

# Citizens Inside:

*A guide to creating active participation in prisons*



This toolkit was created to help people working and living in prisons to build active citizenship. It is designed to be used by prisoners, prison management, prison staff, education staff, organisations and people working in the voluntary sector. It was made possible by a collaboration between de Rode Antraciet (Belgium — coordinator), Changes & Chances (Netherlands), Croatian Association for Creative Social Work (Croatia), Prisoners' Education Trust (UK), UISP (Italy), and The Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), as part of the PAC (Prisoners' Active Citizenship) Erasmus + EU project.

To download a printable PDF of the Toolkit, please visit:  
[www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/)

Downloadable activity worksheets are also available.



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PARTICIPATION &  
LEARNING IN DETENTION  
RESEARCH GROUP



CHANGES  
& CHANCES



UDRUGA  
ZA KREATIVNI  
SOCIJALNI RAC



Prisoners'  
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<b>Foreword</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is active citizenship?</b>	<b>3</b>
Active citizenship in prisons	4
The benefits of active citizenship in prison	5
Principles and values of active citizenship	7
Levels of participation: the pyramid of citizen participation	7
<b>Making it happen: active citizenship in action</b>	<b>9</b>
Embedding active citizenship	10
Introducing a new project	11
<b>1. Deciding your aims</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2. Planning your project</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Participatory planning	14
2.2 Basic conditions	17
2.3 Finding collaborators	20
2.3a The power of peers	21
2.4 Essential collaborators	23
2.5 Recruiting participants (prisoners)	25
2.6 Example projects	27
<b>3. Delivering your project</b>	<b>29</b>
3.1 Who facilitates?	29
3.2 External/internal facilitators	30
3.3 Training	31
3.4 Tips	32
Challenges	33
Measuring success	35
What's next?	37
<b>Further reading</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>39</b>



Prison authorities recognise that active citizenship activities can enrich prisoners' lives, promote transformative learning, encourage constructive relations in prison, and impact positively on wider society. The networks of civic engagement built up in collective activity are the glue that binds citizens together and builds healthier communities<sup>99</sup>

Gresham Sykes in *The Society of Captives* (1958), his classic work of prison sociology, listed the 'deprivation of autonomy' as one of the pains of imprisonment. He examined the ways in which prisoners are denied self-determination and the ability to make a range of choices for themselves. He believed that this led to a dependent status for the prisoner which represented a serious threat to the prisoner's self-image as a fully accredited member of adult society.

Increasingly, prison administrators and policymakers are coming to appreciate the dichotomy between the deprivation of autonomy and the stated desire to promote responsibility in penal institutions. Denying autonomy makes the promotion of responsibility all the more difficult. In a growing number of jurisdictions, prison authorities are trying to somewhat mitigate the deprivation of autonomy by encouraging prisoners to engage in active citizenship. They recognise that these activities can enrich prisoners' lives, promote transformative learning, encourage constructive relations in prison, and impact positively on wider society. The networks of civic engagement built up in collective activity are the glue that binds citizens together and builds healthier communities. As this Toolkit notes:

"Active citizenship can be a powerful force for good in prisons. The chance to play a proactive decision-making role can counter the infantilising effects of prison. The chance to develop skills, and to connect with people from the outside community can prepare people to re-enter society ready and able to contribute."

In 21st Century European society, the concept of active citizenship is everywhere. It is now part of the curriculum in schools in many European jurisdictions. In Western democracies, citizenship participation is promoted as a public good and the concept of active citizenship has become so popular that it is regularly used by politicians, public servants and policy makers, as governments try to engage the general public with initiatives to promote active citizenship. This Toolkit outlines some innovative and practical examples of active citizenship: acts of community building that take place in prisons throughout Europe.

Active citizenship in prison is associated with a range of activities that promote civic engagement. These include volunteering, charitable works, peer to peer support and activities that allow prisoners to participate in civic society, either in prison or outside. This Toolkit outlines the positive work that is done around active citizenship in prison: sports tournaments, quizzes, festivals, exhibitions, talks and fundraising events. It demonstrates how the concept of citizenship is translated into practice.

This Toolkit is likely to become an essential resource for prisoners, educators, programme leaders and prison officers as active citizenship is increasingly promoted inside. While prisoners are physically excluded from society, contained herein are concrete examples of prisoners re-connecting with each other and wider communities. Enabling prisoners to participate in active citizenship encourages them to become engaged and subsequently, empowered.

Active citizenship (whether it is defined as such, or not) has taken place in prison for as long as the institution has existed, in small gestures of assistance, solidarity and humanity. This Toolkit will enable policymakers, practitioners and society outside to become aware of the various endeavours around active citizenship that take place in prisons throughout Europe. I commend the partners from Belgium, United Kingdom, Croatia, Italy and The Netherlands for the work they have done on compiling this Toolkit.

The examples of citizenship illustrated in this Toolkit can act as a guiding light for those in other institutions throughout Europe who wish to encourage and formalise the practice of active citizenship inside. Most importantly, this Toolkit demonstrates how prisoners exercise their citizenship, which can lessen the deprivation of autonomy that accompanies imprisonment. It shows how, when the opportunities are facilitated, citizens can create communities of active engagement within the society of captives, building a better life for themselves, and contributing positively to wider society, both while they are inside and on release.

*Dr Cormac Behan, SFHEA  
University of Sheffield*



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Active citizenship is the glue that keeps society together.<sup>99</sup>

European Economic and Social Committee

**Active:** Characterised by action rather than by contemplation or speculation; an active life

**Citizenship:** The quality of an individual's response to membership in a community

Active citizenship is about people's involvement in the world around them. Whether on a local, regional or national scale, active citizenship means taking part in society. It is the action of engaging with issues, ideas, people and communities.

Today, more and more European countries are introducing active citizenship into their education systems, with policy makers increasingly recognising its value in creating informed, critical, socially and morally responsible citizens, who can make a difference in their communities.

# Active citizenship in prisons

66  
We take citizens and turn them into prisoners and then expect them, with minimal preparation, to turn back into citizens again, with all the responsibilities this involves for themselves, their families and for others.<sup>99</sup>

Burnside, 2008: 8

As places that operate through constraint, control and restriction, prisons may seem incompatible with the concept of active citizenship. However, though deprived of their liberty, prisoners remain citizens: individuals with rights and responsibilities; members of their prison communities; and in nearly all cases future members of communities outside.

International instruments like the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (also known as the Nelson Mandela Rules — United Nations, 2015) and the European Prison Rules (Council of Europe, 2006) underline that prisoners have the right to access prison activities such as cultural activities, educational courses, sport activities and vocational programmes.

In recent years, many prisons have begun to involve prisoners in running these, and other, activities; giving them a say over their lives inside and connecting them to the world beyond prison walls. This is also

supported by regulations. For instance, the European Prison Rules (Council of Europe, 2006) state that 'recreational opportunities, which include sport, games, cultural activities, hobbies and other leisure pursuits, shall be provided and, as far as possible, prisoners shall be allowed to organize them' (Article 27.6).

In 2018, the PAC partners distributed a survey through professionals working in prisons in Europe about active citizenship activities. 129 respondents from nine different European countries filled in this survey. Among them, more than 67% indicated that they wanted to achieve a higher level of active participation in their prison (Brosens et al. 2018).

This guide is intended to give professionals and prisoners the tools and inspiration to support these efforts, and to spread the benefits of active citizenship across Europe.

## We believe that...

Prisoners are more than their criminal record. They are human and are part of society, they are citizens. We believe in creating a space in the prison environment where talents and qualities of people are central and prisoners can feel recognized as human beings, work on a positive self-image, develop their talents and strengthen their relationships with others. We believe that social inclusion and active citizenship are very important issues within the walls of every European prison as they enable prisoners to take responsibility as they prepare for a new start in society.

