

# M4PRIS: DEVELOPING A PEER MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR PRISON STAFF

A blueprint of prison staff mentoring

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## Introduction

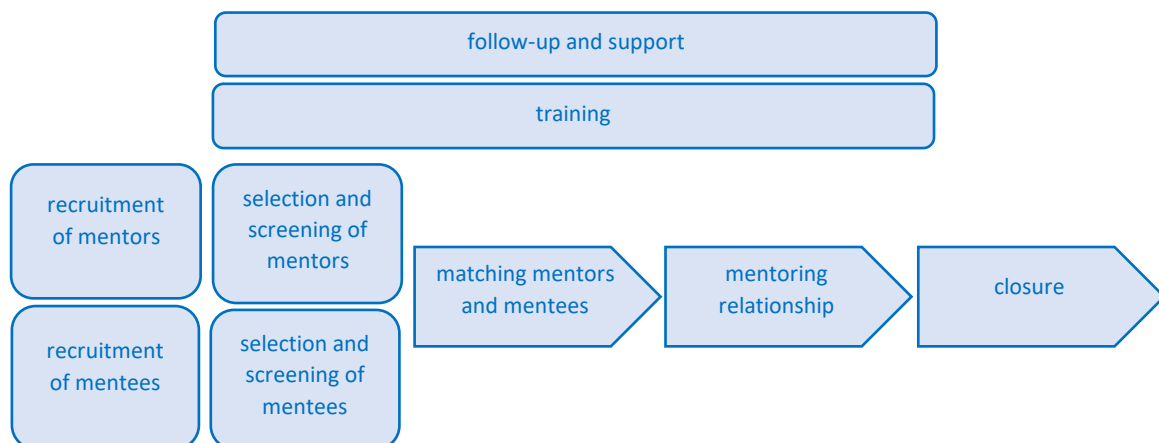
This paper must be situated in the context of the M4Pris project. This is an Erasmus+ project with the aim of developing a peer mentoring programme, including a mentor training, specifically tailored to the needs of prison staff and that can be implemented to different national prison contexts.

Several international partner organisations are part of this project: BrainLog (Denmark-Project Coordinator) - Danish Prison Federation (Denmark), Aproximar – Cooperativa de Solidariedade Social (Portugal), Sindicatul al Politistilor de Penitenciare (Romania), Asociatia Vis Juventum (Romania), Athens Lifelong Learning Institute (Greece) and HIVA, KU Leuven (Belgium).

This partnership is a mix of organisations that have experience with providing services to prisons and a multidisciplinary research institute. Each of which have their own specific responsibility in the whole.

A first step in order to develop the mentor programme is the development of a blueprint of the mentoring programme including a mentor profile and training content. This paper presents the prison staff mentoring blueprint, thus being the mentoring structure, the mentor profile and role, the mentor training. It is the theory cornerstone of the M4Pris project and serves as the basis for the development of all the subsequent work packages as it clarifies how a prison mentoring programme should look like.

The blueprint defines the structure of the mentoring programme. De Cuyper (2020) identified key elements of a mentoring process that need to be given attention when developing a mentoring programme. These elements are:



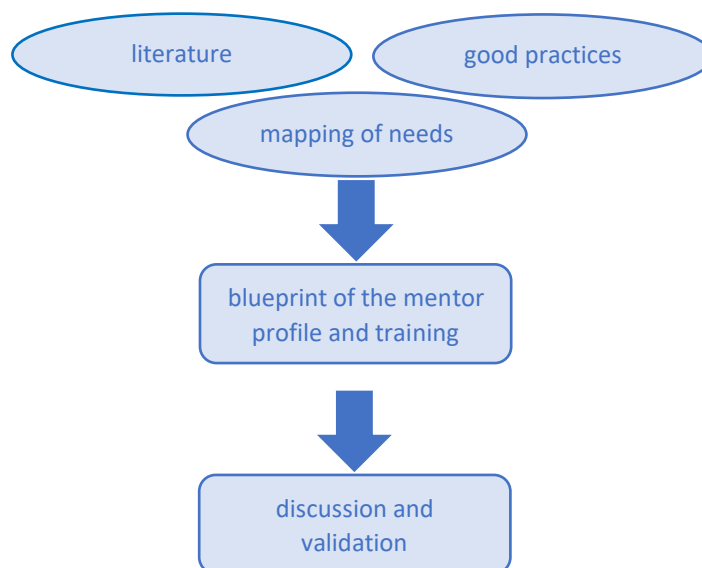
- **the recruitment of mentors and mentees** – all activities that are aimed at leading mentors and mentees to the programme
- **the selection and screening of mentors and mentees** – relates to who is eligible for the programme and the criteria to find a good match
- **the matching of mentors and mentees** – the process of determining the best match possible

- **the mentoring relationship** - whereby mentor and mentee have contact with each other on a regular basis and for a certain duration with the aim to achieve predetermined objectives
- **the closure of the mentoring relationship** – the way the mentoring relationship is to be (formally) ended
- **the provision of follow-up and support for the mentor and mentee** – this by a coach/organiser of the mentoring programme
- **the provision of a training for mentors and coordinators**

Besides laying out the structure of the mentoring programme, the blueprint intends to 1) clarify the profile and role of the mentor and 2) determine what the mentor training should look like. In what follows we discuss the methodology used to develop the blueprint.

### Methodology

Several steps were undertaken in order to develop a blueprint of a prison staff mentoring programme. First we conducted a state of the art literature review on mentoring and peer support interventions, with specific attention to a prison (related) context. Information was also gathered on promising practices in a prison (related) context and a needs assessment was conducted among prison staff. Based on these findings a blueprint was drafted. This blueprint was discussed with the project partners and adapted based on their feedback. In what follows, we discuss the methodology more in detail.



## Literature search

Initially a state of the art literature review was done relating to this topic. The literature search focused on the one hand on articles that mention the challenging context of working in a prison and on the other hand focused specifically on mentoring programmes in a prison context. What the latter is concerned, it was the objective to find as many academic insights as possible on e.g. the structure of such a programme, the role and profile of a mentor, who the mentees are, how participants are required and selected, whether there is a training and what it would include, possible effects,... It was not unusual that both description of prison staff stressors and aspects of mentoring were incorporated in one and the same article.

The literature search resulted in a total of 39 articles<sup>1</sup> of which 17 focused on the challenging context of prison work, 12 on mentoring (in a prison (related) context) and 10 that included both aspects such as prison stressors as well as prison mentoring interventions. However, it also needs to be said that mentoring in a prison context was not always elaborately described. Sometimes only brief references to it were made. The literature search was carried out by using Google Scholar and LIMO<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the identification of a mentor profile and training needs were also subject of a previous research, although not focussing on mentoring in a prison context, carried out by HIVA, KU Leuven<sup>3</sup>. The information that was gathered then, is thus also of use for M4Pris as it can provide additional evidence and practice based inspiration. Information was gathered through scientific articles (16 in total)<sup>4</sup>, but also by means of interviews with coordinators of mentoring projects of all sorts (two national - Belgian - and one international) as well as scraping the websites of international mentoring projects and their annual reports, information leaflets,...<sup>5</sup>

## Good practices

Secondly, promising practices of mentoring in a prison context were identified by the project partners. The initial idea consisted of the partners finding good practices in their respective countries. As mentoring for prison staff is not yet a common practices and good practices were difficult to find, the scope was broadened. First the geographical scope was expanded to other countries, second the scope was also expanded to other contexts with similar features. Below an overview of typical traits of a prison setting and other settings in which these also apply.

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1 See bibliography.

2 LIMO is a search engine of KU Leuven.

3 ESF project "Supermentor: training supermentors for activating job seekers with migration background". A thorough needs-analysis was done with respect to the role and profile of a mentor and topics that should be included in a mentor training, specifically aimed at mentoring people with a migration background towards work.

4 See bibliography.

5 See appendix for an overview of all the sources consulted.

characteristics of a prison setting	other settings in which this applies
law enforcement: the use of violence is permitted when necessary	police
working with people (first line), constant interaction with clients who might be stressed, vulnerable,...	social workers, psychiatric hospitals, emergency departments in general hospitals
strong power dynamics	police, courts
danger in the job	firefighters, ambulance, army
working in shifts and in teams	many different settings

Each project partner aimed at submitting three good practices. They explored good practices and each partner proposed the good practices they selected to HIVA, KU Leuven. During a group meeting with all the project partners all the proposed good practices were discussed to come to a mutual decision on which were retained.

Information about the good practices was reported in a uniform template designed in advance (see appendix). The template included five topics: general information on the programme, information on the mentor profile, information on the mentor training, details on the approach and programme structure, final remarks such as lessons learned, struggles experience.

