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# ETI 7

## EDUCATIONAL TOOL TO INTEGRATE INMATES

Final Report

Public Part

## Project information

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## Executive Summary

Since the 1990's, all European societies have been experiencing a significant growth in their prison populations, and many face common problems of high levels of re-offending, and difficulties in the re-integration of ex-inmates into society and the labour market. Today, prison represents a way of management of offenders, a place where individuals are marginalised and controlled. Individuals who are considered dysfunctional in relation to normal societal rules have many complex problems and require extensive support to meet these needs. The condition of inmates or ex-inmates one of the most difficult in terms of social inclusion and labour market integration. Within the Lifelong Learning environment in Europe, **education** is seen as a powerful lever and instrument for change for these individuals who need extensive support for their transition. The ETI-7 project was designed to support this process, aimed at their re-integration in to civil society and the labour market, especially for those who have difficulties in accessing vocational education and training and learning.

The ETI 7 project was aimed at supporting these individuals, suffering from insufficient education; beneficiaries of the project are, thus, **ex-inmates** (recently out of prison and in need of support) and **inmates** (who may get access to alternative measures of detention). In addition, the ETI7 project was also targeted at the **VET system**, and to the trainers, teachers, counsellors, tutors and coaches involved in VET initiatives with prison institutions.

The ETI 7 project aimed to develop an **Educational Toolkit**, a sort of **package** able to provide the beneficiaries with knowledge, competences and skills, as well as methodological information about how to experience a working practice in the *care and social sector*, generally called the Third Sector. Thus, the project has designed, identified, tested, evaluated and disseminated the **Educational Toolkit to Integrate Inmates**, comprising a combination of tools: an **educational programme**, with learning/teaching methods and training materials (9 training modules), which can provide the target groups with required knowledge, competences and skills; and a **methodological content**, with pointers and guidelines about how to approach and undertake education and training practice in the Third Sector, with the involvement of Focus Groups in the designing and testing phases of the project.

The principles and the approaches underpinning ETI 7 are those of the **Restorative Justice** (Basic Principles on the use of restorative justice, ONU 2000; Recommendation (99)19 European Council); the opportunity to develop an educational and working experience in the care and social sector might allow the beneficiaries to undertake valuable motivating practice, useful for their social re-integration and assist them to become 'caring' individuals instead of 'excluded' ones.

The caring sector was chosen because of its positive social value; it can be significant for beneficiaries to undertake the process, as a new and important direction towards the civic and social coexistence of other categories that are also often excluded and disadvantaged (elderly, disabled, etc.).

Expected results and impacts of the project were as follows;

- encouragement of the acquisition of competences required for integration of the beneficiaries, through an education and work practice process;
- promotion of social/ labour integration ,by links to working opportunities in the Third Sector;
- re-inforcement of networking, with associations and NGOs involved in the social sector as well as with organisations in the field of education and prison environments.
- application of the principles of the Restorative Justice, as a possible model for the resolution of the consequences of a crime;
- development of a innovative intervention and prevention strategy potentially reducing levels of re-offending, by the identification of a new direction for the civic and social coexistence of disadvantaged individuals by the mutual relationships that normally operate in the care services sector.

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# 1. Project Objectives

The ETI-7 project addressed the objectives of the **Lifelong Learning Programme** to “contribute to increase participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups,”

The project’s objectives also addressed **Grundtvig sub-programme** Operational and Specific Objectives:

- *to assist people from vulnerable social groups and in marginal social contexts, in particular older people and those who have left education without basic qualifications, in order to give them alternative opportunities to access adult education **introducing them to an alternative educational pathway through a learning process and an ‘in-service’ experience, as an opportunity for a restorative process of change;***
- *developing alternative learning methods, approaches and tools encouraging the reintegration of marginalised and disadvantaged citizens into society and into the labour market **through a combination of the learning process (transfer of competences, awareness of capabilities and skills) with a real opportunity of work experience;***
- *helping to transform educational practice in prisons from a traditional education to a flexible and individually oriented education **through a different concept of education: a tailored and targeted one, aimed at providing social rehabilitation, able to let them individually elaborate and gain practices of the emotional, social and ethical charge, oriented to a realistic working experience, supported by a tutoring and accompanying measures, realised by the representatives of the Third Sector, as social services providers, organisations and voluntary association involved in caring activities;***
- *developing innovative prevention strategies helping to reduce levels of re-offending - **the Educational Toolkit is designed as a prevention instrument to reduce the level of recidivism, as it aims to give the beneficiaries a concrete opportunity of education, of work experience as well as “social redemption”***

