

DIGITAL TRANSITIONS WORKING GROUPS

DIGITAL CHANGE IN PRISON

Prepared for

**DIGITAL
TRANSITIONS
WORKING GROUP**



DIGICOR
WORKING GROUPS

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INTRODUCTION



DIGICOR Working Group partners Interchange, IPS and the Belgian Ministry of Justice are proud to support conversations around digital readiness in prison and probation, begun during the [DIGICOR project](#). **Start learning today, via DIGICOR's online training programme for prison officer's digital readiness and ability to successfully interact, use and promote technological solutions in digital rehabilitation and reintegration.**



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If you work within the criminal justice system, then you are already part of the digital revolution which will fundamentally change the way that technology can support the rehabilitative aims of corrections. And you also know that Digital Change Management (DCM) is not easy. Navigating the course of adaptation in such a new field is full of 'firsts', and there are many challenges preventing colleagues, management and procurement contractors from welcoming, accepting, and executing change in a secure setting.

These case studies have been collected by colleagues in the [Digital Transitions Working Group](#) working in the front line of corrections. The aim of this publication is for the reader to gain access to potential solutions to barriers to DCM in prison and probation.

The aim of the working groups and of these case studies is to draw out concrete reasons why moving to digital can be challenging and what prison and probation services can do about it. We will use this information to advocate decision makers for relevant support.

We invite you to read the case studies and then to join us online in the dedicated [Digital Transitions Synergies Hub \(LinkedIn\)](#) to carry on the conversation.

THIS WORK FORMS PART OF THE ERASMUS PLUS PROJECT DIGICOR DIGITAL TRANSITION WORKING GROUP UNDER THE GRANT AGREEMENT - 2022-2-DE02-KA210-VET-000099538 DIGICOR DIGITAL TRANSITION WORKING GROUP

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS:



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WHY DOES DIGITAL REHABILITATION MATTER?

The post-pandemic pace of digital change in Europe's prisons is quickening but uneven. Front line staff may need to perform their jobs differently, and to reconsider the prisons rehabilitative mission. Where digital technology is present, it will commonly cover:

- Development of digital applications to support prisoner rehabilitation.
- Access to digital platforms to deliver education, vocational training.
- Therapeutic and behaviour change interventions such as alcohol and drug management courses.
- Facilitation of prisoner connections with families to support reintegration back into the community.

The recent **United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)** report into **Digital Rehabilitation in Prisons** gives a comprehensive overview of present challenges and opportunities in digital rehabilitation, noting that "Digital rehabilitation has some important potential benefits that include more accessible, enriching, flexible and cost-effective delivery of services, but also poses some significant ethical, technical, and operational challenges."

[Click here to be redirected to the UNICRI Digital Rehabilitation in Prisons report.](#)

WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE WORKING GROUPS?

Over 12 months, front line practitioners in criminal justice sectors, criminal justice service users, their families and professionals supporting them contributed to draft these case studies, and to support recommendations for digital change in prison. DIGITWG facilitated exchange between actors both to develop a common understanding of where key challenges lie in digital prison transformation and change management, and to develop recommendations for decision makers to apply a structured approach to whole-prison digitalisation.



Contributors from 8
European member states



Representing 5 groups
of criminal justice staff
and stakeholders



Working together in
person, online and via a
survey



USE OF E-LIS IN BREMEN PRISON, GERMANY

THE CHALLENGE

Led by [IBI Berlin](#), the **elis project - e-learning in the prison system** - has been working for many years to build media-supported modern learning conforming to security requirements of the German prison system. Elis constantly adapts to developments in the information society and the educational media market, supported by a network of decision-makers, committees and project participants that meet regularly to maintain a high standard of organisational and content-related work.

14 federal German states and the Republic of Austria use e-lis, but in the Federal State of Bremen, use of the system had stagnated, allowing Bremen Prison's user numbers to fall behind all other users.

MISSION

- To engage Bremen Prison staff in the current and future use of e-lis - what does the system offer? What do those staying in Bremen Prison urgently need?
- To have an impact on the number of prisoners using the e-lis system, supporting their digital learning and reintegration.