## The benefits of active citizenship in prison

Active citizenship has the potential to be an extremely powerful force for good in prisons. Many prisoners have committed crimes that affected other people and may feel alienated from and by society. Active engagement in prison can be an antidote to this, as well as to the negative psychological effects of imprisonment. Engagement during a sentence can

help people prepare to re-enter society, able to contribute, participate and belong.

Active citizenship has an enriching effect: individuals build knowledge, skills, empathy and a sense of empowerment, and communities are strengthened by citizens joining together towards a common purpose.

In general, active citizen in prison can have several potential benefits for the participants, for the prison, and for society:

### FOR PARTICIPANTS

- 👤 Improvement of skills
- 👤 Soft skills (e.g. self-confidence; team work; time management; communication skills; creative skills)
- 👤 Hard skills (e.g. attached qualification; sports/arts techniques)
- 👤 Social capital (ability to influence change; feeling part of the world around you)
- 👤 Improved relationships with fellow prisoners and staff
- 👤 Improved wellbeing and mental strength
- 👤 Greater understanding of the systems around them
- 👤 A way to positively pass the time
- 👤 Greater ownership and autonomy
- 👤 Feeling that their voices are heard and that they are able to have decision-making power



66 They developed a lot of respect for each other that they didn't have before. They developed a lot of skills to meet with each other, to talk with each other... to not interrupt each other, to learn how to talk with direction.<sup>99</sup>

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### FOR THE PRISON

- 🌱 The chance to gather new ideas and perspectives
- 🌱 Better morale and wellbeing among prisoners
- 🌱 Participants who are motivated to be involved in the community
- 🌱 A more positive atmosphere, contributing to a better dynamic and improved security
- 🌱 Better relationships between prisoners and staff

66 During the workshop, they worked a lot around conflict theory and conflict analysis. The representative of UZKSR (Croatian Association for Creative Social Work) did not give lectures about it but they went from one element of conflict to another and discussed real life examples. The prisoners were able to select which third party intervention they find the most useful in prison settings. For example one prisoner that was sentenced for family violence said: 'Well but I could have done this, I could have done that.'<sup>99</sup>

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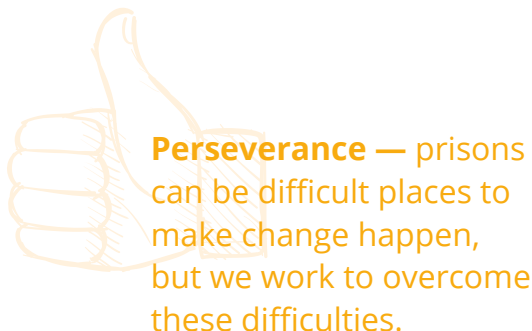
### FOR SOCIETY

- 🌱 Released prisoners with better skills and qualifications
- 🌱 Citizens who are ready to engage with society
- 🌱 Released prisoners who are less likely to reoffend

# Principles and values of active citizenship

Stable principles and values are the foundation of an active citizenship project. The PAC project partners decided on four values that had been most important to their work. You could decide to adopt these or craft your own (see page 26 for an exercise on how to co-produce values for your own active citizenship project in prison).

The four values are:

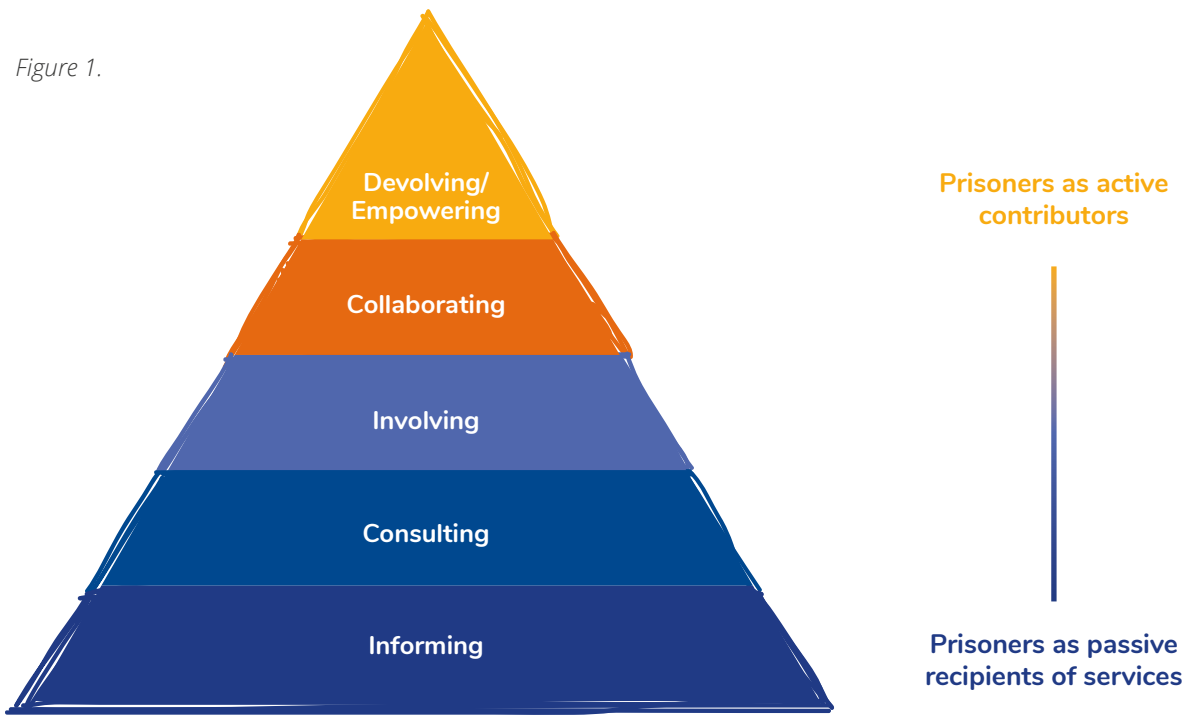


## Levels of participation: the pyramid of citizen participation

There are varying degrees of collaboration within active citizenship. One way to present these different participation levels is by making use of the pyramid of citizen participation (see Figure 1). The pyramid visually demonstrates that more prisoners can be involved at the lower participation levels, while fewer prisoners can take up an active role at the higher levels.

The level of citizenship you can achieve will depend on the context and your resources. The aim is not necessarily to reach the top of the pyramid: not all prisoners have to reach the higher levels. Instead, you could ask: *How do I reach the next level?* It is important to decrease the barriers for those prisoners who want to take up a more active participation role (see Brosens et al., 2018; Brosens, 2019).

Figure 1.



**Informing:**

Prisoners are provided with objective information (e.g. induction sessions, flyers/posters).

**Consulting:**

Views of prisoners are sought, and prison acts on these views if possible (e.g. questionnaires, discussion/focus groups, a suggestion box).

**Involving:**

Prisoners' concerns, aspirations and advice feed into the decision process. Prisoners are involved in making a significant number of decisions, to some degree (e.g. a prison council).

**Collaborating:**

Prisoners collaborate with staff to identify problems, and discuss possible solutions or alternatives (e.g. as members of working groups together with professionals).

**Devolving/ Empowering:**

Prisoners are responsible for making (some) management decisions on their own (e.g. receiving a budget to independently organise activities).

