



**CORRECTIONS**  
CAREERS

## **SECOND STAKEHOLDER CHECKPOINT** organised by CEIPES

**Palermo, Italy**  
**13th April 2021**



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## Preparatory activities

After the first stakeholder checkpoint organised in November 2020, CEIPES started to have a local network of stakeholders within the scope of CCJ4C project. The UIL trade union and its national network allowed CEIPES to get in touch with the regional representatives and inform them of the project activities. Between the first and the second meeting, CEIPES updated the stakeholders of the penitentiary system through a mailing list which also includes the prisons of the city "*Pagliarelli*", "*Malaspina*" and "*Ucciardone*".

In order to start working on the educational and training aspect, under the suggestion of the project coordinator, CEIPES started to contact different European stakeholders in the field of vocational training. In particular, Cedefop, the national Erasmus agency INAPP, the Kore University of Enna - department of adult professional training - were contacted. With each of these interlocutors, CEIPES carried out video calls to talk about the CCJ4C project and seek support on the existing contents that in the field of training for professional figures in different areas and especially in the penitentiary.

These two groups of interlocutors were invited to the second meeting, to carry out a focus group regarding the most suitable training for the prison staff.

CEIPES sent an e-mail invitation with a detailed agenda of the meeting and the main points of discussion.

## Second stakeholder checkpoint

The second focus group of the project took place online on April 13, 2021. All stakeholders were invited to participate and enrich the meeting with their experiences and their point of view to support the project.

Following, a detailed list of the participants:

- Silvia Calcavecchio - PM of CEIPES for CCJ4C project
- Claudia Vittorio – PM of CEIPES
- Giuseppe Tredici – Responsible of CEIPES employment agency
- Giuseppina Ferraro – Erasmus National Agency INAPP
- Gioacchino Veneziano – President of UIL trade union – Sicily







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- Sandro Pepe - Assistant chief of the Rebibbia prison police - deals with treatment activities combined with security.
- Stefano Capirizzi – President of UIL trade union – Apulia
- Salvatore Carbone – President of UIL trade union Piedmont

The stakeholder meeting started with a short presentation of CEIPES, its work at a local level and its involvement in CCJ4C project. The project was presented for the people did not attend the first meeting, giving details of its objectives and activities. The reasons behind the meeting were explored. Each participant introduced himself/herself talking about his/her professional role and experience.




### What is the CCJ4C project?

It is a project funded by the Erasmus Plus program, action line 3 and lasting 3 years, developed in partnership with various European bodies and institutions: prison police union (Romania), Bremen Ministry of Justice, experts in the educational field and training (Portugal, Norway), international organization for prison officers (ICPA).

**Target:** prison staff

**Objective:** to improve the career path of the target group, starting from the assumption that the long-term learning process is essential for anyone doing a job that deals with disadvantaged categories of people



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Then CEIPES got to the heart of the topic by presenting the salient points that emerged from the first focus group:

- The amount of work and the risks that prison staff have to bear, do not find sufficient gratification in the salary
- It is important to provide training on soft skills
- Teamwork with other professionals in the field is important



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- A group formation could create union between the various figures to go towards a common goal
- Up to now, burnout has always been one of the main problems, following the pandemic emergency, concerns have focused on the fear of being infected
- Recognition of mental health issues is a very sensitive issue, as you may be exempt from the service
- Problem of aggression, it unites both the juvenile and adult contexts
- Training is often not carried out due to a lack of staff
- The courses offered sometimes do not meet the needs of staff who would like to be trained especially on how to deal with conflict situations or on the knowledge of foreign languages (such as Arabic)
- The current training offer is lacking from a qualitative and quantitative point of view
- A distinction must be made between training organized by administrations, and that which could be offered by projects such as CCJ4C
- Different points of view with respect to the role of the agent, the dual function of treatment and security, seen by many as essential, is not shared by all
- Training on digital, languages and safety at work is required
- Difficulty dealing with inmates with mental distress
- The importance of having a space to speak, to discuss
- The change can start from the professional figures themselves, to embark on a virtuous circle of well-being within problematic contexts such as that of prisons

These points found great agreement among the participants, who showed a good knowledge of the problems shared by the prison staff at the national level.

The representative of the national agency took the floor and talked about her past as a lawyer which allowed her to observe the situation in prisons. She observed a great diversity between some prison structures and others: the “maximum security prisons” seems to be better organized. It’s possible to notice the difficulty of the agents, due to their important role, but







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there is not the attention they deserve. The difficulty of the inmates who remain, are kept perched for long hours in the cell - difficulties that could arise that resulted in greater aggression which then falls on the agents. This is a very delicate and relevant topic.

One of the UIL representatives took the floor saying that one of the biggest problems for the prison police is the lack of recognition of the type of activity they carry out, both in terms of security and treatment. Training is certainly useful, but it must not be imposed from above. One would probably expect a type of training with a strong psychological imprint, a support in which the agent can be followed.