An overview of the good practices provided by the project partners in the following table:

<b>good practice</b>	<b>provided by</b>	<b>in a nutshell</b>
Mentor programme for new officers	Denmark	This programme applies to Danish prisons and was founded many years ago. It is intended for new prison officers and the mentoring process lasts three years. The goal is for the mentor to have spent 100 hours with the new prison officer, either in the form of mutual shifts and/or conversations. The objective is to ensure common standards and contribute to the uniformity of the practical training. It creates a safe environment for new prison officers to learn the skills, competencies and attitudes that are necessary for the job.
The bureau of prison staff mentoring programme	Greece	This is an American programme implemented in all federal correctional facilities and is available for all staff members, but is specifically intended for new prison officers. It is founded in 2009. The programme lasts between six months to a year and aims at providing guidance through the complexities of working in a correctional setting as well as feeling more confident and competent on the job.
Total worker health mentoring <sup>6</sup>	Greece, Portugal	This programme is implemented in several correctional facilities in the USA. It first started in 2016. It is designed to address the unique challenges faced by correctional workers, such as high levels of stress and exposure to violence. It includes a series of workshops and training sessions (e.g. on communication skills). The programme asks for a one-year commitment.
Mentoring programme for child welfare	Portugal	This is an American programme intended for child welfare staff that lasts two years. It first started in 2006. The general goal is to increase the organisational commitment, build leadership capacity, familiarisation with procedures and ways of working, increase retention rates and offer opportunities for professional and personal development. The programme includes different types of activities.
Mentoring prison officer pack (Unlocked)	Portugal, Romania	This is a two-year programme in the UK designed for new prison officers. It started in 2016. It is designed to provide both professional advice and psychosocial support by means of a comprehensive training that equips prison officers with the skills necessary to reduce criminal recidivism and increase job retention. Among other things training them in effective communication and conflict resolution it helps them to create a positive environment for inmates.



Initiation course for junior employees	Romania	This programme is organised in every Romanian penitentiary unit. The programme has been stipulated in the national legislation, since approximately 15 years. Junior penitentiary officers take part in this three to six month programme that offers them insights in their profession; knowledge, skills and competencies.
Mentoring in the corrections workplace: a self paced workbook	Romania	This is not really a program but a workbook aimed at corrections professionals that are or want to be a mentor. This workbook is/was inspirational in developing the training. .

### Interviews and focus groups

Thirdly, a mapping of prison staff needs in terms of mentoring and peer support was foreseen through a series of interviews and focus groups. It was the objective that each partner would conduct eight semi-structured interviews with prison staff in their country as well as a focus group with mentors. Initially the idea was to work with a survey but we decided that more in depth information was needed, so finally opted for semi structured interviews.

The interviews were structured by means of a template topic list (see appendix) that asked about experiences and struggles when starting a job as a prison officer, the things that helped them to overcome experienced difficulties as well as the role of a mentor in this, including what type of person a mentor should be, how they evaluate their current situation and the needs that might still exist.

In total 31 interviews were conducted in Portugal, Romania, Greece and Denmark. 22 out of these 31 interviews were with male prison officers, nine with females. All interviewees had less than two years of experience. Specifically for Portugal, this was less than two years in a youth prison<sup>7</sup>. As a bias must be stated that there were no prison officers interviewed who had left the job or were on sick leave.

As for the focus groups (see appendix for the template with instructions), so far a focus group took place in Portugal<sup>8</sup>, Romania<sup>9</sup> and Greece.

### Review discussion and validation

Based on all this information a blueprint for a prison staff mentoring programme was worked out. This blueprint includes a definition of a mentor profile and training as well as an insight in how such a programme can be structured. Through a review validation and project partner

<sup>6</sup> This good practice is described in several articles that also popped up during the literature search.

<sup>7</sup> It was decided by the Portuguese National Prison Services to start a mentoring programme in a youth prison. The prison guards thus were not new to the job, but they were new to that specific prison context.

<sup>8</sup> This was a focusgroep with mentees.

<sup>9</sup> In Romania the format of the focusgroup were four interviews with prison staff.

meeting in Belgium<sup>10</sup> a supported agreement was reached on the key elements of how such a mentoring programme should look like.

During the review validation and project partner meeting a debate was organised to discuss the aspects of the blueprint. Specifically with regard to the mentor profile as well as the mentor training a group exercise was organised to structure the debate. Aspects of the profile and training that came up in the academic literature and the empirical data (interviews, focus groups and good practices) were listed and asked to prioritize according to their perceived importance. Each project partner was asked to select those aspects they considered important. Followed by a maximum of five aspects that they deemed very important. In this way a differentiation could be made.

### Structure of the paper

In what follows, firstly the challenging context of a prison environment is situated. The specific needs arising from this are then described. The effects of mentoring and its purpose are pointed out. Secondly, the, based on the gathered information, suggested blueprint, encompassing the different elements being the structure, the mentor profile and role and mentor training is presented as well as the accompanying discussion leading to the final blueprint.

## The context of a prison

In what follows the challenging context of a prison setting is explained based on academic literature and the interviews and focus groups conducted by the M4Pris project partners. Firstly, the different unique stressors of working in a prison environment are listed. The consequences of these stressors on a multitude of life domains are described as well as the needs that result from this.

### Being a prison officer: a challenging job

#### Stressors

Numerous articles describe the challenging context of a correctional workplace (Namazi et.al., 2021; Kotejoshyer et.al., 2021; Howard et.al., 2022; Johnston et.al., 2022; Jessiman-Perreault et.al., 2022; Talbot-Landon et.al., 2007; Finney et.al., 2013; Keinan et.al., 2007; Kinman et.al., 2016; Howard et.al., 2022; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007). The general lack of attention for wellbeing at work, in some countries, and a lack of training due to austerity measures has made the work in European prisons more demanding and complex over the years. High turnover rates are typical (Vereycken & Ramioul, 2019).

Prison officers work in a high stress environment that is characterized by a range of unique organizational and operational job demands. The occupational stressors prison officers are confronted with are described as insidious and chronic. The stressors are multiple and often unpredictable. A Greek prison guard who was interviewed said that these stressors oblige him

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<sup>10</sup> This partner meeting took place on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

to be fully focused all the time. There is no room for mistakes as things can easily go wrong. *“Just when things seem quiet and well and you think the shift is going to go smoothly, a fuse can be lit when you least expect it. So you have to be sharp and constantly observe what is going on.”* (Greece)

Prison staff are exposed to many unique risks that can jeopardise their safety and wellbeing. Aspects of their unique work environment, such as demanding interpersonal relationships, stressful social encounters, the management of critical events and the responsibility to supervise and secure persons that potentially are uncooperative, manipulative or violent are not unlikely to burden them (Griffin et.al., 2012; Lambert et.al., 2015; Farnese et.al., 2016). Then there are also the high job demands such as the workload, understaffing, shift work, overtime and role ambiguity (Farnese et.al., 2016, Jessiman-Perreault et.al., 2021).

Over the course of their career, correctional workers are likely to be confronted with potentially traumatic events and situations involving harm, such as violent incidents, self-injury and even death (Barry, 2017; Boudoukha et al., 2011; Viotti, 2016; Walker et al., 2017). In his study, James et al. (2017) states that approximately one quarter of correctional staff are confronted with threats, either to themselves or to their families. Almost half of the correctional workers that were part of James’ research witnessed a colleague endure a serious injury caused by an assault or saw an inmate die. Moreover, prison staff need to continue working in the same environment where they experience these traumatic happenings (Barry, 2017).

#### Consequences of the stressors

As described above, numerous detrimental stressors threaten prison staff. These stressors can have an impact both on the individual as well as the organisational level. On the individual level potentially resulting in mental and physical problems such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, burn-out, substance abuse, coronary artery diseases. Not only their health, but also their wellbeing is on the line. On the organisational level it can trigger early retirement, increased job turnover, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, decreased job performance and lesser commitment to the job (Keinan and Malach-Pines, 2007, Lambert et.al., 2020)

#### Mental health impact

Studies focusing on different facets of mental health and wellbeing of correctional workers has blossomed during the last years. Research shows the adverse mental health outcomes associated with correctional work. A subset of research focuses on rates of mental health disorders. Findings indicate higher rates among correctional workers in comparison with the general public and other public safety professions such as the police (Jaegers et al., 2019, Lerman et al., 2021, Regehr et al., 2019, Stadnyk, 2003). Apparent mental health disorders are e.g. posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), feelings of depression and general anxiety disorders (Denhof and Spinaris, 2016, Carleton et al., 2018, Regehr et al., 2019). James and Todak (2018) found that in the state of Washington (USA), correctional workers have a PTSD prevalence that equals to that of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans.

The mental impact also became clear from the experiences prison staff shared during interviews with the project partners. *“It is not physical exhaustion at our workplace, it is psychological.”* (Greece)

#### Impact on wellbeing and life quality

Wellbeing and life quality can also be impacted by work in a correctional facility as responses to the stressors experienced on the job can spill over to their lives outside of work. Correctional work can generate different types of work-(family)life conflict, something that is common among prison staff. Conflicts can be time-based as it causes a lack of time for one’s family due to working schedules. It can also be role-based as it is difficult to shift gears between the role one takes up at work and the home persona. Strain-based conflicts also occur referring to emotional fatigue (Higgins et.al., 2021, Lambert et.al., 2020, Triplett et.al., 1999, Vickovic and Morrow, 2020, Namazi et.al., 2021).

The spillover to personal life stated was also confirmed in several interviews. *“In prison we are sometimes insulted by inmates’ parents and that is frustrating. At the beginning I felt upset and I couldn’t sleep. When I was at home I had trouble managing my emotions. I would should at everyone at the slightest thing.”* (Portugal) A quote from a Romanian interviewee expresses the same feeling. *“Adapting to new life was quite difficult. The different characters of the people you meet in your work as a penitentiary policeman. I believe I have struggled very hard with detachment from the problems encountered at work in my spare time.”* (Romania)

#### Physical health impact

Prison staff is considered to have one of the poorest health profiles of any public safety occupation. They are at risk of developing serious chronic health conditions (Kotejoshyer et.al., 2021). A 2008 study of 326 correctional officers in the USA showed that their health rapidly declines early in their job tenure (Namazi et.al., 2021). Despite of the relative young age of the sampled population (41 years), they already suffered from a poor health. The majority of them were overweight or obese. Approximately a third were pre-hypertensive and half of them hypertensive (Namazi et.al., 2021).