*Example*

**Aim: The prison wants to engage more prisoners in reading books.**

**Informing** Spreading information about books available

**Consulting** Asking what prisoners read, and what they would like to read more of

**Involving** Involving prisoners in book selection and discussion groups about certain books

**Collaborating** Prisoners help drive prison's approach to books on offer; help to run book groups

**Empowering** Prisoners take responsibility for each stage and have control of a budget

# Making it happen: active citizenship in action

There are two main ways you can introduce active citizenship into a prison, either by:

**Embedding:** changing the degree of prisoners' participation in existing work

**OR**

**Introducing:** starting a new project aimed at increasing prisoners' active citizenship

This toolkit will cover both options.

To make clear the difference between the two, here is an example of an embedded and new project for each level of the pyramid of citizen participation.

*Table 1. Combining the levels of the participation pyramid and embedding/introducing new project (see Brosens et al., 2018)*

Level of participation	Embedding in existing work	Introducing new project
Informing	Providing all recently arrived prisoners with written and/or oral information about the working of the prison.	Prisoners receive written and/or oral information about project-based activities.
Consulting	Annual survey among the prison population, suggestion box in the library.	A survey or discussion/focus group to gather ideas of prisoners at one point in time.
Involving	A structurally embedded prisoner council meets regularly.	A new plan must be written about which activities will be organised during the upcoming year and prisoners are involved to provide input.
Collaborating	Prisoners and prison officers meet every week to discuss aspects related to a particular wing. They make decisions about what they can do together (e.g. improving regime aspects, doing a sport activity together).	Prisoners and prison officers collaborate to make a documentary. During group discussions, they first decide about the topic and afterwards they make the documentary together.
Devolving/ Empowering	Prisoners get a budget to organise one or two activities for other prisoners every year.	Prisoners get a budget to organise an activity for other prisoners once.

In what follows, we first dive into **embedding** active citizenship and then we describe the different steps to **introduce** a new active citizenship project in prison.

# Embedding active citizenship

66 Putting more power in people's hands is a long process that needs time (Verschoor & de Bruijn, 2017), in particular in prisons where individual's autonomy and choices are controlled and constrained."

Hannah-Moffat, 2000

Start by looking at what active citizenship is currently going on in the prison. There might be pockets of good practice already, and staff who are promoting engagement and could make excellent collaborators.

**Make use of the following exercise to map what is already going on in your prison concerning prisoners' active citizenship.**

## Activity

### Active citizenship audit



To be completed by staff and prisoners

What is your institution doing already to promote active citizenship?

If there is no active citizenship happening, why not?

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being not at all; 10 being very much), do people in prison currently feel that they are actively involved and listened to?

Are all prisoners able to be involved? (Yes/No)

If no, who is not involved? (you might consider types of sentence, nationality/ethnicity, gender, ability)

Are there clear processes for involving prisoners in decision-making? (Yes/No)

Are people in prison able to drive their own agendas or issues? (Yes/No)

Why is active citizenship important to you and what would successful active citizenship look like in your context?

*This is based on a checklist that first appeared in *Involve, Improve, Inspire* (Champion & Aguiar, 2013).*

**Tip:** To measure success, give participants the same questionnaire after you have introduced your active citizenship project.

**Tip:** List the existing activities and write out how to reach a higher level of participation. What do I have to do, for example, to develop a consulting activity starting from an informing activity?

# Introducing a new project

To set up a new active citizenship project, several steps need to be followed:

- 1. Decide your aims
- 2. Plan your project giving consideration to:
  - Basic conditions
  - Finding collaborators
  - Recruiting participants (prisoners)
- 3. Deliver project giving consideration to:
  - Who should facilitate?
  - What training might be needed?

We will consider each of these in turn.

## 1. Deciding your aims

Before starting a new active citizenship project, set some time aside to think about what your end goals are.

A full sense of your aims will allow you to:

- 1. Have a clear understanding of what you want to achieve.
- 2. Be able to explain to the prison and participants what your aims are, and how it could benefit them.
- 3. Keep track of how your project is progressing.
- 4. Measure your success to:
  - Prove your impact
  - Secure future programmes
  - Improve your work in the future

# Activity

## Deciding your aims — key questions



What is your overall aim (what would you like to achieve)?

.....  
..... 

Why is this project important to you?

.....  
..... 

What will be the impact on everyone involved?

.....  
..... 

On prisoners?

.....  
..... 

On prison staff?

.....  
..... 

On facilitators?

.....  
..... 

On you/your organisation?

.....  
..... 

What tangible outcomes will the project have (e.g. a piece of art, performance, event)?

.....  
..... 

How will you measure the project's impact?

.....  
..... 

How will you disseminate the results of the project?

.....  
..... 

# Activity

## Outcome planning tool



This outcome planning tool will help you identify your aims, defined for each person and organisation involved in your project. It will also help you to measure the success of the project.

For this you will need to decide your **audience** and establish **aims** for each group. Next you will need to think about **tactics** to achieve these aims, how you will **measure** them and what your intended **outcome** will be. This will help you keep your goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Targeted). Use the grid below to help you.

## Example

Overall aim: *Write this along the top of your grid*

Audience	Aim	Tactics	Output	Outcome	Impact
E.g. prison participants, prison staff, facilitator, wider prison	E.g. increase hard skills (e.g. learning how to repair bicycles) or soft skills (e.g. increasing self-esteem, conflict resolution); or related to final output (e.g. production of a music festival)	Exercises and approaches geared towards these aims (e.g. group exercises, skills sharing)	Tangible product of the initiative (e.g. publication, event, new project)	The result (e.g. 10 people with mechanics qualification; a reported improvement in prisoner/staff relationships)	Wider short and long-term impact (e.g. reduced violence in prison; more people going into work from prison)
<b>Audience 1</b>					
<b>Audience 2</b>					
<b>Audience 3</b>					
<b>Audience 4</b>					



66 We have had a few meetings before the start of the project to see if there was support for the idea inside the prison.<sup>99</sup>

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After formulating your aims, it is essential to plan the steps you have to take to implement the project. Working in a prison requires in-depth preparation to get a project off-the-ground, and to ensure that it runs smoothly. In an environment with tight timetables, heavy restrictions, and little or no technology, foresight is key.

### 2.1 Participatory planning

For a project to have the most impact, and for it to be truly participatory, it should be designed taking into account the perspective of:

- 🌐 Prisoners
- 🌐 Prison staff
- 🌐 Prison management
- 🌐 Other stakeholders

To fully understand everyone's goals and concerns, it is important to spend time talking to each group before, during and after the project. Different perspectives will help to make the project more relevant and ensure that people get involved.

## Ways to ensure participatory planning:

- 🌐 Organise focus groups (i.e. group conversations) with all stakeholders (even non-participants)

Explain the general aim of the project and listen to their concerns and ideas.

You can choose to organise these focus groups with all stakeholder groups together or every group separately. In a prison environment it is recommended to organise the focus groups separately.

- 🌐 Ensure enough time to develop a good focus group and to evaluate the results.

- 🌐 Organise a meeting or several meetings with all participants of the project.

Develop an action plan.

Develop a time schedule ensuring enough time for the project to be completed.

Divide tasks and responsibilities.

Remind everybody of the aims.

- 🌐 Have informal meetings with potential participants, prison staff, prison management, and other stakeholders. In other words, with all those actors that might have a possible influence on your project.

Participatory planning should also feed into project planning – as outlined in the following section.

66 We started not by saying what they should do but we asked them what they wanted to do and how we could contribute to a kind of a road they wanted to go. So it is really together, bringing a wish and some expertise together and creating something together. That's the idea.”

Changes & Chances

# Activity

## Participatory project planning



1. If it is a project that has not been initiated by people in prison, begin by explaining the overall concept and aim to all stakeholders — e.g. 'I aim to support more people in prison to read.'
2. Stick A3 sheets of paper on the wall/lay them on tables
3. Head each piece of paper with big questions, followed by prompts, e.g.