The **concrete aim** of the project was to develop a **model of education and integration for inmates and ex-inmates** - designing, identifying, testing, evaluating and disseminating an education and labour re-integration alternative pathway, called “**Educational Tool**” that contains the educational and pedagogical material to improve the knowledge and to introduce to specific professional competences for accessing the care services one.

Specific Objectives and activities to achieve these were as follows;

1. ***To analyse beneficiaries’ needs and the social sector requirements in order to develop the project based on a “user centred approach” and to develop an “Educational Tool” targeted at meeting the needs of inmates and ex-inmates***
2. ***To design an educational package for inmates and ex-offenders, based on the results of an analysis and feasibility study***
3. ***To develop and undertake testing sessions for the Educational Tool, in order to verify the materials and the contents of the tool and delivery approaches to training and support***
4. ***To stimulate the creation of Focus Groups, a type of reference group, comprising representatives of the Penitentiary systems, Third Sector, and other key stakeholders, important in the role of ‘field experts’, reviewing, monitoring, testing, providing feedback as well as being able to diffuse and disseminate the project idea and its on-going and final results***
5. ***To identify all the potential users of the Educational Tool***
6. ***To disseminate and to valorise the Educational Tool, as a good practice model providing real opportunities for education and integration of specific disadvantaged groups (e.g. female prisoners, immigrant prisoners, etc.).***

## 2. Project Approach

The project approach utilised the main components of the transnational project management cycle: project planning, team building, transnational cooperation, evaluation, dissemination and valorisation.

Within this overall general approach, the project was organised and effectively undertaken in 8 work packages and phases, which were autonomous but which were closely linked to each other in order to ensure coherence and continuity to the project processes and effective project working. In order to gain the maximum benefit from partners' expertise, skills and specific experience, partners had different 'weights' inside Work Packages, being, in turn, 'guide' and 'supporter' to the partnership.

This meant that each partner, according to its specific experience and expertise, had the leadership of a Work Package; each WP leader coordinated the development of the related WP, together with the overall general project coordination which was undertaken by NAVET and by the Foundation VET EPA 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### Work Packages and Lead Responsibilities

Work Packages and partner organisation responsibilities in having lead roles were as follows;

- **WP1 Project Management: NAVET (BG)**
- **WP2 Analysis and Feasibility Study: ANJAF (PT)**
- **WP3 Conception of the Educational Tool: GIE (RO)**
- **WP4 Testing: COOSS MARCHE (IT)**
- **WP5 Development of the Educational Tool: VET EPA (BG)**
- **WP6 Exploitation: NOEMA (FI)**
- **WP7 Quality monitoring and evaluation: BBC (UK)**
- **WP7 Diffusion, dissemination, valorisation: STPKC (SE)**

### Approaches to Engagement and Involvement

There was effective engagement and involvement of the key stakeholders in the project. Effective stakeholder engagement and involvement ensured that the needs, wants, and expectations of the project stakeholders were captured as early as possible, and products were developed to meet these. Needs and expectations were proactively identified and any issues/concerns were addressed during the project. Engaging, involving, communicating, and delivering benefits to key stakeholders together with opportunities for future effective networking with relevant organisations and agencies were all important features in the project.

### Key Activities in the Project

Key activities in the project included the following elements;

#### Research

Research was aimed at defining a clear picture of the prison population in partner countries, as well as at identifying the training and educational needs of the beneficiaries. The result of the research activity was an Analysis and Feasibility Study. This was important to ensure that the Educational Toolkit met target group needs and those of other stakeholders in partner countries

### **Analysis and Feasibility Study**

Conducting an Analysis and Feasibility Study also assisted in measuring both the Project achievability and benefits, as well as gathering essential information for the development of project products and processes.