Other health issues prison staff are being confronted with are cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure and a metabolic syndrome. Correctional officers (in the USA) also have the highest number of cases of non-fatal occupational injuries (Kotejoshyer et.al., 2021).

#### Impact on job performance and satisfaction

The conflict between work and life, in combination with a variety of other stressors, can produce complex outcomes related to job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job stress and burnout (Lambert et.al., 2002, 2006, 2020, 2021).

#### The effects of burnout

The toll of correctional work on staff manifests itself as (higher rates of) burn-out than in other workplaces (Kim et.al., 2017, Useche et.al., 2019, Griffin et.al., 2012; Lambert et.al., 2015).

Moreover, work related stress and burnout levels have been reported as increasing over the past years. Work related stress and burnout are linked to adverse health behaviours such as smoking, substance abuse, poor eating habits, contributing to a shortened life span (Kotejshyer et.al., 2021). Researchers also indicate that correctional workers are at a higher risk of death by suicide (Stack and Tsoudis, 1997, Jessiman-Perreault et.al., 2021).

#### Especially difficult for newcomers: first time struggles

These stressors are especially burdensome for newcomers. It can produce a severe reality shock (Farnese et.al., 2016, Jessiman-Perreault et.al., 2021). Newcomers must face the expectation that they will have to cope with all these challenging circumstances.

That first time contact with a prison context can be overwhelming is also apparent from the interviews and focus groups conducted by the M4Pris project partners. A Greek interviewee shared that he felt uncomfortable and unprepared to cope with life in a prison. He struggled with this new context and way of dealing with situations that don't occur in life outside a prison. That a prison can be an intimidating environment also becomes clear from this quote: *"We see a prison hall with 300 inmates and it has a big impact on us. Everything is new and different from the outside world. Whoever says they are not afraid, is lying. Although we do not want to show it, there is always fear."* (Portugal) Interviewees from Romania said that there sometimes even is a drop-out during the first months on service. They even reported situations in which newcomers already resigned during the first month. *"We see this in the first two to three months of activity and there were situations in which they did not stay even for a month and submitted their resignation."* (Romania)

A prison context is entirely different from the outside world. This means that newcomers have to familiarise themselves with the procedures and rules that apply. *"It's a whole new world. You have to figure out how to do things."* (Denmark) *"It was special to get into prison at first. A closed world. In the beginning, you had to get used to the manners, rules and procedures. There were many things to learn."* (Denmark)

It is, among other things, about how to handle inmates, taking into account that one inmate is not the other and sometimes inmates push prison staff's buttons. Communication with inmates is also something that new prison officers need to learn to master. *"At first I did not know exactly how to communicate with persons deprived of their liberty. This is, in what way I could express myself."* (Romania) Communication issues became especially apparent from the experiences provided by the Greek project partner where it is not uncommon that inmates are of a foreign origin. Having language barriers makes it even more difficult to communicate. *"First it was difficult due to the particularity of the prison environment. The main problem was how to communicate with the inmates."* (Greece) Cultural differences between inmates (and prison officers) sometimes form obstacles as well.

### Emerging needs

Needs emerge from the above described stressors and the becoming familiar with (new) ways of working and handling situations. Interviews and focus groups conducted by the M4Pris project partners showed that having someone who is attentive and supportive when being confronted with negative key moments, relating to e.g. riots, the use of force or inmates committing suicide, is much needed. *“The first inmate that I saw dead inside her cell... It was not a good thing to see. I had a few weeks without sleep. I didn’t have any kind of support. No one asked me if I needed something. I had to report that situation and that was it, moving on.”* (Portugal)

### Emotional, psychosocial and practical support

Emotional and psychosocial support is considered a need that is felt by the interviewed prison staff.

Besides the emotional and psychosocial support there is also a need for job related support or help when it comes to ‘learning the ropes’. It outlines the perceived importance of having the opportunity to learn by example and having a role model.

Support is considered a leverage, especially during the first months on the job. And it is not only in the aftermath of stressful moments that it can be vital. Support received in the form of appreciation or confirmation contributes to positive key moments. *“I had an experience with a colleague who gave me positive feedback after a period with an inmate. It was not a critical period, but there had been a bad atmosphere. It was nice that the colleague talked to me about it and told me that I handled it well.”* (Denmark)

### A supportive environment

Danish interviewees referred to the support they’ve experienced by (close/older) colleagues. It is seen as a leverage during the first months on the job. *“I was welcomed. I had many good colleagues and I learned from them.”* (Denmark) The help of more seasoned colleagues was also mentioned during interviews with prison staff from the other project partner countries. Older colleagues pass on their insights to the newer ones, while working on the same shifts, by answering questions that are being raised or just because it is a way of doing thing: guiding younger co-workers. Although in Greece some said that the support was being appreciated, it did not always feel as sufficient to be well enough equipped to deal with everything. And some interviews also alluded that some prison staff felt left on their own.

Nevertheless, specifically relating to the older colleagues’ further nuance is needed. Some interviews showed a friction between the new and older generation. An interviewee from Greece stated that he felt disrespected and even mentioned a hostile atmosphere. Old and new ways of thinking and wanting to do things don’t always align easily. This friction is also felt in Romania and Portugal: *“We have this difficulty when we are younger and when we start working. We have a freshness that isn’t well accepted by those who are already in that comfort zone for years.”* (Portugal)

When it comes to Portugal, it should also be mentioned that Portugal struggles with a general lack of prison officers which makes it hard to find that helping hand. *“There is always support by older colleagues, but it is complicated because there is a lack of prison staff. So sometimes if we want to know something, we have to find out ourselves.”* (Portugal) Even if one is willing, there is not always that availability for support giving, *“We don’t have enough guards to do our job so it’s very difficult to help another colleague, if not impossible.”* (Portugal)

Insights from the interviews learn that not just a colleague, but a colleague who is a mentor could be helpful for newcomers. Nevertheless, there were also several nuances made in this regard. In Denmark the experiences with a mentor were not entirely positive across the board. Mentors who were sick were not replaced or a mentor was assigned only after a month and not from the beginning. This does not take away the fact that there are also good experiences with mentors who were considered to help and support in more or less the same way as colleagues. The main differences is the fact that it is done in a more structured way. In Romania, new prison staff is legally entitled to a mentor, but in reality not everybody has one. A Romanian prison guard who had a mentor, never met with him. Someone else, who had a mentor, found it very helpful, but stressed the importance of being able to work together often enough. In Portugal and Greece there are no mentors.

## The potential of mentoring

This chapter elaborates on the different functions mentoring can have. The potential of mentoring for prison staff is also touched upon.

### The difference mentoring can make

Johnston et.al. (2022) report that perceptions of organisational support can have a positive impact on the wellbeing of correctional workers. Participants to their study expressed the need for a mentoring programme. Interviews from the M4Pris project partners as well showed that support from a mentor is seen a positive stepping stone. A Greek prison officer said that it enables and stimulates the sharing of experiences. Provided guidance would make everybody feel much safer, help gain experience faster and be crucial for the adaptation process. During an interview done by the Portuguese project partner there was not only a reference made to people who are entirely new to the job, but also to people who are transferred from another prison and for whom mentoring could have an added value.

The findings of Farnese et.al. (2016) also give support to the usefulness of mentoring in a law enforcement context. Their study shows that mentoring can be helpful to reduce the intention to search for another job. In line with this, Butler et.al. (2019) reported an increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment in addition to less stress. The Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme, one of the good practices, evaluated the mentoring programme and results also showed higher levels of job satisfaction and improved retention rates by those who attended the mentoring programme compared to those who didn't.

Specifically relating to newcomers', mentoring exerts a positive influence on their adjustment. This in turn has a favourable effect against burnout onset (Farnese et.al., 2016). In their description of the Total Worker Health Mentoring Programme, also one of the good practices provided by two project partners, Namazi et. al. (2021) and Kotejoshyer et.al. (2021) state that mentoring offers a tangible form of support for newcomers to learn from experienced colleagues to anticipate, identify and manage health risks related to the job. It also can help newcomers to handle the risks that arise from the physically dangerous aspects of corrections work.

Promising results of prison staff receiving support from supervisors and peers are also reported in other studies. Based on his own experience, Wittenberg (1998) wrote that the mentoring he received helped him to become part of the organizational culture of the correctional workforce and create a job identity. Mentoring contributes to the sense of personal accomplishment (Farnese et.al., 2016).

Promoting ways of supporting prison staff 's job stress and satisfaction can also be important towards achieving other goals. It stimulates a custodial environment that is conducive to the rehabilitation of inmates. Prison staff who report less job stress and more job satisfaction also endorse more rehabilitative orientations and less punitive attitudes towards inmates (Howard et.al., 2022).



### The functions mentoring can entail

Mentoring is considered a 'learning relationship' (Eby et.al., 2007) as almost all mentoring relationships involve the acquisition of knowledge of some sort (e.g. insights, skills, competencies,...).

There are two 'functions' of mentoring that pop up when it comes to workplace mentoring: the psychosocial function and the career-oriented function (Eby et.al., 2007; Haggard et.al., 2010; Kram, 1985).

The first refers to all types of psychosocial support related to attitudes, motivation and interpersonal relationships at the workplace. It entails motivating, affirming, giving emotional support, etc. The career-oriented function is about introducing one at the workplace, sharing job-specific skills and tips and tricks, giving work related advice, familiarize one with the workplace culture, etc.

Both functions do not exclude each other. Workplace mentoring can be about psychosocial support as well as being career-oriented.

