FREE TO CODE

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'Improving digital and coding skills for inmates'

This newsletter provides regular updates about the work of the FREE to CODE project and useful information for organisations, networks and professionals within Europe working within the Criminal Justice System (CJS).

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Introduction

Project FREE to CODE

The **project FREE to CODE - 'Improving digital and coding skills for inmates'** - has the ambitious goal of using digital skills and computer programming as a means of human development that can help adult European prisoners to re-enter society with a resale expertise.

Background

In 2014, prisons across the EU were holding over half a million inmates, including both convicted persons, serving their final sentence, and persons accused of a crime. It is therefore a considerable number of people.

The European context in the management of education and social and educational rehabilitation of prisoners is quite rich. There are different experiences and educational programs tailored to allow a correct reintegration into society for incarcerated people, after having served the sentence imposed. Especially there are e-learning platforms established for such beneficiaries, as explained by the Report on e-learning in European prisons.

But, since our society is facing a new digital era where new languages are raising up and whoever knows them can get more opportunities in finding jobs and help humanity to develop toward and beyond a

high-tech development, coding seems to be a great chance to learn and to be competitive, especially for those that could be starting from a weak and disadvantaged point.

Finally, there are not similar methods in this field, corresponding to what FREE to CODE proposes. In fact, some of previous funded projects on a similar topic (prisoners and reintegration) are more focused on general trainings on the topics, such as prison, reintegration, education, trainings to support social and labour market (re)integration of people in or after detention.

The story so far

So far, the kick-off meeting has taken place in Bucharest in 8-9 November 2018. Partners met and explore the project objectives and overall strategy. Also during the kick-off meeting partners shared their views and strategies for the practical implementation of the project and especially the implementation of **Intellectual Output 1 - Best practices report on coding for detained learners** - methodology, tasks and responsibilities and deadlines was defined during those days.

To prepare the report, a survey proves to be necessary for two reasons:

1) the consortium aims to identify differences and specific needs of the target group, to consider any characteristic or divergence that may be relevant to the development of customised contents and tools;

2) to detect divergences between countries and common issues (including terminology) that may be relevant to a European audience of adult detained learners.

The focus of the survey will be on:

- general digital literacy level
- attitudes and perceptions about computer programming
- ideas on application of coding knowledge in finding a new job
- interest in being engaged in training activities
- common terminology in in the partners' countries
- preferred delivery methods and tools

Partnership

PROJECT PROMOTER

What do we offer? Scientific activities and expertise. ESC members have academic and internationally recognized background certified by board-memberships in scientific societies, articles in peer-review journals and presence in university councils, guaranteeing an evidence-based expertise acknowledged among senior scholars and researchers. In this

capacity ESC can provide high quality services, such as:

Research. Literature reviews, Systematic reviews, Meta-analysis, Impact analysis, Cost-benefit analysis, Qualitative and Quantitative research etc.

Consultancy. ESC members are continuously involved in activities on the behalf of national, European and international organizations as consultants on policy reform, formulating recommendation, advising on law-making strategies and drafting action plans. Based on this experience, ESC can provide high quality services such as:

Consultancy for Criminal justice structures and proceedings, especially prison and probation.

Modernization of probation & penitentiary systems, Professionalization of probation services, Assistance on social inclusion, Improvement and promotion of public policies, Developing evidence based services for vulnerable groups.

Training. ESC members have long-term experience with students and professionals within various institutional contexts. In this capacity they offered services like: academic courses, vocational training, advanced courses for stakeholders, etc. The transmission of knowledge, skills and know-how can be adapted to one-to-one classes or to group seminars over several days, using interactive and computer-based tools.

Evaluation. Feasibility studies. Needs assessment. Project evaluation.