### WHAT?

- 🗺️ What is the overall aim?
- 🗺️ What sort of activities should be implemented?
- 🗺️ What topics should be covered?
- 🗺️ What should we call ourselves?
- 🗺️ What should we produce at the end?

### WHERE?

- 🗺️ Where should the project take place?

### HOW?

- 🗺️ How do we know the project has been a success?
- 🗺️ How should we tell other people (prisoners and staff) about it?
- 🗺️ How should we involve other people (prisoners and staff) in it?

### WHO?

- 🗺️ Who should be part of the group?
- 🗺️ Who should take which role?

### WHY?

- 🗺️ Why are you doing this?

4. Give people post-its and pens to write their own ideas. Allow them to discuss the notes in groups and to ask their own questions. The facilitator can then stick the post-its under the relevant section
5. Bring group back together to discuss different ideas
6. Produce consensus plan (group consensus about all the above questions) for approval

## 2.2 Basic conditions

To run a successful active citizenship project in a prison, you should be mindful of meeting basic conditions. You are unlikely to find a prison where all the basic conditions are met immediately — but it is important that you understand which have been met and try and address those which have not.

Basic condition	Tips
<p><b>Time</b> Time needed to plan, find support, recruit participants, build relationships within the prison and deliver your work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Take time to inform all stakeholders (potential participants, prison staff, prison management, and other stakeholders) about the purpose of the project. Be as clear and complete as possible in providing information about the purpose and goals.</li> <li> Allow enough time to create support for the project. If this means that you need a few months (or more) to do this, you should. Allow relationships and trust to be built.</li> <li> Be clear about time limits — when the work will begin and end, and what will happen afterwards.</li> <li> Ensure enough time given within the project to account for disruptions (e.g. strikes, delays in receiving authorisation, slow group progression).</li> <li> Assign a dedicated project coordinator who will make up a time schedule. Ensure everyone is aware of this time schedule.</li> <li> What time commitment from prison, education or other staff is needed for the project to succeed? Whose agreement is needed to make this available? This includes your own time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difference in feelings and approach to prison life topics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Make sure that everybody understands that within the ‘process’ all topics are valid.</li> <li> Explain that some topics within process activities or meetings (even those which are difficult) are necessary to ensure better results.</li> <li> Understand that this is not always self-evident for prison staff.</li> <li> Creating room for a natural process to happen is very important for the participants.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Location</b> Where the activity takes place — in which prison and in which space within that prison</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Choose a prison setting that will allow you to deliver your work, in terms of understanding and supporting the project, security restrictions, ease of access, etc.</li> <li> Explain to the prison management why a good space is important for the project — make clear what you need and why. In this way, you can ensure you have a dedicated space to work in as early as possible.</li> <li> This space should be accessible to all, where participants feel safe. It should have sufficient light, ventilation and comfortable seats.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources</b> The materials needed to complete your activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Establish as early as possible what materials are needed for the project.</li> <li> Explain to the prison management why certain materials are important for the project — make clear what you need and why.</li> <li> Establish what can be brought into prison under security restrictions.</li> <li> Source materials — approach the prison to see what they can provide, but also approach external contacts (e.g. source textbooks from local colleges or branded T-shirts from an outside charity).</li> </ul>

<p><b>Support of staff</b> Those running the project, education/workshop staff, officers and prison leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Recruit an enthusiastic person with sufficient time and resources to coordinate the active citizenship project.</li> <li>🌐 If working externally to the prison, ensure you have a key contact and advocate within the prison staff.</li> <li>🌐 Hold separate meetings with different types of staff to inform, consult and get them on board.</li> <li>🌐 Consider inviting staff to co-produce activity, participate in activity and/or run a separate activity for them.</li> <li>🌐 Emphasise the benefits of active citizenship to their work (see page 5) but be clear about expectations and possible limitations.</li> <li>🌐 Have a clear policy, development plan and monitoring and evaluation strategy to share with prison staff.</li> <li>🌐 Communicate about the project throughout.</li> <li>🌐 Use staff insights and expertise and demonstrate their impact.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prisoner support</b> Both in terms of running and sustaining the project, and ensuring wider population knowledge and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Co-create the activity with prisoners (see page 16).</li> <li>🌐 Recruit a peer coordinator (i.e. a prisoner that can help in coordinating the active citizenship project).</li> <li>🌐 Work to achieve diversity — get peer help in reaching all sections of the population.</li> <li>🌐 Communicate your work to a broader population (e.g. through posters, presentations, peer-led research).</li> <li>🌐 Decide on prerequisites for being part of the group. Be transparent about any selection criteria involved.</li> <li>🌐 Work with staff and participants to understand conflict between groups and plan to mitigate this.</li> <li>🌐 Be aware that prisoners may have seen similar initiatives before, which may or may not have met their expectations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Language</b> Language can be a barrier — both in terms of non-native speakers and people with low literacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Decide if there is a minimum standard of linguistic competence required to take part in the project and communicate this.</li> <li>🌐 Produce multi-language material where appropriate.</li> <li>🌐 Use visual materials whenever possible.</li> <li>🌐 Use interpreters, including prisoner interpreters, where appropriate and possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Security</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Draw up the possible risks and plans to offset and then deal with them.</li> <li>🌐 Have a clear idea of security restrictions from the beginning. What materials can/cannot be brought into the prison?</li> <li>🌐 Do officers need to be present during the activities? If so make sure they have been sufficiently informed of your aims and the activities, and that there is a clear plan in the case of any security breaches.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Develop a communication plan together with the prison management, staff and other stakeholders.</li> <li>🌐 Communicate by updating everybody about developments within the project.</li> <li>🌐 Communicate about potential problems with the prison governor/management and relevant stakeholders.</li> </ul>

## Basic conditions – a case study

### The project

In the prison of Hoogstraten (Belgium) we wanted to organise a mini society / cohabitation forum in the women's department in which both the prison staff and the prisoners would participate. This meant that prisoners, together with prison staff, would develop activities, provide the reception of new prisoners, and make cohabitation agreements. The prisoners participated on a voluntary basis.

With this project we aimed to develop active citizenship / participation by encouraging prisoners to communicate with each other and prison staff, to address problems and to make shared decisions. In this way the prisoners would become an active part of life within the prison. We also taught prisoners to manage discussions and conflicts, developing their decision-making skills, self-confidence and sense of responsibility.

### What went wrong

Before the start of the project we were convinced that a project on the topic of 'Active Citizenship' could succeed in the prison of Hoogstraten. Everything seemed to fit: support for the project, including participants and staff, a small and specified department, and time to ensure the project was completed. We had meetings with the prison management and stakeholders that confirmed this. However as the project progressed it became clear that the basic conditions required to be successful were not in place.

In the run-up to the first contact with prisoners we (PAC members and the prison management) agreed that the **involvement of prison staff and the prison management** was a necessary condition for the project to be a success. We organised meetings with prison staff and prison management, explained our aims and the project plan. During these meetings no problems were noted.

Once the project started, PAC teachers noticed that the prison staff did not engage with the project.

In hindsight this should have been a reason to pause the work with the prisoners, to take time to listen to the concerns of the prison staff and, if possible, to address them.

However the **time pressure** of the PAC project required this phase to be completed before the end of December 2018. This resulted in the decision to continue working with the prisoners while awaiting a meeting with prison management, during which time there was a confrontation between a participant and prison staff. As a result the project was stopped. The confrontation could have been avoided if basic conditions were met.

By having detailed conversations with prison staff we now fully understand why certain things happened and why there was **not enough support** for the project. PAC is still playing a role in the prison of Hoogstraten, and now all stakeholders, prison staff and management are convinced of the importance of basic conditions being met before

starting up a project like this. PAC members work together with management, staff and other stakeholders to ensure these conditions are met before starting any 'Active Citizenship' project.

