can get very excited [about the learning area], but that is not very helpful. You better have the prisoners enthusiastic."* The fact that prisoners were involved in the development phase of the learning area was also appreciated by the prisoners themselves, as one of the prisoners indicated during the group interview:

"Just consulting the prisoners whether that is a good idea or not. This then gives us the idea that we are not in detention, but that we are also in society, that we are also appreciated, that we are allowed to think along with them [the facilitators]. That gives us a very good feeling and that makes it very different here. It seems more like assisted living than being in detention. This involvement is very much appreciated among the prisoners, that they also have a say in something."

Finding the right facilitator(s) to set up the learning areas might be challenging

A third aspect in implementing the learning areas was finding the right facilitator(s). These people were setting up the learning areas on the prison floor and effectively realizing them. In some learning areas, the **facilitators** came from **'the outside'** (e.g. charities, specialists, ex-prisoners), while in the majority of the learning areas they came from **'the inside'** (e.g. local prison staff, organizations that already came into prison before the learning areas).

Professionals involved in the learning areas mentioned that working with outside or inside facilitators both had advantages. For instance, outside facilitators brought in knowledge and specialism from the outside, while inside facilitators were experts on the prison environment and working with prisoners, and could help to build a network of support inside the prison. Mainly the advantages of working with inside facilitators were underlined by the PAC-partners, as they experienced less difficulties in implementing active citizenship activities in prison. Bringing in facilitators from the outside turned out to be challenging in some circumstances as they still had to learn everything about the prison, its rules, regulations and functioning, and get to know the people that are working there like prison managers or prison guards.

2.2. Informing prisoners to get involved in the learning areas

During the group interviews, we asked the participants how prisoners were informed about the possibility to take part in the learning areas. Based on the group interviews, we can conclude that several information channels were used to inform the prisoners about the possibility to get involved.

The most important way of informing prisoners turned out to be by **word of mouth**. For instance, some prisoners were informed by prison staff during a meeting for newcomers, others by prison guards or educational staff. Gaining this information from professionals was appreciated as prisoners linked this to the fact that there must be an institutional interest for the activity. Other prisoners were informed about the activity by their fellow prisoners. Next to the word of mouth, one learning area used a **combination of word of mouth and written notices**. The prisoners indicated that this combination was fine and worked for them. Overall, prisoners expressed that they were quite good informed before the start of their participation. Some of them mentioned that they were better informed about the learning areas compared to other activities that were taking place in the prison.

2.3. Prisoners' motives to get involved in the learning area

In the starting questionnaire, prisoners were presented the following question: "Below you find several possible reasons for taking part in this activity. How important are these reasons for you?" Respondents could indicate if a motive was not or less important to (very) important. Table 4 presents an overview of how important each separate motive was. The motives are categorized based on previous research (Brosens et al., 2013; Manger et al., 2010), supplemented by some additional categories.

Table 4. Prisoners' motives to get involved in the learning area

MOTIVES	(Very) important (%)	N
INDIVIDUAL MOTIVES		
I am interested in the activity involved	98.7	75
It is a chance to get my views heard	73	54
NORMALISATION		
Participating in this activity gives the day variety	86.7	65
It gives me a sense of normality	82.9	63
To get my mind off things	80.3	61
To make time go faster	77.8	56
It takes me out of cell for a while	65.3	47
TO PREPARE FOR LIFE UPON RELEASE		
To be able to cope with life after release from prison	83.1	59
To improve my self-esteem	79.2	57
It allows me to make plans for the future	78.7	59
It increases my chances of release	56.2	41
SOCIAL MOTIVES		
I learn how to deal with other people there	75.7	56
I get to see other people there	60	42
To be part of a group within the prison	53.4	39
RECOMMENDATIONS		
A staff member suggested it to me	47.1	33
Another prisoner told me about it	41.4	29
My lawyer recommended it to me	30.3	20

Note: 76 prisoners filled in the question about the motives. However, not all respondents indicated for each separate motive how important this was for him/ her.

Motives related to the category **individual motives** were most frequently reported. The fact that participating prisoners were interested in the activity involved was the most important motive (98.7%). Also 73% of the respondents participated as they considered it as a change to get his/her views heard. A second important category of motives was **normalisation**. 86.7% of the respondents participated in the activity as it gave the day variety. This was the second most frequently reported motive in total. Also, 82.9% indicated that it gave a sense of normality and 80.3% that it helped them to get his/ her mind off things.

A third motivational category was **to prepare for life upon release from prison**. To be able to cope with life after imprisonment (83.1%) was the most important one within this category, and this also completes the top three of most important motives for the participants. To improve self-esteem (79.2%) and allowing to make plans for the future (78.7%) were also important within this category.

Fourth, there were **social motives**. Mainly learning how to deal with other people there (75.7%) was the most important social motive. The last motivational category is called 'recommendations' and was less important. For instance, 47.1% mentioned that a staff member suggested the activity to him/her.

2.4. Expectations at the start of the learning area

Prisoners' expectations

Both in the starting questionnaire (open question – only for prisoners) and during the group interviews (prisoners, facilitators, and PAC-partners), people were asked about the prisoners' expectations at the start of the learning area. The majority of the prisoners had **positive expectations**, which can be divided into seven categories: (1) to improve knowledge and skills, (2) to have a voice, (3) to facilitate reintegration in society after imprisonment, (4) to improve social relations among prisoners, (5) to pass time or spend time doing something useful, (6) to improve their physical and mental condition, and (7) to get some privileges.

