



THE PROJECT ON PARTICIPATION AND GOOD ATMOSPHERE IN CATALAN PRISONS

EPTA 2018

CONTENT:

1. Some relevant characteristics of the Catalan penitentiary system regarding dynamic security and positive relationship between inmates and prison staff
2. The project on Participation and good atmosphere (PP&GA) in prisons and the main tools and processes that are involved including the important role of the “motors of participation”
3. Which new competences are required by “motors of participation”?
 - 3.1. Working with a group of experienced motors
 - 3.2. The competences selected and the training designed

1. Some relevant characteristics of the Catalan penitentiary system regarding dynamic security and positive relationship between inmates and prison staff

- A model focused on **social reintegration**

-Great number of staff is directly rehabilitative (759 people/ for 8.400 inmates): educators, psychologist, experts on activities, social workers, teachers, jurists, etc. Moreover, security staffs have also their focus on rehabilitation

- The daily plan of activities is also focused on rehabilitation. Number of hours out of cells: 13h. Doing activities: 7h (+ leisure + meals)

- Many group activities (school, work, specific programs, leisure... but also meals and free time are shared with other inmates and take place in direct/personal contact with security staff)

- Main characteristics of the contact between security staff and inmates: no weapons; a lot of proximity; staff is present in all the activities and maintain an active role in prevention of conflicts through a personal knowledge of each inmate, proximity and active sighting

- Implication of community in the daily activity of the prison: through volunteers (more than 800) and the Tables of Social Participation (community representatives and prison staff are represented and have regular meetings to discuss several items of the daily prison activity and regarding the collaboration of community with reintegration of inmates).

In this context, some competences are already [key competences](#) for the initial training of both rehabilitation staff and security staff, mainly: Communication with the inmates; Prevention of incidents; Cooperation and team work; Management of conflict

2. The *Project on participation and good atmosphere in prisons*

Our penitentiary context isn't bad regarding the relationship between staff and inmates. But currently the system wants to climb a new step.

Since now, inmates have been pretty inactive members of a prison with very few possibilities of participation in its daily organization.

The new management model of Catalan prisons, the *Project on participation and good atmosphere*, wants to incorporate the participation of inmates and their families as the normal dynamic, as well as new systems to prevent and solve conflicts.

Participation of inmates is recommended by the European Prison Rules and is also included in our specific legislation.

- The new management model is inspired by a previous experience in Spain: the Units of respect. These are specific units in some prisons for inmates with good behaviour that accept, voluntarily, to live in a prison unit with different rules: a lot of participation, conflicts solved within the group of inmates, no drugs, no sanctions, no uniforms, etc. A lot of benefits but if you fail, you return to the normal prison regime.

-Our model is not a specific option for those inmates that have good behaviour and accept to live in a "different place", our model is a new way of organising prison's life in general:

- In all the prisons
- In all the units/departments
- With all kind of inmates

Some key points of the model:

- Inmates participation through: civic promoters; module delegate; mentoring; assemblies of inmates; unit commissions; board of the unit; board of the prison
- Improve Family's participation
- Improve Community participation
- New ways of preventing and solving conflicts: improve positive communication between inmates and staff; improve personal knowledge of inmates by staff; participation of inmates; inmates mentoring new inmates; use of penitentiary mediation

There are key staffs to impulse the Project, we call them: Reference staff or "motors of participation". There are 2 or 3 in each unit or department of the prison. Their functions are:

1: Promote the participation of individual inmates as civil promotor or unit delegate: select them, train them and keep track of their work.

2: Conduct participation with the inmates (assemblies; unit commissions; board of the unit; board of the prison).

3: Promote the participation of families and community, and contribute to make it possible.

4: Promote the new model among staff. Organize and facilitate participation spaces with other professionals, organize debates, etc.

5: Organize specific work procedures of the Participation Project (for example, protocol of elections; plan for the reception of inmates; work plan with social organizations; participation plan with families; etc.)

This is a very important role for the project!

3. Which new competences are required by the “motors of participation”?

3.1. Working with a group of experienced motors

Our Training Department was asked by the Prison service to help with this Project. One of the main questions was to train the new “motors” of the project.

When we began to think in our training contribution, some pilot projects were already working and some “motors” were already doing their new job. Our idea was, immediately, to analyse with them their new role and its difficulties and requirements.

We met with a group of 10 experienced motors during 4 hours with a specific plan that had the following steps:

- To identify their main functions and activities
- To analyse, activity by activity, their difficulties to assume the new role dividing those related to organizational issues from those related to personal competences
- Explain difficulties through critical real incidents
- Define the main competences and the “contra competences”

3.2. The competences selected and the training designed

4 clear competences were selected for the initial training of “motors”:

- Implication in the project and motivation were underlined as very important in a starting point (very important for the selection of “motors”):
At the same time, training should upgrade this competence. At the end of the training the “motors” would have to be able to:
 - Explain the MPiC and its benefits in a clear, attractive and motivating way, to the unit staff and volunteers, and to the inmates and their families
- Impact and influence
When finishing the training the “motors” would have to be able to:
 - Persuade people who are against or are not convinced by the Project of participation and good atmosphere; refute arguments against and reinforce arguments in favour, and reorient them to the basic principles of the project showing clearly its benefits
 - Transmit a positive image of the project
 - Use different strategies to capture and involve specific inmates in individual responsibilities linked to the PP&GA
 - Use different strategies to involve inmates and staff of the unit in participation activities

- **Leading group participation**
When finishing the training the “motors” would have to be able to:
 - Prepare the meetings and assemblies, both in their formal aspects (agenda, call, distribution of time, etc.) and content, anticipating topics of interest and possible controversial issues
 - Conduct these meetings conveniently: focus on the issues to be addressed and redirect those that do not correspond, distribute words, control time, etc.
 - Listen and take into account all the participants, and integrate them into the dynamics
 - Manage the group with transparency and coherence, establishing limits but with the right flexibility
 - Empower the inmates as a way of solving their own conflicts and demands
 - Manage serenity conflicts that may arise
- **Communication.** Communication was seen as an important part of the rest of the competences already mentioned. It is, in fact, included in them, but the experts wanted to underline its important role in the project
When finishing the training the “motors” would have to be able to:
 - Use different communicative strategies to "sell" the product "Model of participation and good atmosphere". Use various persuasion strategies
 - Maintain fluid and assertive communication with inmates and staff
 - Detect conflicts and redirect them communicatively into assemblies or meetings

The training plan gives an answer to these competences through:

- Working and reflecting on the project contents in depth: pros and cons; aims and values; theoretical bases and practical issues (4 hours)
- Practising new skills (one workshop on Impact and influence; one workshop on leading group participation) (8+8 hours)
- Participating in real participation activities side by side to an experienced “motor” (5 hours)

Regarding the continuous training, the experienced “motors” stressed the importance of improve training on the following competences: Institutional competence (human rights, ethics, institutional mission and values); Communication with the inmates; Prevention of incidents; Cooperation and team work; Management of conflict; Management of information.

Centre for Legal Studies and Specialized Training
Department of Training and Research in Criminal Justice

Barcelona, May 2018