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BeCode is a non-profit coding school for talented, underprivileged adults. Our mission is to grow today's talent into tomorrow's best developers. First classes started in spring 2017 in Brussels. By January 2019 we will have 300 students in 6 campuses all over the country. Our 7-month program (followed by a 1-3 month internship) has achieved 80%+ positive outcomes (i.e., graduates finding employment, creating a new venture or enrolling in advanced studies).

CONTACTS

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Asturia vzw

The Asturia vzw is an institute for adult education which based in Minderhout's inner city. The centre was founded in 2014 as a leading independent, and not-for-profit professional body dedicated to promoting best practice and raising the awareness and standards of project management and coaching in prison education. The centre has a regional scope.

CONTACTS

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Aproximar is a non-profit organization aiming to enhance organisations' social and human capital as a strategy to build their capacity and take advantage of challenges and opportunities raised by the external conditions as a mean to build their sustainability. In fulfilling its mission, Aproximar organises and manages tailor-made and social innovation projects and good practices transference and dissemination to enhance organisational, personal, social and professional efficacy and efficiency. The programmes always combine social science (knowledge), active methods (people) and suitable tools (technology).

In what concerns the Criminal Justice System, Aproximar is intensively collaborating since 2009 as partner in mentoring projects at EU level. In Portugal the participation started in 2013 a strategic partner in JIVE project **(Justice Involving Volunteers in Europe)**. In 2017 Aproximar designed a training course for Employment and Labour Insertion of ex-offenders. Since 2017 that Aproximar coordinates Entre Sistemas.EU - a project to exchange knowledge and good practices between different prisons in Europe; 2) to improve and empower professional, linguistic and social competences of practitioners, educators, professors, volunteer managers. Aproximar has also launched **MOBi** (Mobilizing Society Towards (ex) Offenders Reintegration) – a initiative that stands 1) to understand the European contemporary punishment and reintegration picture in terms of society's' perception, participation, offenders labelling,

return to work or to community, building assessment tools to measure society "culture" towards punishment and reintegration, and offenders perceptions about reintegration process; 2) to develop a community engagement methodology to support Criminal Justice System (http://mobi-initiative.org/).

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The European Digital Learning Network – DLEARN – aims to embrace the challenges brought by the digital revolution in terms of digital skills mismatch, toward an inclusive digital society. The 47% of Europeans is not properly digitally skilled – yet in the near future 90% of jobs will require some level of digital skills and numerous opportunities in terms of jobs that are going to shape the labour market. Our aims are characterized by 4 key-words: **SHARE, CONNECT, MULTIPLY, ENHANCE.** DLEARN is a collector of practices and ideas, gathering diverse organizations in Europe to reflect, think and trigger new initiatives, toward the valorisation and the enhancement of digital learning.

The network was born from the initiative of 20 different organizations from all over Europe, active in the field of education and digital learning at various levels.

CONTACTS

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Administraţia Naţională a Penitenciarelor

Avaca Technologies S.A. (AT) is an independent consultancy based in Athens Greece, which provides consulting, informatics and engineering services. AT, established in 2001, is a fast growing company which has developed a significant list of clients across many industries and market sectors. AT has considerable experience in the management and implementation of complex software applications using open source technologies and tools. It has developed its own products including a web platform for shipping companies, an eCommerce platform, eLearning Platform, a content management system, a few gaming titles with its gaming framework. AT is constantly investing in R&D using it as the source for its product development and in staff training to new technologies. It has an internal R&D team and has participated in the past in research projects either EU or funded by the Greek Government. The project managers and consultants of AT have received Scrum and PMP training. AT is a member of the Greek Chamber of Industry.

CONTACTS

Nikos Skarmeas, Managing Director

Bucharest - Jilava Prison is one of the biggest from Romania and it has in custody more than 1000 inmates in open and semi-open regime, males, over 21 years old. Half of them are involved in work activities and almost all of them participate to other activities like: school, vocational training, programs for drug users, sex-offenders, old people, psychic problems etc. prison staff are very focused on individual planning of punishment, relationship between inmates and their families, social reintegration after release.

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