### **What we learnt**

The project demonstrated that it is necessary to have a prison-based co-ordinator in charge of the learning area and the design of the project inside the prison. This role plays a management function, and needs to make the connection between the prison stakeholders and the teachers within the active citizenship project.

The story of Hoogstraten is a combination of not meeting basic conditions, underlying problems, not enough support and not enough time to counter problems. It's an example of all things that can go wrong when setting up a project in a prison context. It is important to take enough time to analyse the work environment, understand all possible problems and be clear about the conditions.

## 2.3 Finding collaborators

People are key to the success of your project, particularly in a prison environment. It is critical to decide who will be involved in your project to ensure it is a success.

66  
I'm proud to have gained approval for the project. I went to the Ministry of Justice and said, 'Look, we will do everything you advise us. But this is what we can do: here are our goals.' Now you can tell how many prisoners we can work with, where we can work and how often."<sup>99</sup>

UZKSR (Croatian Association for Creative Social Work)

## 2.3a The power of peers

People living in prison are often an untapped resource. We strongly believe in the added value of working with peers (prisoners guiding other prisoners). They are uniquely placed to guide and support others through the system, building skills and attributes at the same time.

Peer working is based on the assumption that people receive information more effectively from someone they identify as a peer than when they receive information from someone with whom they cannot make such an identification.

Peer working opens doors and takes away possible barriers.

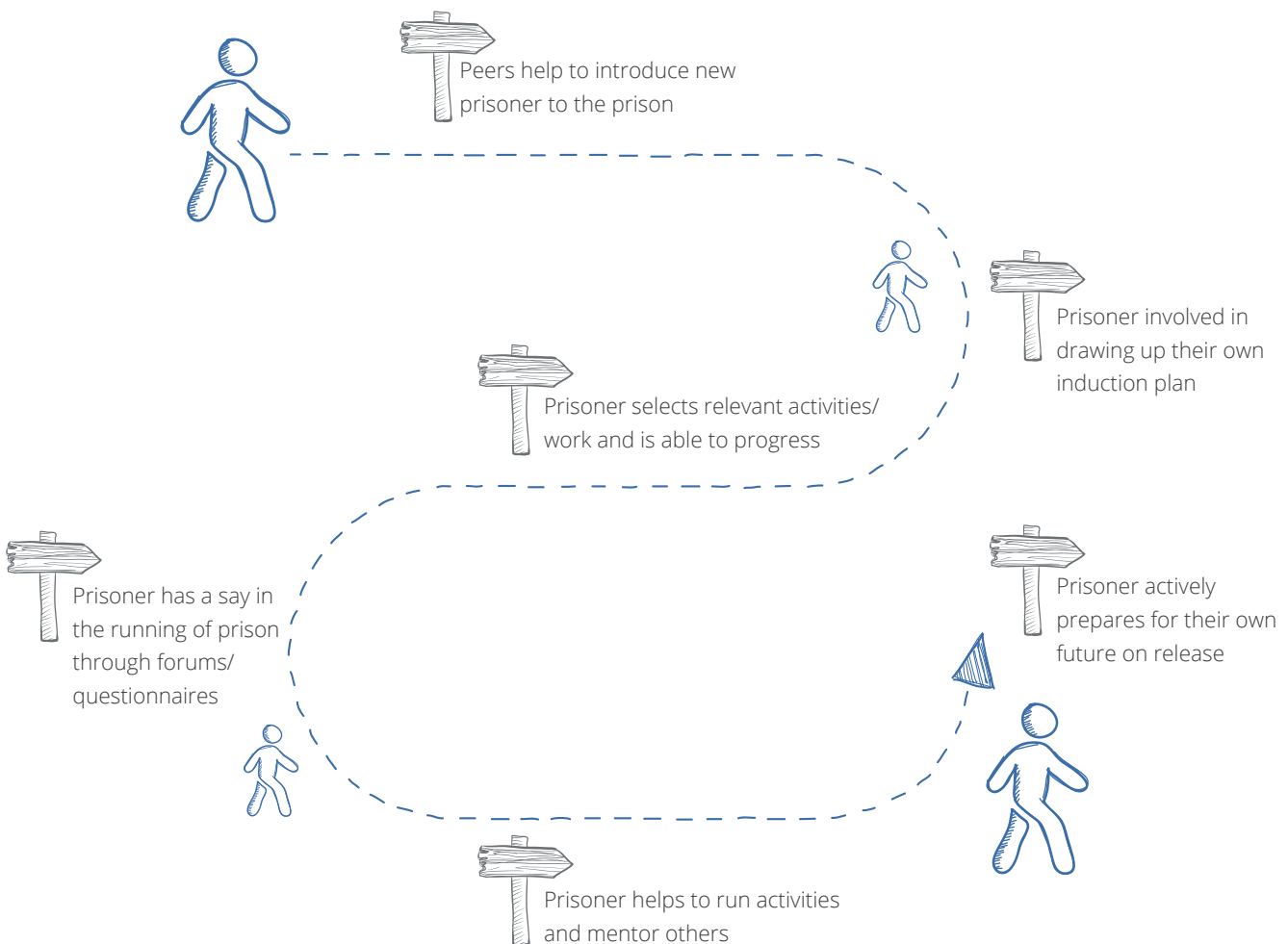
If possible, prisoners should play a role or be involved in decision-making from the beginning of the project. A shared experience will lead to added value within the project. It is important that these roles are recognised as proper jobs with job descriptions, reviews, payment and, where possible, related accreditation. Peer workers could gain certificates in advice and guidance or in counselling for example.

Example Role	Example Responsibilities
Consultative Body (prisoner council)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Consulting prison management or activity organisers on activities and services.</li> <li> Taking forward requests.</li> <li> Developing and implementing activities for other prisoners.</li> </ul>
Education Support (also called peer education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Assisting with lessons.</li> <li> Discovering needs.</li> <li> Advice in planning lessons.</li> <li> Leading lessons.</li> <li> Tutoring individuals.</li> <li> Supporting with distance learning.</li> <li> Offering advice on progression.</li> <li> Helping with administration.</li> <li> Designing information material.</li> </ul>
Mental Health Worker (e.g. Samaritans' Listener, Wellbeing Mentor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Counselling peers.</li> <li> Mediating between peers.</li> <li> Designing awareness material.</li> <li> Advice in developing programmes.</li> </ul>
Sport Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Training prisoners and staff.</li> <li> Contact with organisations/sport teams outside the prison walls.</li> <li> Motivate other prisoners by designing leaflets and developing programmes.</li> <li> Running sports competitions and activities.</li> <li> Looking after space and equipment.</li> <li> Advice and consultation regarding the offer and the equipment available.</li> </ul>



Forum Member (member of specific work group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>👤 Working together with professionals.</li> <li>👤 Taking part in forum meetings.</li> <li>👤 Creating agenda for meetings.</li> <li>👤 Chairing meetings.</li> <li>👤 Conducting surveys and peer research.</li> <li>👤 Taking forward requests.</li> </ul>
Library Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>👤 Running library.</li> <li>👤 Organising books.</li> <li>👤 Ordering stock.</li> <li>👤 Taking requests.</li> <li>👤 Organising reading activities.</li> <li>👤 Producing material.</li> </ul>
Reception Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>👤 Welcoming new prisoners.</li> <li>👤 Developing materials for welcoming new prisoners.</li> <li>👤 Explaining the rules and meeting the requirements of the prison system.</li> <li>👤 Introduction to services and activities.</li> </ul>

## Prison Journey



## 2.4 Essential collaborators

66 I think it is a very important thing [...] we have to involve prison staff. [...] the need for the staff is [...] maybe even bigger, even some prison managers don't understand what you are doing, they don't understand what active citizenship is, they don't understand about the process, they don't understand about the need, it is really important that staff is included in the project."

