



# CORRECTIONS CAREERS



## EUROPEAN CAREER COUNSELLING GUIDELINES **FOR STAFF WORKING** IN CRIMINAL CORRECTIONAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

# WP2

## 2.3 STRUCTURED PUBLIC HEARING



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# CCJ4C Development of policy action recommendations based on the evidence built in the project for the development of a career guidance mechanisms in Criminal Justice Systems

## Results of a public hearing on the CCJ4C WP5 Country Report Recommendations

### Inhalt

CCJ4C Development of policy action recommendations based on the evidence built in the project for the development of a career guidance mechanisms in Criminal Justice Systems .	1
Results of a public hearing on the CCJ4C WP5 Country Report Recommendations.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Agenda.....	1
Participants.....	2
Skills and Competences Required by Bremen's Prison Officers (from DACUMs) .....	4
Six skills identified as priorities for training.....	4
Seven competencies identified as priorities for training .....	5
Outcomes .....	5
Reference documents.....	8

### Introduction

The aim of this public hearing was to filter and validate the findings of the CCJ4C Country Report, which was itself a result of two activities:

- In WP2 a comprehensive research into the existing policy landscape around career development, guidance, personnel recruitment and training and
- In WP3 a DACUM workshop to validate the findings and confirm future needs specifically for the Federal State of Bremen, one of the 16 Federal German States.

Necessary information from the Country Report will be repeated to provide the reader with context, but essentially this report into the public hearing should be read against the backdrop of these previous findings.

### Agenda and Process

The Public Hearing took place over three hours on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022, online via Zoom. Participants were sent the agenda and the Bremen Country Reports in advance, so were informed about what would be discussed (content) and how their input would be requested (methodology). These notes are not intended as a stand-alone commentary on the training of German/Bremen correctional officers, but rather reflect the discussion of the professionals



participating in the workshop. Unfortunately, due to illness, not all of the professional groups responsible for the education, training, and continuing education of correctional officers were represented on 19/10/2022.

This report on the public hearing workshop is intended to make the results of the event available to those responsible for technical and legal supervision as well as to those responsible for personnel and organizational development in the justice departments. Furthermore, the results should be made available to the correctional schools, educational institutes of the federal states for comment. If colleges, universities or (criminological) research institutes are concerned with questions of vocational training, professionalization and practical support in the field of correctional services, this level should also be taken into account.

Participants came together with three key aims:

To filter and assess the skills and competencies recommended for further training for Bremen Prison Officers for future professional development – participants were asked to work in small groups and discuss if the skills and competencies were indeed lacking, if so what could be done and if not, why some prison officers felt that further training was needed.

To go on to make recommendations about policy, which could bring about some of the practical suggestions which had started to generate in the first discussion. Again in small groups, participants discussed which of the action points from the previous discussion were most important to prioritise, and what policy needs to change to make a difference.

A German-language version of this summary was sent to all participants prior to publication, to ensure that it is an accurate representation of the discussion. Where necessary, correct reference has been made to the relevant passage in the *Bremisches Jugendstrafvollzugsgesetz / Bremen Criminal Law*, or *BremJStVollzG*<sup>1</sup>.

## Participants

The online meeting attracted a wide range of experienced professionals from the Federal States of Bremen, Lower Saxony and North Rhine Westphalia.