### Job familiarisation and career development as a focus

For a correctional facility it is not always easy to attract and maintain a correctional workforce. The correctional work environment is not an easy environment to work in or recruit into. By means of mentoring programmes and tapping into the knowledge and experience of more experienced staff correctional agencies can prepare and support their staff to get themselves acquainted with the job setting, skills and career prospects (Wittenberg, 1998). More or less the same reasoning is found in the work of Farnese et.al. (2016) where mentoring is seen as vital for 'learning the ropes' and integration at the workplace. Mentoring is found to have a positive effect on job commitment and reduce the intention to search for another job. It enhances the feeling of effectiveness, personal growth and achievement at work while reducing disengaged attitudes towards work as well as mental and emotional distancing from people at work. It has a positive influence on newcomers adjustment which in turn exerts a protective influence against burn-out.

Preparing prison staff for leadership roles, promoting learning and development as well as stimulate communication and mutual respect were the focus points of a Workplace Mentor Program in Australia. The Workplace Mentor Program involves teaming up prison officers with volunteer senior officers on an ongoing one-to-one basis to share knowledge, give advice and support. All with the overall aim to improve the workplace culture. Viewed from a broader perspective, the mentoring programme is part of range of reforms that aim to deliver a prison environment that enables rehabilitation of prison inmates. Studies have shown that prison officers who report more job related stress and less job satisfaction also endorse less rehabilitative orientation and more punitive attitudes towards inmates (Howard et.al, 2022).

### Health and wellbeing as a focus

Mentoring is a useful way to help new prison officers to adjust to their role. Mentoring provided by experienced co-workers can also be a useful avenue specifically for health and wellbeing interventions at work. It can help prison officers to identify, anticipate and manage health risks that arise from physically dangerous and emotionally challenging aspects of corrections work (Kotejshyer et.al., 2021).

In their research Johnston et.al. (2022) explore Canadian correctional staff perspectives on how mental health policies at the organizational level could foster better well-being outcomes for them. Some of the persons they've interviewed expressed the need for mentoring programmes, whereby less experienced staff would be peered-up with more senior employees. *"A mentoring programme could be a good way for staff who are less confident to have a person to go to when they need"* (correctional officer, Saskatchewan). Such a mentoring programme could assist not only in operational issues, but also in matters relating to mental health and well-being. *"Opportunity for education both in terms of recognizing secondary trauma, but also in working with individuals who have experienced trauma"* (correctional officer, Manitoba).

Programmes supporting mentor-mentee relationships, based on consensual health-related goals, are relatively novel in the health related literature, and even rarer when it comes to correctional settings.

One of the few, more elaborate scientific contributions on this, is the article of Namazi et.al. (2021). In their article they describe the development and implementation of a mentoring programme in a correctional context. More specifically it is about a peer health mentoring programme in the USA: a Total Worker Health Mentoring Programme. The aim of the programme is to address worker safety, health and well-being of prison officers. The programme distinguishes itself through the fact that it goes beyond job task familiarization. It is a programme that is provided to newly hired prison officers during their first year at the job.

## Developing the blueprint

This chapter describes how the blueprint came into life. It builds further on the insights that are presented in the previous chapters and adds additional theoretical and empirical insights to it. As academic literature on mentoring for prison staff is rather limited, this chapter must be seen as an integration of all types of information sources that have been consulted.

This chapter also integrates the discussion held by the M4Pris project partners to validate the blueprint.

### The definition of a mentoring programme for prison staff

A first step in the development of a mentoring programme for prison staff is figuring out what mentoring could and should contribute to prison staff. In other words, it is defining what a mentoring programme for prison staff is.

The previous chapters discussed in depth the specific context of prison work; the stressors, their impact and the needs that arise from them. Previously, it is also already stated that mentoring could be a promising instrument to alleviate the challenges that, especially new, prison staff are confronted with. These insights are both based on academic underpinnings as well as on what the by the M4Pris interviewed prison staff said.

Mentoring can have different functions that do not exclude each other. As academic literature states it can be aimed at job familiarisation and career development on the one hand, but also at providing psychosocial and emotional support. The good practices provided by the M4Pris project partners all focus on both. In addition, the interviews conducted in the context of this project make it clear that having both support in gaining the specific job related expertise and competencies as well as having mental and emotional support is considered vital. As a conclusion, both types of support are considered equal and equally needed.

The theory and the empirical findings from the interviews put a focus on newcomers (and/or people not new to the prison context, but being transferred from one prison to another) as it is a work environment that is very distinct from others.

It became clear that the supportive bond between colleagues is a leverage. Special attention is given to more senior colleagues who are willing and available to transfer their knowledge and experience.

All these recurring and mutually affirming elements across academic expertise and practice-based insights have led to the following definition of a mentoring programme for prison staff. This definition is agreed upon and validated by the M4Pris project partners.

**A more senior colleague providing emotional support, sharing job related information, institutional knowledge and helps to develop skills in an informal manner and on a voluntary basis with a less experienced or even new colleague in his/her department.**

Another essential consideration, besides defining the mentoring programme for prison staff, was whether the blueprint of the mentoring programme for prison staff should be 'one size fits all' or that it should provide for the opportunity to be tailor made for each (in this project participating) country.

As the above theoretical and empirical findings show, there are several common elements. However it is also clear that there are contextual differences between each of the project partners involved. Differences in prison contexts, experienced needs and added value that is expected from such a mentoring programme for prison staff. For the Danish project partner, as they are confronted with drop-out rates and recruitment issues, a mentoring programme could potentially help more people 'to stick to the job'. Reducing the high number of prison guards on sick leave and raising the motivation as well as cooperation with other prison staff members is hoped for when implementing a mentoring programme. In Romania, one is confronted with the fact that the ways of preparing prison staff before do not apply anymore to new prison guards. A mentoring programme could be a new way of preparing new prison guards for their job.

Therefore during the validation phase in which all the cornerstones of the blueprint were discussed with all project partners, it was decided to opt for a model that integrates all the cross-country commonalities as a basis and leave an openness for each country to further finetune it depending on its own specific needs. It thus is a transferrable blueprint.

#### [The structure of a mentoring programme](#)

As already became clear from the overall limited number of academic literature on mentoring for prison staff as such, there is also hardly any theoretical insights in how the structure of a programme for such a specific context should look like. Articles relating to the development of a Total Worker Health Programme (also one of the provided good practices) are the exception (CPH-NEW, 2021). The aspects described in this that make out the structure of the Total Worker Health Programme are in line with what is found in other literature on how a mentoring programme for other contexts (e.g. mentoring to work) could look like.

In the introduction of this paper the key elements of a mentoring programme were already mentioned. Repeating this, according to De Cuyper (2020) the key elements are: 1) the recruitment of mentors and mentees, 2) the selection of mentors and mentees, 3) the matching of the mentors and the mentees, 4) the mentoring relationship and 5) the closure. Also characterizing for a mentoring programme is that there is a follow-up and support given to the duo's. In addition training is also an element of a mentoring programme. These aspects also pop up in Total Worker Health Programme (CPH-NEW, 2021). We discuss these elements in what follows.

#### [Who is the mentee?](#)

When developing a mentoring programme a crucial question is: who is the mentee? Does a mentoring programme for prison staff apply to new prison staff or does it also include prison staff who are already longer in active duty? Wittenberg (1998), in his article, describes his own experience with mentoring as a former prison officer saying that he had several mentors at different stages of his career. Both at the early stage of his employment in corrections and at a later phase in his career. However, overall most of the rather limited amount of literature on mentoring for prison staff refers to newcomers on the job (Farnese et.al., 2017; Kotejshyer et.al., 2021; Namazi et.al., 2021). That is being referred to newcomers might not be surprising as

literature shedding a light on the unique and challenging context of working in a prison is often described as especially overwhelming for those who are new to the job (see also chapter 2).

Newcomers' adjustment is a focus in all the, by the M4Pris project partners conducted, interviews. All the good practices also put a stress on (relatively) new prison staff.

However, in relation to this, one could ask how new 'new' is. Is it (only) for those who are completely new to the prison context or could it also apply to those who are new to a specific prison context (e.g. because they are transferred from one prison to another)? The discussion with the M4Pris project partners resulted in the following conclusion:

**Mentoring for prison staff should be for both those who are completely new to the job and those who are new to a 'new' prison (context).**

Another question is whether mentoring for prison staff should be voluntary or mandatory. Participating in a mentoring programme in the American good practices is everyone's free choice. According to the Danish good practice it is obliged. Howard et.al. (2022) state that the Australian Workplace Mentor Program that is being described in their article is mandatory for newcomers and voluntary for existing staff.

During the discussion with the M4Pris project partners different views were discussed. It became clear that both, making it mandatory or keeping it voluntary, have implications. The Greek project partner suggested that making a mentoring programme voluntary is the most desirable option as some people might not want to join. It is not favorable for people to be forced to take part in a mentoring programme. The Danish project partner made the consideration that people possible might not want to take part in such a programme when it is not mandatory as 'being in need' of mentoring can be considered as weak by the older generation of prison staff. Not wanting to be labeled as 'weak' might be a hindrance for newcomers entering such a programme. Jessiman-Perreault et.al. (2021) also mention this mentality in the Canadian correctional workforce. Even when available, interpersonal workplace support may not be accepted as a viable source of support among prison staff because of the stigma, especially when it comes to psychosocial support, there is: a prison guard is though. Johnston et.al. (2022) make the same observation. Nevertheless, for a (pilot) mentoring programme to have a chance to work, there need to be people willing to take part in it.

