



- Recommendation 1 -

Promote more research to highlight the diversity of volunteering activities in the prison context and evidence their impact on reintegration needs

VOLPRIS's research clearly shows the long history of promoting the contact between both prisoners and volunteers, and the management of volunteers as one part of the prisons staff's daily work. These volunteering activities differ from prison to prison, as do management practices. This research only provides a non-representative snapshot of 79 prisons' management practices and needs in terms of volunteering activities, but gives a taste of what we could learn from practices in the partner countries. We urge investment in research studies to better define, understand and evidence the impact of volunteering activities in prison settings (including volunteering with specific groups such as female prisoners, young people in prison and volunteering to connect with particular racial and ethnic groups).



- Recommendation 2 -

Keeping the prison voluntary sector on the European Agenda

Prison administrations and staff themselves have told us that volunteers play a pivotal role in accomplishing their rehabilitative mission, building capacity and contributing to prisoners' wellbeing. Nonetheless, this research shows that volunteering activities is not a priority for the prison administrations. Maybe this occurs because prisons are unique work environments in both context and purpose: they are complex to manage, with very limited resources and often regarded as a working environment that holds little prestige in our society. Receiving and managing volunteering activities can be viewed by prison staff as an additional work. VOLPRIS recommends that European Programmes further support prison voluntary activities by creating more funds, defining concrete prison volunteering policies linked to measurable reintegration goals which create safer communities, and by providing more resources to value – and communicate the value of - volunteering in the prison context. These actions would both contribute to a constructive environment inside prisons, and contribute to value and recognise the role of volunteering activities in the prison context (respecting diversity and local/ national contexts).





- Recommendation 3 -

Set up European Recommendations related to volunteering practices in prisons and community sanctions and measures

Although it is important to respect diversity in each prison practices to manage volunteering activities, the European project aims to achieve a greater unity between its members, and to increase international co-operation and the attendant high standards in the field of criminal justice. VOLPRIS strongly recommend that the Council of Europe defines some common guidelines to help prisons with written, local volunteer policies and procedures related to volunteering activities, aligned with European standards, the objectives of our justice systems and the social and economic reintegration of sentenced persons.



- Recommendation 4 -

Awareness campaigns for what prison volunteering achieves and the added value this gives

Increasing prison staff, volunteers, volunteering activities coordinators/ managers and the whole society in the role and value of volunteers in the Criminal Justice Systems is a vital contribution increase the expression of the society's solidarity and European values in prison settings. These can be achieved by, inter alia, investment on impact evaluation studies to capture the volunteering programmes' results, campaigns on social media, public events, online networking activities.



- Recommendation 5 -

Training those that manage volunteers matters!

Whatever the local context, some basic training content is common to both volunteering coordinators and volunteers managers. These professionals are responsible for ensuring the good volunteering activities' performance in prisons. According to the research results, some common and basic contents are important: 'Communication and interpersonal skills', 'Ability to design Volunteering Programmes, together with the Volunteer Service Organisation/Volunteer', 'Organizational and management skills', 'Sensitivity to volunteers' needs' and 'Team spiritedness'. VOLPRIS training programme will include key-content to develop on the volunteering coordinators these five main competences. It is Recommended that these 5 key-topic should be included as a mandatory part of any training curricula that is delivered to prepare those selected to manage both volunteers and volunteering activities in the prison context.



- Recommendation 6 -

Relationships matter!

Through knowledge sharing, appreciation and communication, create the means to improve the quality of the relationships between all prison staff and volunteers. In addition to sufficient working hours to manage the volunteers, prison staff need to be aware of what it is that volunteers actually do in their prison, and why those activities matter. All staff should be trained to be able to meet known challenges, which could mean addressing a variety of different tasks. Starting with the rules for volunteers' engagement, these challenges could include creating instruments to screen the institutions and the prisoners' needs, identifying and engaging with organisations who can satisfy these needs and ensuring the quality of those activities before, during and after implementation. That requires training. Not only initial training or the training that come in some professions with general studies. But training that enables staff-members to stay on top of ever more effective ways to address reintegration, and even to pass on these working methods to volunteers. Always bear in mind that working with volunteers and VSOs might be an additional duty to the internal needs of the prison.



- Recommendation 7 -

Promote quality in prison volunteering activity through the development of volunteering programmes that are aligned with a prisoners' reintegration needs

That gives the institutions the task to design volunteering programmes that are very specific to the topic of building and establishing suitable activities with the best results for prison rehabilitation programmes and the broader socio-economic reintegration of the prisoners. VOLPRIS recommends that prison volunteering programmes should be evidence-based and designed to prove their impact, so that prisons can assess and prioritise activities which correlate positively with lower recidivism and safer communities. For this to be effective and efficient, volunteer managers must be trained in how to evaluate impact and to report evidence.



- Recommendation 8 -

Improve conditions for volunteering activities

For more effective volunteering activities, basic working conditions in prisons need to be improved. Prisons need to create clear structures when it comes to volunteer profiles, legal framework and the individual needs of both the institution and the person deprived of their liberty. These structures need to tailor to local conditions and specific groups and in awareness of their own situation. In many cases that will mean investing in work capacity and working time. VOLPRIS recommends that volunteering coordination be considered a full-time job and not one of many duties for one staff member to juggle.



- Recommendation 9 -

Promote cross-border mobility of prison volunteering coordinators/ managers, and prison volunteers

The basic reintegration aims of Europe's justice systems are the same, as are baseline training needs for volunteer coordinators and for volunteers themselves. Sharing cross-border knowledge and networks can be pivotal to reinforce the execution of the European Recommendations related to volunteering practices in prisons and community sanctions and measures. Sharing best practice and experience can also help save valuable resources.



- Recommendation 10 -

Continue to invest in the recognition of the prison volunteers' role

Result of the previous Justice Involving Volunteers in Europe (JIVE) project results. VOLPRIS partners urge continued investment in the recognition of the prison volunteers' role as an expression of society's solidarity and of European values in prison settings. Society should know how we all benefit from a prison volunteers' contribution to safer communities, where volunteers provide support to prisoners to integrate back into their communities and the part that we all have to play in the successful social and economic inclusion. VOLPRIS recommends that each Member State recognise the need for investment in the recruitment, training, management, qualification, and value of Volunteer Service Organisations that deliver volunteering activities in the Criminal Justice Systems.



- Recommendation 11 -

Ensuring citizens access to information about opportunities for volunteering in prison settings

Prison volunteering is still a mysterious world. VOLPRIS partners are developing an online platform to facilitate the exchange of practices on prison volunteering activities between European Member States. VOLPRIS recommends that each local prison and Volunteer Service Organisations begin a network and organise themselves, in order to facilitate the establishment of national databases on volunteer activities, opportunities and needs in the prison context. We further recommend them to pursue collaboration with civil society organisations (e.g. Universities, NGOs), media, state and volunteering umbrella organisations. Also, they should strongly invest in awareness campaigns across other volunteering platforms, in schools, on social media and/or other channels that will guarantee people see what prison volunteers actually do, and what that matters (also ensuring that information is accessible to disadvantaged segments of the population).