



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

2021



Survey:  
**The Prison Officer Training**  
Proposals for improved training of  
**Danish prison Officers**



**CORRECTIONS**  
CAREERS

The report was possible with the special support by  
**The Danish Prison Federation (*Fængselsforbundet*) and Ministry of  
*Justice in Bremen***



**Freie  
Hansestadt  
Bremen**

---

## About CCJ4C Project

---

BrainLog in collaboration with all European partners is developing the **European Career Counselling Guidelines for Staff Working in Criminal Correctional Justice System (CCJ4C)**, which will address the staff retention and talent attraction **objectives** relating to social workers within the correctional system. The project will aim at:

- **Developing**, testing, and setting in a place a working methodology for improving the career guidance process in the criminal correctional justice focusing on the competences in-need to develop and manage your career.
- **Applying** to the European public agenda using a structural and guiding approach to career management in the prison system.
- **Running** and analyzing of the interested party.
- **Developing** ready-to-deploy solutions for the correctional staff.
- **Embedding** the solution at the prison administration level and identifying the indicators that suggest competencies.

Unsurprisingly, these **aims** overlap with the Danish Trade Union of prisoners which are addressing the following objectives:

- **Better** salary conditions based on negotiations and working environment;
- **Flexible** education applying to the changes;
- **Better** pension conditions for retirement;

Through CCJ4C project, BrainLog would like to assist the Danish Trade Union of Prison Officers for enhancing the staff retention, conditions and quality of work by developing career guidance tools and educational courses for social workers.

---

## Working Group Survey

---

In 2020, the Danish Prison Officers Union decided to set up a working group to focus on the large drop-out rate of prison officer trainees in Denmark, including how the Danish Prison and Probation Service employs, assesses and dismisses the officer trainees.

As part of the working group's work, the Danish Prison Officers Union has investigated the satisfaction with the prison officer training by sending out a questionnaire to students and internship supervisors. The survey mandate has been from November 2020 to March 2021. The questionnaire was answered by 217 people in the Danish Prison and Probation Service's four areas, of which **163** are students and **54** internship supervisors.

The response rate is **48 percent** among students and **64 percent** among internship supervisors.

The following issues have need identified by the working group:

- It is difficult for the Danish Prison and Probation Service to attract new applicants.
- About 30 percent of prison guard students drop out.
- Nearly 1,000 permanent officers have stopped over the past five years.
- The shortage of officers is putting pressure on the system with increased overtime, sick leave, and poor working environment.
- In total, the Danish Prison and Probation Service currently lacks more than 600 prison officers.

### **About the Working Group:**

The working group's focus has been to come up with proposals that can prevent the large drop-out rate of prison officer trainees and make proposals that can make the working conditions for the trainees more attractive.

To qualify the recommendations, we conducted a questionnaire survey among current prison officer trainees, internship counselors, and union representatives.

In addition, there has been a dialogue with the Danish Prison and Probation Service's training centers and other trade unions.

The working group's proposal is based on the questionnaire survey, the working group's overall work and the dialogue with the Danish Prison and Probation Service's training center.

### **The working group's 10 proposals to strengthen the prison officer education.**

#### *1. Better pay during school periods*

- Compare the prison officer education with a vocational education.

#### *2. Remove company-based training or significantly increase quality.*

- There are too many cancellations and unprepared tuition.
3. Let *the student officers start internships before school*.
    - The dropout rate is greatest in the beginning because the knowledge of the job is limited.
  4. *Strengthen the support of the officer trainees*.
    - Increase the number of internship supervisors.
  5. Introduce a ceiling for the number of students at each institution.
    - Distribute the students to several institutions - also larger detention centers.
  6. *Students must be trained by experienced prison officers*.
    - It is important that students have an experienced mentor to learn from.
  7. *The basic education must be more practically oriented*.
    - There is a need for greater knowledge of everyday tasks.
  8. *Are the Danish Prison and Probation Service's schools located in the right places?*
    - Many students experience the location of the schools as a challenge.
  9. Centralize the employment of prison officer trainees
    - Recruitment must be needs-based.
  10. Involve the union representatives in the students' training courses
    - The representatives want to take responsibility for hiring the right students.

---

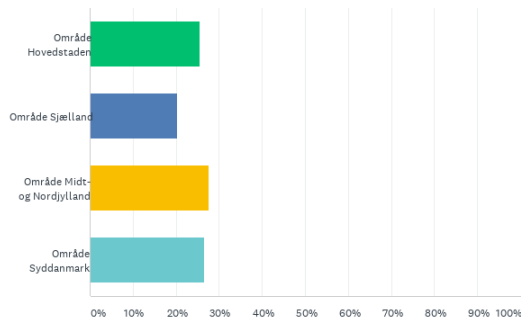
## Results

---

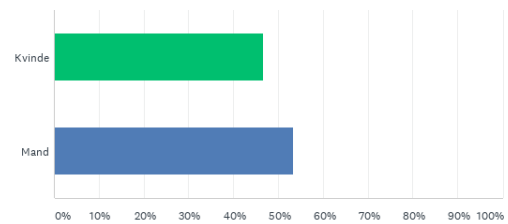
### Answers from students:

The average age among the students in the study is 33 years. 43 percent are first-year students, 37 percent second-year students and 20 percent third-year students. They are evenly distributed according to areas and gender. The majority have a high school education, and there are most students from Birkerød.