Therefore the Romanian project partner, stated that the pilot mentoring programmes for prison staff should be voluntary. This would give more insights in how it will be perceived by the people and, in time, make the added value obvious to everyone. This in turn could then be a leverage to make it mandatory in the end.

The discussion with the M4Pris project partners resulted in the following conclusion:

**The (pilot) mentoring programmes for prison staff will be on a voluntary basis.**

### Recruiting and screening mentors

Secondly, after having decided who the mentee is, a decision needs to be made on who the mentors are. Partially, this relates to the role and profile of a mentor<sup>11</sup>. On the other hand, it deals with recruiting, screening and selecting mentors.

The good practices provided by the M4Pris project partners give insights in how the process of recruiting, screening and selecting mentors is done.

In Denmark mentors are recruited by the prisons' HR unit. As an incentive, those who are willing to become a mentor are entitled to a financial supplement on top of their salary. Willingness of (more experienced) colleagues is appealed to. The good practice of the American Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme is a good example of the effort that is being put in stimulating staff to sign up as a mentor. A broad variety of channels is used for recruitment purposes, such as newsletters,... promoting mentorship and explaining it's objective and added value. The fact that those who do want to become a mentor are entitled to a number of rewards and recognition (e.g. for outstanding professional performance) contributes to the recruitment process. Other ways of promoting mentorship is done by e.g. putting up posters in break rooms. This is something that is being done by the American Total Worker Health Programme. Also from other good practices efforts are put in inviting people to roll up as a mentor. The British Unlocked programme asks those expressing an interest in becoming a mentor to fill in an application form. Expressing an interest and filling in an application is also a first step in the American Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme.

Slightly different, in Romania, mentors do not put themselves forward. They are appointed by the director of their unit, at the proposal of the head of their department. Being a mentor is considered part of the job and no incentives neither rewards are given.

Recruiting mentors is only one step. They also need to be screened and selected. In Denmark, the same prison HR unit that is responsible for the recruitment does the screening and selection. It is done through an interview. Interviews are also a common approach for screening and selection when looking at the other good practices. In the Total Worker Health Programme a steering committee has been established for this purpose. During the screening and selection interviews aspects (criteria) are taken into account to decide upon the eligibility of the candidate-mentor, e.g. having had an excellent evaluation during the past two years.

During the reflective discussion with the M4Pris project partners the financial incentives to become a mentor were questioned. It was decided jointly that intrinsic motivation is best. To stimulate the intrinsic motivation of a (candidate) mentoring is important to stress the impact mentoring can have on the individual mentee, but also the work environment as a whole. It increases the level of competency, it reduces stress and burn-out levels and prevents turnover. In the end mentoring is about creating a win-win for everybody in the workforce.

A mentor can be a supervisor or a peer. As for the first, this is sometimes problematized because mentoring is all about supporting, confirming and helping the mentee develop (see also later

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<sup>11</sup> This also relates to the role and profile of the mentors that is discussed later in this paper.

with regard to the role and profile of a mentor). This might conflict with a mentor who is a higher ranking colleague giving direct orders of who might be in charge of evaluating the job performance of the mentee. Scandura (1998) problematizes the coincidence of the roles of a direct supervisor and a mentor. According to him a mentor is not the same as a (direct) supervisor. A mentor and a mentoring relationship ask for a different role than the one that is being taken up by a superior that e.g. assigns work and evaluates work performance (the Southern Region of the National Institute Corrections Academy Division's Regionalization Project, 2002).

Since mentoring is also about providing psychosocial support, it might be an additional argument why a mentor is by preference a peer. This was said during the M4Pris project partner meeting. However, some nuances were made. The Danish and Greek project partner argue that a mentor is a peer at more or less the same job level as the mentee. The Portuguese and Romanian partners have a different view on this. A mentor, agreed upon by all, is someone with more experience. As a consequence it is not unlikely that this person has moved up in his/her career. It also relates to a practical concern of finding sufficient mentors if one only looks for people at the same job level. Resulting from all of this are the following:

**It is important that is known who the mentor is. By preference it is a peer. When recruiting mentors emphasis should be given to stimulating intrinsic motivation and the willingness to contribute to the overall added values of mentoring for prison staff.**

#### The matching of the mentee and mentor

Creating a good match between the mentee and mentor is fundamental. How this is done is mostly described in the good practices. The Danish good practice proves that creating good matches does not necessarily requires 'a matching system'. In Denmark matching is done in pragmatic manner by the same unit that is responsible for the recruitment, screening and selection. An internal evaluation showed that duo's were happy with their match and when this was not the case, it had to do with a lack of chemistry between the mentor and mentee. The reflection and discussion with the M4Pris project partners showed this as well: mutual chemistry is a matching aspect that needs to be given attention. Mutual trust came up as something that is also important to get a good match.

Other good practices, such as the Total Worker Health Programme, state that application forms are reviewed in the light of finding a suitable match with a mentee. Ensuring, to a degree that is possible, that the mentee and mentor work during the same shifts is mentioned a few times. Farnese et. al. (2016, 2017) describe a mentoring programme in Italian prisons where mentees are appointed to a mentor who works in the same prison (unit). In Denmark this is also aimed at, but during the discussion phase it became clear that this is easier said than done. It is not always possible to have a mentee and mentor who work (constantly) during the same shifts. It however is something to strive towards as regular contact was deemed important by all the M4Pris project partners. Some interviews also touched upon the wish to have regular contact with a mentor. It was also stated that one learns the most during those mutual shifts. *"It is on*

*the shifts were you probably learn the most. You learn how to act and how to act practically in different situations.” (Denmark)*

The Total Worker Health Programme strives for matches that are as compatible as possible. Compatibility as e.g. being reflected by having similar value and believe systems, comparable learning styles,... However this is not taken to the extreme to avoid over-identification. This is also described in CPH-NEW (2021).

The discussion of the M4Pris project partners led to the following decision:

**Mutual ‘chemistry’, trust and a certain degree of compatibility are aspects to take into account when matching as well as striving for duo’s that are able to work on same shifts as much as possible to ensure regular contact.**

#### Duration and intensity

Having time to invest in the mentor – mentee relationship is crucial for the success of the mentoring relationship. If a mentoring relationship fails, it is because there has not been put enough time in it, according to Wittenberg (1998).

When it comes to the duration of a mentoring programme in a prison context six months up to a year is most frequently mentioned in literature (Kotejoshyer et. al. 2021, Namizi et. al., 2021). However, some M4Pris project partners stated during the discussion round that piloting a mentoring programme for a period of one year is too long. It’s not feasible. Therefore the option was launched to choose for six months, with the potential to prolong the duration if desirable. This way of working, is also described by Howard et.al. (2022).

Six months up to a year is also the case when looking at the American good practices put forward by project partners. In Romania the duration is less: three months up to maximum half a year. On the other side of the spectrum is Denmark with a programme that lasts three years.

As for the intensity the good practices indicate an average of at least once or twice a month. The interviews showed that regular contact, from the beginning, is preferred. A mentor needs to be available and accessible from the first day on the job throughout the entire programme. Availability is very much preferred, but a mentor can not be available 24/7 was a reasoning during the M4Pris project partner discussion round. Trying to align shifts makes it easier to spend as much time together as possible.

The discussion with the project partners brought to light that duration and intensity of a mentoring programme could go hand in hand. There is a difference between one mentor having one mentee and one mentor having to be engaged with several mentees at the same time. It is time consuming. The choice for duration and intensity thus has consequences that need to be considered. The shorter the mentoring programme is, the more mentees there could participate. Taking into account the availability and numbers of staff that could serve as a mentor is an element in making a decision on this matter.



A duration of six months, potentially with an extended period if deemed favorable, is opted for. Regular contact between mentor and mentee from the beginning of the mentoring relationship is strived for (e.g. by means of shift alignment).

## The mentor role and profile

### The role

As literature showed, mentoring can entail different functions (see previous chapter), the role of a mentor is grafted on this: transferring job-related knowledge and competencies and providing psychosocial support. Both roles of a mentor were also put forward by those interviewed and the good practices. It was also concluded by the M4Pris project partners.

Each prison context is different and is operated by means of its own distinctive rules and procedures. How to deal with specific situations in practice is something that needs to be learned. There is no better way than to learn by example and to learn from someone who can act as a role model. Wittenberg (1998) referred to his own mentor as his role model in prison helping him to succeed in the job. The Total Worker Health Programme also refers to mentors as role models (CPH-NEW, 2021).

Farnese et.al. (2016, 2017) and Howard et.al. (2022) describe the role of mentors as a job resource helping in promoting newcomer's learning process. They help them to familiarize themselves with the organizational values and practices. The role of a mentor entails shedding light on the specific institutional and practical knowledge and skills. It's about giving advice and tips and tricks on how to deal with situations that come at hand. All of this on an informal basis. Besides the job related knowledge, a mentor is expected to give mental and emotional support in a context that can be intimidating. Interviews showed that a mentor is someone they can go to whenever there is a need to feel supported with whatever situation at hand. In Italy, where a mentoring programme for prison staff is initiated, mentors only take on the psychosocial role as newcomers are already engaged in a specific work related training on top of the mentoring programme (Farnese, 2016, 2017). Overall, a mentor is someone who is supportive towards his/her mentee. A mentor guides new colleagues in their role and promotes their professional and personal growth (The Southern Region of the National Institute of Corrections Academy Division's Regionalization Project, 2002).

