FORINER

2017

Providing distance education to foreign national prisoners across Europe

Good practices and recommendations

PROVIDING EDUCATION FOR FOREIGN NATIONAL PRISONERS

WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

THE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN EU PRISONERS ARE RISING

HIGH NUMBERS OF FOREIGN EU PRISONERS IN EUROPE

OVER 86.000 prisoners were detained in European prisons at the first of September among which 23% had another nationality than that of the country in which they were imprisoned
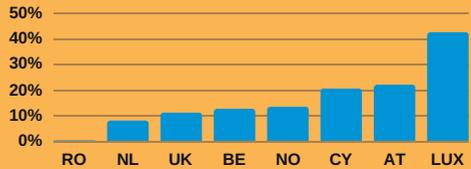
LARGE PERCENTAGE IN EUROPE

On average, the prison population of European prisons consists of **21.7%** foreign national prisoners

Bar chart with vertical axis labeled 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50% and horizontal axis categories: RO, NL, UK, BE, NO, CY, AT, LUX

EDUCATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT FOR ALL

THE RIGHT TO ACCESS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The EU Council recommends their Member States to ensure that their educational and vocational training is as effective as possible for foreign prisoners

MAKING GOOD USE OF THEIR SENTENCE

Education has the capacity to form a stepping stone in the pathway towards i**nclusion** for the foreign national prisoners by providing them with competences and positive learning experiences

DISTANCE EDUCATION FACILITATES TRANSITION OF PRISONERS BACK IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

SAVES MONEY

For every euro Invested in prison education economical benefits such as reduced prison costs can be expected

LOWERS RECIDIVISM

Prisoners that receive education have lower risk of recidivism. Without necessarily earning a diploma/certificate education reduces the likelihood of going back to the prison.

F⚬RINER

The FORINER partners are proud to present the project results in this booklet after two years of implementation. This booklet includes:

- ★ A short summary of the goals and activities of the project;

- ★ An overview of the FORINER pilot projects evaluation report 'Distance education for citizens detained abroad' - Dorien Brosens, Flore Croux & Liesbeth De Donder, 2017 (VUB, Belgium)

- ★ A short version of the FORINER model for providing distance education for foreign national prisoners in their native language;

- ★ A list of recommendations for policy makers and practitioners in order to ensure efficient strategies to provide education for foreign national prisoners across Europe.

The FORINER project

Aims of the FORINER project

The FORINER project, launched in January 2016, was initiated to provide European foreign national prisoners in European prisons with access to qualitative, accessible, certified learning opportunities provided by educational institutions from their home country. The target group of the FORINER project consists of European citizens with an educational need detained in a country other than their country of origin. To satisfy their learning needs a structure was designed and tested which allows education providers to reach out to their national prisoners in other European countries, at the same quality standard as the home offer.
At the same time the FORINER project emphasises the importance of ICT and (secured) internet access in European prisons. With this project the FORINER consortium hopes to boost the use of digital technology for prisoners for educational purposes.

European recognition through Erasmus+

The FORINER project was selected by the European Commission to be co-funded through the European programme Erasmus+ under Key Action 3 (support for policy reform) 'Forward-looking cooperation projects'. The FORINER project started in January 2016 and ended in December 2017.

The FORINER Consortium

The FORINER consortium consists of 4 formal partners:

★ Vlaams Ondersteuningscentrum voor het Volwassenenonderwijs (VOCVO, Belgium) (project coordinator)
★ Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB, Belgium)
★ Stichting Educatie Achter Buitenlandse Tralies (EABT, Netherlands)
★ MegaNexus (United Kingdom)

In cooperation with 4 associated partners:

★ European Prison Education Association (EPEA)
★ European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris)
★ Confederation of European Probation (CEP)
★ Weston College (United Kingdom)