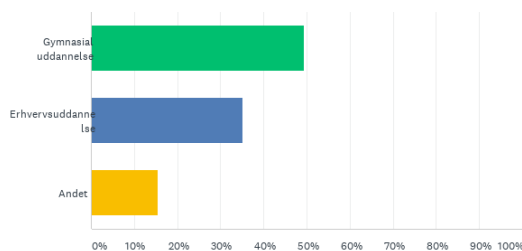
### Where do you work?



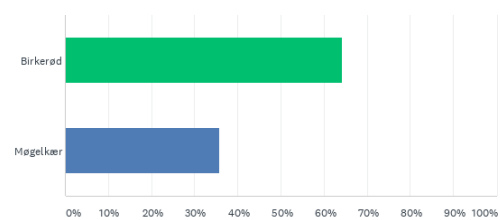
### Gender



### What school education do you have?



### What school are you at?



## Questions about school time:

Note: The training as a prison officer in Denmark lasts three years, spread over 7.5 months on the school bench in Birkerød / Møgelkær and 28.5 months in internship at an institution.

About the time at school a predominance of students in the survey assess:

That their expectations for the education have been met (45 percent are positive, while 21 percent are negative).

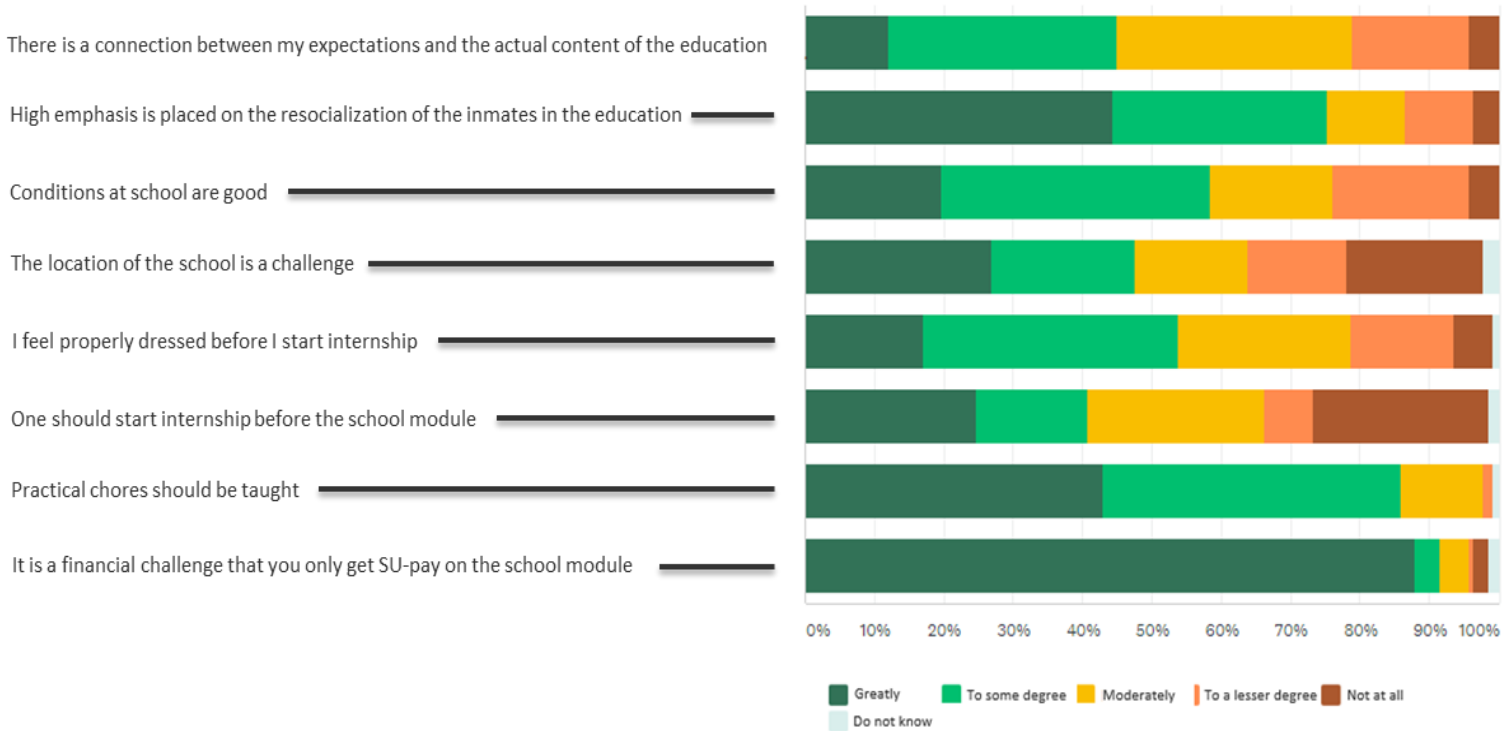
That they feel well dressed before the internship (54 percent are positive, while 20 percent are negative).