WHAT CHANGED?

- Strategic coordination of use of elis by Digital Technologies Manager in Bremen Ministry of Justice and Constitution
- Full review of elis use and potential in Bremen Prison
- Series of meetings with key stakeholders – wing officers, teachers, administrators. What do our prisoners need? What are the reintegration benefits of each elis function? What's a good fit for Bremen?
- Practice sessions, for stakeholders to try out existing and new functions of ELIS, ask questions, learn from peers
- Stakeholder buy-in for existing ELIS functions – what could this do today for prisoners on my wing?
- Agreed between them most beneficial future use of ELIS features – a clear plan for ELIS for the future
- Ongoing dialogue supported by the Digital Technologies Manager
- 2023 - increased uptake of ELIS within the year by over 100%



ELIS IN KLEVE PRISON
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**100% INCREASE IN PRISONER
USE OF ELIS IN 2023 THROUGH
ENGAGEMENT OF RELEVANT
STAKEHOLDERS**



TELEMEDICINE IN MARCHE-EN-FAMENNE PRISON

THE CHALLENGE

March-en-Famenne is a relatively remote prison in French-speaking Belgium, whose the main serving hospital some distance away. With 350 prisoners, significant police staff time taken up with visits to hospital. The prison reported 3-8 trips to hospital per day, plus the time of one prison officer to stay there for one-two hours. The hospital reported a lack of hospital place for inmates, particularly in south of Belgium, and some reluctance to take on prisoners, whose security needs add to existing concerns. Yet, previous attempts at introducing telemedicine had not been successful, with objections from people in prison and their legal advisors.

MISSION

- To engage with stakeholder concerns about the equivalence of healthcare – would something be missed if the person was not being checked in person?
- To react to new societal attitudes to what is 'normal' in terms of medical healthcare post-pandemic. Uptake of telemedicine tools has become more common in society, so that the call for prisoners to have the right to see a doctor face to face became less relevant.

WHAT CHANGED?

- For daily medical care (not emergencies) Google Lense + connected medical link, the internal medical staff of the prison can examine the inmate with the connected tools, and all the data is sent to the hospital so that the doctor can review it. There is a one-time cost of 8000EUR for the equipment but this is the only financial outlay.
- After the pilot in Marche en Famene in 2023, the rollout is due to take place in 8-10 Belgian prisons.

Steps to normalising use of telemedicine

1. Preparation and needs analysis of the connected material funded by Local Authorities (owner of the hospital)
2. Building cooperation and adopting common procedures. Connected material was paid for and developed by hospital.
3. Pilot phase took place during the pandemic with ongoing dialogue with people in prison and other stakeholders as telemedicine healthcare was becoming more accepted outside of prison.
4. Review and revise according to outcomes.
5. Phase 5: Look for funding and backing for full rollout.

During the review phase, the prison noted that Prison Officers and Trade Unions immediately supported the project as this takes the pressure off the staff. Staffing levels are currently low in Belgium and sending two officers with one inmate to hospital 4 times a day put real pressure on the whole prison. Hospitals were also pleased to have an alternative to hosting people from prison and their attendant security personnel.

AFTER THE PILOT IN MARCHE-EN-FAMENE IN 2023, THE ROLLOUT IS DUE TO TAKE PLACE IN 8-10 PRISONS.



DIGIMOST: DIGITAL LITERACY AND PEOPLE IN PRISON

THE CHALLENGE

Led by [RUBIKON Centre](#) in Czech Republic and [EDUKOS Centre](#) in Slovakia - both experienced providers of long-term work with clients that the lack of digital skills - DIGIMOST responds to the increasingly significant role in the complex cumulative social disadvantage of people leaving prison.

