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**Respire, Remember, Response**

# IO1 Task 1.2

## A3.4

# Common Report

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# 1 3R Project

The project plans to show the importance of the application of Emotional Intelligence tools and strategies for inmates who will be released within 6 months in order to reduce the levels of recidivism. The project will have a double line of intervention, both with inmates and with people who support the inmates in their attempt to reintegrate into society: guards, wardens and social workers, but also NGOs in the off-prison monitoring. This program is doubled focused. On one hand, it will work with inmates and on the other one people who make up the support systems for inmates in their reintegration in society.

The Purpose of 3R (Respire, Remember, Respond) Emotional Intelligence for reducing recidivism project is to improve the social adaptability and resilience of offenders and exoffenders, to promote their reintegration to society, and as a result to reduce recidivism. In this sense, Emotional Intelligence interventions, should be given to prisoners who will be released within 6 months.

For prisoners it seems desirable to offer a comprehensive program which will help inmates learn how to integrate emotional intelligence practices into their everyday lives, for example, have training sessions focusing on stress handling, self-awareness and self-regulation. In parallel to this program for inmates, another should be offered for people whose role is to support the inmates in their attempt to reintegrate into society. These include guards, wardens and social workers (in prison monitoring), but also NGO and other kind of

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organizations (off prison monitoring) taking into account the extreme importance of the follow up in the first months after releasing. 3R project will develop, pilot and implement a framework of methodology, tools, learning programs and recommendation for both targets. The goal is to endow the inmates to be aware of their options to design a different and new future from their last months in prison and their immediate release, the assumption of responsibility and the making of decisions and actions thinking in their re-entry in society.

## 2 Background

During the previous task a map of competences in emotional intelligence was designed for the target groups: guards, warders and social workers (in prison supervision), but also NGOs and other types of organisations (outside prison supervision).



To do so, questionnaires were developed. The questionnaire was distributed to prison officers (educators, counsellors, managers) and social workers, both from prison staff and from external associations, organisations or NGOs working with inmates in prison. Social psychologists from associations working with ex-prisoners and educators from hostels for ex-prisoners were also sent.



The aim of the focus groups was to analyse with experts the results that were obtained from the questionnaires in the previous task. Each partner implemented focus groups of national experts to check the results of the questionnaires.

The aim of this common European report is to compare the results obtained in each national report and compare them to obtain the 10 emotional skills required by professionals (including guards, warders and social workers - in prison surveillance), which will be the basis and starting point of the training system.



# 3 Analysis of focus group and conclusions

The aim of this section is to analyze the research results obtained through the group dynamics carried out in each of the partner countries. Focus groups are conducted with prison workers to explore their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, motivations and underlying behavior related to the importance of emotional skills and their management in prison work. During the focus groups, a set of pre-established questions were used in order to identify arguments and counter-arguments with respect to the quantitative results obtained in the previous phase of the project through the questionnaires. Throughout this section we will collect the most significant results of each question in each of the focus groups carried out in the partner countries. Through a comparative analysis we will be able to determine the coincidences or not between the results in each partner country and to establish conclusions.



01

**What is the main socio-emotional risk situations faced by the target group?**

In relation to this question, the conclusions we can draw from the comparison of the different focus groups carried out in the partner countries are as follows:

In all the national reports of the focus group conducted with prison workers, violence towards prison staff is mentioned. It seems to be demonstrated that the prison environment itself becomes a risk factor from the moment it holds people against their will within its walls, thereby generating a climate of hostility and violence towards those who, in the name of the State, carry out this detention. Another commonality between

**“Understaffing and "overcrowded" prisons increase emotional risk among prison workers, causing them to suffer from stress anxiety, decreased job satisfaction, burnout, Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)”**



the findings of the national reports is that some of these emotional risks are caused by a lack of staff and overcrowding in prisons. The risks are related to the way prison work is designed, organised and managed. The most immediate consequence of psychosocial risks for the health of prison workers is stress. Prison staff, faced with the materialisation of risks, will suffer a series of negative effects that will affect a large number of daily aspects, affecting not only their physical and mental health but also their social and family relationships, a decrease in professional performance, a degradation of the working environment, an increase in accidents at work, among others.