### **Conception and Testing**

The Conception and Testing phases were also essential in answering “What should be done?” and meeting the needs of the identified target groups and providing support for the various organisations, agencies and key stakeholders who support the complex needs of these groups. On this basis, the further development of the Educational Tool could then take place, informed by the findings of both of these phases.

### **Design and Product Development**

This was aimed at developing an educational model for inmates and ex-inmates, based on needs identification of target groups in order to provide them with knowledge, competences and support for their social and labour market integration. The result of these activities was an “Educational Tool” and Handbook comprising a range of different modules and training activities to support these target groups, and stakeholders and organisations that provide support for inmates and ex-inmates in partner countries.

### **Testing**

A total of 10 training sessions were undertaken from March 2009 to June 2009 by ETI 7 partners; 123 participants were involved, of which 107 were inmates or ex-inmates and 16 were prison administration staff and VET stakeholders (trainers, experts, focus group members, etc.). The training sessions were delivered by 10 trainers, representatives of the partners’ organisation or experts and professional trainers involved by partners.

The whole Training Programme was the subject of 1 specific testing initiative (undertaken by COOSS Marche), while the other initiatives focussed on testing modules of the Training Programme.

Overall, as a result of the test training sessions, useful suggestions and helpful feedback was gathered that assisted the ETI 7 partnership in improving the Training Programme design and, therefore, the development process of the Educational Tool and the final product.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation focused on the main tasks of the project: project management, the analysis and research, the development of modules, the testing and the Educational Toolkit materials, feedback from Focus Groups, dissemination, Project Partnership working and Partnership meetings. There were also two levels of evaluation - internal and external. Evaluation at an internal level was undertaken by partners with the agreed use of a specifically designed and tailored package of evaluation instruments. At an external level there was involvement of focus groups and key stakeholders, including representatives of prison administrations, VET systems and Prison Education Systems, inmates, ex-inmates, trainers, tutors and third sector representation. A Package of Evaluation Instruments for the Project was developed.

### **Dissemination**

This was aimed at providing information and undertaking activities both during and after the project to promote awareness and understanding of key activities and elements of the project. This was also designed to ensure that project and its results have impact, and to assist in making the “Educational Tool” an example of good practice transferable to other prison contexts and in other European countries.

### **Exploitation**

This was aimed at promoting the use and mainstreaming of the Educational Model in partner countries, as an innovative approach that can be implemented in support and transition programmes for these target groups in prison education, in other contexts and potentially with other disadvantaged target groups.

### **Working methods**

The working methods used in undertaking the project were:

- Coordinating desk-based research results (including a survey/analysis) involving all partners;
- Questionnaire for needs analysis. The results of all aspect of the survey were analysed by the PMC;
- Focus group sessions, with the objective of validating and assessing the product and its features;
- A valorisation strategy, adopted by the partnership, developing 3 levels of dissemination: local/regional, national and transnational (MICRO-MASO-MACRO);
- Use of ICT to support project activities, in particular the dissemination phase (e.g. delivering e-format of leaflet, newsletters and documents);
- Internal evaluation, agreed by project partners and realised through periodical 6-monthly sessions;

Other methods and approaches that were used in the project included the following;

- partnership meetings, as examples of transnational cooperation and shared work;
- continuous and appropriate communication between partners, in order to make the internal decision process transparent and immediate;
- production of guidelines, reports, studies and deliverables, for internal and external use, in English and in partners' languages.

