**Final Report IO 1: Female prisoners in Italy**

The Pal Women project, as a general aim, has the integration of women in disadvantaged conditions, improving their basic skills through adult learning and training in doing business, in order to increase their chances of being placed in the world of work, both within social cooperatives and by encouraging and supporting the development of new entrepreneurial and self-employment realities.

In this context, Consorzio Innopolis deals with involving prisoners and ex-prisoners in training and mentoring activities aimed at promoting their social inclusion; it provides notions of entrepreneurship and promotes opportunities for the development of a social redemption; it supports innovations in management and artisan production, and encourages good practices in the introduction of new business models.

There are 2713 women in Italian prisons out of a total of 61174 prisoners[[1]](#footnote-1).

They represent 4.4%[[2]](#footnote-2) of the total number of people detained, confirming the percentages reported by the European Commission. Only 25% of the inmates serve the sentence in one of the four exclusively female institutes currently operating in Italy (Trani, Pozzuoli, Rome-Rebibbia and Venice-Giudecca), whereas the remaining 75% is distributed among the approximately fifty female sections obtained at internal male prisons present in all regions except Valle d'Aosta and Molise.

The women who enter prison are marked by a context of serious social marginality, reflected in the type of crimes for which they are imprisoned. Asset-related crimes, the drug law and crimes against the person are those for which women are most frequently sentenced to prison terms.

The data show that for many women, the commission of crimes is not the result of the individual option for a life model based on illegality, but derives more frequently from the subordination towards family figures and reference that have adopted it, transmitted it, and sometimes imposed it. In other cases, the detainees were themselves victims of crimes, sometimes the same for which they are atone for punishment: the typical example is that of women in prison for crimes related to the exploitation of prostitution and violation of the rules on immigration, of which almost all the condemned were themselves victims, before "start thei own business". Also in this case, the use of crime as a source of sustenance appears to be closely linked to the lack of realistic alternatives, especially in the absence of recognized professional skills in the European country of arrival.

The Italian constitution art. 27[[3]](#footnote-3), establishes the principle of 're-educative punishment finalism', intended as the creation of the conditions necessary to favor the reintegration of the sentenced person in the community, eliminating or reducing the danger that, once released, he/she may commit new crimes.

The penitentiary law reform, law n.354 / 75 and subsequent amendments, have implemented this constitutional principle, identifying and regulating rules, tools and methods to guarantee the effective social and employment reintegration of the sentenced.

In particular, Art. 20 reports “In prison institutions, the destination of prisoners and interns at work and their participation in professional training courses must be favored in any way. To this end, processes organized and managed directly by public or private companies may be established and professional training courses organized and carried out by public companies, or even by private companies affiliated with the region, may be established".

Based on what is stated in the article, the work within the penitentiary institutions can be carried out both under the penitentiary administration (mostly in the so-called domestic jobs and, in some realities at industrial works for the needs of housing and furniture of the same institutes) which depend on third parties (companies or cooperatives) who can manage work within the detention facilities. To encourage this type of job placement, Law 193 (Sbaraglia law) was launched in 2000, which provides for tax and contribution relief for companies or cooperatives that hire prisoners. In the analysis dated 2016 in T*he XIII report on conditions of detention* provided by the Antigone association refer that “As far as work activities are concerned, there are 840 working prisoners at 30 June 2016, of which 356 are foreign. If it is true that female workers represent around 37% of prisoners compared to a national average of 28%, it is also true that a large majority are exclusively employed in school services, such as cleaning workers and cook help (73.6% inmates employed by the prison administration). The remaining 26.4% of the workers are divided between workers in the institution on behalf of companies, externally pursuant to art. 21 and semi-free for external employers.”(Giulia Fabini, 2016)

