

Klasbak Memorandum 2019: 5 recommendations for learning in detention

Klasbak, the Flemish branch of the EPEA, has published its Memorandum 2019 “Five recommendations for learning in detention”. With this bundle of focal points, Klasbak wants to create awareness with the policymakers around specific themes and put them up to action!

The recommendations are in line with the European recommendations concerning prison education (European Prison rules, 2006) and the local regulation (Belgian and Flemish). To map the concrete needs for the memorandum, Klasbak consulted different actors in the field of learning in detention.



An extract of our Memorandum:

Recommendation 1: Make a policy for digital inclusion of prisoners

Digital exclusion leads to social exclusion. Access to the internet, digital tools and digital skills are in our digital society of great importance. That's why the government invests in digital literacy. But the contrast with the situation in the prisons is big. How can the purposes of rehabilitation and integration can be fulfilled without access to the digital world?

Policymakers; digital exclusion limits the learning abilities of people in detention. Therefore invest in digital inclusion and open the way for new (learning) opportunities. For example, develop a policy for the use of internet and digitalization in prison and make sure that online learning platforms are available.

Recommendation 2: Create a frame in which judicial actors and the actors offering different forms of assistance and service can work together

In prison learning is offered in a context of control. Therefore it is important that the different governments recognize the importance of learning activities. And the actors need to consider each other as equal partners. The prisoner's wellbeing benefits from a good collaboration.

Policymakers; when you build new prisons make sure you take in account what is needed to organise learning activities. Make sure that there is enough staff to enable the execution of the learning activities and other forms of assistance.

Recommendation 3: Stimulate research in prison to facilitate evidence-based working

In Belgium there is a lack of extended and lang standing research in the field of education in prison. Figures on the impact of learning activities on recidivism, experiences in prison and reintegration are lacking.

Policy-makers; provide these numbers so it is possible to develop a policy in an evidence based way and to enhance the quality of education. What can you do? Stimulate for example large scaled, relevant, innovative research and develop a structural policy for research on education in prison. And base your policies on the results of such research.

Recommendation 4: When shaping the policy on small scaled detention, take into account learning activities.

Within the small scaled detention regime it is nearly impossible to provide all educational activities based on the needs of the inmates. Therefore learning activities should be imbedded in the existing activities outside prison walls. This helps inmates to gradually integrate back into society.

Policy-makers; ensure both a legal and administrative framework for inmates to join in learning activities outside prison walls. Create opportunities for inmates in detention houses so they can independently search for information and participate in online - and blended learning. To do so, make sure there is a computer with internet access available.

Recommendation 5: Create within the policies the possibility to innovate

Innovation is crucial to maintain a high quality educational offer. To bring about change and innovation in the controlled environment of a prison, is challenging. Innovation requires experimentation. This calls for flexibility of all parties involved. Ease this flexibility on both financial and administrative level. This allows us to continuously innovate the educational offer in prisons.

Policymakers; spend time and resources on tailor-made projects in prisons, such as workplace learning or dual learning. Take the lead on European co-operation involving learning. Develop a policy that enables foreign prisoners to access (digital) distance education programs in their mother tongue. Provide time and resources to mentor the inmates trough the learning process. Pave the way for educational transfers.