### 3. Project Outcomes & Results

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS OF ACHEVEMENTS/RESULTS
1. Work packages Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Six</b> Guidelines for WP were developed</li> </ul>
2. Progress report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Progress report was developed, submitted and approved by EACEA</li> </ul>
3. Final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Final report was developed and submitted to EACEA</li> </ul>
4. Transnational meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Six</b> Transnational meeting were organised</li> <li>• <b>Six</b> Minutes of meetings were developed</li> </ul>
5. Analysis Report and Feasibility Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seven</b> reports(<b>800 copies</b>) were published in BG(100 copies), EN(200 copies), PT(100 copies), IT(100 copies), RO(100 copies), SE(100 copies), FI(100 copies) languages</li> </ul>
6. Functional specifications of educational tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Functional specifications was produced</li> </ul>
7. Organisation of Seven Focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Guidelines for focus group was produced</li> <li>• <b>Nine</b> focus groups were organised</li> <li>• <b>One</b> Report on results of the focus groups organisation was produced.</li> </ul>
8. Piloting/ testing of the educational tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seven</b> testing sessions of the educational tool were organised</li> <li>• <b>One</b> Testing Report was developed</li> </ul>
9. Educational tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seven</b> handbooks (<b>800 copies</b>) were published in BG, EN, PT, IT, RO, SE, FI languages</li> </ul>
10. Exploitation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Exploitation Report was produced</li> </ul>
11. Instruments for project monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> package of Instruments for project monitoring and evaluation was produced and implemented in practice</li> </ul>
12. Internal Evaluation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Six</b> internal evaluation reports were conducted</li> </ul>
13. External assessment report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two</b> external assessment reports were conducted – one international and one BG national</li> </ul>
14. Project monitoring and evaluation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> overall project monitoring and evaluation report was produced</li> </ul>
15. Dissemination and Valorisation report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> Dissemination and Valorisation report was produced</li> </ul>
16. Dissemination activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>One</b> dissemination workshop in Italy and <b>three</b> dissemination seminars in Romania</li> </ul>
17. Project website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Project website</b> was realised - <a href="http://www.eti7.org">www.eti7.org</a></li> </ul>
18. VCP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Virtual Community Platform</b> was realised - <a href="http://www.eti7europroject.org">www.eti7europroject.org</a></li> </ul>
19. Leaflet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Seven</b> leaflets (1600 copies) in BG, EN, PT, IT, RO, SE, FI languages were published</li> </ul>
20. Posters and folders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two</b> posters were published – BG, IT</li> <li>• <b>One</b> Folder was produced – IT</li> </ul>

## 4. Partnerships

The partnership was composed of 8 institutions and organisations from all over Europe (2 from Bulgaria, and 1 from each of the following countries: Finland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Sweden and Scotland, covering a wide range of experience and expertise. The reliability of this consortium for achieving the project's goals and objectives was high, due to its unique combination of previous experience in specific fields of activity, which ensured not only the coherence of the activities performed during project implementation but also effectiveness in all activities. There were two institutions which supported the management activities of the project as a whole (the applicant and the coordinator), whose efforts were complemented by the experience of the other partner organisations in administrating European projects (this project partnership had been previously involved in a total of 51 EU projects). The applicant was a licensed body of the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria, providing expertise in the field of VET guidance, VET standards and qualifications, and monitoring and valorisation at a national level.

The project coordinator brought solid experience to the partnership through professional research, education, consultancy and co-ordination skills in the fields of VET and LLL, being actively engaged with the stakeholders and the representatives of the labour market and also having close contacts with prison administration staff.

The professional knowledge and competencies required for working with people in need of care was provided by the Italian partner, well experienced in the provision of social care services and support for the social integration of citizens and for their reintegration to the labour market.

In relation to the skills and expertise in the fields of new technology, virtual communities and portals - without which the real integration of inmates and ex-inmates in the outside world cannot be thought about or achieved – this was provided by the Finnish and Swedish partner organisations in the project. This also brought to the partnership knowledge in methods for flexible working and on-line learning. In addition, this ensured that their expertise in dissemination activities through the design, development and use of specific ICT-based tools could be utilised.

In order to be able to offer the project's target groups and beneficiaries effective integration after release from prison, the partnership included among its institutions a Portuguese organisation. It has considerable experience and expertise in this area and has achieved effective results in relation to harmonisation of the economic, social and cultural development of people and supporting social and professional integration.

The Romanian partner brought extensive experience and expertise in the fields of designing educational and didactic / professional evaluation tools, knowledge in LLL applied and field research, comparative studies, and development of LLL strategies and methodologies, essential in the project as one of its main outcomes was the Educational Toolkit .