That practical chores should be taught (85 percent think so).

That the location of the schools is a problem (48 percent are negative, while 33 percent do not see the location as a problem).

That one should start an internship before the school module (44 percent think so, while 33 percent disagree).

That remuneration during school hours is a financial challenge (this corresponds to 92 percent of the students).



## Questions about internships:

About the internship, a predominance of the students in the study assesses:

That they got their desired internship (that corresponds to 89 percent).

That the company-based\* teaching does not make sense. That corresponds to 53 percent (only 12 percent answer that the teaching makes sense).

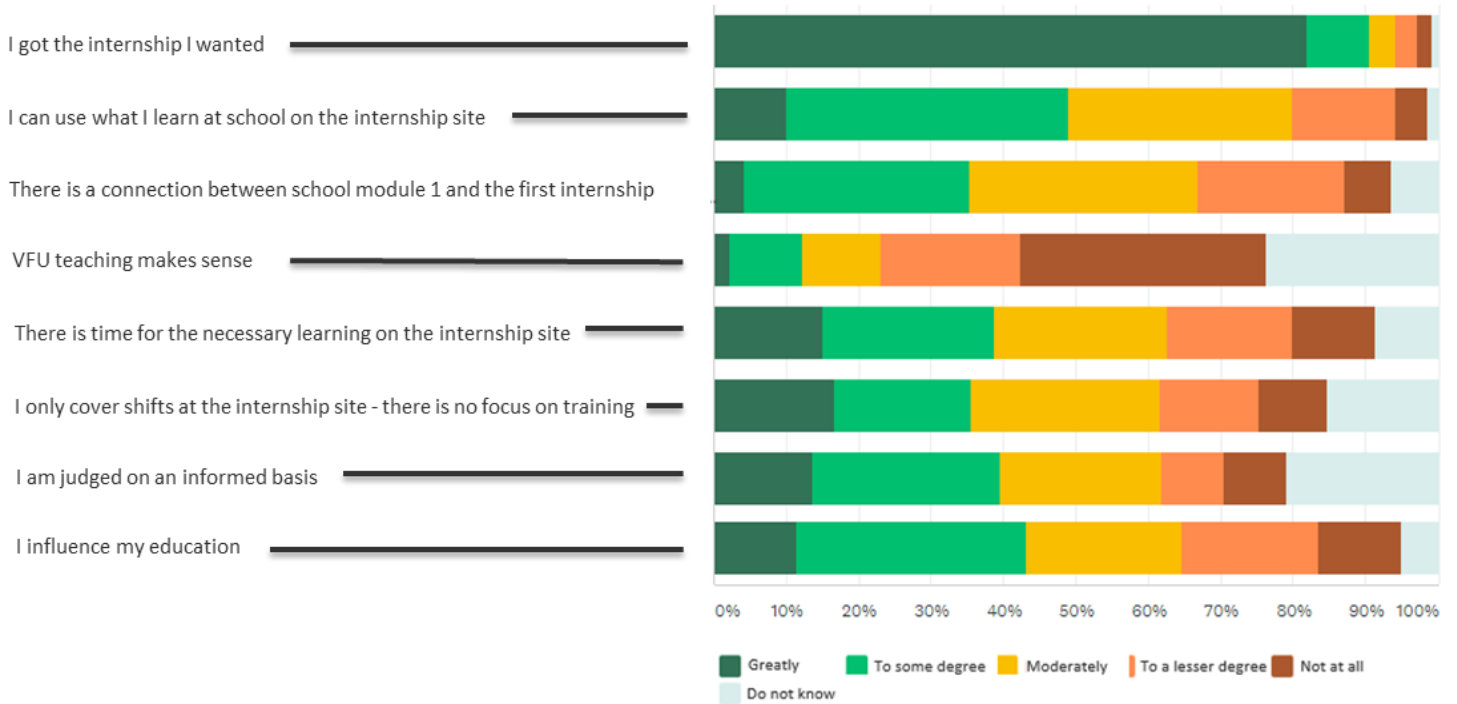
Around the link between school time and internship, the assessment is more mixed.

35 per cent answer that there is a connection between the first school module and the first internship, while 58 per cent answer either 'both and' or 'no'.

Similarly, 39 percent answer that there is time for learning on the internship site, while 52 percent answer 'both and' or 'no'.

And 35 percent estimate that they only cover shifts at the internship site.

\* The company-based training (VFU) takes place at the place of employment and lasts a total of two months.



## Questions about internship supervisors:

Regarding the relationship with the internship supervisors, a clear majority of the students (71 percent) answer that they have a good collaboration.

Whether there are enough internship supervisors, the students' assessment is more uncertain. Every other respond is either 'both and' or 'don't know'.



## Questions about working conditions and colleagues:

Regarding the experience of the job, the majority of the students say that they experience respect from colleagues and the inmates.

Students are also generally confident positively: Only 4 percent are often insecure.