Prison staff member, survey response

It is not only specialist staff whose support is important. Prison staff could make or break a project – giving access to the prison, ensuring participants are authorised to attend, opening doors, encouraging people to attend, and informing others of activities.

It is important to sell the benefits to the prison governor/management and to other education staff, stressing the importance of the advantages to the prison community and wider society.

In reality there is sometimes a thin line between collaborators and participants as you will notice in the next part of the toolkit. Reflect on the activities you are planning. What could you do to move an activity from informing to collaborating?

Prison Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Involve prison governors/management from the start of the project.</li> <li>🌐 You will need them to create support with prison staff and prisoners.</li> <li>🌐 The involvement of the prison management will also create awareness about the necessity and the benefits of the project and will open doors too.</li> </ul>
Prison Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Involve prison staff from the start.</li> <li>🌐 Do not use them only as practical facilitators who open doors, ensure participants are authorised to attend, and take care of security; let them join the project if possible and desired.</li> <li>🌐 Including prison staff can create an added value (different perspectives; creating support; helping to understand underlying difficulties; contacts with prison population).</li> <li>🌐 It will provide the project with different perspectives and will make the project less uncomfortable and inconvenient for prison staff.</li> </ul>
Prisoners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 The whole set up of 'active citizenship' projects must evolve around prisoners' collaboration. Therefore it is important to make prisoners the co-owners of the project. Give them responsibilities and involve them in the decision-making process.</li> </ul>
Stakeholders – other organisations working in the prison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 It is important to make stakeholders aware of the importance of the project. Active citizenship or participation has to become the 'normal' way to engage and work with prisoners. It should be embedded in the culture of the prison.</li> </ul>

Own organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every colleague of your organisation has to become an ambassador of the topic and the project. This is not only important within your organisation but also to disseminate and support the ideas, results and impacts of the project.</li> </ul>
External organisations – other organisations working in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These organisations could provide a vital link with the outside world (for more information see section 3: Delivering your project).</li> <li>If you work with external organisations make sure that they offer an added value.</li> </ul>

## Activity

### Support matrix



**Tip:** Meet with stakeholders you will be working with and fill out this table together.

**Ask:** 'What are your goals regarding the active citizenship project? How can we meet your goals?' and 'What are your concerns? How can we address your concerns?'

Stakeholder	Their goals	How do we meet these goals	Their concerns	How do we address these concerns
<b>Prison management</b>	E.g. involving prisoners more actively in organising and supporting activities for fellow prisoners	E.g. by giving ten prisoners the opportunity to be involved in organising and supporting activities during the next six months	E.g. prisoners should be supported by a professional to gain the necessary skills to realise this	E.g. by providing training for prisoners and having follow-up conversations
<b>Prison staff</b>				
<b>Prisoners</b>				
<b>Your/external organisation</b>				

66

After getting approval from the prison, we also had a meeting with a staff member who would help to run the project. She was very important for us because she is creative and she had been working in prison for 15 years. She really knows the prison. From the beginning, she was involved in the whole system and she also knows all the boys and knows which of them could be interested in working with us.”

Changes & Chances

## 2.5 Recruiting participants (prisoners)

### Who participates?

Including everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Prisoners involved in decision-making should be representative – in terms of age, ethnicity, disability, culture, religion, language or learning abilities.</li> <li>🌐 When organising your activity, you should take steps to facilitate and encourage the participation of hard-to-reach groups. You should also consider how to ensure those with special educational needs are involved on an equal basis.</li> <li>🌐 Deliver all projects within a culture that encourages mutual respect in a safe, inclusive environment that is intolerant of racism, sexism and other excluding attitudes.</li> <li>🌐 PAC's survey of European prisons showed that foreign national, foreign language speaking, remand prisoners, prisoners with physical disabilities and vulnerable prisoners tended to have fewer opportunities to actively participate in prison life (Brosens et al., 2018). You could consider ways in which you might be able to include these groups in your project.</li> </ul>
Free choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Who takes part in an active citizenship activity will to some extent be determined by practical factors — who is available and who has the necessary clearance.</li> <li>🌐 The best results will come from people choosing to be involved in the activity.</li> <li>🌐 <i>“In many Dutch facilities it is not allowed to compel prisoners to participate in these activities. When prisoners participate in a project on a voluntary basis, there usually is less absenteeism and dropping-out.” Changes &amp; Chances</i></li> </ul>
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Be aware of the fact that not every prisoner may be allowed to participate.</li> <li>🌐 Also be aware that the nature of your project may affect what security issues arise.</li> </ul>
Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 PAC proved that active citizenship projects will work best in small projects and groups (a maximum 10 to 15 participants).</li> <li>🌐 You can organise a project in one section of the prison or organise it by topic.</li> <li>🌐 You can also set up several 'Active Citizenship' projects within one prison.</li> <li>🌐 Not every project has to be very big. Small projects are equally important.</li> </ul>

## How

- 🗣️ Talk to individual prisoners to inform them about the project. This works especially well when trying to engage hard-to-reach groups.
- 🗣️ Organise focus groups to get input from the target group.
- 🗣️ Organise meetings to inform them about the project.
- 🗣️ Use all means of communication provided by the prison (e.g. leaflets and flyers, prisoner newsletter, prison radio, cloud systems).

## Activity

### Bias check



There are varying degrees of co-production and collaboration within active citizenship – see page 7 for more information. The process can feel uncomfortable and time-consuming, particularly if you already have an idea of how the project will proceed. This activity may help to take away possible resistance.

Before beginning the co-production process, sit down with the people initiating the activity. Ask:

- **“What would you like/not like to hear?”**
- **“What would really challenge us as an organisation/institution?”**
- **“What would we do if we heard this?”**

Discuss thoughts with a group.

## Activity

### Shared values



Organisations often have collective values. This activity is designed to help people think about and share their personal values, to consider what motivates them and what links them to their peers.

1. Working individually, ask prisoners to select up to three one-word values that resonate with them. They could also find prompts in a pre-written list, with words such as ‘compassion’, ‘achievement’, ‘family’, ‘wellbeing’, ‘perseverance’, ‘religion’, etc.
2. Arrange chairs in two concentric circles, so that each pair is facing each other. Invite them to share their values with the person opposite, explaining why they have chosen each one and why it is important to them.
3. After five minutes, ask the person in the inside circle to move to the next chair, leaving everyone facing a new partner.
4. Repeat until there have been multiple discussions.
5. Tally values and share most widely held with the group.
6. Use these to form own group values.
7. Keep these to refer back to throughout work. They could be stuck on the wall, and could be used as an alternative to ‘ground rules’.

## 2.6 Example projects

Active citizenship projects are varied and adaptable. Which you choose will depend on your interests, the capacity of the prison, timing and resources.

Here are some examples of types of projects that have been successful in Europe.

### Involving prisoners in organising activities

From sports tournaments to quizzes, festivals, exhibitions, talks and fundraising events.

- 🌐 In 22 of **Italy's prisons**, prisoners and local residents, athletes and amateur runners joined together in a race inside prison. Prisoners were part of the organisation of the activity.
- 🌐 In the **UK's HMP Erlestoke**, prisoners organised an arts festival featuring comedians and musicians.
- 🌐 In **the Netherlands**, Changes & Chances helped young men in prison **PI Krimpen aan de IJssel** produce their own magazine — a guide to prison life for newcomers.