First, the expectation that was most frequently mentioned was improving knowledge and skills. Prisoners expected to enrich knowledge, learn new or useful things, and skills like communication, listening, and working together with others. Secondly, they expected to have a voice during their time of imprisonment and be able to make differences. With the words of a prisoner: "*Making a difference and getting a chance to give our opinion on decisions*". Thirdly, several prisoners also expected to facilitate reintegration in society after imprisonment. They expected to learn how to handle problems outside prison, learn things that they could apply on the outside and a minority expected to learn a new job to create new possibilities, both inside and outside prison. Fourthly, less prisoners also expected to improve social relations among prisoners. Like for instance one prisoner mentioned: "*I expect to be taken into account like others, this never happens when I'm in my division*". Unfortunately, this particular prisoner mentioned during the group interview that this did not happen. He experienced great difficulties in working in group. Fifthly, a few prisoners mentioned that they expected that participating in the activity would make it easier to pass time or spend time doing something useful. Different prisoners hoped that they would learn something due to their participation in the learning areas, for instance working with horses or learning to dance. Sixthly, some prisoners – but that was related to one particular learning area in which dancing was central – expected to improve their physical and mental condition. And lastly, some prisoners mentioned that they hoped to get some privileges in the prison when they participated in the learning area.

However, in addition to the predominantly positive expectations, some prisoners also expressed **negative expectations** at the start of the learning areas. One prisoner was sceptical because he did not know if the activity could be useful to him. A PAC-partner mentioned that in the beginning of his learning area he experienced distrust from the prisoners. That particular partner said during the group interview that prisoners reacted as follows: "*We [prisoners] do not believe in it. You are the same as all the others*". But he saw that prisoners adjusted their expectations throughout the lifetime of the learning area: "*Then we started to work and evaluated it, and after two, three times they were like 'yeah, it is different. It gives us [prisoners] hope'*". Only a limited number of prisoners indicated that they had no expectations at the start of the learning area.

Facilitators and PAC-partners' expectations

We also did some group interviews with the facilitators that were involved in developing and implementing the learning areas in the local prisons, and with the PAC-partners themselves. Most of them did not have any real expectations at the start of the project, except **being able to experiment with the idea of active citizenship**. They just wanted to learn something about implementing active citizenship activities in prison.

Some of them also mentioned they had some **'wrong' expectations** in the beginning. To give an example: In the learning area with people coming from the outside (the Netherlands), one of the facilitators mentioned that in the beginning he questioned the ability of people from the outside who enter the prison without knowledge and expertise to work with young people in a prison context, but this went really well in the end. Those people from the outside could interact with the juveniles very well, which went beyond his expectations. Due to this, he learned to be more open to people coming from the outside.

In other learning areas, the PAC-partner expected to have **difficulties in doing the evaluation** of the learning areas (i.e. providing the beginning and ending questionnaire to the prisoners, doing the group interview) as they had never done this before. They thought it would be difficult to convince the prison management about the value of doing the evaluation, but it turned out to be much easier than expected.

Expectations of people coming from the outside

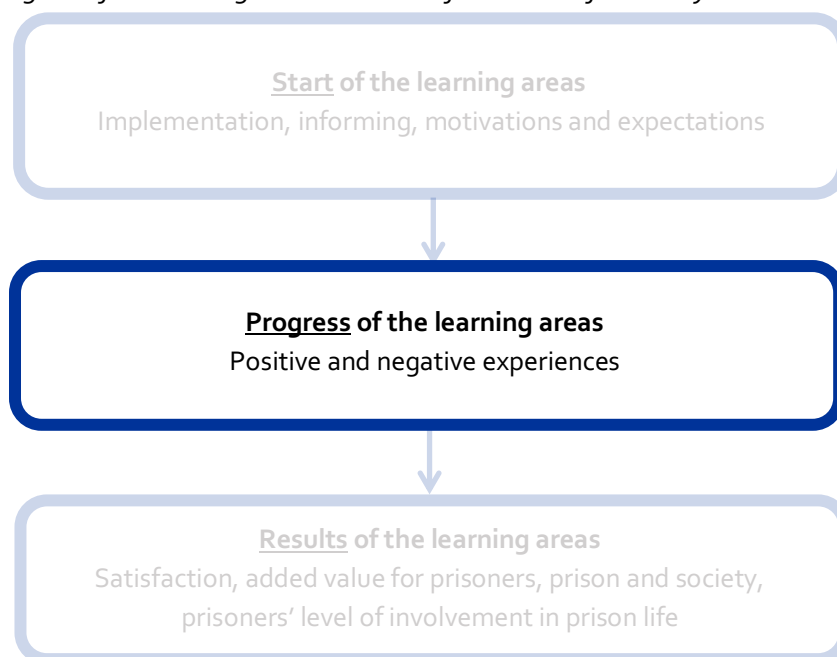
Only in the learning area in the juvenile prison, people from the outside were coming inside prison. These people had **substantive expectations** at the start, like for instance, they expected that together with the juveniles, they would learn to bake a cake, play chess, or do something creative. However, in some cases those substantive expectations changed. For instance, one of the people coming from the outside thought he would play chess, but it became the making of a chess game. Besides, the people from outside expected that the juveniles could learn from them, but also that they could **learn from the juveniles**. Some of these

people had little to no expectations. However one of them asked what the juvenile expected from her so that she was able to guide the juvenile well. In general, there was a lot of curiosity among the people coming from the outside about the participating juveniles, the prison itself, the progress of the project, etc. One of the participants mentioned that he **had too high expectations** in the beginning about what could be achieved with the juvenile. His expectations had already been adjusted by the facilitator that was responsible for the learning area at the beginning but despite that it remained a slightly disappointment for him. By adjusting his expectations once again he started to see more results with the participant and they were able to achieve the ultimate goal, namely working together towards an end product, trying to earn mutual respect and having a pleasant time together.