**Below are some of the conclusions regarding this question in each of the focus groups organised in the partner countries.**

**IN DENMARK.** No one doubts that prisons are an incredibly high-risk area to work in. This means that they face risk every time the check into work. During the most of previous decade, the prison system has been so understaffed, approximately by 25%. This lack of staffing effectively results in “overcrowded” prisons which increase emotional risk and mental stress among guards causing them to suffer from stress anxiety, decreased job satisfaction, burnout, PTSD. More than 10% of the guards have, or are, suffering PTSD. This amount of work-related mental stress, combined with the low salary, has been a major contributing factor to the lack of staff in the system.

**IN UK.** The UK focus group report also concludes that there are multiple socio-emotional risk factors in prisons, and that in particular violence and aggression, substance abuse and mental health problems of both prisoners and staff may be among the emotional risks. The lack of training to deal with verbal abuse and threats from prisoners was also mentioned. Another important point to note is that socio-emotional risks are very different depending on the specific prison, there are large differences in the violent and non-violent prison population in the UK.

**IN SPAIN.** All agree on the comment that violence towards prison staff is a risk that manifests itself as something specific to the nature of the prison work environment. Most of the participants also agreed that many of the emotional risks they suffer from (work-related stress, anxiety, burnout syndrome, etc.) are mostly due to overcrowding in prisons, understaffing and poor work organisation.

**IN ROMANIA.** Poor communication with bosses and colleagues, lack of empathy. The request from the administration to perform a quality professional act without providing the necessary resources. People in the operative department behave without empathy, lacking in verbal communication skills and specialists take this tension which leads to mental and physical fatigue. Lack of resources, and lack of continuous training.



**IN POLAND.** Lack of empathy. That was the problem especially for staff from prison. Daily routine makes those people “stiff”. There is still not enough professional trainings for staff. This kind of work demands continuous trainings and improvement of the soft skills. Problems with communication. It is especially important in work with ex-prisoners. It happens often that those 2 groups (social workers and prisoners are speaking completely different language).

02

How are they prepared in this area?

With regard to this issue, there is a general coincidence among the national reports, and that is the lack of training in this area. They all receive initial training and have a traineeship period, but in the different national reports we find opinions that this training is not sufficient, that there is a need for continuous training on these issues. There are also those who think that there is no training focused on emotional preparation in order to be able to manage all the emotional risks of prison work. Therefore, in conclusion, we can say that training in emotional management is absolutely necessary, either because it does not exist or because the training that does exist is not adequate

*There is a lack of training programmes for prison workers on emotional management.*

**IN DENMARK.** Every single prison guard go through the same centralized education. Three years of school, which includes three terms of practical experience at 9 – 10 months of duration. During those three years, the students are prepared to handle all sorts of situations and risks they might face, but there is a big difference between training and real life working in prison.

In the case of the **UK**, there were several strands of thought, on the one hand there were those who felt that the initial training had been very good and that mental strength and stress management had been worked on. However, they also felt that ongoing support was very limited. On the other hand, there were those who did not believe that the training of prison officers focused at all on mental preparedness and stability. Or even those who consider that there is a big difference between the training and the practical elements of the role: the reality is very different from the training provided.



**IN SPAIN.** Most of the participants agree that having emotional stability is fundamental and will help an officer to be a good professional and that his or her work does not affect him or her on a personal level in a negative way. The lack of preventive programmes on psychosocial risks, within the preventive plans of prisons, has particularly harmful consequences for prison staff.

**IN ROMANIA.** One clear conclusion can be drawn from the opinions of the participants, and that is the lack of training. Despite the fact that the majority of respondents in Romania felt mentally prepared to work in high-risk contexts, the conclusion that can be drawn from the result of the national report is quite clear: vocational training courses are needed to prepare them in this area.