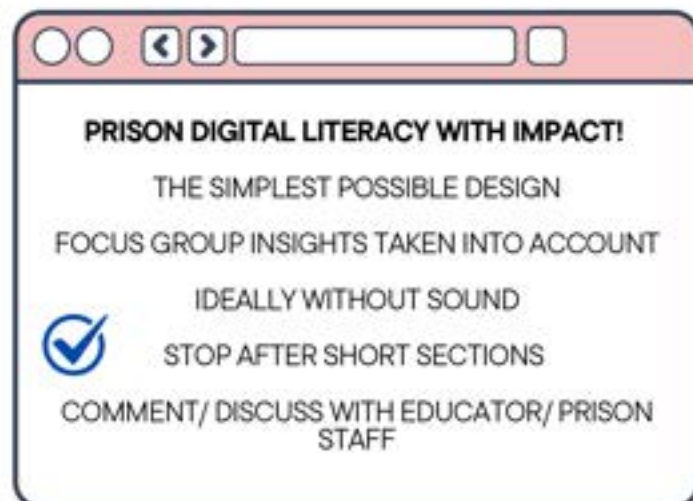
On release, people in prison are increasingly no longer able to access to banks, use chatbots to resolve issues, pair their speakers, connect with family on WhatsApp. This contributes to low self-esteem as people who were in prison ask "Who do I ask for help?". Quickly, this gap has become a barrier to mastering the routine tasks for a full life in freedom and is one of the barriers to successful integration.

MISSION

- DIGIMOST conducted two focus groups with clients recently released from prison: where do they need support most? These covered 58 female and male clients, and staff from three prisons.
- Using these results, they could break down the educational products based on the needs highlighted, and develop specific learning content as a preventative measure for people still in prison.

WHAT CHANGED?

E-learning modules for people in prison were developed, covering key areas such as 'Communication with people and robots combined with the topic of working with texts, numbers and images', 'How to protect your wallets and passwords online'



- The simplest possible design was used, without sound and in short sessions (3-5 minutes).
- A blended learning approach was used in delivery, and after each comment allowing time to expand the discussion to include e.g. their children's use of ChatGPT.

The modules were piloted by Rubikon at women's prison Nové Sedlo, Drahonice and men's prison in Rýnovice. By contextualizing the modules with discussion, the participants took the online world more seriously: they recognized their knowledge or lack of knowledge may affect others, such as their children.



DIGIMOST PRACTITIONERS FOUND THAT TEACHING THE INTERNET WITHOUT THE INTERNET OFTEN **LOST AUTHENTICITY, SO THERE ARE LIMITS TO HOW FAR THIS APPROACH CAN TAKE DIGITAL LITERACY.**

PARTICIPANTS SAW THAT THEIR KNOWLEDGE (OR LACK OF IT) MAY AFFECT OTHERS, SUCH AS THEIR CHILDREN.



REFRAMING DIGITAL REINTEGRATION DIALOGUES

THE CHALLENGE

Taken forward from [FrameWorks UK Bridges from prison: a communications toolkit for making the case for jobs and relationships](#), the Digital Transition Working Group spent time discussing the way we frame, talk about and position digital rehabilitation in the justice system, decision making, with our families and the media can open up space for a productive conversation. Using these tools, participants saw the value in countering common resistance to digital reintegration, to stop stakeholders rejecting growth messages and ideas without discussion.

MISSION

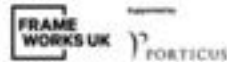
- DIGITWG participants noticed that by referring to prison sentences and rehabilitation, our 'messages' talk about why inmates or prisoners need digital support during and after incarceration.
- In doing so, we reinforce the language and ideas of punishment and deprivation rather than showing what could be achieved by digitally training people during their time in prison.
- Instead, we need to focus on the people in prison, and the societal benefit in supporting effective release.

Bridges from prison

A communications toolkit for making the case for jobs and relationships



WHAT CHANGED?



By tying new digital initiatives such as use of tablets to digital progress in society shows more clearly how and why supporting people leaving prison matters: Framing this as another aspect of digital progress ensures common understanding that everyone needs to be able to bank, vote, buy online. Everyone needs to have access to the benefits and be aware of the dangers.