In according to the questionnaire shares among national stakeholders, professionals and companies that work with prison institutions and experts in the field of entrepreneurship, we know that in Italy it is very difficult to find prisoners who have started an entrepreneurial activity (7 cases out of the 56 questionnaires collected). The focus group furthermore declares the inmates were small entrepreneurs, or anyway had some skills about the topic. The female prisoners are in majority Roma women. They have no level of schooling, or anyway very low, and moreover they are not used to work. This means they face three level of discriminations: social condition, gender discrimination and racism. 32 out of 54 respondents believe that women's difficulties to get finding are due to a factor of gender discrimination and that ex-prisoners women have the right to greater protections and opportunities. 87% believe that inmates suffer from double or triple discrimination in addition to gender discrimination, linked to their particular social condition. Moving in policies to contrast the widespread prejudice towards people who leave prison reflects the main objective of the Pal project Women.

Overall it turned out that women ex-prisoners share personal and social needs with many women who have not committed crimes and from this gender mainstreaming measures must be designed. Maternity, situations of lone-parent family, women’s situation in the work market, the domestic violence, differences in the use of drugs and their consequences, the social role that women are supposed to develop, differences in social and family support that women receive, the responsibilities that they have, prostitution, etc., all of these aspects that, among many others, configure a reality and different needs due to gender, and demand responses based on gender mainstreaming. The women in prison accumulate disadvantages of class, gender and, in many cases, of ethnicity and nationality.

The report on the social condition of prisoners in Italy highlights the low school level, strongly reiterated by the interviewees who denounce an absence of specific general skills and suggest educating former women prisoners in starting a business with a program of training and awareness-raising activities on corporate culture already in prison structures. A desirable outcome would be a learning and educational path with a phase of orientation and the subsequent phase of accompanying the enterprise lasting over time put together.

The best activity to educate former prisoners woman is to develop public seminars and open workshop. In the conference held in La Spezia with the title *Education and training in penitentiary contexts: new actions and perspectives*[[4]](#footnote-4), the importance of customize the training paths of prisoners based on a predetermined life plan, coordinating the actions of the various institutions, so that the prison period is not a useless period, was emphasized. For this purpose, a connection with the world of work is indispensable for future placement after the penalty and, for this reason, the training courses should also be aimed at acquiring certifications that can be spent at the end of the prison period. Very often the activities that detainees carry out in prison are largely unprofessional, and it is difficult to build a reintegration path that allows the prisoner to carry out the activity he carried out in prison even outside. The analysis of the situation set out in the aforementioned article was confirmed during the focus group organized in Rome.

Most of the detainees work for social cooperatives that have the labor inclusion of disadvantaged people in their mandate. These are cooperatives that benefit from particular benefits and tax relief, they are born exactly with the aim of giving work to the categories of disadvantaged workers, and therefore predictably arrive where the profit company has no interest to hold. In fact, prison work is hardly as productive as outside work. The organization is much more complex, being in prison poses various obstacles to business activities, and the workforce is generally less qualified and less "stable". As a result, traditional profit companies rarely bring branches of their businesses to jail.

Boosting female entrepreneurship could be a chance of reintegration, but providing suitable support, training activity and communication of economic resources. Another problem is the fact that inmates, once the sentence has been served, are free but have still disputes with the justice system and they must pay the damages. That means that they have no access to the credit system, they risk the foreclosure or the seizure of goods etc. They prefer not to open a bank account and work in the black economy. Access to credit easier and suspension of bonds and accessory penalties that limit financial autonomy even after the sentence, are important social intervention that play for improving self-employment.

Increasing basic knowledge at a financial level and knowing the already existing specific support measures for ex-prisoners are a priority set out among the skills necessary to be able to start one's own business. Developing intervention policies that improve their opportunities to create businesses is at the forefront of the aid provided to encourage their entry into the world of work.

Finally, any training activity should considerer at the same time subject dealt with planning and time managing, marketing business, branding, communication and networking to emphasize natural skills like problem solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, critical decision making, cognitive flexibility.

The quality most appreciated seems to be Persistence. This mean how much is important giving tools but mostly encouraging soft skill to start entrepreneurship.