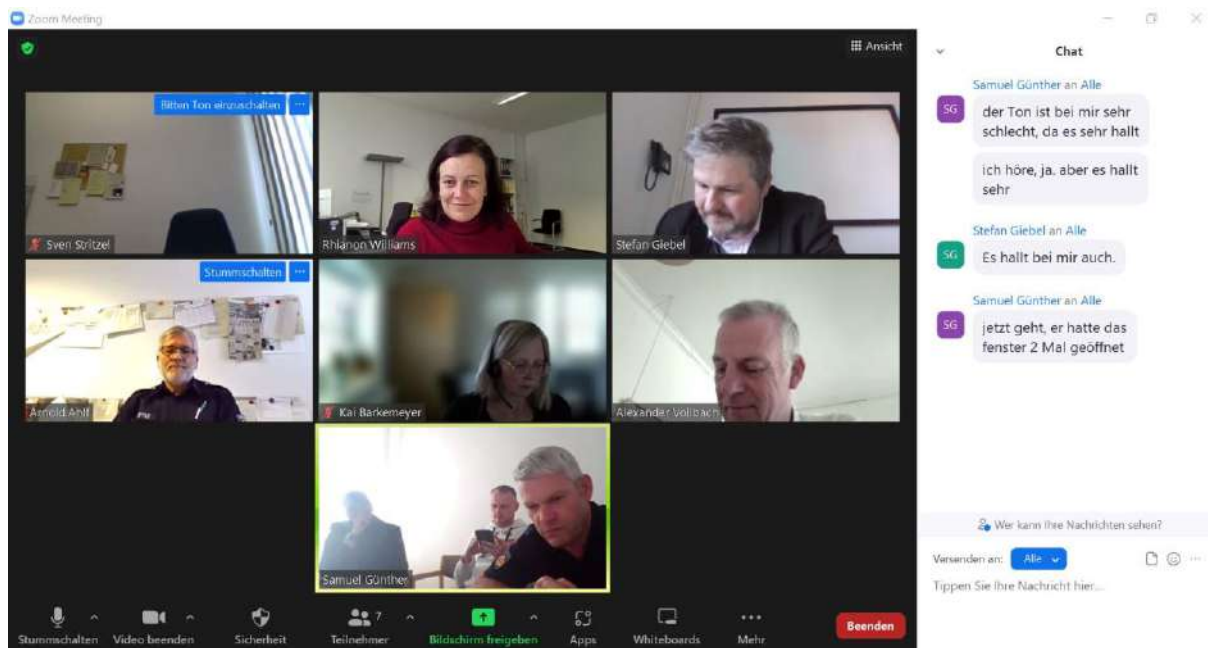
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<sup>1</sup> Gesetz über den Vollzug der Jugendstrafe im Land Bremen (Bremisches Jugendstrafvollzugsgesetz - BremJStVollzG) [https://www.transparenz.bremen.de/metainformationen/gesetz-ueber-den-vollzug-der-jugendstrafe-im-land-bremen-bremisches-jugendstrafvollzugsgesetz-bremjstvollzg-vom-27-maerz-2007-67928?asl=bremen203\\_tpgesetz.c.55340.de&template=20\\_gp\\_ifg\\_meta\\_detail\\_d](https://www.transparenz.bremen.de/metainformationen/gesetz-ueber-den-vollzug-der-jugendstrafe-im-land-bremen-bremisches-jugendstrafvollzugsgesetz-bremjstvollzg-vom-27-maerz-2007-67928?asl=bremen203_tpgesetz.c.55340.de&template=20_gp_ifg_meta_detail_d)



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## Skills and Competences Required by Bremen's Prison Officers (from DACUMs)

### Six skills identified as priorities for training

The German DACUM workshop results pointed out six current skills that are needed for prison officers:

- Intercultural competence through specific training;
- Awareness of rehabilitation needs, preparation for release procedures and aftercare structures;
- Urine control, escorted leave, security measures (such as conducting cell controls);
- Processing applications, correspondence with other authorities and institutions involved in the prisoners' care and rehabilitation, daily routines;
- Implementation of training contents; recognising needs in training, accepting existing training and putting it into place; and
- Continuous updating and development of specific specialised knowledge (in relation to special issues and basic knowledge, such as substance misuse and mental health).

## Seven competencies identified as priorities for training

During the DACUM workshop, participants agreed that the following skills are needed for prison officers in the future. Those highlighted in the list below in bold are themes dealt with in the following section on promising practice in Bremen:

- More knowledge about cultural specifics, civic education and awareness of different cultural and ethical values in society (then mirrored in prison); Intercultural skills and language competencies.
- Practical skills on how to cooperate and develop partnerships with relevant institutions and wider cooperation partners;
- More theoretical knowledge about the 'correct' way to deal with inmates, a competence so far almost exclusively obtained from professional practice;
- Improve the quality and practical knowledge of new colleagues, and improve the quality of exchange of competencies between incoming and outgoing staff<sup>2</sup>;
- Dealing with the danger of suicide/ suicidal thoughts of inmates;
- Dynamic reaction to very specific challenges in the shortest possible time as well as dealing with the emotional instability of staff and inmates caused by such events;
- Confidence and routine in dealing with technology and digital solutions;

## Outcomes of the discussion

- 1) **Fundamentally, those skills identified are already covered but could do with more revision:** (Almost) all the topics covered in the skills and competencies outlined in the Bremen Country Report are actually already part of the Bremen Correctional Officer Training Curriculum. The publication by Thes Blanck<sup>3</sup>, referenced during the workshop, had already evaluated examination regulations nationwide and attested that Bremen had a large proportion of social science training content there (in addition to "community studies, job-related psychology and pedagogy, criminology, and on correctional science). (loc. cit., p. 144 ff.). This curriculum is constantly being updated, and the practice-related sections in particular have been strengthened.

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<sup>2</sup> Responses from the Corrections Careers Prison Officer Needs Survey told us that there are a significant number (48%) of officers who have been in the service more than 11 years, of whom 33% had served more than 15 years. 21% of prison officers had worked for up to 2 years in the prison service.