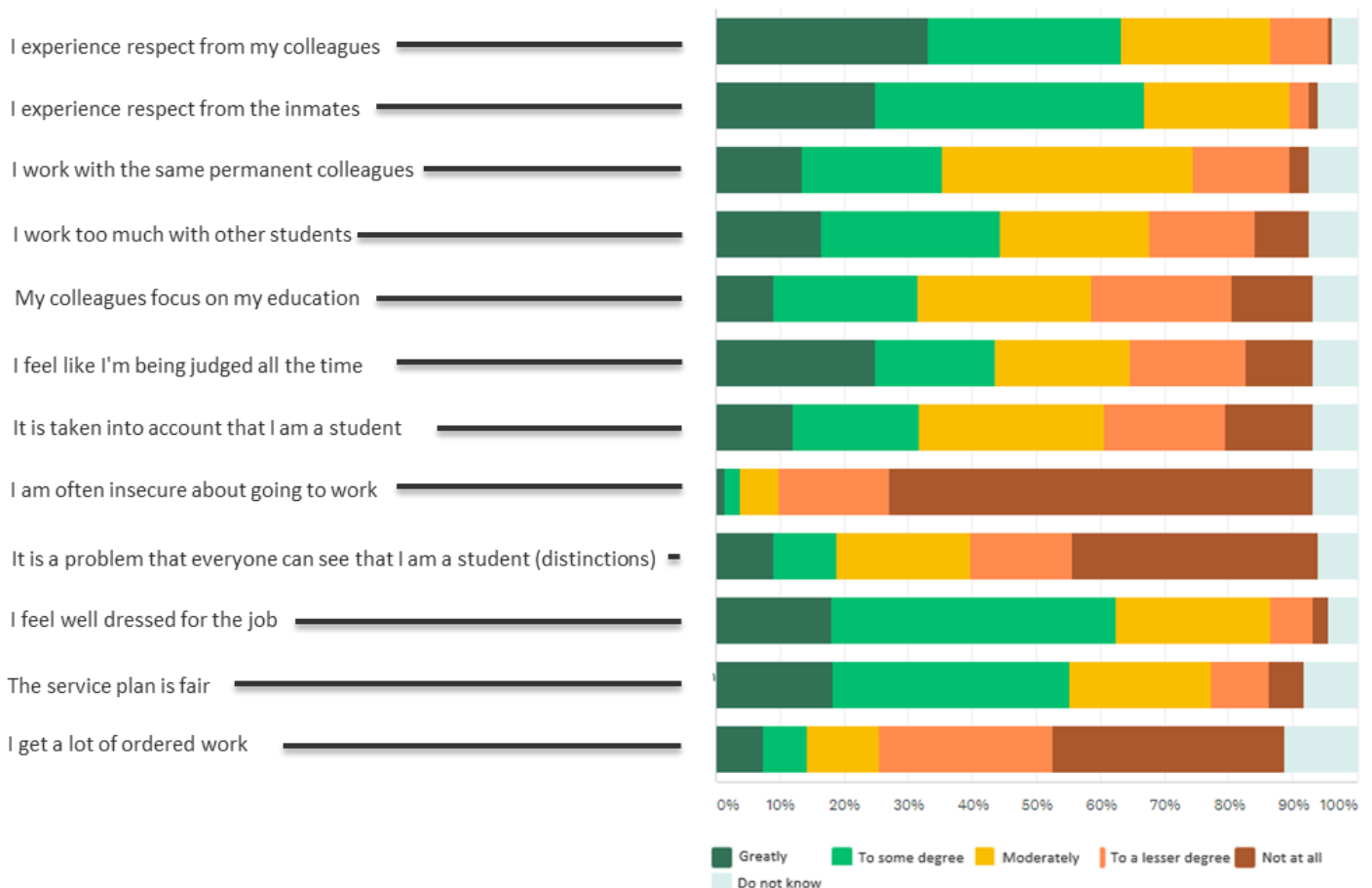
Most - 62 percent - feel that they are well dressed for the work.

And the majority - 53 percent - do not experience it as a problem that everyone - via the distinctions - can see that they are students.

On the negative side:

43 percent experience that they work too much with other students (while 25 percent do not see it as a problem).

33 percent experience that they are not taken into account that they are a student (while 32 percent experience that they are taken into account).