3. Progress of the learning areas

In this part of the results, we describe the process of the learning areas. During the group interviews we asked the prisoners, facilitators, PAC-partners, and people from the outside what they experienced as positive and negative about the learning areas. We first present the positive experiences, afterwards the negative ones.

Figure 6. Situating 'progress of the learning areas' within the framework of the study



3.1. Positive experiences with the learning areas

Respondents of different group interviews indicated that in several learning areas there was a **low drop-out rate** among the participating prisoners. Facilitators attributed this to the fact that in many of the prisons involved, this type of active citizenship activities was something new, something unknown and that over time, prisoners gained the feeling that their voices matters, that they could share their opinion and they were really being listened to. This is in line with the experiences of the prisoners themselves. Many among them felt respected, had the feeling that they could make a difference and got value out of their participation.

Secondly, another positively experienced aspect was the fact that in some learning areas the participants **worked together towards an end product**, for instance an exhibition, a magazine, or a brochure for informing recently arrived prisoners. Participants indicated that they felt proud when they achieved those results as they considered it as something unique and valuable. In the words of one of the facilitators involved: *"The fact that there was a clear result every week, which they could share with the rest of the participants and people from outside, worked very positively, they [the prisoners] were proud."*

A third aspect that was positively experienced by several PAC-partners was the **support of the prison management and prison guards**. As mentioned before, in several prisons it took some time to convince essential stakeholders like the prison director and prison guards of the idea and added value of the learning area. However, the meetings with these stakeholders were of utmost importance for gaining support and acceptance for the learning area, and some facilitators involved have not experienced such a great support from these stakeholders before. For instance, in one learning area some of the participating prisoners were transferred to semi-open facilities in another part of the country during the timespan of the learning area. The prison succeeded to organize that these prisoners were transported to the prison where the learning area took place at the moment of the sessions so that they were able to complete their participation. The facilitator of that learning area was amazed about this because this was beyond her expectations.

Another positive experience mentioned by prisoners, facilitators and PAC-partners was **the improved relationship between the participating prisoners**. In the words of the PAC-partner: *"They [the prisoners] developed a lot of respect for each other that they did not have before. They developed a lot of skills to meet with each other, to talk with each other, to not interrupt each other"*. In the words of the prisoner: *"The relationship between us has improved because it is a new context"*. Obviously, there were discussions and disagreements within the group, but they were able to solve those problems.

The improved relationships not only had effect on the prisoners that were involved in the learning area itself, but several prisoners indicated that also their **relationship with fellow prisoners** (i.e. prisoners that were not taking part) has **improved**. For instance, one of the prisoners indicated that he had conversations

about the learning area with fellow prisoners that were not involved. During those conversations, those prisoners showed interest in the learning area and came up with ideas that he tried to include in the prison magazine they were creating. This person liked to involve the opinion of his fellow prisoners as well: *"I also like to involve certain people and when it's all done, everyone will be a little proud of it, then it's a bit of everyone's business"*. Also a participant of another learning area mentioned that his participation had an influence on his contact with fellow prisoners outside the learning area: *"The guy in my cell keeps whining about his wife and children. I learned in the workshops to listen to him instead of telling him what he should have done differently"*.

Besides the improved relationships between prisoners, several respondents expressed that also the **relationships between the participating prisoners and facilitators of the learning areas has improved**. In the words of a prisoner: *"It worked well between us [prisoner – facilitators], that I find very important. It is like what they say: 'It's not important what people know about each other, but what they mean to each other'"*. Prisoners mainly appreciated that the facilitators listened to them, were open, supportive and transparent about what was (not) possible. This enabled to build trust and respect among the different actors involved. In the words of one of the prisoners: *"It [the facilitators] are people who transmit a great trust in life and I am very happy to be in contact with people who listen to us, detained in our suffering"*. Mainly in the learning areas where decisions were made in partnership between the professionals and the prisoners, the prisoners expressed that they appreciated the fact that their voice was of equal importance as the one of the professionals. In one of the learning areas, the facilitator was an ex-prisoner, which directly created a link between her and the participating prisoners.

Lastly, in the learning area where **participants from the outside** were involved, it was experienced that **relationships with juveniles were built**. Both the juveniles as people from the outside really enjoyed the contact with each other. Bringing together two different groups into one learning area was experienced as a great success, from which something beautiful emerged according to the professional involved. The young people reacted very enthusiastically to the people from the outside. There was understanding and respect for each other which resulted in a productive cooperation, good conversations (e.g. about their future), a connection between the two and more insight into each other. The juveniles found it very special that someone from outside the prison made time for them. Also the one-on-one approach was experienced as positive. With the words of one of the outside-persons:

"The number I want to give is a 10 [out of 10 to the learning area]. I give this number partly because we made this project personally. Each participant had one supervisor [person from the outside]. From my experience this works much better than when I have to guide a group. You can really give the participant personal attention, so that in my opinion you can achieve more with this target group."

3.2. Negative experiences with the learning areas

Although many learning areas had a low drop-out rate among its participants, there was one learning area in which several prisoners **dropped-out** because of a sanction, or another mandatory activity at the same time.

Another challenge experienced was that in some of the learning areas, there was a **lack of involvement of prison guards**. For instance, in some learning areas it was expected that prison guards would take up a more active role than they did in practice. Facilitators in one country attributed this to the fact that prison guards considered the learning area as an increased work load, while they do not understand the added value of the learning area. Also in another learning area, professionals reported that they had to deal with a lack of involvement of prison guards due to a miscommunication between the prison management and the guards. Partly because of this, the learning area was discontinued prematurely as prison guards' involvement was crucial in creating a democratic setting within prison.