During the M4Pris project partner discussion it was said that the role of a mentor includes encouraging and motivating the mentee in what he/she is doing. CPH-NEW (2021) stresses encouragement as an aspect of a mentor's role. The M4Pris project partners also referred to the importance of confirmation when something is done well. A Danish interviewee said that he would have liked his mentor not only to focus on the negative things that could be done better. More confirmation and affirmation in pointing out the positive aspects of how he handled situations would have been appreciated as well. Giving constructive feedback was also seen by the project partners as an crucial element of a mentor's role. In academic literature this is also

mentioned frequently and is sometimes seen as a aspect of the profile and considered a part of a training (see later for more detail).

The project partners decided upon the following:

**The role entails giving job-related as well as psychosocial support. It is sharing the specific institutional knowledge and transferring practical skills related to work in a prison in order to facilitate job familiarization. It is supporting mentally and emotionally in all kinds of situations. Concretely it is about being a role model who enables learning by example, motivating and encouraging, affirming and confirming and giving advice and feedback.**

### The profile

Literature suggests that the effectiveness of a mentor programme depends on the qualifications of the mentor. Xu and Payne (2014) state that a high quality mentor leads to a higher outcome. It is thus needed to think carefully about the mentor profile.

As a mentor is expected to act as a role model and pass on job-related knowledge, it is not surprising that it is someone who has a number of active years on the job on his track record. Mentors participating in the Total Worker Health Programme are all experienced staff. Although not being so concrete on the number of working years Howard et.al. (2022) also speak of a more senior prison officer. The Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme, one of the good practices, is more concrete when it comes to the number of active years on duty. It is referred to a minimum number of three active years on the job. Indications of a solid track record are also found in other good practices. Having no history of disciplinary action is a condition when wanting to participate in the Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme. In Denmark mentors are people who are professionally well grounded in their job. And also from the Danish interviews it became clear that having sufficient experiences to draw from is seen a mentor trait. In Romania mentors must have had multiple positive job evaluations.

It is not only about having experiences and knowledge to draw from. Moreover it is about being able to pass this on in a constructive manner. During Romanian interviews it was said that a mentor needs to be someone who is willing and able to do this. The good practice of the Unlocked programme also stresses the importance of the ability to share knowledge and experiences with others. A mentor also needs to have enough time to do this and be available to a mentee.

Being able and willing to pass on knowledge and experiences is in a way linked to being motivated for the cause. That intrinsic motivation was already mentioned earlier when elaborating on the recruitment and screening of the candidate-mentor. Referring to the Italian prison context, mentors are, among other things, identified on the basis of their motivation (Farnese et.al., 2017). Motivation and enthusiasm to be a mentor and to contribute to the development and growth of mentee is also trait that is mentioned in the good practice of the Mentoring Program for Child Welfare Staff as well as in the Danish good practice. In other words,

a mentor is someone who is willing to make a difference and contribute to the development of new colleagues.

Several soft skills are mentioned, both in literature as in the interviews conducted by the M4Pris project partners and the good practices. Good (inter)personal skills of a mentor are valued. The interpersonal skills identified as significant by Namazi et.al. (2021) were as follows: someone who sets a good example, and someone who demonstrates good work quality and good communication skills.

A mentor is someone one can speak freely to and is discrete (Namazi et.al., 2021). Showing discretion is a trait that is important to Portuguese interviewees. Wittenberg (1998) also referend to this by describing a mentor as someone who possesses the following traits: having a genuine interest in the mentee, being sensitive to and understanding the needs of the mentee, having an open and sincere personality, a good communicator who is willing to show commitment to and be patient with the mentee, being honest and patient, trustworthy and responsive. Being able to create a trustworthy environment also became apparent from the Unlocked Programme, one of the good practices.

Trust also contributes to a relationship in which the mentee feels comfortable enough to ask for support and help. At the same time a mentor should not wait for a mentee to ask for support, he/she should be outreaching enough to take the initiative themselves to address issues. It is seen as a key mentor characteristic by a Danish interviewee. Romanian interviewees stressed the importance of an open attitude. Empathy and authenticity are also seen as a favorable traits of a mentor (Rowly, 1999; Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014).

Empathy is also mentioned by some good practices The Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme and the Unlocked programme add that interpersonal skills include the ability to build and maintain strong relations with others. Other interpersonal skills that came to light during interviews were effective communication and active listening skills (e.g. giving constructive feedback). A mentor is someone who is not judgmental according to interviews conducted by the M4Pris project partners.

All these elements were discussed by the M4Pris project partners. The aim of the discussion was to find out whether all mentor traits are covered. In addition, the objective was to make a distinction between mentor traits that are important and traits that are 'most' important and deemed necessary for the mentor profile.

Below the mentor traits found in literature, interviews and good practices are listed and categorized, including those that are considered the most important by the M4Pris project partners (in bold).

Objective traits

**Three years of experience in a relevant position** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

**Willingness to commit and invest time** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

Personal traits

**Empathy** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

Patience (Greece, Romania)

**Motivated** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

Interpersonal traits

**Building trust** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

**Active listener** (Greece, Romania)

A good communicator (Greece)

Interested and showing concern (Portugal)

Having pedagogical skills (Denmark, Greece)

**Being able to draw boundaries** (Denmark, Greece, Romania)

Being discrete (Portugal, Greece)

Being proactive and willing to reach out (Romania, Portugal)

Technical skills

**Knowledge and expertise about prison and prison rules** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

**Insight in educating new prison guards** (Denmark, Greece, Portugal, Romania)

Time related

Having time to invest in the role as a mentor (Denmark, Romania, Greece)

Being available (Portugal)

Role model

Skills and reputation to act as a role model (Denmark, Romania, Greece)

Having credentials to give feedback (Greece)

Added during the discussion

Having a good mental health (Portugal)

Sharing the belief that rehabilitation is equally important as protection (Portugal)

During the M4Pris partner discussion having a good mental health was added as a characteristic by the Portuguese partner. They also were of the opinion that a mentor should be someone who shares the belief that rehabilitation is equally important as protection.

All the above listed characteristics are considered important aspects of a mentor profile. Several (inter)personal skills were seen as crucial by all project partners (in bold in the overview above). These aspects are being able to create trust and a trustworthy environment, showing empathy and being motivated to be(come) a mentor. Having the necessary knowledge and experience of the job and prison setting are as well among the most important elements of a mentor profile according to every partner. The same goes for the ability to effectively and efficiently pass on this knowledge and experience. Other most important mentor traits were the ability to listen actively and be willing to commit (time) in the mentorship while at the same time be able to draw boundaries in this relationship with a mentee. Finally, the project partners concluded that

a mentor is someone who has a certain number of years (three) of experience in a position relevant for the mentoring programme.

### The mentor training

A mentor should approach the commitment to act as a mentor in a skilful, thoughtful manner (Wittenberg, 1998). Good mentoring programmes require mentor training as it is seen as a fundament to enhance the quality of the mentoring relationship. It is vital for preparing and guiding prospective mentors for their role (Rowley, 1999; Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014). A training that engages prospective mentors in reflecting on their qualities and skills is a good place to begin for further finetuning, according to Rowly (1999).

Training can thus be seen as a vital part of a mentoring programme as it can be a leverage for the quality of a mentoring relationship. Despite it's importance, so far there is little academic literature describing what a mentor training could look like and what topics ideally are covered.

In the light of the ESF-project 'training supermentors for migrant mentoring-to-work programmes' a literature scan (complemented with a scan of websites and documents of Belgian and international organisations in the broader field of mentoring, some interviews with mentoring organisations and a brainstorm moment with Flemish mentoring-to-work organisations) was carried out with the objective of identifying the learning needs of prospective mentors. The key question was: what topics should a mentor training include.

This resulted in some overarching themes first being an introduction to what mentoring is (e.g. differences with coaching, tutoring,..., the objective and added value of mentoring, the expectations and boundary setting, etc.). A training usually touches upon the different core competencies a mentor should need (communication skills, interpersonal skills, pedagogical skills, organisational skills). Communication skills include aspects such as active listening and giving feedback. The interpersonal skills e.g. are about 'breaking the ice' with someone, learning how to build and maintain personal relationships and trust, motivation and stimulation. Pedagogical skills relate to competencies to convey insights and how to be a role model. How to identify and set goals and be effective and efficient in a mentoring relationship are elements of the organisational skills.

The above-mentioned aspects also became apparent when zooming in on the specific literature search relating to mentoring for prison staff. In the description Howard et.al. (2022) gives of an Australian workplace mentor programme pilot it is said that mentors are specifically trained for the participation in the programme. In an Italian mentoring programme for prison staff, mentors receive a training of a few days. The training is designed to provide guidelines and equip them with skills necessary to be a mentor. The training is also seen as an element to enhance the commitment of the mentors to the cause (Farnese et.al., 2016; 2017). The same reasoning is described in CPH-NEW (2021). By means of a training not only skills and competencies are developed, but also confidence in the role as a mentor.

Already in early 2000 the Southern Region of the National Institute of Corrections Academy Division's Regionalization Project (2002) developed a mentoring workbook for (American) correctional services. The workbook sets out a self-paced course in which prospective mentors learn more about the responsibility of being a mentor, the benefits of the mentor - mentee relationship, listening skills and giving feedback, goals and expectation setting. It also includes several self-do exercises to practice, but also to explore one's own experiences that might be worth sharing, how to be positive and solution oriented as well as which pitfalls there might occur and how to avoid them.

Also in America and also a good practice identified by M4Pris project partners is the Total Worker Health Mentoring Programme. The training course they developed builds further on the above described mentoring workbook. Therefore it is no surprise that the same topics are covered: an explanation about what mentoring is, listening skills, mentoring basics such as goal setting,... giving feedback and avoiding pitfalls. Additional topics are related to e.g. preventing suicide.

