



DIGICOR

Implementing Video Conferencing solutions with Courts

Scenario Description

DIGICOR Digital Scenarios

Recognising the marked resistance of European penitentiary services towards technological modernisation, the Digital Scenarios seek to directly influence senior officers and those responsible for the operational management of penitentiary settings by aggregating and disseminating innovative and evidence-based practices in the field of digital readiness in prisons.

Raising these stakeholders' awareness regarding the benefits of well-implemented digital solutions in the prison setting, namely in what concerns inmate rehabilitation, will contribute to enhancing the prison services openness towards modernisation.

Scenarios to be developed:

Inmate communications

- Scenario 1: Telephony
- Scenario 2: Videocall and video visitation
- Scenario 3: Secure e-mail/text messages/digital letters

Education and e-learning

- Scenario 4: e-learning and access to online resources

Digital self-service solutions

- Scenario 5: implementing integrated digital self-service solutions

Training and treatment using Virtual and Augmented reality

- Scenario 6: Inmate's treatment and training using VR
- Scenario 7: Officers training using VR and AR

Videoconference with courts

- Scenario 8: Implementing videoconference systems with courts

Telemedicine

- Scenario 9: Implementing telemedicine

Offender and Case Management Systems

- Scenario 10: Implementing offender and case management systems

Electronic monitoring in prisons and probation

- Scenario 11: Implementing an EM project (RFID and GPS)
- Scenario 12: Implementing an EM project (mobile phone)
- Scenario 13: Implementing an inmate monitoring system in a correctional environment

Smart Prisons and digital transformation in corrections

- Scenario 14: Implementing a "Smart Prison initiative"

Artificial Intelligence in corrections

- Scenario 15: Using AI and xAI in prisons and probation

DIGICOR Digital Scenario Form

Scenario #: 8 Implementing Video Conferencing solutions with Courts

Problem/problems that it aims to solve:

Research has consistently shown that the use of Video Conferencing in court cases reduces the costs of transporting inmates, reduces the security risks in inmate transfer, helps to alleviate overcrowding, assists with meeting legal deadlines and provides easier access to the courts where long distances must be travelled to attend court.

Description of the solution:

Video Conferencing for court appearances can be solved in several ways:

- Video Booths on the landings or in Kiosks that are easily accessible to inmates.
- Video Conferencing in the cells.

Expected benefits:

For the organisation and staff:

- Reduces the costs of transporting inmates.
- Reduces the security risks in inmate transfer, in terms of possible escape and the smuggling of contraband
- Helps to alleviate overcrowding
- Assists with meeting legal deadlines
- Provides easier access to the courts where long distances have to be travelled to attend court.
- Staff are freed up to do more high-value duties.

For the inmates:

- Avoids inmates having to travel long distances to attend court for what is often a brief hearing before the court
- Allows inmates to attend court without major interruption to their daily routine.

Evidence of effectiveness:

Empirical evidence shows that virtual court hearings have the potential to reduce the security risks associated with prisoner transfer, reduce the costs associated with transporting from prison to the criminal court and return; allow greater access to justice through a hearing, helping to alleviate overcrowding and the number of pre-trial prisoners who do not pose a threat to public safety; and provide a useful tool for rural jurisdictions that would otherwise have difficulty meeting legal deadlines for holding custody hearings (Davies and Matelevich-Hoang, 2015).

Videoconferencing in courts (VC is one of the measures proposed by the 2019-2023 action plan European e-Justice. VC facilitates distance hearings, reduces the costs associated with criminal proceedings (Graur 2020), enhances security, and speeds up proceedings (Devaux 2017; 2018) and is used in many jurisdictions for cross-border proceedings. VC allows children to testify without seeing the offender (Ali and Al-Junaid 2019). In a comparison of penology in Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and France, Shiyaba *et al.* (2020) note VC as one of the most effective and advanced means for conducting remote trials and protecting defendants, witnesses, and victims.

Key phases of the implementation:

Phases of implementation will vary depending on the extent of the project undertaken. The list below outlines some of the key phases for a successful implementation.