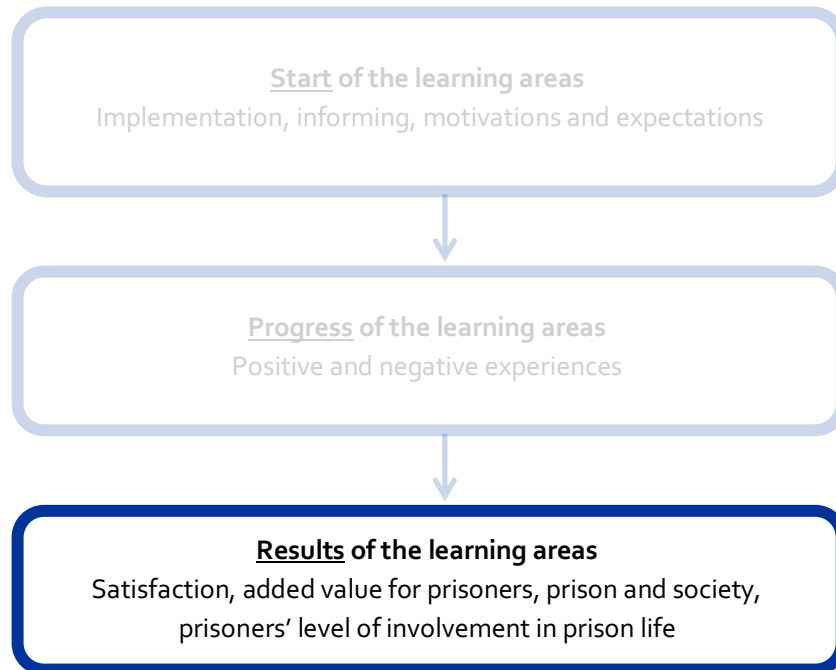
Third, respondents involved in several learning areas emphasized that the **time span** of the learning areas was **too short**. On the one hand, prisoners and people from the outside mainly referred to the amount of meeting times, that the participants could have met more. On the other hand, facilitators and PAC-partners also indicated that having more time to set up the learning area, having more meetings with essential stakeholders, etc. would have been better.

Fourth, the **relationships between prisoners did not always improve**. One of the participants mentioned he stopped coming to the meetings as he did not feel accepted by the other prisoners involved. Another prisoner expressed to have difficulties in teamwork and he hoped that his participation in the learning area would improve that: *"I expect to be taken into account like others, this never happens when I'm in my division"*. However, instead of an improvement there was a worsening.

4. Results of the learning areas

During the mixed-method evaluation, we also focused on the results of participating in the learning areas (see figure 7). We studied how satisfied prisoners were with their participation, the added value of prisoners' participation in the learning areas for the prisoners themselves, the prison and the society, and prisoners' level of involvement in prison life.

Figure 7. Situating 'results of the learning areas' within the framework of the study



4.1. General satisfaction of prisoners with the learning areas

In the ending questionnaire, prisoners were asked about their **general satisfaction** with the learning areas (see table 5). 93.8% were (very) satisfied with the activity. 89.4% felt that the activity served his/ her needs, and 86.7% would participate in a similar activity if he/she had the opportunity to do so. When asking the prisoners: "How satisfied are you from this activity?", the answers were very positive. For instance: "*I found it very helpful and I hope we could help you too*", and "*Very much so! I feel empowered and happy to have my opinion valued*".

In addition, prisoners were also provided some statements which can be clustered under the term **normalization**. 82.2% of the prisoners was able to get his/her mind of things by this activity, and 79.2% could spend time doing something sensible and useful.

Also the **social aspect** of the learning areas was important for the satisfaction of the participants. For instance, 68.1% of the participants indicated that fellow prisoners approved them of taking part in the learning area. 43.5% also mentioned that prison guards encouraged them to finish the activity.

During the group interviews, it was also mentioned that prisoners were satisfied that they **could keep their bad thoughts away** by participating in the learning area. For instance in the words of one of the prisoners:

"Engaging in work at the stables distracts me from my thoughts and I try to do good both to myself and to this beautiful animal. Taking care of the horses and helping in the management keeps the bad thoughts away from my mind, which unfortunately the incarceration brings you to face and to live with."

Table 5. Prisoners' satisfaction of prisoners with the learning areas

SATISFACTION	(Totally) agree (%)	N
GENERAL SATISFACTION		
I am very satisfied with this activity	93.8	45
I feel this activity served my needs	89.4	42
If I had the opportunity to participate in a similar activity, I would gladly do so	86.7	39
NORMALISATION		
By this activity, I got my mind of things	82.2	37
I could spend time doing something sensible and useful	79.2	38
SOCIAL ASPECTS		
My fellow prisoners approved me of taking part in this activity	68.1	32
Prison officers encouraged me to finish this activity	43.5	20
The relationship between prisoners and prison officers has improved	37	17

Note: 48 prisoners filled in the questions about satisfaction. However, not all respondents answered all sub-items.

4.2. Added value for prisoners

During the mixed-method evaluation, we focused on the added value for prisoners related to: (1) the feeling that their voices are heard, (2) improvement of skills, (3) changes in their quality of life, (4) preparation for life upon release, and (5) mastery and valorization.