The surveyed experts indicate the fields in which the ex-prisoners can prove more competitive, mostly in craft -manufacturing sector then in agricultural -food sector and finally in the field of personal services. But any kind of sectors are suggested based on personal orientations meanwhile putting an eye on specific fields required by the labour market. The simplest and most achievable business model for an ex-prisoner woman is the cooperative and / or social enterprise model.

In conclusion it would be highly recommended go along and endorse those women in developing their ideas, both financially and methodologically, breaking barrier about discrimination, supporting their desire to get involved even after hitting the bottom. Self -employment and social entrepreneurship can be efficient tools for reintegration and against the risk of recurrence.

**Reference List**

Walmsley, R. ( 2018).Women and girls in penal institutions, including pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners in World Female Imprisonment List fourth edition. institute for criminal policy research. Retrieved from <https://www.prisonstudies.org/research-publications?shs_term_node_tid_depth=27>

Panayotopoulos Cassiotou, M. (2008). Report on the situation of women in prison and the impact of the imprisonment of parents on social and family life (2007/2116(INI)). Retrieved from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2008-0033+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

Istat. Istituto Nazionale di Statistica.

Retrieved from [https://www.istat.it](https://www.istat.it/)

Palmisano, R. (2015). Scheda sulla detenzione femminile. D**ipartimento Amministrazione Penitenziaria . Ufficio del capo del dipartimento.Ufficio studi ricerche legislazione e rapporti internazionali. Retrieved from** <https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_12_1.page?contentId=SPS1155101&previsiousPage=mg_1_12>

International centre for prison studies 2019. **Retrieved from**

<https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/italy>

Salvati, A. (2011). La detenzione femminile. Amministrazione in cammino. Rivista elettronica di diritto pubblico, diritto dell'economia e di scienza dell'amministrazione. **Retrieved from** <http://www.amministrazioneincammino.luiss.it/app/uploads/2011/10/Salvati-detenzione-femminile_riv.pdf>

Fadda, M.L. (2010). La detenzione femminile: questioni e prospettive, **Retrieved from**  and from [www.personaedanno.it](http://www.personaedanno.it/)

Fabini, G. (2016). Donne e carcere: quale genere di detenzione?. Torna il carcere, XIII Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione. **Retrieved from** <http://www.antigone.it/tredicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/03-detenzione-femminile/>

Fabini, G. (2019). Uno sguardo qualitativo sulla detenzione femminile. Donne, non solo numeri. Il carcere secondo la Costituzione, XV Rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione. **Retrieved from/**<http://www.antigone.it/quindicesimo-rapporto-sulle-condizioni-di-detenzione/donne-non-solo-numeri/>e non solo numeri”

Mantovani, G. (2018). Donne ristrette. Ledizioni. Milano.

Gonnella, P. (2015), Le identità e il carcere: donne, stranieri, minorenni. **Retrieved from** <http://www.costituzionalismo.it/download/Costituzionalismo_201502_521.pdf>

Cruells, M., Igareda, N. (2005). Mip women, integration and prison. Analysis of the socio- labour integration processes of women prisoners in Europe. Project financed by the EC under the V Framework Programme, 2002-2005. **Retrieved from** <http://www.surt.org/mip/docs/finalResults/spain%20en.pdf>

Hawley, J., Murphy, I., Souto-Otero, M. (2013).Prison education and training in europe current state-of-play and challenges. A summary report authored for the European Commission by GHK Consulting. **Retrieved from** [Http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/hawley\_ue\_education\_may13.pdf](http://www.antoniocasella.eu/nume/hawley_ue_education_may13.pdf)

1. Ministry of Justice, update to 30 November 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/italy [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Costituzione della Repubblica italiana**,** Parte I. Diritti e doveri dei cittadini. Titolo I. Rapporti civili**.** Articolo 27.”Le pene non possono consistere in trattamenti contrari al senso di umanità e devono tendere alla rieducazione del condannato” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://epale.ec.europa.eu/it/content/convegno-istruzione-e-formazione-nei-contesti-penitenziari-nuove-azioni-e-prospettive [↑](#footnote-ref-4)