<sup>3</sup> Thes Blanck, Die Ausbildung von Strafvollzugsbediensteten in Deutschland. Mönchengladbach : Forum Verlag Godesberg, 2015. - XXIV, 294 S. (Schriften zum Strafvollzug, Jugendstrafrecht und zur Kriminologie ; 54/ *The training of prison staff in Germany. Mönchengladbach : Forum Verlag Godesberg, 2015. - XXIV, 294 pp. (Papers on the penal system, juvenile criminal law, and criminology ; 54.*



**Suggested solution:** regular revision of parts of the curriculum might be a way to keep this knowledge fresher in the minds of employees. Suggestions for the adaptation of the training content currently come from the correctional schools and educational institutes of the states as well as from the units or departments in the state ministries of justice. Needs for revision also arise when these are reflected back from practice on the ground, e.g. from training officers, from the Federal Association of Prison Managers, from the trade unions, but also from practical research. Participants in the workshop suggested that parts of the curriculum be revised regularly, taking into account feedback from the field. This would also ensure that the training content is, on the one hand, technically/theoretically up to date and, on the other hand, does not lose touch with the dynamic practice on site.

**Suggested solution:** evaluation of skills and competencies at different points in the career. "Casework in the course of imprisonment and in correctional transition management and its regular evaluation is prescribed by law (§ 9 BremStVollzG). Furthermore, there is an injunction in Bremen Prison according to which, prior to release, the head of the department is to hold a "final discussion" with the prisoner in order to reflect on the course of imprisonment. It was suggested that this is an opportunity to reflect on one's own casework from the perspective of the "clients": in other fields of action, there are already "client surveys" (e.g., patient surveys in hospitals, but also in educational assistance, etc.) that provide information about the level of practice from the perspective of the (formerly) incarcerated. The panelists then asked who would be responsible for conducting the evaluation and how could it be ensured that the results of the evaluation would actually be used to make other decisions? Reference was made to the legally required "correctional treatment controlling" (e.g., § 93 BremStVollzG).

- 2) Just training prison officers will not guarantee they will stay in the service:** The discussion participants noted that more effective "evidence-based action" and decision-making is required in criminal justice - and thus also in the prison system. However, we should not assume that civil servants will continue their education just to be better informed professionally - professionalization is a good motivation, but promotion and better salary conditions are also part of that decision. In addition to the undoubted intrinsic motivation for continuing education and training, however, there also needs to be prospects for promotion and career advancement.

Continuing education also requires time off from work. However, after making an individual investment in education, employees are often expected to return to work



and make up for everything they missed during the training days. Continuing education and training time must be adequately accounted for in staffing levels.

**3) Prison Officers need to be much better represented and position in political lobbying.** Prison staff are just as central to security and prevention as police, yet are (in the Bundesländer, and in the European Union) under represented by decision makers, and overlooked by finance administrations. In comparison with the police, prison staff are under funded and under trained. The attractiveness of the criminal justice profession "behind bars" suffers. As a result, not enough correctional officers are trained, leading to an ever-increasing burden on existing staff and on the prison system.

**4) Training to become a prison officer must be more visible and should be designed to make prison service more attractive** – they should be alongside the police at young people's job fairs, should be making training more feasible for people who enter the prison service from a different career. However, this is just part of the picture: one participant also shared the experience of having attracted more new recruits to the service, who later found out there was no real possibility for promotion and who then left the prison service to work in Customs or the Police, which offer promotion, training and better salary.

**Suggested solution:** a nationwide research project, such as the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN) conducted 20 years ago<sup>4</sup>, would be welcome. Dr. Vollbach can suggest this via Bremen Ministry of Justice's membership in KrimZ, the central research institution of the BMJ and the German states.

Panelists suggested that such a research project could examine the following personal needs and the "attractiveness" of correctional service (in terms of salary and in terms of training/promotion and personal development). Updating this nationwide project could help the issue gain more traction at the state level.

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<sup>4</sup> Justizvollzug als Profession : Herausforderungen eines besonderen Tätigkeitsbereiches ; Befragung der Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeiter im niedersächsischen Justizvollzug ; das Forschungsprojekt und der Erhebungsbogen der standardisierten Befragung. Hannover : Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen e.V. (KFN), 2003. - 79 S. (Forschungsbericht / Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen).





**Suggested solution:** Bremen could learn from good practice, e.g. in Baden-Württemberg or Hamburg, on how to successfully advertise the recruitment and professionalization of correctional officer training and development.

A point that has not yet been examined in much detail in this context is also the inclusion and qualification of voluntary work in the correctional system. Reference should be made here to the relevant results of the VOLPRIS project.

### Reference documents

- A full literature review and country reports from all partners form the basis of this project work. This can be downloaded in 5 languages here:  
<https://www.careersincorrections.com/>
- Report of the Prison Officer Needs Analysis Survey (2020) carried out by the Corrections Careers partners is available here:  
<https://www.careersincorrections.com/>
- The following repository of Open Educational Resources (OERs) for prison staff:  
<https://correction-careers.com/>
- Thes Blanck, The training of prison staff in Germany. Mönchengladbach : Forum Verlag Godesberg, 2015. - XXIV, 294 pp. (Papers on the penal system, juvenile criminal law, and criminology ; 54.
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