In the case of **POLAND**, the results of the national focus group are in line with the results of the survey in the first phase of the project. The conclusion that can be drawn, therefore, is the importance of soft and emotional skills for job performance and the need for training in this field.

**03** What risks can poor emotional management have for the target group?

From the results of the different focus groups, we can draw a very clear conclusion and that

*“The most immediate consequence of poor emotional management risks to our health is stress.”*

is the negative impact that poor emotional management can have on the health of prison workers. The most immediate consequence of poor emotional management risks to our health is stress. In

the different national reports, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD,) work overload due to lack of staff, lack of expectations, burnout syndrome, violence generated by the prison environment or an unsatisfactory work-life balance were mentioned as consequences. Prison staff facing these stressful situations will suffer a series of negative effects that will affect a large number of daily aspects, affecting not only their physical and psychological health but also their social and family relationships, with the obvious deterioration in their professional lives.

**Some of the conclusions regarding this question in each of the focus groups organised in the partner countries were the following:**



In the case of **DENMARK** the answer to this question is very clear, one of the main risks that could result from poor emotional management is the high rate of workers with post-traumatic stress. More than 10% of prison guards in Denmark suffers from **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD.)** The system is currently understaffed, and this has led to increased pressure on the guards. They agree that mental strength and their teamwork and "esprit de corps" is what gets them through those periods of pressure.



**UK.** In the national report of the focus group in the UK, stress can be pointed out as the main risk. Stress caused by different reasons, threats of violence or aggression in the workplace, long working hours and the fact that, due to staff shortages, overtime is often required. They also mentioned the importance of feeling well supported in their family life, and that it helps them personally. They also referred to a vicious cycle "where prison staff were stressed and unable to relate effectively to inmates, so inmates were unable to

talk about their emotions and became more aggressive, which made prison staff more stressed, so the cycle continued.

**IN SPAIN** . Each of the participants spoke of experiences during their work in prison that had caused them emotional problems. Almost all of them had suffered periods of anxiety and stress, and some of them had even needed psychological therapy. The participants all agreed that there is a lack of preventive programmes on psychosocial risks, within the preventive plans of prisons, and this has particularly detrimental consequences for prison staff, both physical and psychological. They also agree that there are categories more exposed to psychosocial risks, in particular prison officers V1 and V2 who are in continuous contact with the inmates and who are also the ones who suffer the problems of poor work organisation by the bodies in charge of management. They also refer to the burnout syndrome resulting from work overload due to lack of staff. All of them mentioned negative effects affecting not only their physical and psychological health, but also their social and family relations and an evident deterioration of their professional life.

**IN ROMANIA.** Regarding the levels of stress that prison workers suffer in Romania and how this could impact on prison officers and their families, the reflections and ideas expressed





focused on Exhaustion, demotivation, frustration. Some even spoke of Burnout, depression, behavioural decompensation at work and/or in personal life. It was also mentioned that these levels of stress have an impact on the quality of the development of the professional activity, as well as the discharge of negative emotions in the family.

**IN POLAND.** All participants underlined that the first risk of having not enough knowledge/skills in the emotional intelligence area is lack of the effectiveness in their daily work. The lack of those skills can cause frustration, affects decision making and have influence on the entire work plan. Moreover it can cause problems with supervisors as well as co-workers but at the first stage with the customers/clients

**04****To what extent is there a real awareness of its importance?**

**Behind many of the incidents that occur in prisons, among the staff, of failed professional actions, there are cases of colleagues who suffer the consequences of a lack of real awareness of the importance of training in emotional management as a fundamental part of protection against psychosocial risks. From the results of the opinions given by the participants in the different focus groups we can draw the conclusion that the authorities in the penitentiary institutions are aware of the importance but there is no real and practical application.**

According to the national focus group report from **DENMARK**, it is true that there is an increased awareness of the issue. But despite the increased awareness, the real problem is not really being addressed. It does not seem to be a question of will, but of resources. It is all down to the huge lack of staff. Without an increase in staff and therefore without the flexibility to educate and change the current situation, no real change can be made.