Another union representative said that they feel their job like educators, not just agents. In fact, it is important for them to know and understand the orientation processes that are offered to the inmates once they are readmitted into society. Training is often required but is often of little use.

One of the participants stated that if the training is not requested by the authorities, no one will be motivated to do it.

Beyond the lack of social recognition and negative emphasis of social media - more treatment means more security. It should be ensured that the message that inmates don't feel good in prison is a message that the inmates themselves use for their interests. We should work on social recognition since prison most of the time comes out as a negative meaning.

The main question launched by CEIPES around which the discussion had to be built was: "What kind of training would be most useful in order to maintain a balance in working life and at the same time be supportive for the effective rehabilitation of prisoners?"

Among the main answers:

- External training and not internally so that the staff can really understand what are the needs that the prison police have.
- It's necessary to fight big problems such as:
  - Lack of staff;
  - No social recognition;
  - Training only as a third point

The UIL representative affirmed that "when there is a debate on prisons, in which there is talk of a reform on prison matters the prison police are never invited, there is no prison staff and this is the lack of recognition of their work. The prison police need a work on themselves, a psychological work on what their own work is and more awareness to increase their self-





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esteem, improving the human relationship. A psychological aid is necessary also for the penitentiary police. Inside the section during the shift an officer normally listens to 50 inmates, many of whom have a very serious problem. Thus, the agent becomes a “sponge”, observes the inmate, listens to him, internalize his problems. When the shift ends, the policeman finds himself in a tense psychological condition that is normally reversed in his private life.”

To help the debate, the representative of the CEIPES employment agency made a presentation of the transversal skills that could be useful to develop within the prison system.

**Examples of soft skills:**

- Problem solving
- Conflict management
- Stress management
- Assertiveness
- Proactivity

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UIL representatives commented the presentation on soft skills:

“This type of work leads the agent to work a lot on his/her psyche, the courses should focus on stress management (working on the agent's psyche is essential for a successful conflict management). Psychological aids hub in the prison would be of great use. Courses aimed at bringing greater management of the agent's stress with a propaedeutic training series so that the college can have greater self-esteem. Many agents are unmotivated, so it is necessary to bring the colleague to understand that the institutional work that is done is important. Rather than studying the penitentiary system, it could be better working on the psyche of the people. Reason why the suicides of the prison police are much higher. Being unmotivated is given by the lack of communication from the very rigid hierarchy. So it would be good a training that leads to the facilitation of human relationships.”



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“The conflict within the prisoners arises because many of the prisoners are Third country nationals or psychiatric prisoners. This country must understand how many prisoners it can hold.”

There is a strong hierarchy, the staff have difficulty in relating with superiors. It would be useful to reform relations between employees and between all agents and their superiors. A bridge should also be created between agents with more years of service and new ones.

Highly important is the prevention of conflict, which can be physical and psychological. Conflict management as part of the training could be useful in giving clear operational protocols. Sometimes the rules are not clear for everyone, when an agent needs to understand how to behave in front of a fight.

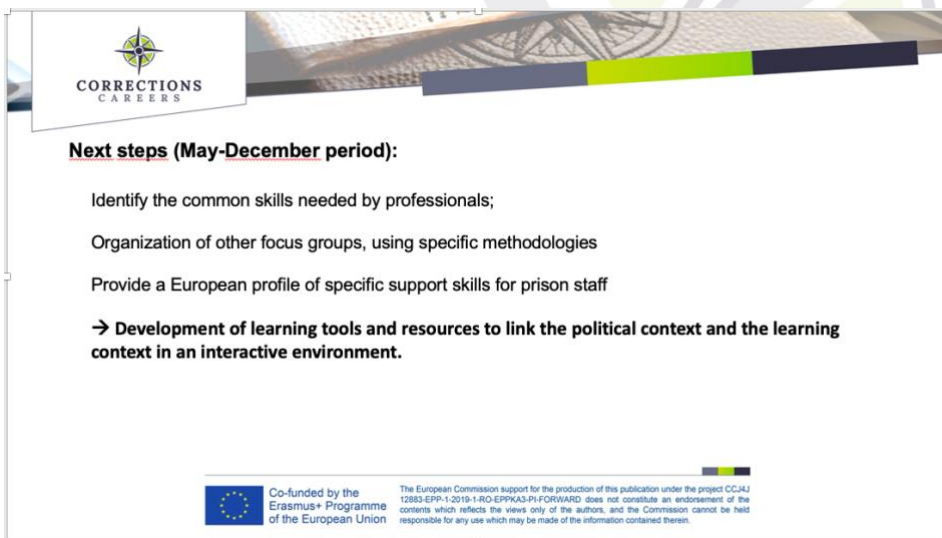
During the meeting there was a cyclical return to underline the lack of social recognition of the figure of the prison policeman. This aspect is strongly demotivating for the staff, who often see themselves as aggressive and careless of the inmates.