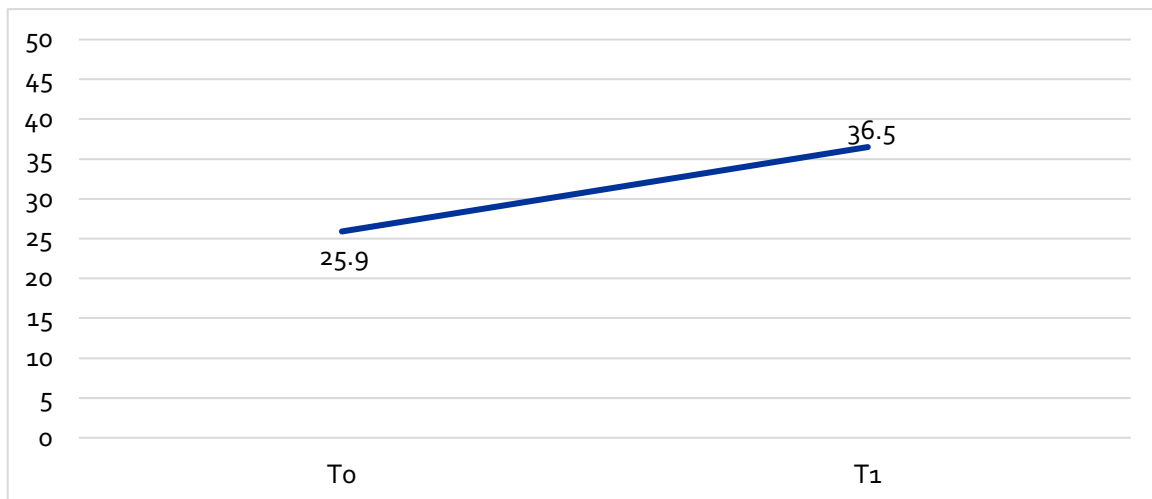
The feeling that prisoners' voices are heard

As a first added value, we measured the extent to which prisoners have the feeling that their voices are heard at the beginning (T₀) and at the end of the learning area (T₁). This was measured by computing the following items:

1. I feel that prisoners' voices are heard
2. My voice matters here
3. I feel that my views and opinions are respected here
4. I have the feeling that I am listened to

A paired t-test has been performed to measure the evolution of having "the feeling that voices are heard" over time. The results are presented in figure 8. The average score in the beginning (T₀) was 25.6 and has increased to 36.5 at the end (T₁). The minimum score was 0, meaning that prisoners voices are not heard at all. The maximum score was 100, implying that prisoners have the feeling that their voices are always heard.

Figure 8. Prisoners' evolution of having the "feeling that their voices are heard" (N = 39)



Note: $p < .05$

Also the results of the qualitative evaluation confirmed this. During the group interviews, prisoners expressed having the feeling that their voices were being heard and that they could have a decision-making power. A facilitator of one of the learning areas has heard from participating prisoners that they

had the feeling that the facilitators cared about the participants, were interested in what they thought and the input they could provide, which was appreciated. **The feeling of being taken into account** was also described by a participant from the learning area with the horse riding school: *"I'm taken into account here in the prison, especially in the divisions. You are less than the manure that is here, in this place I'm learning to work with the horse and I'm taken in account."*

Improvement of skills

Secondly, we paid attention to the improvement of skills among the participating prisoners. In the ending questionnaire, we presented prisoners four statements about the improvement of skills. We asked them to put a cross next to each statement in the column that corresponds with how much they (dis)agree with these statements (see table 6).

Table 6. Improvement of skills

SKILLS	(Totally) agree (%)	N
This activity learned me to better communicate with others	73.9	34
Due to this activity, I can control myself more	63	29
This activity has learned me how to behave well in a group	55.3	26
This activity has improved my language skills	48.9	22

Note: 48 prisoners filled in this question. Not all of them provided an answer on all items.

The most important item in this category was that the learning areas learned prisoners to **better communicate with others** (73.9%), but also that they **learned to behave well in group** (55.3%). The improvement of these skills was confirmed during the qualitative group interviews. For instance, during several group interviews it was mentioned that prisoners learned a lot of skills to meet with others, to talk to other people, not to interrupt, behave well in group, and have respect for others. Some prisoners mentioned that due to their participation they learned to be polite, cautious and more professional. They also learned to make and keep appointments, and to take into account the needs and boundaries of other persons by not merely thinking about themselves.

In addition, in the ending questionnaire 63% of the prisoners also indicated that they could **control themselves more** due to their participation in the learning area. During the qualitative group interviews, this was confirmed as, for instance, one of the prisoners mentioned: *"Thanks to the participation in this wonderful work, I managed to manage, until my anger disappeared, which I nurtured against people and situations for the injustices suffered"*. Being able to control themselves more was also mentioned by another prisoner:

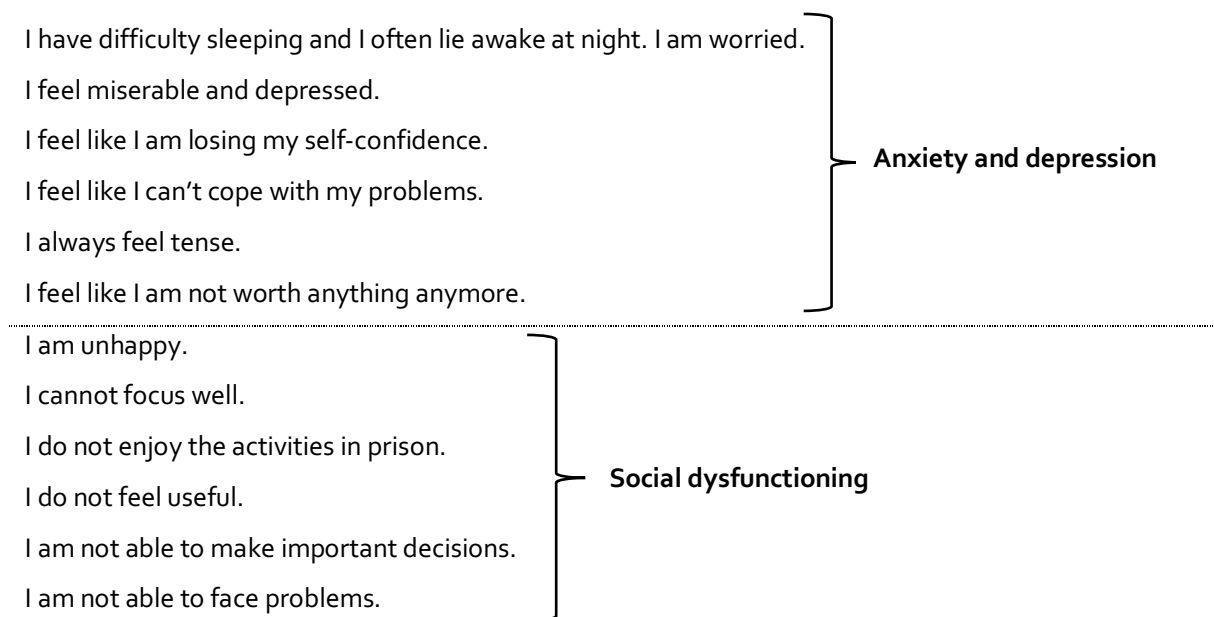
"I learned that I am too violent and that I have a low threshold of tolerance [that leads] to frustration. [...] I learned here that I can deal with that differently if I use different ways than before, like let's solve this instead of reacting violently."

Lastly, 48.9% of the participating prisoners also indicated in the ending questionnaire that they have **improved their language skills**.

Evolution of prisoners' quality of life

As a third aspect, we measured prisoners' quality of life during the lifetime of the learning areas. We asked prisoners to fill in the General Health Questionnaire (12 items) at the start of their participation (T₀) and at the end (T₁). Afterwards, these items were divided into two scales: (1) anxiety and depression and (2) social dysfunctioning.

Figure 9. Prisoners' general health (N = 35)



A paired t-test has been performed to compare the evolution of prisoners' quality of life, but there was no significant change throughout the lifespan of the learning areas.

However, during the group interviews, several participants mentioned that participating in the learning areas was positive for the quality of life of the prisoners, mainly for their mental health. For instance, some participants mentioned that due to their participation they gained a higher self-worth and gained more physical and mental strength. Prisoners were feeling themselves like a more useful and important person. Their involvement in the learning area also made them proud of themselves. Also in the learning area with

people from the outside, the juveniles learned that people from the outside were interested in them, which also contributed to those positive feelings.

Preparation for life upon release

A fourth aspect related to how much the learning area prepared prisoners for life upon release. In the ending questionnaire, prisoners were asked to indicate how much they (dis)agreed with two statements about the extent to which the learning area has prepared them for life upon release (see table 7).

Table 7. The extent to which learning areas prepared prisoners for life upon release

TO PREPARE FOR LIFE UPON RELEASE	(Totally) agree (%)	N
Due to this activity, I will have a better life after release from prison	51.1	24
Following this activity has increased my chances for release	39.1	18

Note: 48 prisoners filled in this question. Not all of them provided an answer on all items.

More than half of the respondents mentioned that they will have a better life after release from prison due to the learning area. Less prisoners (39.1%) indicated that participating in the learning area has increased his/her chances of release. Also during the group interviews, mainly having a better life upon release has been touched upon several times. For instance, due to their participation, some prisoners started to think about their future:

"I realized that I would not come back to prison because I do not belong here. I see prison as a blueprint of the society and I think that considering my values, I don't belong in prison and I don't belong in this country."

In addition, a prisoner declared that the learning area was different from all the other activities he already participated in in prison. He thought that everything he learned could be useful for the future, after his release from prison. Also facilitators involved in the learning areas agreed with the added value of prisoners' participation to prepare for their life upon release:

"If I look what this [learning area] has meant for the participants, you can say that with this project we [professionals] are a nice link in the chain, where we build with the participants to eventually be able to work outside on their future again."

However, some of the people from outside that were involved in one of the learning areas argued that the added value for the prisoners functioning in society still had to be demonstrated: *"For a return to society, exemplary behaviour seems to me to be the most important thing to be treated appropriately. An activity like*

this can be a first exercise in practicing treatment and behaviour outside". Some people from outside were not sure this will add something to the prisoners' life upon release, but they hoped so.

Mastery and valorization

Both in the starting and the ending questionnaire, prisoners were asked to think about past month and indicate how often they did feel as described in several statements. Table 8 presents the percentages of how many prisoners indicated that they often/ always felt like described at T₀ and T₁.

Table 8. *Mastery and valorization*

	To – Often/ always feel like this (%)	T ₁ – Often/ always feel like this (%)
I can take pride of my work/ achievements here in prison	67.1	79.6
I am part of the prison community	55.4	70.2
I feel I have control over my life or surroundings	70.3	61.9
I understand how I could change things	60.8	61.7
I have the feeling I have influence of the things around me	43.8	46.9

At the end of the learning area, many more prisoners indicated that they were **proud of their work/ achievements in prison** (67.1% at T₀, 79.6% at T₁) and that they **felt part of the prison community** (55.4% at T₀, 70.2% at T₁). Being proud of yourself was also underlined during the qualitative evaluation. In the words of one of the facilitators:

"This opportunity has learned him [a prisoner] to achieve something in his life to be proud of and makes him happy to know that he has helped to do something right, that goes according to the rules and not breaking them."