In the case of **UK**, both inmates and prison officers could identify the importance of many elements of emotional intelligence. It is important to note the opinion of some of the participants that female prison staff are more open to training opportunities involving emotional aspects than male prison staff. Both prison staff and justice department decision makers of the importance of emotional intelligence skills but that many of the decisions made are purely economic and with reduced prison budgets, many specific and tailored prison training programmes are no longer available. Emotional skills training covers two broad areas; 'red' skills which are regarding emotional intelligence of others, and 'blue' skills, referring to awareness of your own emotional intelligence.



According to the opinion of the participants **IN SPAIN**, prison staff are fully aware of the importance of good emotional management. They all recognise that it is a professional field with many peculiarities and where there is a strong emotional influence, and they are aware of how important it is to know how to manage emotions. They do not feel the same way when it comes to the bodies that manage them. Prison Institutions have carried out initial assessments of psychosocial risks in a significant number of prisons, but their practical policy has been and continues to be to delay the necessary measures, leaving preventive activities against psychosocial risks to inaction.

According to the national report from **ROMANIA**, the institution is aware of the importance of emotional management in prison workers but nothing is done about it. Other participants said that at the institutional level there is no awareness of the importance of emotional management for prison workers, everyone works individually to maintain their emotional balance.

The participants **IN POLAND** responded that they are aware of its importance, but that the trainings are too general and that there is no priority for this type of training. They also differentiated when it comes to staff working as specialists (e.g. from external institutions or prison psychologists) because they are better prepared in this area. However, staff such as guards have limited knowledge of emotional management, especially in practical terms. Academic staff are more aware of the need for the importance of soft skills and teach students in the prison systems in this area.

05

Is there training in this area and what is it like?

From the reading of the different national reports, it can be concluded that although, as in the case of Denmark, UK and Poland, staff receive some initial training before entering the prison service, the training received is not sufficient, and there is a need for continuous training in emotional management issues. From the rest of the national reports, the lack of training in this area is highlighted, including the need for a good assessment and preventive programme (including training of prison staff) against psychosocial risks within prison prevention plans.

**The following are some of the conclusions of each of the national reports;**



In the case of **DENMARK**, there is training during the first three years of training, the guards receive training in the subject. After that, additional training is available, but again all training is on hold due to staff shortages in prisons and covid-19. Online resources are not adequate, according to participants. With regard to prisoners, in the Danish prison system, prisoners are offered courses within the "Cognitive Rehabilitation Programmes". These programmes include cognitive skills training; reinforcement; anger management; violence prevention programme; Breaking with delinquency.

With regard to the **UK** national report, it should be noted that prison workers receive initial training on entry to the prison service, which included some discussion of resilience, mental toughness and emotional management. However, they felt that the lack of ongoing training was a major problem and that these emotional management issues had only been briefly covered in training.

Regarding the psychosocial risks of prison staff, **IN SPAIN** mention was made of the need on for a good assessment and a preventive programme (including training of prison staff) against psychosocial risks within the prison prevention plans, with special emphasis on a more person-centred work organisation, harm mitigation protocols and intervention programmes for the reduction of the harmful effects of all psychosocial risk determinants on prison staff.

The results of the focus group regarding this question in **ROMANIA**, is clear that the majority opinion is that there is no training in this area. Others said that there are e-learning courses but they do not have a concrete result.

**IN POLAND**, There were again different answers depending on the professional group. there are trainings for staff organised by the central unit for prison system however those trainings are providing limited amount of knowledge about the soft skills in practice. Professionals who want to improve their knowledge have to search for additional knowledge/trainings by themselves.