Regarding the possibility of developing training for the staff of the prison staff, the use of an online platform was discussed. According to some participants, the staff is old, so a virtual methodology of approaching the course contents would not work.

In general, retirement could be a valid tool to have a younger staff and therefore a prison staff that can be easier to administer distance education which is not adequate at the moment. There are no basic elements to be able to make agents follow this type of training. Doing face-to-face training would facilitate training between them and make exchanges between the different cities, also to be able to identify what the common interests are.

## Conclusions and next steps

The meeting ended with the presentation of the next steps of the project and with the commitment on the part of those present to continue with the involvement for the future project phases.



**Next steps (May-December period):**

- Identify the common skills needed by professionals;
- Organization of other focus groups, using specific methodologies
- Provide a European profile of specific support skills for prison staff
- **Development of learning tools and resources to link the political context and the learning context in an interactive environment.**

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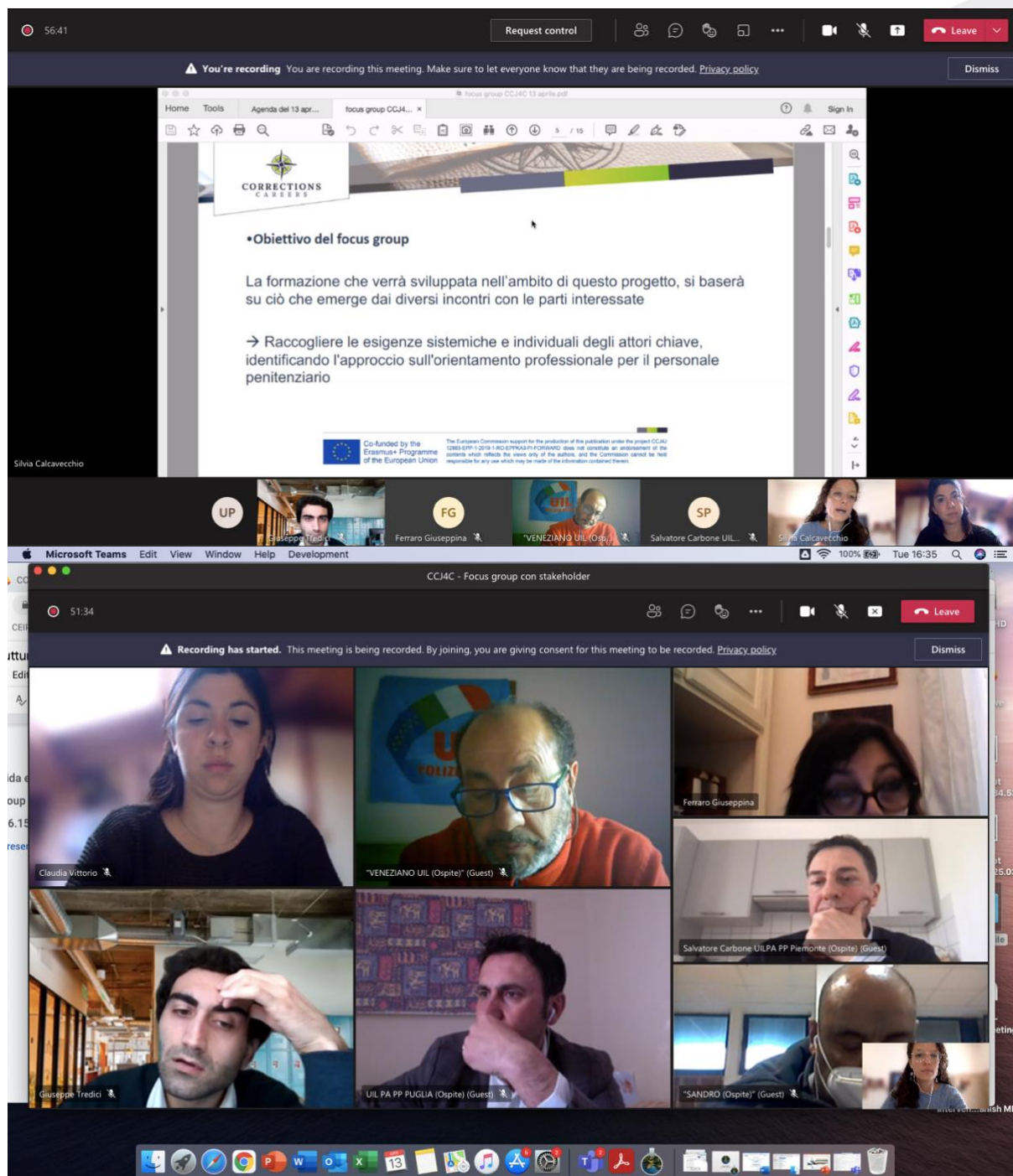
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Following some screenshot of the meeting:



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**Article published on the stakeholder checkpoint**

<https://ceipes.org/ccj4c-focus-group/>



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