### Democratic voices

From filling in surveys to taking part in prison councils, learner voice forums, and education around citizenship.

- 🌐 In **Belgium and the UK**, prison councils are a common feature of most prisons.
- 🌐 In **the UK**, learner voice councils, where prisoner students join with staff to discuss issues related to education, are common.
- 🌐 In **Croatia**, PAC partner the Croatian Association for Creative Social Work ran workshops on conflict management, which expanded into classes on democratic rights and responsibilities.

### Peers together

Prisoners trusted and equipped to work with and for their peers, navigating prison life, education, mental health and relationships.

- 🌐 In a Red Cross project in **Ireland**, prisoners are trained to become peer-to-peer educators who promote hygiene, health and first aid among their fellow prisoners.
- 🌐 In **the UK**, Shannon Trust's Turning Pages programme has prisoners provide literacy training to their peers.
- 🌐 In **France's** 'codétenu' programme and the Samaritan's Listener scheme, prisoners are trained to help counsel their peers with mental health issues.
- 🌐 In the **UK's HMP Grendon**, prisoners live in communities, with responsibility for cooking, cleaning and looking after plants and fish. They set community rules and are collectively entrusted, as a community, with deciding on punishments for minor violations of these rules.
- 🌐 In **Belgium's Beveren prison**, residents are responsible for the reception of new prisoners. They provide newcomers with information about organisations, activities, services and the 'prisoncloud' intranet system. They organise this themselves with the aid of people from the Flemish community, who provide logistical assistance.
- 🌐 In **the Netherlands' prison PI Krimpen aan de IJssel**, a special group of prisoners called De Compagnie is responsible for their cooking, cleaning of the unit, and problem-solving within the group.

### Outsiders in

Bringing citizens into prisons to use prison facilities or volunteer with people inside.

- 🌐 In **Belgium, Denmark and the UK** there are a growing number of prison-university partnerships – bringing students into prisons to study alongside those in prison.
- 🌐 In **the Netherlands**, Changes & Chances invited retired local residents into the prison of **Lelystad** to share skills with residents — e.g. one resident helped produce a CD; another helped sculpt a chess set.
- 🌐 In **Croatia**, local residents can visit a car repair service staffed by serving prisoners.

### Leading by experience

To run the PAC workshops in **the UK**, Prisoners' Education Trust recruited someone who had been in prison herself, and has built a successful career since her release. Having someone with direct experience running the workshops was a huge boon for the project. Much of the participants' feedback centred on the value of hearing from the facilitator.

## 3. Delivering your project


66 They were very excited about the fact that someone came and asked about their opinion, that they were taken very seriously. They were very committed and coming up with ideas – even the staff member who normally works with them didn't know them like that.<sup>99</sup>


Changes & Chances



### 3.1 Who facilitates?

Who should deliver the project?

 **From the outside** — Who has experience of setting up a dynamic and well-run project? Could charities, local residents, specialists or ex-prisoners be involved?

 **From the inside** — Include as many relevant partners as possible, and try to identify people who will be your 'champions' on the ground.

This could include prison staff, prisoners, peer mentors, internal organisations involved in areas such as sports, education, or mental health provision.



## 3.2 External/internal facilitators

You could choose to have an external or internal person lead the project.

Within the learning areas of PAC it became clear that a combination of both worlds is ideal. An external organisation or teacher will bring in knowledge and specialism from the outside, while prison staff have the advantage of being an expert on the prison environment and the target audience.

Advantages — Internal	Advantages — External
Has an understanding of the prison	Might encourage more open and honest dialogue with prisoners
Can make changes themselves	Could help improve staff/prisoner relationships
Has knowledge of working with prisoners, and understands their expectations and grievances	Not involved in the daily prison routine and therefore is free from baggage of previous grievances and expectations of prisoners
Could help improve staff/prisoner relationships	Could use ex-prisoner facilitator
Has working contacts within the prison	Independent from 'prison politics' and grievances
Has more insight into the topic within prison walls	Could provide different perspectives
Could help to build a network of support inside the prison	Provides a link to the 'outside world' and a potential network of external support
Advising external organisations	Specialist skills, expertise and coaching techniques

Involve, Improve, Inspire (Champion & Aguiar 2013)

## 3.3 Training



The importance of training and counselling for prisoners and prison staff is not to be underestimated. Training participants and retaining the interests of the participants are success factors in a participation project.<sup>99</sup>

Derwael, 2013

<p>Prisoners</p>	<p><b>Time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Make sure, you have enough time planned within the project for coaching, counselling, and support of the participants.</li> <li>🌐 This is certainly important when participation takes place in the upper layer of the participation pyramid: advising, co-producing and empowering.</li> <li>🌐 This will take time but will ensure the success of your project.</li> <li>🌐 You cannot expect the participants to be experts on every different aspect.</li> <li>🌐 Be aware that it is not sufficient to support the participants only within the start-up period. It will be necessary to provide support during the whole project.</li> </ul> <p><b>Topics</b></p> <p>Working with the target group inevitably means that you have to support the participants on different topics.</p> <p><i>Some examples:</i></p> <p>Practical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Management skills</li> <li>🌐 Communication skills</li> <li>🌐 Meeting skills</li> <li>🌐 Contact with the outside world</li> </ul> <p>Group dynamics/social skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🌐 Learning to work together</li> <li>🌐 Shaping self-confidence</li> <li>🌐 Shaping trust/belief</li> <li>🌐 Developing satisfaction</li> <li>🌐 Developing sense of responsibility</li> <li>🌐 Developing social ties and capital</li> </ul>
<p>Peers</p>	<p>The 'peer teachers' will need to be trained in certain topics and given knowledge and skills which they can then transfer to 'learners'.</p>

External organisation	Working together with external organisations can provide added value for your project. External organisations are often specialised in setting up processes and developing certain skills, necessary for the project. A combination of an internal organisation (your organisation) and an external organisation works best. Do not forget that the external partners need your support and knowledge of working in the prison context and with the target group. In many cases this will be new to them.
Own organisation	Make sure that everyone within your own organisation is an ambassador for your project. You can only reach this goal by involving them. Organise meetings, focus groups, and dissemination activities within your own organisation. The topic of your project should be a focus for everyone within your organisation. It is important to disseminate the ideas and results from your project further than the prison you initially work in.

## 3.4 Tips

Every prison and every project is different, but here are some tips gathered from the PAC partners and others running successful active citizenship initiatives.

### Genuine Empowerment

- 🌐 Allow the prisoners to take the lead — the stronger their involvement, the more they will achieve.
- 🌐 Challenge the prisoners, make them the centre of the project, give them credit, let them see themselves positively.

### Mix It Up

- 🌐 Keep activities varied.
- 🌐 Be aware of different learning styles and adapt to these.
- 🌐 Give everyone room to speak.

### Keeping It Real

- 🌐 Make the citizenship projects real – they should reflect the controversial nature of citizenship issues and explore possible real solutions.
- 🌐 Link citizenship activities to the personal and social interests of participants and involve other areas of learning: catering, sport, art, music.
- 🌐 Get involved in local/national campaigns in which prisoners can connect with issues from different parts of the country or world.

### Seeing is Believing

- 🌐 Operate a clear feedback loop — if participants are advising or working on a project make sure they can see the outcome of their actions or suggestions. If a suggestion has not been taken on board, explain why not, or why not yet.
- 🌐 'You said, we did' notice boards, newsletters, posters, notices, staff intranet and updates in staff meetings are ways to feedback positive changes.
- 🌐 Have some 'quick wins' when you first set up a project so you can build support and momentum from prisoners and staff.
- 🌐 Guarantee feedback mechanisms are in place. It is vital prisoners receive feedback.