**06****Is it particularly difficult to leave work on the job?**

If one thing has become clear from the focus groups carried out in each of the partner countries, it is the idea of the strong emotional component that exists in prison work. The way prison work is designed, organised and managed often leads to emotional overload which affects not only their physical and mental health but also their social and family



relationships. If we add to this the lack of adequate training in emotional management, the answer to this question in all the focus groups is that it is not an easy task not to take work issues into family life. It is also important to underline, as mentioned in several national reports, that there should be a differentiation between the different professional categories as there are categories that are in direct contact with the inmates where there can be more cases of conflictive and difficult situations that can produce some kind of emotional consequences.

### **Below are some of the results of each focus group**

As a result of this question in **DENMARK**, when your job causes mental illness, it is impossible not to have work interfere with the rest of your life. When your work has a strong emotional component and your safety outside of work can be compromised by the work you do, then it can be more difficult to separate work and personal life. The prison system has had to implement policies prohibiting uniforms outside of work to help protect guards.

Work-life balance is biggest problem, says **UK** national report, but also that the lack of mentors or colleagues they could talk to made them often feel more stressed or anxious at home when they had a difficult day at work. Some were even surprised that the survey result was only a third, as they expected many more prison officers to say that leaving work at work is difficult.

**IN SPAIN**, All agree that it is not an easy task. You have to make a great emotional effort, and know that your life is outside the prison. They also make a differentiation in terms of professional categories, because as they already commented in another previous question, there are categories that are in direct contact with the inmates where there can be more cases of conflictive and difficult situations that can produce some kind of emotional consequence.

The general conclusion according to the result of this question in the national report of **ROMANIA** is that it is quite difficult considering the emotional overload of prison work. They consider that most of the emotional burden persists even after leaving work.

As **POLAND**'s national report indicates, this work requires staff to leave the job on the job. Generally it works well, but especially with new and not "seasoned" workers it is difficult. Prison staff have fewer problems with this issue than NGO workers

**07**

**In the previous survey representatives from the partner countries highlighted the importance of stress management. Do you agree? How does it work?**



It can be concluded that working environment of prison workers is quite difficult, having to deal with situations of disobedience, threatening behaviour, aggression, or even the death of inmates. It is therefore an established fact that prison work in certain circumstances generates degrees of stress in workers, and can lead to serious health problems. One of the areas prone to the development of stress-related health problems among workers is the penitentiary. It is therefore imperative that measures be taken to teach prison workers how to manage and handle stress, as well as organisational measures by the penitentiary institutions to act on stress factors (lack of staff, work overload, overcrowded modules...)

The participants in **DENMARK** strongly agree on the importance of stress management. Stress is a factor that can lead to different and worse choices, than if a person is calm and collected. One of the tools guards have available to help manage their stress is the offer of free counselling by psychologists. Everybody also knows that it is impossible to execute a job effectively and efficiently if you are stressed all the time.

**In UK.** To a large extent stress is due to the fact that prison officers are under intense pressure with an often-heavy workload and a wide variety of tasks to perform. It is also



important to note the view that there is a difference between younger and more experienced prison officers, but I was unsure whether the older officers had simply become better at "masking" their stress, or whether they were actually better able to manage their stress.

The results of the national report **IN SPAIN** highlight that prison workers are workers who are subjected to emotionally demanding working conditions and high interpersonal demands, and failure to cope with these demands can lead to stress. In this respect, they again say that it is a work environment with many particularities, with a sometimes comforting work climate, but many others in which they have to deal with very complicated situations. All agree that one of the main stressors is understaffing and overcrowding in some prisons. It is impossible not to be stressed in such working conditions. The participants again mentioned the lack of preventive programmes for such psychosocial risks, within the preventive plans of prisons, which have particularly harmful consequences for prison staff: shorter life expectancy, increased cardiovascular diseases, respiratory problems, endocrine system problems and problems of a mental nature.