4.3. Added value for the prisons

Also some added values of prisoners' participation in the learning areas were mentioned for the prisons itself. For instance, prisoners' participation in active citizenship activities was considered important for the **dynamic security** in prison. In the words of one of the PAC-partners: *"It secures your prison. It is little bit a cliché but it is true"*. Also during one of the group interviews a prisoner referred to dynamic security, without using this term, as he stated: *"Just the fact that we are calmer and communicate in a different way. This is good for the others [prisoners] too"*. Related to this, the improved relationships between the prisoners and the facilitators of the learning areas, but also with the prison management and the prison guards has been considered as an added value for the prisons involved.

In addition, in many learning areas prisoners had the feeling that their voices count and that they could provide input (see added values for prisoners), for instance in developing a brochure or magazine for newly arrived prisoners, in discussing activities that will be organized, or how a budget could be spend. By creating a dialogue between prisoners and other stakeholders in prison (e.g. activity organizers, prison managers, prison guards), **a greater support can be created.**

4.4. Added value for the society

The participants of the group interviews also acknowledged the added value of prisoners' participation for the society. This related to the fact that prisoners learned several skills and attitudes that they can possibly transfer to other situations when they are on the outside. However, it is sometimes challenging to convince the public opinion of the importance of active citizenship for prisoners:

"The public opinion does not agree with the fact that organization x organizes nice things for the prisoners because they are in prison. They don't have to do activities. It is difficult to let people understand that prisoners' participation in activities has an added value also for society because at a certain point they go out." (PAC-partner)

4.5. Prisoners' level of involvement situated on the participation pyramid

In the ending questionnaire, we asked prisoners: (1) How involved are you in life in prison? At which level can your involvement in life in prison be situated?, and (2) Which level of involvement in life in prison would you desire? (see figure 10). Respondents could choose one of the five levels of the pyramid of participation:

1. *I am informed:* Information is provided about my rights and ways to participate in the organization and the activities that are organized in the prison.
2. *I am consulted:* My views have been sought and the prison management commits to act on these views, if possible. This is done by means of surveys, panel discussions, suggestion boxes or focus group interviews.
3. *I am involved:* My concerns, aspirations and advice are fed into decision-making processes. This means that I am involved in decision-making to some degree. I can provide advice, but the staff take the decisions.
4. *I am collaborating together with staff:* This implies that I can participate in identifying problems, and discussing possible solutions or alternatives with staff. Decisions are taken in partnership with prisoners and staff.
5. *I have power:* I am responsible for making (some) organizational decisions by themselves. For example, I get a budget to organize a particular activity.

Figure 10. Prisoners' actual and desired level of involvement in prison life at T1 (N =48)