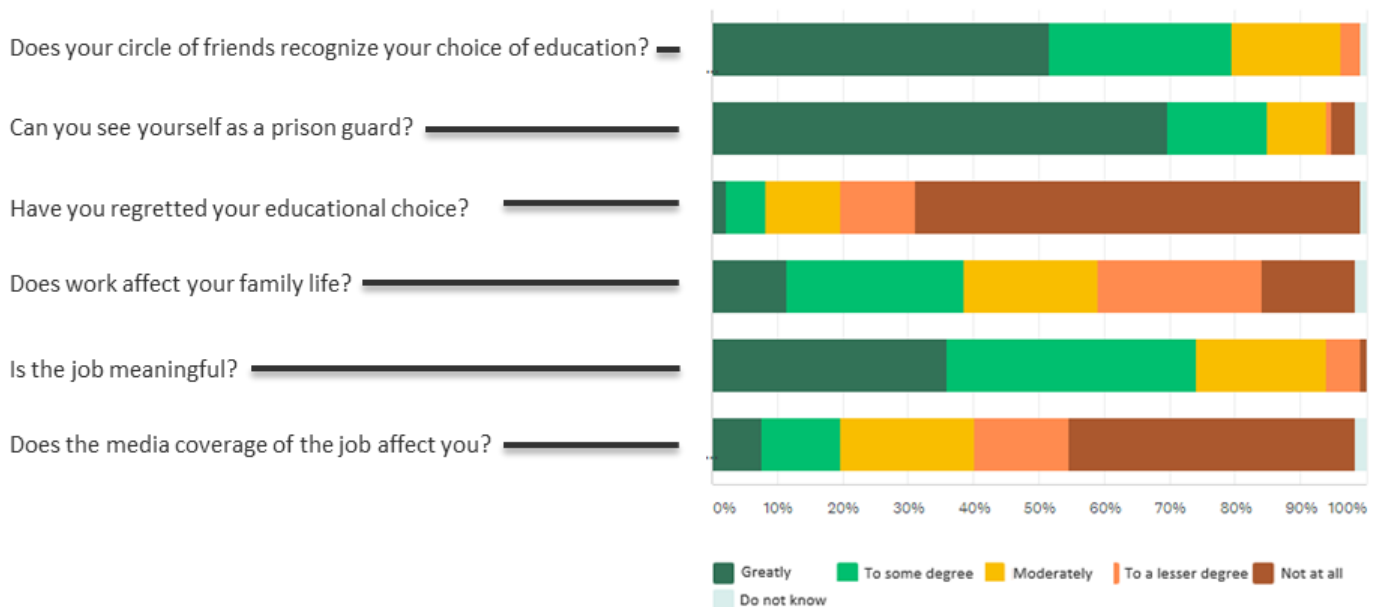


## Questions about job choice:

The students are predominantly positive in relation to their choice of job, and they experience support from their surroundings.

They strongly believe that the job makes sense, and they are slightly affected by the media coverage.

However, a large proportion - 39 percent - experience that the job affects their family life.



## Are you considering quitting your education?

Finally, the Danish Prison Federation (*Fængselsforbundet*) asked the students if they were considering dropping out. A third said yes.

Examples of comments from the survey:

I doubt it's a job for me to stay in until my retirement age.

At times, it is really bad at work due to the large overcrowding and stressed colleagues.

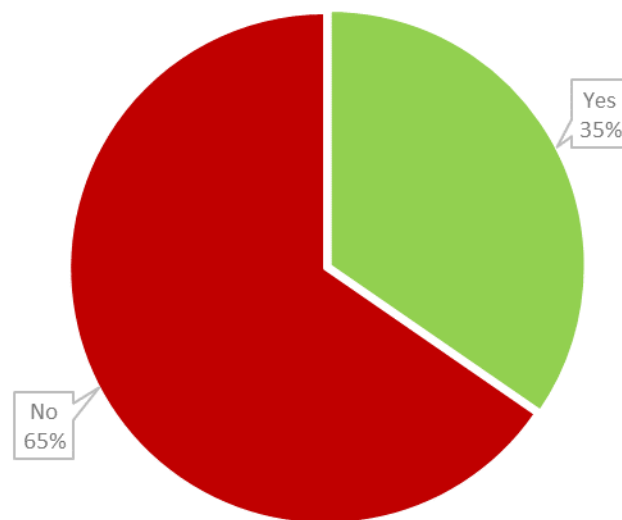
Sometimes the thought roams. The salary is poor and there is little recognition in the job. At the same time, we are being cut down on constantly.

Since the retirement age has been changed, I think it may be necessary, as I can not see myself as a working officer when I am 68-69 years old.

Is probably the most ungrateful work I have had. All the things you need to know and all the extra hours you put into it. And one for still poor pay. and it's way too busy, so it's a bit of a stressful job, and besides that, poor pay!

The only time I have considered changing jobs is due to my three month internship in Horserød. KF students are exclusively up here to cover guards - and it is clearly seen and felt.

Sometimes. There is far too much cut on everything, both pay and civil service. But right now, I do not want to stop.



## Answers from Internship Supervisors:

### Questions for internship supervisors about their working conditions

The internship supervisors are critical on several points in relation to their ability to support the students.

A large majority experience:

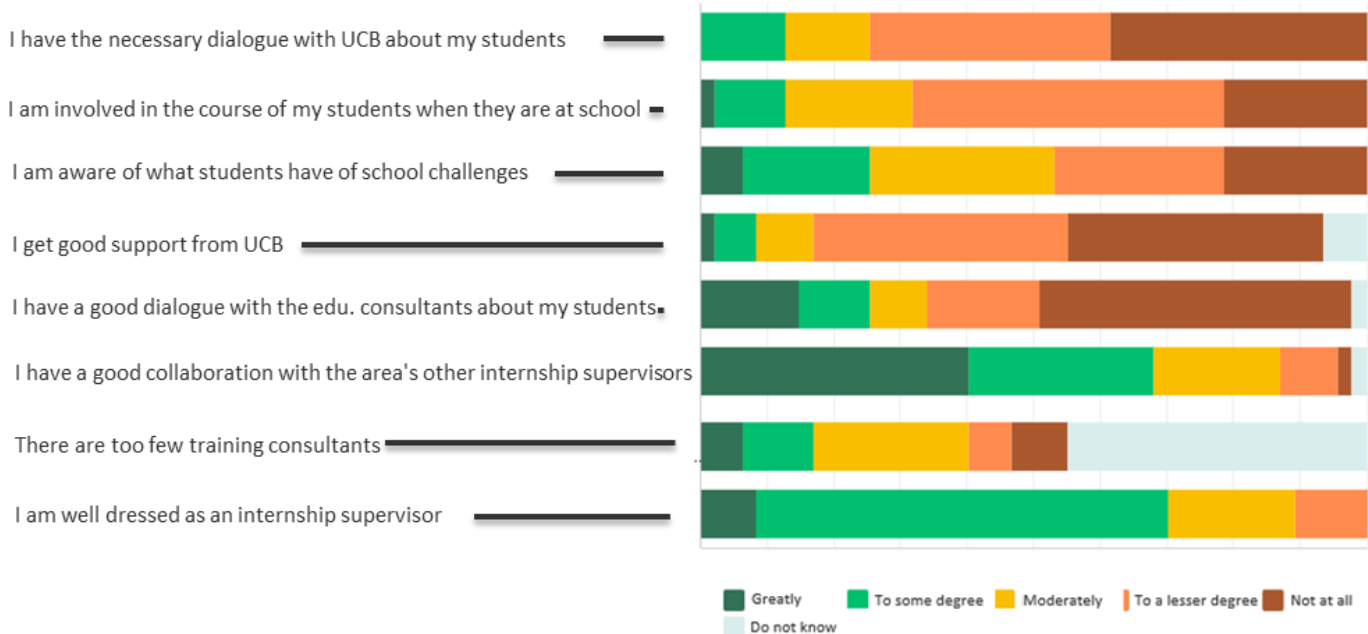
That they lack support from the Danish Prison and Probation Service's Education Center (this corresponds to 77 percent).

That they do not have sufficient dialogue with the education center around their students (74 percent).

That they are not involved in the students' course when they are at school (68 percent).

That they have a bad dialogue with the education consultants (64 percent).

The internship counselors point out, however, that they have a good collaboration with other internship counselors (68 percent) and that they feel that they are well dressed in their function (70 percent).



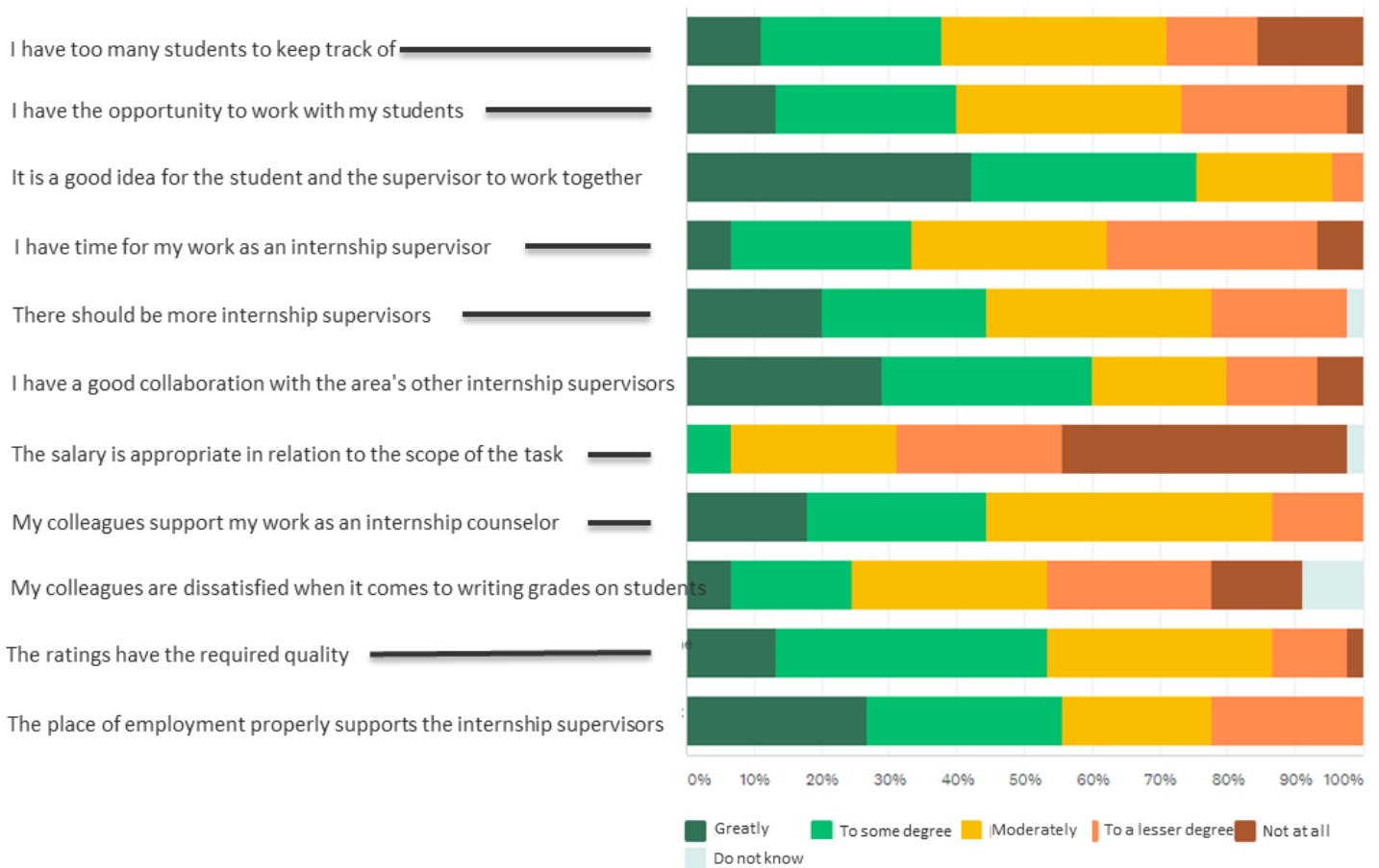
## Questions for internship supervisors about the daily responsibilities