The good practices provided by the M4Pris project partners also mention similar topics as those that pop up in literature. The Bureau of Prison Staff Mentoring Programme for instance foresees an obliged training for mentors including topics such as roles and responsibilities of a mentor, effective communication skills, insights in how to build a positive relationship,...

The training of the Total Worker Health Mentoring Programme is planned during the shifts of the mentors. Few of the good practices gave insight in the possible duration of a training. In Denmark a training lasts a week. The American bureau of prison staff mentoring foresees an orientation training of four hours and information sessions during the mentor programme.

The information gathered on the mentor training was discussed by the M4Pris project partners. During the discussion a selection of important and very important aspects of a mentor training for prison staff was made by each project partner.

Overall, all the topics identified are considered as important by at least one M4Pris project partner. As for the communication skills, non-verbal communication was not found in academic literature nor mentioned by the good practices. It was added by the Portuguese project partner as something that could be relevant for a mentor training. The other partner countries agreed that this is an important topic to be included. As for the interpersonal skills, it was noted that some of the topics included in the overview are somewhat overlapping. A reference was made to giving moral support as more or less the same as knowing how to motivate the mentee. There was a discussion on how fitting the topics relating to the organizational skills are for the M4Pris mentoring programme. The question about its relevance was raised as it seemed something that is specifically at place when speaking about a formal mentoring programme and less important when it comes to mentoring that is not formalized (al lot). The Portuguese project partner was of the opinion that too much organizational paper work could demotivate people to become and engage as a mentor whereas the Romanian project partners finds it an inevitable aspect of work life in an established system. According to the Greek partner not every aspect of

a mentoring relationship should necessary require paperwork and efforts could be undertaken to limit this as much as possible.

From another angle, the organization skills might not be so important if the mentor and mentee work closely together, e.g. during the same shifts. Then it might not be needed to do a lot of (formal) planning and stating down agreements, planning when they meet each other,... Cultural differences between prisons and countries could also influence the way in which the need for planning and making mutual agreements,... is considered essential.

In Denmark, prison guards are granted a lot of autonomy, but this is under pressure as trade unions have to advocate for it. During the discussion it was also mentioned that evaluation and self-evaluation could possibly also be a part of a mentor training. The same for skills on how to close the mentoring relationship and cooperation and communication with the programme coordinator.

The topics that in the end were considered as very important are in bold in the overview below. These are also the topics that definitely need to be part of a future M4Pris mentoring training.

### An introduction to mentoring

Definition of mentoring (*Romania, Greece*)

Understanding how it relates to other forms of support such as befriending, tutoring,... (*Greece, Portugal, Romania*)

**Insight in responsibilities and boundaries in relation to the mentee** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

**Understanding how mentoring can impact on one's professional and personal development** (*Greece, Romania*)

**Insight in how mentoring can be an added value, e.g. moral support, turnover rates,...** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

### Core competencies

#### Communication skills

**Active listening** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

Forms of questions (*Romania, Greece*)

**No judging or making assumptions** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

**Giving constructive feedback** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

Added during the discussion: non-verbal communication (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

#### Interpersonal skills

**Building a positive relationship and trust** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

Showing empathy and understanding (*Greece, Romania*)

How to motivate and stimulate (*Portugal, Greece*)

**Recognising signs of reduced motivation, lower self-esteem, suicide warning signs,...** (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

How to reverse negativity in the mentee's thoughts and attitude (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

Dealing with different personality styles (*Romania*)

Showing belief in the mentee (*Romania*)

Giving moral support (*Portugal*)

Building confidence and self-reliance (*Portugal, Romania*)

Indicating mutual accepted expectations (*Greece, Romania, Portugal*)

Initiating a meaningful relationship with attention to trust, confidentiality,... (*Greece*)

#### Pedagogical skills

How to convey knowledge and insights related to the specific professional background (*Romania, Portugal*)

**How to be a 'learner broker' – how own experiences can be a learning opportunity for the mentee** (*Romania, Portugal, Greece*)

**How to be a role model** (*Romania, Portugal*)

#### Organisational skills

Reviewing the agenda and planning next meetings (*Romania, Greece*)

Noting down action points and agreements (*Romania, Greece*)

Developing an action plan/personal development plan (*Romania, Greece*)

Exploring and setting goals (*Romania, Greece*)

Investigating ways of realising goals (*Romania*)

#### Getting to know the mentee

**How to break the ice** (*Romania, Portugal, Greece*)

**Identifying aspects the mentee wants support on** (*Romania, Portugal, Greece*)

**Discussing what the mentor can do to help** (*Romania, Portugal*)



### Next steps

This paper described the development of a blueprint for a peer mentoring programme for prison staff. The next step is to put the blueprint into practice. M4Pris project partners (from Denmark, Romania, Greece and Portugal) will transform the in this paper defined blueprint to a workable mentoring programme. Pilots of mentoring programmes for prison staff based on the elements provided by the blueprint will be worked out. Results of these pilots will be evaluated and used to further finetune the mentoring programme and provide insights for further innovation, even after the M4Pris project lifetime.

Not only a mentoring programme for prison staff will be piloted. Based on this blueprint a training for prison staff mentors will be concretized and piloted by the M4Pris project partners as well by means of a blended format fostering the usage of new and improved learning tools adequate to the digital and green transition. Again, insights from these pilots will be used for further finetuning.

The (further) development, rollout, evaluation and finetuning of a (pilot) mentoring programme for prison staff and an accompanying training mentor training are steps towards an overall aim of increasing awareness to the challenges of occupational stress among prison staff and the importance of staff wellbeing programmes.

## Template for the description of good practices

*This template has been developed to describe and share defining features of current mentoring practices or other practices of peer support in prisons and other relevant contexts. Please provide the information as extensively and accurately as possible, as detailed information is needed in order to be able to identify good practices.*

*Please note that we have used the term 'mentor' in what follows, but it can also refer to another type of peer support. Please adapt accordingly in your answer, depending on the characteristics of the program you report on.*

### 1. General information on the mentoring program

Name of the mentoring or peer support program:	
Where is the program situated (geographically):	
In which context is the program situated?	<input type="radio"/> Prison/correctional facility <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify):
Goal of the program (please be as specific as possible here)	
Who is the program aimed for? (=who is considered as the target group)?	
Who funds the program?	
Which (type of) organisation is responsible for the coordination/follow up?	
Are there any other partners involved? (If yes, please describe the role of each of them)	
How long does the program last? (= how many months/years is the mentor-mentee or buddy dyad in contact with each other, as part of the program)	
When was the program first started and why (=what prompted the programme)?	
How many mentees (or buddies, or...) are enrolled per year (=starting the program)? (if this information is not available, please	

provide another indication of the program size)	
Has there been any evaluation of the program? If yes, please explain in detail (when, by whom, which methodology, etc.)	
Is there any information available on the effects of the program? Please explain. (note: 'effects' can be very diverse; to give just a few examples: having a higher confidence in the job, a quicker adaptation process in the new job, less intention to quit, etc. These are just some examples, please adapt to the specific context of the program you report on, and the focus of the evaluation which has been conducted)	

## 2. Mentor profile

*Please recall that the term 'mentor' can be replaced by another term referring to a person providing peer support; please adapt the term in your answer based on what fits the program you describe*

Which formal criteria are put forward to be eligible as a mentor? (e.g. in terms of amount of experience in the job in the job, function or job title, department, having worked in specific functions, are retirees considered suitable, etc.)	
Which soft skills are expected from the mentor?/does the program specify a mentor profile in terms of soft skills? (e.g. trustworthy, patient, empathic, good listener, motivated to be a mentor, skilled in terms of motivating others, etc. )	
What roles is the mentor expected to take? (e.g. sharing knowledge about organizational processes/ 'explaining' the job, help integrate into the workplace, sharing job specific knowledge and providing tips and tricks on the job, listening after difficult experiences, providing feedback,	

motivating the mentee, etc.) <i>(these are only a few examples, please use your own words)</i>	
Summing up your answer on the previous question, would you summarize the role of a mentor as offering....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Professional advice on how to perform the job</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Psychosocial support</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Both</li> <li><input type="radio"/> None of the above</li> </ul>
What is expected from a mentor in terms of commitment? And are time and effort invested in mentoring by mentors considered as 'part of the job' (=during working hours) by the employer, or considered as a voluntary extra? Is there any additional reward or incentive for mentors?	
Are there any specifications of what is NOT considered the role of a mentor? (=elements which are considered as beyond/outside the scope of mentoring)?	
Do mentees get to meet and share experiences with other mentors than the main mentor that was assigned to them? If yes, in what way? Please explain.	
Has any of the aspects related to the mentor profile (=section 2) changed over time (since the existence of the program?)? If yes, in what sense? And what lead to the change?	
In case there has been a program evaluation: were there any conclusions related to the mentor profile? If yes, please specify.	
Are there any other 'lessons learned' with regard to the mentor profile, which could be of interest for our project, which have not been mentioned above?	