The palette of the necessary skills and experience would not have been complete without the involvement in the partnership of a Scottish partner organisation. This partner brought to the project expertise and a successful track record in curriculum design, evaluation, guidance, learning and teaching in VET and LLL and training delivery.

In this way, the partnership of the ETI 7 project was not only a diverse one in terms of its geographic spread, but also had a solid professional composition based on partner expertise and previous experience related to the project's theme as well as to connected and related fields. The well chosen geographic distribution of the partner institutions conferred a special feature to this partnership, as it gathered western countries (such as IT, UK and PT), countries which have just recently joined EU (like BG and RO) which have specific approaches to dealing with the target groups, and Nordic countries (like FI and SE) in which the practices in managing inmates at a community level are quite advanced and there are many different aspects to legislation.

Thus, the multi-national partnership provided European added value to the project because of its many features, making it original and unique: the variety of involved partner organisations and their range of activities, the geographic placement on the European map, and the previous experience and the particular expertise held by each and every partner. This partnership composition ensured the successful achievement of the project's goals and outcomes.

At the same time, the fact that all partners involved had previously worked in European partnership projects represented additional value to the quality of this partnership and a guarantee of its ability to function effectively in such a European combination (all partner organisations are able to adapt themselves to the working environment specific to European partnerships, to understand the requirements and the needs of the others, to ensure the necessary standards of the project's outcomes and to observe the imposed calendar).

In addition to the project's partnership, national partnerships were established between the project local teams and representatives of the stakeholders, through the creation of 7 Focus Groups. These Focus Groups included representatives of the prison administration, social and health care systems, educators working with inmates/ex-inmates, local authorities, and representatives from the Third Sector.

These national partnerships were the bridge with the key stakeholders and had the role of reviewing and providing feedback on the draft *Educational Toolkit* and its content, structure, features and use. Specifically, the Focus Groups;

- provided local teams with contextual information which could be used within the ETI resource;
- gave advice and support in relation to ETI content;
- provided feedback on the structure of the ETI resource;
- assessed and validated its content;
- provided advice on proposed delivery of training and the use of the ETI resource.

The partnership worked effectively and successfully achieved the anticipated objectives and activities in the project.

There was a very capable and committed partnership in-place to carry out the project. The project sponsor, project manager and partners and stakeholders, who have shared goals and commitment, have been absolutely essential for the successful completion of the project. The project has successfully used a partnership approach in planning and delivering support for these target groups, using the right blend and mix of staff from different organisations in different partner countries in supporting the project and effectively achieving its objectives.

## 5. Plans for the Future

The ETI -7 project objectives were successfully achieved and its products and processes will provide valuable instruments and approaches which will support inmates and ex-inmates of prisons. In particular, the Educational Tool to Integrate Inmates will be an important instrument in education and training programmes delivered by a range of different organisations and agencies in partner countries. The use of the Toolkit, which provides an integrated package of materials and appropriate effective needs- driven support, could result in positive outcomes for many individuals in these target groups.

It is the view of the partnership that the end of the project does not mean the end of the dissemination or other activities.

The most important plans for the future are to:

- maintain contacts and reinforce networking established with key stakeholders during the project, and explore if the methodologies can be developed further in their work activities and support for these target groups.
- inform the community about what has been developed during the project using the websites of the different project partners, the project website and other means of communication
- show the benefits of using the toolkit to the organisations and agencies that work with inmates and ex-inmates (prison system, training organizations, third sector agencies and others) of each partner country, and to consolidate the work developed during the project (using newsletter or information in the websites about the project results)
- share the ETI-7 project results with other projects (National and transnational). These provide excellent opportunities to share what the project has successfully achieved and get feedback from projects doing similar work or facing similar problems and issues ( through seminars, conferences, transnational meetings etc).
- deliver the final products of the Project to new stakeholders.

A very strong platform for future provision and support has been established as well as experience, knowledge and expertise of staff and partners involved which could be used to support other organisations and agencies offering similar provision for the benefit of such target groups.