- Extensive market soundings are undertaken to ensure best-of-breed solutions.
- Consideration is given to having a Proof of Concept and/or Pilot Phase to ensure that the requirements are fully understood and agreed upon.
- A cost benefit exercise is undertaken to ensure the costs and benefits are understood and that sufficient funding is in place.
- A comprehensive tender process is undertaken once the requirements are agreed upon.
- Buy in is obtained from Senior Management, Judges, Staff and Staff representatives from both prisons and courts through extensive engagement.
- Communication to ensure the benefits are understood by management, staff and inmates.
- A change management exercise is undertaken and local champions of change are put in place.
- The project is carefully planned and managed from start to finish.
- Clear and agreed objectives are outlined so it is understood what success means.
- Post project reviews are undertaken.

Key success factors:

It is recommended that before undertaking any project of this type that:

- Extensive market soundings are undertaken to ensure best-of-breed solutions.
- Consideration is given to having a Proof of Concept and/or Pilot Phase to ensure that the requirements are fully understood and agreed upon.
- A cost benefit exercise is undertaken to ensure the costs and benefits are understood and that sufficient funding is in place.
- A comprehensive tender process is undertaken once the requirements are agreed upon.

- Buy in is obtained from Senior Management, Judges, Staff and Staff representatives from both prisons and courts through extensive engagement.
- A change management exercise is undertaken and local champions of change are put in place.
- The project is carefully planned and managed from start to finish.
- Clear and agreed objectives are outlined so it is understood what success means.
- Engagement to ensure the benefits are understood by management, staff and inmates.
- Post project reviews are undertaken.

Key risk factors:

Key risks to note are:

- No proof of concept and/or Pilot Phase to ensure that the requirements are fully understood and agreed upon.
- No cost benefit exercise is undertaken to ensure the costs and benefits are understood and that sufficient funding is in place.
- No clear understanding of the market options available that potentially lead to a poorly tendered solution.
- Lack of buy in from Senior Management, Judges, Staff and Staff representatives from both prisons and courts.
- No change management and/or local champions of change.
- Lack of proper project planning.
- Insufficient engagement to ensure the benefits are understood by management, staff and inmates.
- No clear and agreed objectives for the project.

Jurisdictions in which it has been implemented:

Many countries in Europe have implemented some form of Video Conference to Courts for their prisons. Many of these solutions were driven in part by the Covid 19 pandemic. The UK was one of the first countries to implement VC for Courts. VC is also used in Northern Ireland, Ireland, France, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Italy, Lithuania, Scotland, Poland etc.

Specific Regulations to consider

These will vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction it is therefore recommended that an exercise to consider the specific regulations in your jurisdiction is undertaken as part of the pre-project planning phase.

Estimated implementation period:

This will vary depending on the extent and complexities of the project undertaken.

It is recommended that a detailed project plan is developed and agreed upon in conjunction with the selected service provider.

Estimated cost

This will vary depending on the option chosen. It is recommended that detailed market soundings are undertaken in advance of tender commencement to gain an understanding of potential solutions that best suit the requirements of the jurisdiction. The tender process itself will also serve to ensure the most economic and advantageous solution is obtained. It is also recommended that where possible the prisons and courts work together to agree on the solution best suited to both.

Useful resources:

<https://remotecourts.org/>
<http://www.europeanrights.eu/public/commenti/BRONZINI3-Gori-Pahladsingh.pdf>
<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/research-videoconferencing-post-arraignment-release-hearings-phase>

Main suppliers:

There are several suppliers in the market. The following list serves to give examples of some of the service providers. It is recommended that jurisdictions carry out detailed market soundings in advance of project commencement to gain an understanding of the market suppliers in their area.

- Pexip
- Involve
- Casedoc
- Cisco
- Polycom



DIGICOR

"Digitalisation in corrections towards reduced recidivism"
Erasmus+ Project Number 2020-1-DE02-KA226-VET-008330