### 3. Mentor training, peer learning sessions for mentors and group activities

Remark: in what follows, we make a distinction between training, peer learning sessions and group activities (even though we recognize that in practice, there can be some overlap, depending on the the program):

- *Training* is rather formal and structured, with a predefined 'learning content' which is transmitted to participating mentors.
- *Peer learning* takes place in a more informal setting and tends to be more focused on the immediate concerns and experiences of the mentors they want to discuss. Peer learning sessions can either start from recent experiences that participating mentors want to share, or can start from a more specific topic which is proposed (e.g. handling conflicts with the mentee, setting boundaries, motivating strategies, handling trust issues, providing feedback, etc.), and providing more structure to the exchange.
- *Group activities* are activities in which mentors and mentees participate, meeting other mentors and other mentees

Is there any <i>pre-match</i> training provided to mentors? If yes, please explain in detail (goals, programme, topics covered, content, who provides the training, etc.). Please also mention whether or not the training is mandatory for mentors.	
Is there any training provided to mentors <i>during the program</i> ? If yes, please explain in detail (goals, programme, topics covered, content, who provides the training, frequency and intensity, etc.). Please also mention whether or not the training is mandatory for mentors.	
Is there any form of peer learning organized for mentors as part of the program? If yes, please provide more details (e.g. what are the goals, are topics set in advance or dependent on input of mentors, to what extent is it guided, is there a programme, how frequent do mentors meet, etc.)	
Are there any group activities organized for mentors and mentees as part of the program? If yes, please provide more details	
Has any of the aspects related to mentor training, peer learning or group sessions	

(=section 3) been changed over time (since the existence of the program?)? If yes, in what sense? And what lead to the change?	
In case there has been a program evaluation: were there any conclusions related to the mentor training, peer learning for mentors and/or group sessions? If yes, please specify.	
Are there any other 'lessons learned' with regard to training/peer learning, which could be of interest for our project, and which have not been mentioned so far?	

#### 4. Further details on approach and programme structure

##### a) Recruitment of mentors

How are mentors being recruited? i.e. which information channels are being used? Are staff members being addressed personally or does communication stay at a more 'general' level?	
What arguments/benefits/values of mentoring are put forward to convince potential mentors to apply?	

##### b) Screening and selection of mentors

How is the screening of mentors conducted, and by whom? <i>Here we refer to the 'general' approach: are mentors asked for a cv, is there an application form, do coordinators meet the mentor in person, who is involved in the selection, etc.</i>	
How are the soft skills of mentors screened and evaluated? (e.g. if 'being a good listener' is one of the criteria, how is it assessed?)	

##### c) Recruitment of mentees

How are mentees being recruited? i.e. which information channels are being used? Are staff members being addressed	
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personally or does communication stay at a more 'general' level?	
What benefits are put forward to motivate potential mentees to apply?	

d) Screening and selection of mentees

Who is eligible to become a mentee? What are selection criteria for mentees?	
How is the screening of mentees conducted, and by whom?	

e) Matching

How are mentors and mentees matched? What criteria are used? (and if possible, in what order of importance?)	
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f) The actual mentoring relationship

Are there any rules or guidelines about the intensity and frequency of the interaction, the location, etc.? If yes, please specify.	
Are there any rules, guidelines or tools provided to determine/guide/influence the content of the interaction of the mentor and mentee? If yes, please specify.	
Are the goals of a specific mentor-mentee dyad (i.e. adapted to the personal situation) explicitly discussed at the start?	

g) Follow up provided

What role does the coordinator play during the mentoring relation, i.e. between start up and end of the mentoring?	
Are there any mid-term evaluations / meetings in which the 'success' or 'progress' of the mentoring is monitored or assessed?	
Are mentees sometimes 'rematched' to a different mentor? If yes, in what instances does it occur?	

h) Closure

Is there a predefined ending to the mentoring relationship?	
What happens at the end? (e.g. is there a meeting to close up, etc.)	

i) Summing up

Has there been changes over time in the practices with regard to the items mentioned above (recruitment, screening, selection, matching, the actual mentoring, follow up, closure)? In what sense? What has led to the change?	
In case there has been a/several program evaluation(s), were there any conclusions with regard to the items mentioned above (recruitment, screening, selection, matching, the actual mentoring, follow up, closure)? Please explain.	
Are there any other 'lessons learned' with regard to the items mentioned above, which could be of interest for our project, and which have not been mentioned yet?	

**5. Final remarks**

Are there any of the features of the program that you consider as specific or fundamental for the context of prison staff (or related)?	
Are there any specificities about the mentoring program which have not been mentioned so far which could be of interest for our project?	
What would you consider as the main strengths of the program and why?	
Are there any remaining struggles or difficulties the program faces, as far as you know?	
Please complete: in this program, a mentoring trajectory of a mentor&mentee (or buddies, or...) is considered as having been successful when....	





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Is there anything else you would like to mention which could be relevant for our study and search for good practices?	
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## Reporting template for the interviews

### General information

Country	
Number of the interview	
Male/female	
Amount of experience as prison guard (years/months)	
Age of the interviewee	
Is the interviewee already in a mentoring program as mentee? (yes/no)	
M4PRIS Contact person (email) for HIVA if we need clarifications on this interview report	

### Trajectory so far

*Please summarize when(/how many months or years before the interview) the interviewee started working at the prison, and how the interviewee ended up in the job. Please also mention, if possible, to what extent it was a positive choice or rather a coincidence or a necessity.*

### First experiences and struggles at the start:

*Please summarize what the interviewee shared about his/her initial months as a prison guard, and how he/she experienced this period. Please also mention in detail any struggles at the start that were mentioned. Please be as specific as possible. (any information not mentioned in the report is lost afterwards)*

<p><i>Please provide 1 or 2 quotes (in the original language and the English translation) about the experience the first months and/or struggles at the start. (quotes can be sentences that reflect the 'essence' of what was said, or telling examples, etc.)</i></p>

**Leverage and support in the first months**

<p><i>Please explain what the interviewee shared about:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>1) what helped to deal with the difficulties mentioned,</i></li><li><i>2) whether there is any type of support foreseen for new staff,</i></li><li><i>3) if there were any people that were particularly helpful or supportive (how they helped, how did it originate, etc.)</i></li></ol>

*In case the interviewee has a mentor, as part of a mentoring program: what role did your mentor play in that stage and did he/she make a difference?*

--

*Please provide 1 or 2 interesting quotes (in the original language and the English translation) about the topic of leverage and support*

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**Key moments so far**

*Please summarize the information related to positive key moments (Were there any positive key moments? What happened? And why did the interviewee consider it as a key moment/why was it important? Etc.)*

--

*If there is a mentor, please specify the role of the mentor in that/these situation(s) mentioned (related to positive key moments)*

--

*Please summarize the information related to negative key moments (Were there any negative key moments? What happened? And was there anything or anybody that helped dealing with the situation or problem? Etc.)*

--

<i>If there is a mentor, please specify the role of the mentor in that/these situation(s) mentioned (related to negative key moments)</i>
<i>Please summarize the information that was shared about 1) moments considering quitting and the reason why (and situation now), and 2) any work-related absences so far, and the needs of the interviewee at that moment.</i>

**Situation now:**

<p><i>Please summarize the information related to the actual situation of the interviewee, more particularly 1) how the interviewee feels in his/her job now (overall) AND 2) to what extent (and which) struggles he/she was facing in the beginning are still there, AND 3) if there are any other struggles at present</i></p>
<p> </p>
<p><i>Please explain the needs of the interviewee at this moment and/or what could be helpful</i></p>
<p> </p>
<p><i>In case there is/was a mentor: is the mentoring still ongoing? What role does your mentor play now?</i></p>
<p> </p>

**For interviewees with a mentor only – if there was no mentor, please jump to the next box**

<p>Please summarize the information which was shared with regard to the following questions/topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- would you say there is an added value of your mentoring program and your mentor? In what way/if not: why not/what is missing?</li> <li>- Is there anything you miss in the support of your mentor?</li> <li>- What do you consider as key competences or key features of a good mentor?</li> <li>- What do you consider as key features of a good mentoring program?</li> <li>- If a prison (or country) is setting up a new mentoring program, is there anything in particular that should be taken into account? Do you have any advice?</li> </ul>
<p> </p>

**For interviewees without mentor only – if there was a mentor, please jump to the next box**

Please summarize the information which was shared with regard to the following questions/topics:

- In some other countries/prisons/... new staff gets the support of a mentor. Was it ever proposed to you?
- How would you feel about it (=about entering a mentoring program/having a mentor)? Do you think it could be useful/fruitful?
  - o In what way? (in which situations could a mentor have provided added value?)
  - o Under what conditions?

**Rounding up/final remarks**

Did the interviewee want to add anything at the end of the interview? If yes, please specify
Is there anything which you consider important which was mentioned in the interviews, but not mentioned so far (in this template)?
Is there anything else we should know about the interview or how it was conducted? (from a methodological perspective)? Examples could be: other people being present in the interview, interviewee feeling uncomfortable or reluctant to answer, etc.



## Instruction for reporting on the focus groups

As every country has a different topic list, I did not make a template, but please do the following:

- The idea is you summarize what was said in the focus groups, illustrated with quotes (like for the interviews).
- While you 'summarize' the results, in the sense that you don't write it word per word, it is important to **provide enough detail (!)**, giving concrete examples that were given, etc. Put differently, you don't need to report every word, but **you do need to report every idea/statement that was shared**.
- Please follow **the same structure as your topic list**, and make the (extensive) summary per heading, and provide 1 or several quotes per heading.

Many thanks!

For example, for Greece and Portugal, please use the following structure:

### Part 1: Experiences, struggles and leverage

- 1) First experiences and struggles at the start
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)
- 2) Leverage and support in the first months
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)
- 3) Situation now
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)
- 4) Key moments so far
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)

### Part 2: mentoring

- 1) Desirability of mentoring
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)
  
- 2) Expectations and profile
  - a. Summary
  - b. Quote(s)

Rounding up (mention it if anything was said here)

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