



## ICONET

# Good Practice Model Romania



Ministerul Justiției, Administrația Națională a Penitenciarelor, RO



# Good Practice Model

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## STAFF LEARNING EVENTS TOWARDS ENABLING THE INFORMAL SKILLS VALORIZATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

### Summary

The practice model we present here refers to a possible model of organizing learning events for staff working in the counseling, therapeutic and educational programs addressed to young people in prisons. The model propose a reflective approach of the existing practices in working with young people in prisons and ways to empower the staff in order to use different kind of tools for a better valorization of the informal skills and competences of disadvantaged young persons in the penitentiary system.

### Situation

What was the setting in which this project occurred? A tagline for you project or work.  
Describe the user group and the work context

Recognition of informal learning in Romania benefits by a legislation that allow any citizen to address their requirements for evaluation of competences acquired in informal context. The system of recognition comprise Local Evaluation Centers for Informal Competences that are entitled to issue appropriate certification based on a specific evaluation procedure. In spite of the legislative regulations and institutional settings, the reality shows that the process is actually difficult and sometimes exclusivist, as far as only people that have access to information and generally speaking highly qualified population address this national service.

The number of disadvantaged people accessing the informal competences recognition services is very low, firstly because of limited information regarding the access to the services and secondly because the low social recognition on the Labour market of those certificates. In case of our target groups consisting on young people in prisons the access to those services is almost inexistent, as far as the penitentiary system didn't implement any kind of structures or procedures for recognition of informal learning.



### **Task/Problem**

Describe what you are trying to achieve, e.g. a problem you have encountered in your work and you wanted to solve!

The staff training offer in using different kind of tools for valorization of informal skills of young imprisoned people is rather limited in Romania, although there are a lot of other intervention tools that are used in the process of social and educational rehabilitation of young people in prisons. Sharing experiences and reflection upon the approaches and used practices between different categories of staff might bring more understanding and effectiveness in valorization of what young people in prisons can do, rather than what they can not do, as usually refers when we discuss about those disadvantaged categories.



### Actions/solutions

How did you address the issue? What was done to solve the problem?

The audience of the learning event was staff working in prisons or educational centers for young delinquents. The group comprises 11 persons that are working as: social assistant, psychologist, sociologist or educator. All of them are graduated higher education institution in the field of social assistance, educational sciences, psychology or sociology. They all have direct contact with the young people on a regular bases, providing different services like: counseling, education, psychological therapy.

A small research team from the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) organized one day learning event. The ISE team have a large training experience and the trainers tried to facilitate the process.

Main determinants of the learning event approach were:

- using the experiences of audience in the learning examples and tasks;
- experiencing the ICONET tool in small groups by each of the participants;
- positive approach of the target groups they are working with

General objective of the learning event was to develop the skills of the participants to use the different tools for validation of informal skills in their specific context. Specific objectives of the learning events were:

- sharing participants experiences in working directly with the target group in the framework of daily activities;
- common understanding of the validation of informal and non-formal learning approach;
- experiencing (getting to know) different kind of tools;
- designing together a methodological aspects and criteria for implementation of ICONET tool or other related instruments in their specific institution.

The face to face training events was followed by online communication between participants. A virtual community of practice was created, hosting all the feedback and further discussion and reflections between staff involved in the process. Also, the community offers a set of relevant resources accessible by all interested public. The virtual community can be accessed the address: <http://training.ise.ro/course/view.php?id=31>



## Results

What were the outcomes of the actions you took? What happened? What contribute to the outcomes?

The face to face learning event, together with the exchanges of practices during the participation to the virtual community helped to create a common and trustful learning environment between all the staff involved and created a participative general atmosphere. The staff involved in the events declared they developed relevant professional competencies in the relationship with the young men by acquiring new knowledge and by developing some specific skills with respect of the use of new work instruments. Also, the staff involved recognize the benefits of the learning experience for a more personalized recuperative intervention program and of social reintegration programs, in general. Some of the staff reviewed the personalized psychosocial intervention plan and filling out the personal development file;

Some of the participants declared they acquired a better understanding of the young men's skills, experiences, abilities and adaptive resources. Others recognize that the participation to the virtual community helped them to acknowledge the advantages of using narrative methods.

Getting familiar with a tool which succeeds in creating an adequate framework for the development of the relationship with the young man (therapeutic relationship, mentorship, etc.) was also one of the benefits the staff revealed after the learning event. Moreover, some of the staff involved recognize that during the virtual communication they developed themselves relevant personal skills in order to reinforce competency enhancement behaviors and the young men's learning experiences and developed communication and negotiation skills in learning situations.



## Reflections

Lessons you've learnt and conclusions drawn. What was successful, what could be improved?

1. Most specialists from the penitentiaries and reeducation centers which participated in the learning events find appropriate to use different tools for identifying and validating the informal skills of young people in their institution, given, first of all, the impact it can have on young people. From this point of view, all staff involved appreciated the remarkable benefits of the tools to self-confidence, its utility for self-knowledge and social enhancement.
2. According to the specialists who participated in the events, this type of tools as ICONET tool could be added to the set of psychological tools used in the activities which aim at knowing the prisoners better and in the current professional counseling and orientation programs. More specifically, the ICONET tool could be useful in the last part of prison stay, when prisoners are getting ready for social and professional reintegration
3. For an optimum use of the ICONET tool in penitentiaries and reeducation centers, the tool should be adapted and improved, so that it should become relevant to the profile of young prisoners.
4. Some of the specialists who applied the interview have some reservations about the appropriateness of using this tool as part of current penitentiary activities. These reservations are mostly related to the amount of time needed in order to apply the ICONET tool, which is quite significant compared to the volume of work of a psychologist or social worker within the institution. This situation could be solved by acknowledging the specialists who use this tool and including them in a rewards system.
5. In order to disseminate the experience of piloting the ICONET tool, as well as in order to improve and adapt the tool to the specific characteristics of young prisoners and young people in reeducation centers, it is necessary for the specialists who conducted the interviews (but also for those who are interested in using this tool in the future) to get involved in a series of dissemination, research and innovation activities (seminars, conferences, experience exchanges in Romania and abroad).
6. If there is enough interest in future activities related to the adaptation and use of the ICONET tool in penitentiaries and reeducation centers, the Institute for Educational Sciences can provide the necessary training and dissemination expertise. In order to do this, a financing source should be identified, which shall support this activity by means of a national or European project.
7. Given the results obtained following the application of the ICONET tool, this could become (with subsequent adaptations and improvements) a work instrument included in the "Education and psychosocial assistance file".



### Expenses, Resources

Training specific facilities (room, videoprojector, flipchart, colored pencils, cards)

Open sources facilities: virtual learning space, slide share, blogs

Training module design

### Attachments, Links, References

Pictures from the learning event in Romania - Slide share presentation attached – to be sent to Randolph

### Support

Magda Balica

Researcher

Institute of Educational Sciences

Bucharest, Romania

magda.balica@ise.ro

### Tags

Informal learning

Learning event

Skills

Community of practice