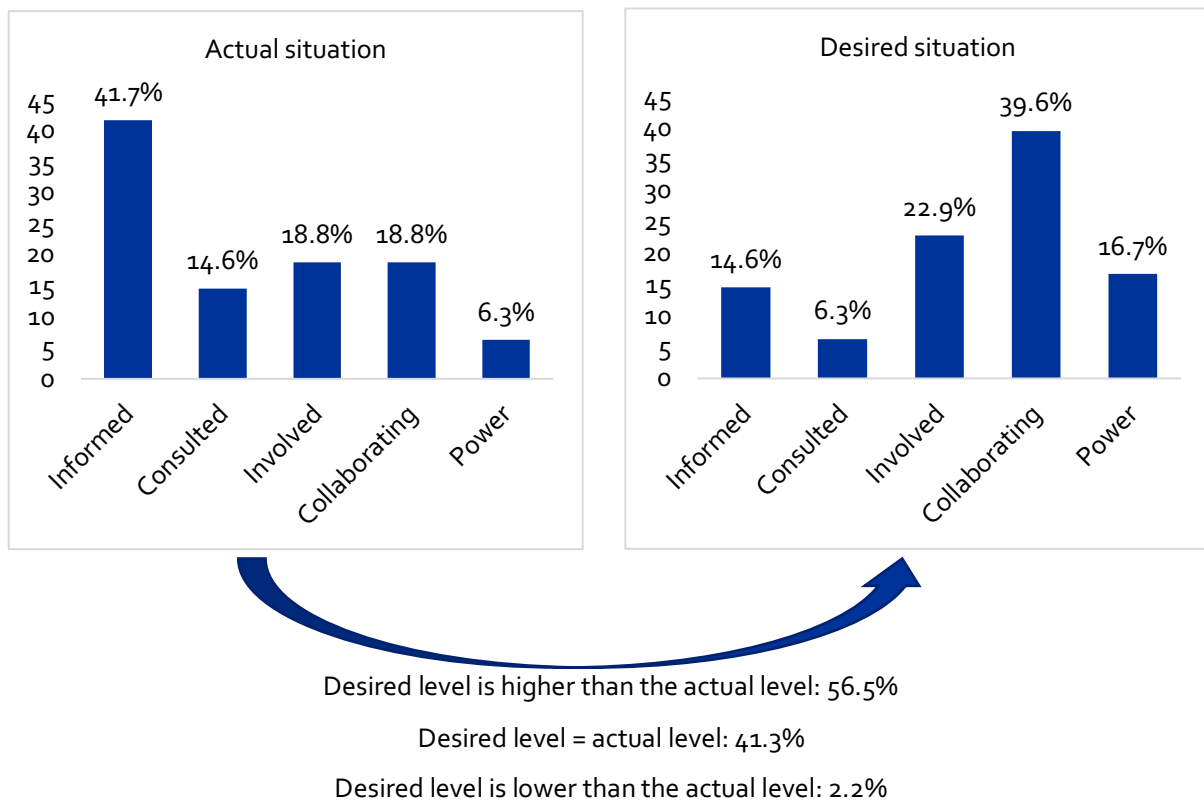


Figure 10 demonstrates that there were differences between prisoners' actual and desired level of involvement in prison life. According to 41.7%, the actual involvement of prisoners at the end of the learning area was situated at the level of informing, and 14.6% situated it at the level of consulting. These two levels were the less desired levels (14.1% and 6.3% respectively). 22.9% of the respondents wanted to reach the level of involvement, 39.6% of collaborating and 16.7% of having power.

56.5% of the respondents desired a higher level of involvement, 41.3% indicated that the desired level of prisoners' involvement is already obtained, and 2.2% of the respondents noted that the desired level of prisoners' involvement is lower than the actual level of involvement.

5. Future perspective on setting up active citizenship activities in prison

We asked some questions about the future perspective on setting up active citizenship activities during the group interviews with the facilitators and the PAC-partners. For instance: "Do the learning areas have a future?" and "What advice would you give to other people who would like to set up an active citizenship activity in prison, based on your experiences with the learning areas?" The PAC-consortium is convinced that the steps they took were important, but that the learning areas are only a starting point. Future experimentation is necessary to effectively embed the idea of active citizenship in European prisons.

Among the PAC-partners, facilitators and prisoners involved, there was a lot of **enthusiasm for the idea of implementing future active citizenship activities in prison**. For instance, several prisoners liked their participation so much that they would like to participate in a similar activity in the future. Other prisoners emphasized that the activity should be offered in other prisons as well. In the words of one of the prisoners:

"This [the learning area] should just happen every time with other prisons and other foundations. This is nice, because then you have contact with people, but you also give away information. Then they will get a different picture about prisoners than they have now."

However, with regard to the future of active citizenship activities in prisons, some points of attention that need to be taken into account when people wants to set up an active citizenship activity were mentioned. For a complete overview on how to set up an active citizenship activity we would like to refer to the participation toolkit 'Citizens Inside: A guide to creating active participation in prisons', which is available [here](#).

First, to structurally embed the idea of active citizenship for prisoners, it is essential to have the explicit goal of creating **a culture in which active citizenship of prisoners would no longer be questioned**. Several facilitators and PAC-partners were aware that this would be a long process because implementing a cultural change is not something that immediately happens. It requests a change of attitudes of people working and living in prison. With this in mind, setting up active citizenship activities is something which cannot be done alone. Getting the **involvement and support of different actors** (e.g. prison staff, prison direction, ministries, prisoners) at the start and during the progress of the activity itself is essential. Getting the support of the different actors within prison requires an effective communication strategy. It is important to be open and talk about what is going to happen, to make sure that what you plan to do is important for them, to make the agreements clear and to include their wishes, expectations, rules, ideas, and concerns. Actually it is about co-producing the activity together. By doing that, a vision about active citizenship for prisoners can be created, shared and supported by everyone who is working and living in prison.

Another point of attention for the future is the difference between **continuously embedded and project-based active citizenship activities**. The learning areas have been tested in five European countries, but the idea behind the learning areas is not yet an everyday practice that have become sustainable and structurally embedded in many countries. However, some countries or prisons have decided to keep going after the six months that were initially foreseen in the framework of the PAC-project for developing and implementing the learning areas. For instance, in Belgium the two learning areas were from the beginning designed to become structural, implying that they would be organized and supported on a continuous basis. After the PAC-project was finished, they kept doing what they could to keep the learning areas lively

and make them more structural. Other learning areas functioned more as projects with a clear end goal (e.g. creating a magazine, working towards an exhibition, getting prisoners' input to improve the way of working of the own organization). These more project-based activities could not be implemented on a continuous, daily basis, but it may be possible to organize them on a regularly basis. For instance, one of the PAC-partners mentioned:

"The good thing about this [the learning area] is that they [the prisoners] get an impulse of seeing that things are positive and also because it is new. Even if the learning area would be organized every week, than it would also go down. It is also about realising that sometimes you need an impulse to do things. In prison x, they are thinking about organizing the learning area three or four times a year for a shorter period to give this impulse, also to the prisoners. When you make something structural, will it then have the same effort or not? This is something to question."

A third point of attention for the future is that to set up active citizenship activities in prison, **time and resources** are needed. Setting up active citizenship activities is time-consuming. It takes time to create involvement and support among different stakeholders like the prison management, prison staff, prisoners, etc. Especially when something starts from scratch, the period of six months which was foreseen within the PAC-project was not enough to set up an active citizenship activity. For instance, with regard to on of the PAC-partners indicated:

"When a big ambitious project like this learning area is set up, more time is needed to do stuff like that. It takes like half a year to organize it and to see if everything is okay. Also in another project [which was launched before the PAC-project itself], it took some time. The person who organized it needed one year to look around and to get things started. When it started, it was a success. Three to four months like in this learning area is too short to implement a prison community. All the basic conditions need to be fulfilled because when it is not there, it will not work."

Finally, what is possible in terms of setting up active citizenship activities also depends on the **local context**. What is possible in one prison or one country may not be possible in another prison or country. It is therefore important to take into account the local context into setting up active citizenship activities, as this is the background and framework against which the work has to be done.

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