There is a real opportunity to build on the success of this project, and through multiplier activities, extend the model to other groups, other organisations in other countries, and that opportunity will be explored by partners. The project could provide a good practice example and model that could be replicated successfully in other countries if the right level and mix of support is provided.

## 6. Contribution to EU policies

Lifelong learning is, for the EU, "*the guiding principle for the development of education and training policy*". While promoting social inclusion and personal fulfilment, lifelong learning develops people's employability and adaptability, and is therefore a core element of the Jobs and Growth strategy. The ETI -7 Project fits with this description and this principle.

Lifelong learning includes learning for personal, civic and social as well as for employment-related purposes. It takes place in and outside the formal education and training systems. Lifelong learning implies raising investment in people and knowledge; promoting the acquisition of basic skills, including digital literacy; and broadening opportunities for innovative, more flexible forms of learning. The ETI -7 Project encompasses all of these elements.

European adult learning participation rates are lower than those of its major global competitors, whether in higher education, adult education or continuing vocational training, and participation in life-long learning activities varies considerably from one country to another. The ETI-7 Project is designed to assist these particular disadvantaged beneficiaries, whilst contributing to increased participation rates for these groups in the partner countries. Policies to increase participation in lifelong learning should therefore especially focus on low educated, participation of older age groups in education and training as well as on the regional dimension and the wider benefits of learning, that is those not directly associated with the needs of the labour market, but which are concerned with citizenship and social cohesion. The ETI-7 has addressed some of these inequalities for these disadvantaged groups.

It is also in line with the definition of lifelong learning which emphasises the importance of its four broad objectives of active citizenship, personal fulfilment, social inclusion, and employability, and which encompasses the full range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activity.

The ETI-7 Project was developed to support **Grundtvig** 4.2.6. Priority 6: Adult education for marginalised or disadvantaged citizens, including prisoners and ex-offenders.

Under this priority this project has focussed on:

- Developing alternative learning methods, approaches and tools encouraging the reintegration of marginalised and disadvantaged citizens into society and into the labour market;
- Benchmarking national systems and sharing examples of good practice on facilitating the learning process and social inclusion of marginalised citizens
- Helping to transform educational practice in prisons from a traditional education to a flexible and individually oriented education;
- Developing innovative prevention strategies helping to reduce levels of re-offending;
- Raising the quality of education in prisons by developing specialised training courses for teachers working in prisons;
- Improving the quality of prison education by making use of ICT.

The ETI-7 Project supports all of these areas.

The ETI-7 Project also links to the strategic document for the development of LLL in the EU (including the European Employment Strategy - EES) and its 6 priorities: Valuing learning; Information, guidance and counselling; Investing time and money in learning; Bringing together learners and learning opportunities; Basic skills; and Innovative pedagogy. In addition, the ETI-7 Project links to the objectives of EC Priorities and Programmes such as Equal and the second Transnational Exchange Programme (TEPEU Programmes) to promote co-operation and mutual learning on policies and programmes to combat social exclusion.

There are links to the EU 'Social Exclusion Programme' (SEP) and its Common Objectives and National Action Plans against Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The objectives are grouped under different headings: **“to facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services”** - this objective deals both with access to quality employment and with rights in areas such as adequate social protection; **“to live life with dignity”** - income, housing, healthcare, education etc.; **“to prevent the risks of exclusion”** - this includes the uses of technology, particularly to prevent exclusion of disabled people; avoidance of life crises such as indebtedness and promoting family solidarity 'in all its forms'; **“to help the most vulnerable”** - this deals with preventing exclusion of those most at risk of persistent poverty and promoting integration, action for children and for 'areas marked by exclusion'.

The ETI-7 project has promoted a co-ordinated partnership and inter-agency approach to tackling the employment needs of offenders, who have a very high rate of exclusion from the labour market. It has adopted a beneficiary centred and needs driven approach that includes wrap-around services in prison and beyond the prison gate, supports motivation to work, employability and skilled for employment readiness.