Around the day-to-day life with the students, a large majority of the internship supervisors point out that they should work with the students (76 per cent) and that their salary is not appropriate in relation to the scope of the task (this corresponds to 67 per cent).

Otherwise, the picture is more nuanced.

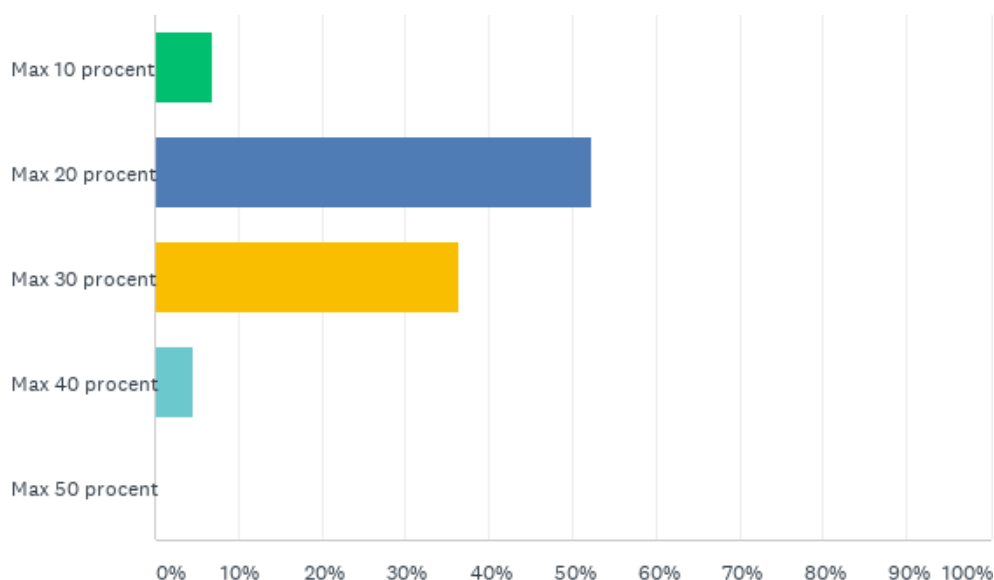
Some of the internship supervisors experience that they have too many students to keep track of (38 percent) and that there should be more internship supervisors (44 percent).

Almost half of the internship supervisors experience that their colleagues support their work, while the rest either answer 'both and' or 'to a lesser extent'.



## What proportion of students should there be at the individual service?

When asked about the maximum proportion of students in each institution, the majority of internship supervisors answer 20 percent.



---

## Conclusions and Recommendations

---

### Elaboration of **proposal 1**: Better pay during school periods:

The low education salary (SU) deters many from applying for the job as a prison officer, because the Danish Prison and Probation Service largely recruits among Danes with life experience. This group may have difficulty being at education salary (SU) during school hours as they have often started families.

- In the questionnaire survey, 92 percent of the students answer that the SU-pay is a big challenge.
- Other job categories in the Prison and Probation Service's already receive a salary when they are at school.
- The costs of a restructuring are estimated at only DKK 12 million annually.
- In comparison, the municipalities have had difficulty hiring the required number of SOSU-assistants. They have chosen to make the education a vocational education (adult apprentices) and remove SU for this group.

### Elaboration of **proposal 2**: VFU (private educational company) amended or removed.

One of the questions that gave a clear answer in the questionnaire survey was whether the company-based teaching (VFU) made sense, the answer was that it did not.

- In the questionnaire survey, 53 percent of students assess that VFU does not make sense (while only 12 percent think it makes sense).
- A large part of VFU is canceled.
- VFU is often a repetition of teaching from UCB, and not practical lessons (visitations, case processing, etc.).

- VFU is also at education pay (SU), so the feeling of "waste of time at SU" is a point of view that is repeated in the questionnaire.

## **Elaboration of Proposal 3: Students should begin in prisons before schooling.**

The job as a prison officer is very different from other positions. Therefore, it is a problem to start the education without knowing what the job actually entails. Students should instead begin their training course in internship.

- In the questionnaire survey, 44 percent of students answer that they should start an internship before school (while 33 percent disagree).
- Previously, the probation officer only conducted conflict management before starting at their educational institution. This meant that the individual student from the beginning was aware of what the education was about.
- The effect of teaching will be much greater if you actually know why you are being taught.
- By starting an internship, you quickly get them out where the education does not meet their expectations.