In the toolkit, FrameWorks UK uses the metaphor of 'digital bridges' to bridge the digital gap between prison and the outside world. Explain what supports are needed and how these are now every day in our world: bridges to loved ones, communities, jobs, health and drug abuse support. In communicating digital change in prison we can:

- Appeal to pragmatism and emphasise practical solutions to digital tools in prison and to digital rehabilitation – like making sure families far away are able to virtually visit people in prison and spend meaningful time together.
- Expand understanding in concrete terms of how people in prison will be able to do e.g. given more internet access or given tablets to use.
- Tell stories that show how digital solutions work, to explain how we can do better – highlighting positive impacts, we can remind people what the impact could have been if they weren't in place.

REFRAMING BUILDS UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LEAVING PRISON COULD LOOK LIKE AND WHY IT'S NEEDED

TRANSVERSAL CONSIDERATIONS

* THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ALL DIGITAL INITIATIVES

Participants in the DIGITWG activities identified considerations that 'cut across' all the different tasks and roles we discussed in the case studies. Those we identified are detailed here:

ALIGN WITH EXISTING STANDARDS

Such as the Council of Europe, (2019). [Guidelines Regarding Recruitment, Selection, Education, Training And Professional Development Of Prison And Probation Staff](#) (Council of Europe) and the EU [Digital Competences Framework \(DigComp 2.2\)](#).

ACCESSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN PRISONERS

NEURODIVERSITY AND DIVERSITY INFORMED TRAINING METHODS

FAIR AND ETHICAL DATA MANAGEMENT

BEING TRANSPARENT ABOUT DATA USE AND DATA ACCESS

Standardised tools and resources via the [European Data Protection Board Guidelines and Recommendations, as these refer to police and justice.](#)

NATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF NORMALISATION IN DETENTION

The [European Prison Rules \(EPR\)](#) is a framework to help organise prison life as closely as possible to life outside the prison walls.

WHAT'S NEXT?

LINKED IN

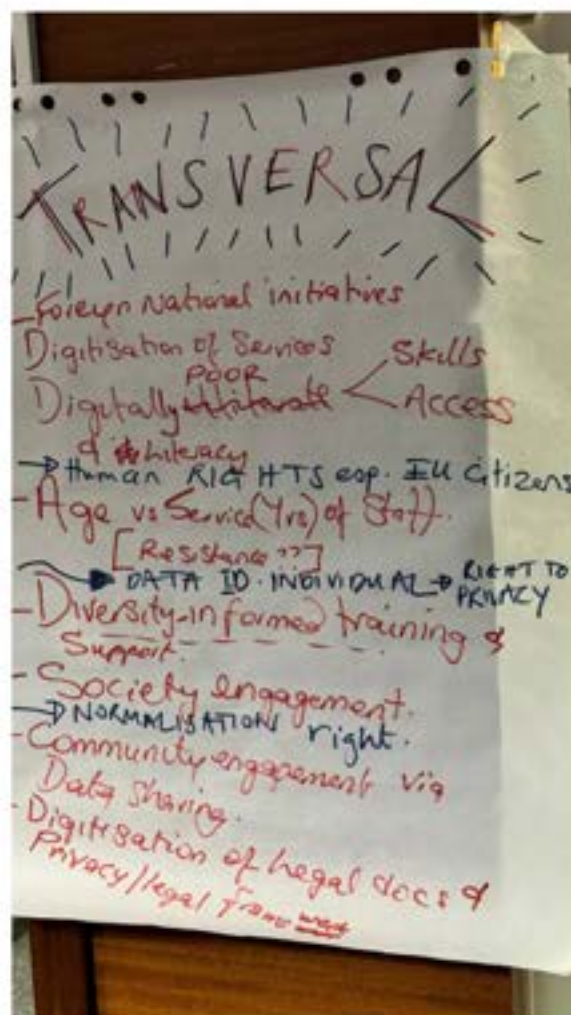
Join the next Digital Transitions Working Group online and stay posted about future study visits to detention facilities in Europe via the dedicated LinkedIn Group:

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12819163/>

NEXT WORKING GROUP MEETING

Do you want to stay connected with professionals across Europe in your field and updated with practical examples of how implementation teams have overcome challenges in implementing digital technology in prisons? We'll be keeping you update on the next working group meeting via the LinkedIn group above. If you're not on LinkedIn, email Interchange to join the mailing list:

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STAY IN TOUCH



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