It also supports individually tailored interventions, supports the need for the prison system to provide training that is relevant to the labour market, and has cross-cutting links with programmes to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drugs. It ensures support and services are geared to preparing offenders for the job market by equipping them with work and life skills that start in prison with a focus on social care, and supports vocationally appropriate learning to help to prepare offenders /ex offenders for the job market by providing basic 'life-skills' along with vocational skills (for both adults and young people). It ensures that all stakeholders are effectively engaged and supported, and provides on-going transition and workplace support to both ex-offenders and employers.

## 7. Innovative Features

There were a number of innovative features and elements of this project, which successfully adopted a needs driven and user centred approach to meet both target group and stakeholder needs.

The target beneficiaries of this project are often trapped in a vicious cycle and downward spiral of unemployment, poverty and re-offending, which contributes to a high exclusion from jobs, homes and families. All of these factors usually reinforce feelings of failure, which in turn act as a significant barrier to their addressing their offending behaviour. The project will enable these beneficiaries to break out of that potential cycle, and provide them with skills and qualifications, related to employability, which will impact on their future lives, work and family. It will also reinforce the important principle and practice of restorative justice and reduce re-offending.

The project was about supporting a change process for these target groups in a period of transition in and through what is a key change which has already taken place – in the case of ex-inmates, or will take place in the future, for existing inmates on their release from prison.

The difficulties, problems and issues surrounding the needs of this particular group cannot be met by conventional measures or by standard approaches to delivery of training and support. The innovative and integrated approach which has been used has sought to add value to existing measures and delivery patterns and provide materials to support change and transition. It also provides opportunities and direction for these target groups and alternative pathways for their future lives and work.

The project was innovative in the following ways:

- It is an innovative Education and Training Support Programme which can stimulate and motivate these disadvantaged individuals, together with the provision of appropriate support for their transition.
- The philosophy and training materials which were developed in the project were based on innovative principles, and tested and trialled effectively in practice to meet target group and stakeholder needs.
- The project is specifically targeted at an 'excluded' target group, who themselves can be seen as 'victims' of a discrimination process which can lead or contribute to their social exclusion.
- It has developed a tailor-made "Educational Tool", based on a needs-driven and users-centred approach, to meet the specific, complex and unique needs and support requirements of this target group population.
- It combines and meets the needs of two different fields or sectors; the penitentiary system and the care services sector.
- The "Educational Tool" can be seen to have significant social value, with social contents and potential social impacts.
- It 'opens' new approaches and opportunities for the integration of individuals coming from prison environments, based on the assumption and premise that it is possible to 'redeem' inmates and ex-inmates, through an educational and social process.

In relation to the European dimension, innovation was reflected in the following;

- Implementation of a new model of educational and transition support for this disadvantaged group;

- Selection of partner organisations and countries to research, design, test, develop, exploit evaluate, disseminate, diffuse and valorise project products and processes
- Implementation of a strategy for diffusion, dissemination and valorisation of the project as well as for the learning and support process
- Contribution to the existing European and national training systems and practices through training and development of educational tools.

In addition, there were innovative elements related to the *integrated approach* used for the learning and support process:

**a)** Multi-faceted systemic service which includes very different functions, areas and fields.

- *Functions*: informing, advising, coaching, consulting, mentoring, etc.
- *Areas*: family, accommodation, finance, gender, conflict resolution, etc.
- *Fields*: different organisations, activities, professions and types.

**b)** The goal of learning activities is to find the most effective solution which *connects three key elements*:

- *Individual*: with her/his aspirations, potential, talents, education and training background, skills, etc.
- *Education and training opportunities*: in a "non-traditional environment".
- *National/regional/local opportunities*: and trends in the "identified area".

**c)** For the project partners and their networks:

- *Common concept/approach*: to the education process, with several European countries to address the needs of key stakeholders and prison administration staff to establish and develop national VET activities.
- *Methodology*: for needs analysis and feasibility study development.
- *New model and instruments*: for VET processes in non-traditional environments.
- *New evaluation and assessment*: instruments specifically designed for testing and future use of the Educational Tool and delivery of training and support.
- *Richness of the network*: between partners and organisations from different countries through the use of a common concept/approach in meeting the support needs of these disadvantaged target groups.