## **Elaboration of Proposal 4: More support from the internship supervisors.**

The questionnaire survey shows that there is great satisfaction with the internship supervisor scheme. Nevertheless, there is potential for improvement in supporting the individual student.

- In the questionnaire survey, 71 percent of the students answer that they have a good collaboration with their internship supervisor.
- But there is a need for more constructive feedback and more guidance from the individual student (time to talk about things that can be improved in a safe environment).
- Closer contact and more time between internship supervisor and student (services together).

- In addition, the internship supervisors demand greater dialogue with UCB (the Danish Prison and Probation Service school) in relation to the individual student. Not least around the school challenges that the individual student has.

## Elaboration of **Proposal 5**: Introduce ceiling for students per. Institution.

A limit should be introduced for the maximum number of students at each institution. It can possibly be determined locally in collaboration with union representatives.

- 43 percent of the students in the questionnaire survey answer that they work too much with other students (while 25 percent do not see it as a problem).
- 58 percent of the internship supervisors answer that there should be a maximum of 20 percent students at the individual institution.
- One should look at whether there are other types of institutions that can accommodate officer trainees. It could be larger jails.

## Elaboration of **Proposal 6**: Students must be trained by experienced prison officers.

It will strengthen the education if the students work with regular colleagues. In an environment like ours, it is imperative that students have a permanent staff member to lean on.

- Students should not be taught by other students.
- It must be ensured that the individual student has the necessary support during his or her education. Not only from fellow officers, but also from the institution's other staff groups.

## Elaboration of **Proposal 7**: Introduce teaching in practical knowledge.

Teaching in schools has at a high level but there is a lack of coherence between teaching and practice. Therefore, the teaching of practical knowledge should be strengthened.

- In the questionnaire survey, 85 percent of students call for teaching practical chores.
- Examples of practice-oriented teaching: How to hold the good conversation; transport with inmates; how to act as a companion in court, dental visits, etc. How to use the Danish Prison and Probation Service's client system; how to write good reports, journals, etc.
- The transport officer training is similarly practically oriented.

## Elaboration of **Proposal 8**: Are the schools located in the right places?

It has been a great improvement to establish an education satellite in Møgelkær (East Jutland). It can further strengthen recruitment to establish another training satellite in the middle of Denmark or move the location of the training center in Birkerød (Copenhagen).

- In the questionnaire survey, 57 percent of students answer that the location of schools is a challenge.
- One can also consider outsourcing more teaching locally so that school stays are minimized.

## Elaboration of **Proposal 9**: Centralize the employment of students.

It is the institutions who has the responsibility for hiring prison officer trainees. It should be considered whether the employment of students should take place centrally in dialogue with the educational institutions. In this way, the overall employment goal could be maintained, and it will to a lesser extent be the individual institution's local challenges that are decisive for the number of employments.

- In relation to the recruitment phase, there are examples of qualified applicants who have actually been refused. Either because the individual area had enough students or lack of payroll to hire. The Danish Prison and Probation Service is not in a position where it is possible to say no to qualified applicants.



- In relation to the payroll for students, it should be considered whether it should be taken from the areas' finances.

## **Elaboration of Proposal 10: Involve the union representatives.**

The union representatives want to take responsibility for the right students being hired. Therefore, the shop stewards should be involved in the students' training courses.

- The local representative/area representative (OFTR) should be a member of the assessment committee at the individual institution.
- There should always be an OFTR with when dismissing a student, even if the dismissal is based on poor grades.

The main conclusions of the Survey are:

### Positive findings

- The majority of students are happy that they have chosen to become prison guards. They experience that the provided education prepares them well for the job and they believe that they have a good collaboration with the internship supervisors.

### Areas for improvements:

There are a number of identified issues.

- Not all respondents share the same perception and expectation for the provided education.
- Every third is considering dropping out.
- Many experiences a lack of connection between school time and internship time.
- Respondents call for teaching in practical environment.
- Students lack time for learning during the internship and they find that they work too much with other students.
- All students experience remuneration during school hours as a financial challenge.

The internship supervisors are critical on several points in relation to their ability to support the students. They greatly lack support from the Danish Prison and Probation Service's Education Center and many experiences that they have too many students to keep track of. The majority, however, assess that they are well enough prepared for their tasks and responsibilities.

## CCJ4C

### European Project Partners:



The National Trade Union  
of Prison Policemen (SNPP)



Timisoara Penitentiary



Freie  
Hansestadt  
Bremen



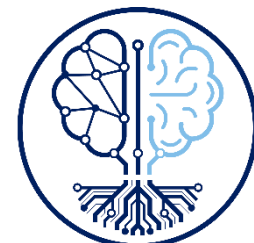
General Directorate of Prison  
and Detention Houses



ICPA  
International Corrections  
& Prisons Association



York Associates  
International Ltd



BRAIN.OG



CEIPES

CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE PER LA PROMOZIONE  
DELL'EDUCAZIONE E LO SVILUPPO

BETI Baltic  
Education  
Technology  
Institute