Stress caused by overwork and poor work organisation is also common in the case of **ROMANIA**. New techniques of emotional control should be promoted: meditation,

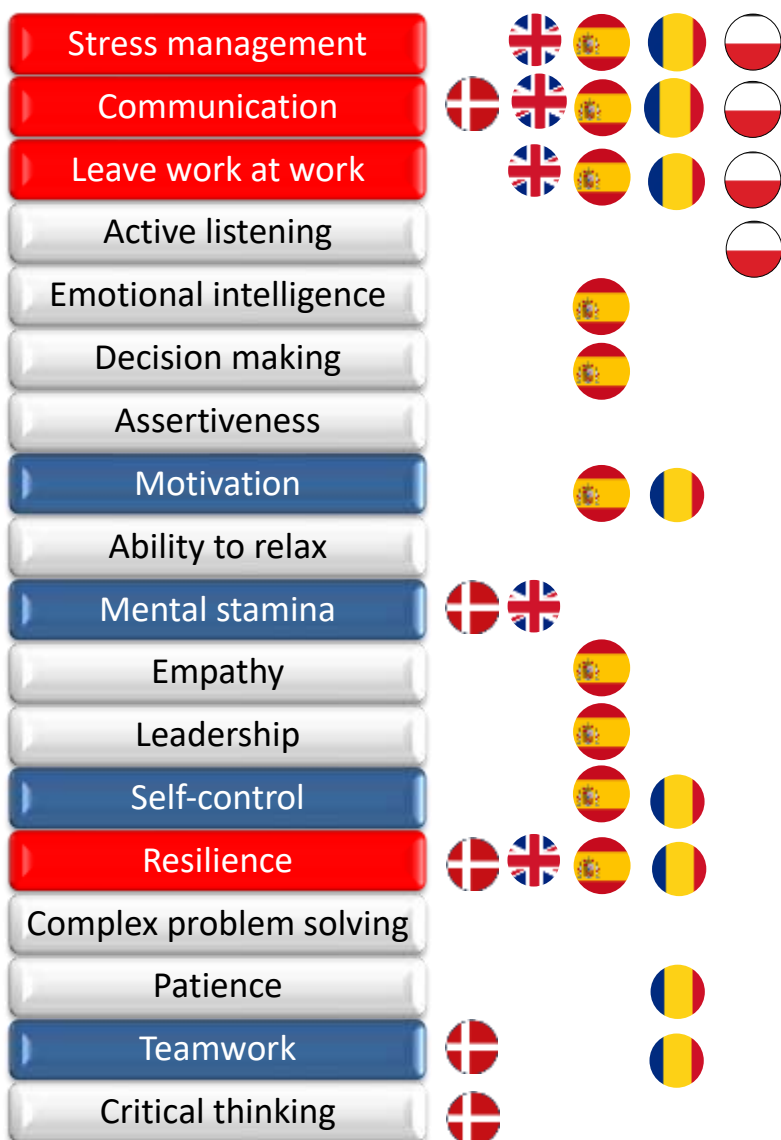


mindfulness to counteract the consumption of mental energy. It is important to manage stress because otherwise personal and family balance suffers.

Participants **IN POLAND** totally agreed that stress management is crucial in their work. The specific of their work demands from those kind of workers special skills how to deal with the stress. Especially in the context of preventing the disruption of life after work. All participants agreed that this is one of the most difficult skill because of the unpredictable situation which can occur every day in their work.

## 08 Main list of Emotional Skills

In this last question, the focus group was asked to consider which were the most important skills on which future training in emotional management for prison staff should focus. For this purpose, they were provided with a list of 18 skills that they should consider to be the most important in their professional experience in the context of prison workers.



With regard to the results of the comparison between the different focus groups on this question, we can indicate as the most important skills for emotional management training those marked in red, which have been selected in all or almost all partner countries. In this case we would have stress management, communication, leaving work at work and resilience. In a second block and marked in blue, we have those skills that at least two of the partner countries have agreed on as important for emotional management, such as mental stamina, self-control, teamwork and motivation. Other skills not included in the list and pointed out by some of the partners, such as the case of setting boundaries, in the case of Denmark or in the case of Romania, which also pointed out others such as self-regulation, lack of mentoring, team building activities, etc.