66  
When the group came up with questions, we always tried to make sure that we had something to reply to them between sessions, for instance 'We took your question to this person, and they said this...' That really worked well and built trust between us and the group.<sup>99</sup>

Prisoners' Education Trust

### Celebrating Success

- 🌐 Challenge participants to celebrate their achievements, promote their successes and let them see themselves positively, to build their self-esteem.
- 🌐 Successes need to be visible, recognised and promoted to prisoners and staff. Celebrate prisoners' achievements, for example photographic displays, performances, and stories in newsletters will spread the citizenship message and build self-esteem.

## Challenges

Any project in a prison, particularly one that is new and pushes boundaries, is bound to present challenges — from bureaucratic difficulties to disruptions that undermine or halt a project.

The basic conditions outlined on page 17 are intended to mitigate these, but it is not always possible to predict events.

In running our own active citizenship projects, the PAC partners faced difficulties including:

Challenge	Suggested responses
Safety/security rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand rules before starting the project.</li> <li>Build relationships with prison staff and management to help build your understanding of the rules.</li> <li>Be aware of what is possible elsewhere.</li> <li>Allow prison staff to join the project.</li> </ul>
Lack of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider what might be covered by different prison budget pots.</li> <li>Explore where you can get things for free.</li> </ul>
Lack of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider involving volunteers or organisations from outside prison with relevant knowledge.</li> <li>Involve scientific partners (universities, schools).</li> <li>Audit prisoners and staff for skills.</li> </ul>
Lack of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate different activities — done with you or in other contexts. Do this together with all stakeholders.</li> <li>Consider linking in incentives/qualifications/certificates to encourage attendance.</li> </ul>
Lack of communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous communication with all partners is of utmost importance for the success of the project.</li> <li>Motivate the partners to communicate in a regular, constructive way to ensure the realisation of the project.</li> <li>If any problems occur, you will need to communicate these to your stakeholders and bring them together to find a solution.</li> </ul>
Lack of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure there is enough time to undertake, support and complete the project. This is a basic condition.</li> <li>If not enough time can be guaranteed, do not start the project.</li> <li>Make sure that every stakeholder understands that setting up active citizenship projects take time.</li> </ul>
Staff involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include staff development activities as part of the project.</li> <li>Give staff either time or resources (preferably both) to develop citizenship activities.</li> </ul>

66  
 In the beginning there was a lot of distrust – ‘We don’t believe in it’, ‘You’re the same as all the others’ – and then we started to work and evaluated it and after two, three times they were like ‘Yeah, it is different’, ‘It gives us hope.’”

De Rode Antracit

66  
But when it comes to implementing this sort of thing it is a very delicate process because I had to convince the prison of the idea of active citizenship, I had to convince the prison staff of the importance of this, and that was quite something to be honest.<sup>99</sup>

## Changes & Chances

### **Pains of self-government**

There is a more fundamental challenge of introducing active citizenship in prisons. How can an activity that promotes freedom and autonomy work in a system that is fundamentally restrictive and disenfranchising? Could a taste of freedom actually make things worse for participants — now more acutely aware of what they are missing?

Criminologists like Dr Ben Crewe speak of the ‘pain of self-government’ (Crewe, 2011), where prisoners are given more responsibility for their own rehabilitation, but still live in a regime that holds all-encompassing, invasive power. As Victor Shamma writes in ‘Pains of Imprisonment’ (2017), “As inmates are given a broader range of potential actions and power to make decisions, they are also held responsible for failures to live up to the standards of rehabilitation interventions.”

As project facilitators, we have a responsibility to think about the potential negative impact of our project, incorporating this into discussions and working with staff and participants to mitigate this.

## Measuring success

66  
I’ve learned you care about what we think.<sup>99</sup>

Prisoner participant, UK

**Outputs** tell the story of what you produced or what activities went on.

**Outcome** is the level of performance or the achievement reached because of the activity or services provided.

Having clear, tangible results from your active citizenship work is hugely valuable as it:

- 🌐 Provides a sense of achievement.
- 🌐 Is a chance to celebrate and mark success.
- 🌐 Shows other people what the project has achieved.
- 🌐 Increases likelihood of buy-in for future projects.

Your desired output should be threaded throughout your project: part of the **aims** decided at the beginning, and informing the **measurement tools** you use to decide whether your project is a success.

## Activity

### Ideas for monitoring activities



#### Surveys

Give participants a questionnaire at the start and end of your work together. (example questionnaire on page 10).

#### Line up

1. Stick paper along a wall with the numbers 1 – 10 written on them

2. Say one statement at a time e.g. "I would like to do an activity like this again." "I have not learned a lot."

3. Ask participants to grade themselves 1 – 10 by standing at a particular point. 1 = strongly disagree, 10 = strong agree.

4. Have discussion around different answers.

#### Suggestion box

Give participants space to write comments or suggestions and place them in a box, to be treated confidentially. Issues could be raised anonymously with the group.

#### Evaluation group

At the end of the session, gather participants and those who worked with them and facilitate a discussion on what went well and what did not. Questions could include:

- 🌐 What went well?
- 🌐 What could have gone better?
- 🌐 Was everyone able to be involved?
- 🌐 What would you change for next time?
- 🌐 What difference has it made for you?
- 🌐 How do we make sure this project continues and/or has a legacy?

## Sharing success

Take time to share the project's successes — and failures — with all key stakeholders. It is important that they recognise the impact of the project and are thanked for their involvement — or are encouraged to take part next time! It is also a good opportunity to invite participants' families and members of the outside community to gain an insight into the positive things that are possible within prisons.

*This could be through:*



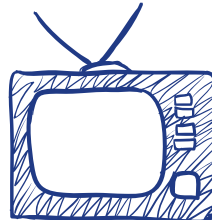
**A celebration event**



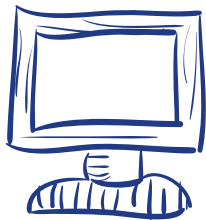
**An awards ceremony**



**Share through national/international networks**



**Coverage in prison/local/national media**



**A write-up for staff bulletin/intranet**



**Sharing in meetings**





## What's next?

True empowerment comes from people developing the ability to run their own activities beyond the lifetime of a project.

If you are running a standalone project, it is vital that you consider what will happen when it comes to an end or you leave the prison. Include this in discussions with participants from the beginning, being open about what is possible.



## Will the project be able to continue?

If yes	If no
Who will lead it? How have you equipped them to run it? Will they be able to learn from successes and failures? 	Are the participants fully briefed on this? 
Who will take part? How will they be recruited? 	Will they have the chance to use new skills — how? 
Can you reach a higher stage of participation e.g. by giving more ownership to previous participants?	Is there anything you can signpost them to e.g. distance learning courses in related subjects? Other schemes in the prison?

## Further reading

The PAC project also led in-depth research into the evidence base for active participation. To read the report and find out more about the impact of active citizenship projects, please visit:

[www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/)

To gain the benefits of active citizenship, prisons need to be hospitable to these programmes, and policy makers need to support their development. The PAC team has put together a set of policy recommendations for governments across Europe.

To read the recommendations, visit:

[www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/](http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do/policy/active-citizenship-in-prisons/)

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This toolkit was created to help people working and living in prisons to build active citizenship. It is designed to be used by prisoners, prison management, prison staff, education staff, organisations and people working in the voluntary sector. It was made possible by a collaboration between de Rode Antraciet (Belgium — coordinator), Changes & Chances (Netherlands), Croatian Association for Creative Social Work (Croatia), Prisoners' Education Trust (UK), UISP (Italy), and The Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium), as part of the PAC (Prisoners' Active Citizenship) Erasmus + EU project.