Main activities
of the FORINER project

1. Research report on educational opportunities for foreign national prisoners

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium) conducted a research in the beginning of the project in 2016 that investigated the educational opportunities of foreign national prisoners and existing practices in the field of prison education. The results of the research showed that :
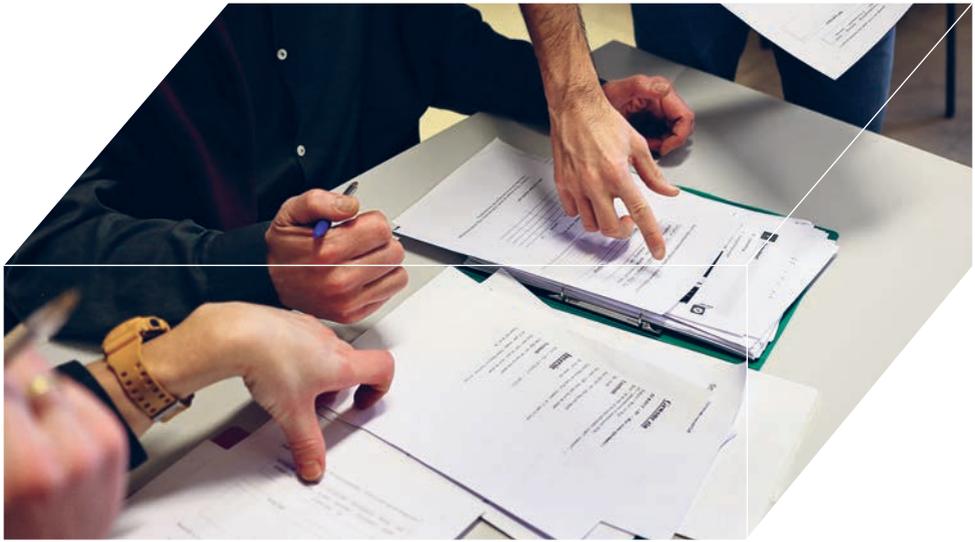
1   Almost 50% of the respondents indicate it is difficult to provide education to foreign European national prisoners, as they do not speak the language sufficiently.

2   Almost 60% of the respondents indicate there are only limited or no educational materials available for foreign EU national prisoners, and that the financial resources to offer foreign prisoners education, are too limited.

3   Scores for E-learning facilities and limited internet are relatively high. Only a small minority of the prisons allowed prisoners to have these ICT possibilities inside their cells.

Reference: Brosens, D., & De Donder, L. (2016). Educational participation of European citizens detained in a foreign European country. Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel

2. Build a European network on the topic of distance education for foreign national prisoners

From the start of the project the consortium invested in establishing a network of stakeholders in prison education. The associated partners and especially the European networks Europris and EPEA were of particular interest in this matter.
In October 2016, a conference was organised in London by MegaNexus (UK) to bring together European stakeholders interested in developing pilot projects. The aim of these pilot projects was to test how education can be organised for foreign national prisoners. Participants from 12 different European countries attended the conference. They exchanged information and ideas for setting up pilot projects. Further advocacy and network building actions continued throughout the entire project duration.

3. Setting up pilot projects

The FORINER consortium examined and tested in several small pilot projects how educational programmes for foreign national prisoners can be organised. The piloting phase of the FORINER project took place from January to June 2017. Countries could act as 'sending countries', meaning that they provide distance education to one or more nationals detained in a foreign European country. Countries could also operate as 'receiving countries', meaning that they receive educational courses for foreigners detained within their correctional institutions. VOCVO coordinated these pilot projects and provided tools in support of the pilot project partners.

4. Evaluation of the pilot projects

A scientific evaluation of the pilot projects was conducted by VUB (Belgium) between August and November 2017.

In total, 15 pilot projects all over Europe were evaluated. Partners in nine European countries were effectively involved in the development and realisation of the pilot projects. Partners in six European countries sent education to their nationals abroad (sending partners): Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Romania, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Partners in three countries received educational programmes for foreigners detained within their correctional institutions (receiving partners): Belgium, Malta, and Norway.

Results of the FORINER pilot projects evaluation report

General findings

- 4 different organisation models to provide education to foreign national prisoners were tested throughout the piloting phase.
- 14 non-digital and 1 digital pilot project were carried out during the piloting phase.
- 36 people detained in a foreign European country started a distance course issued from their home country.

Diverse profile of sending partners and receiving partners

- Some of the pilot partners had previous experience with prison education, others didn't.
- Some of the sending partners used already existing courses, while others developed courses specifically for the FORINER project.
- Some partners were educational departments under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice, whereas some were educational institutions from the community.

Student

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity to learn and to participate in this project.[..] I don't want to waste my time. When I go back out, at least I have something that can help me in the future to start a new life. You have the chance to do something positive with your life. All people make mistakes, and from these mistakes you can learn. I now have the chance to start something that is positive"

Receiving partner

"In the future, I will continue to approach them personally[..] You notice that they (potential students) are astonished, surprised, pleasantly surprised, about this educational offer. They expect to get information, so it is important to have a personal conversation in which they can ask all their questions. And also vice versa, that we can ask questions about their stay here."

Sending partner

"It was my own personal decision to help people. To help my countrymen who are locked up in various prisons around Europe, and just let them know from far away that, even though they are locked up [...] there is someone at home who might be interested in their education."

Satisfaction with the distance course

• 95.9% of the students would recommend the course to other prisoners, and 80% of the students would take another course in the same manner if they had the opportunity.

• The majority of the students also agreed that the course served his/her needs (79.2%).

General perspective on reintegration

• 66.7% of the students thought that the course would contribute to having a better life after release from prison, and that it would be easier to avoid committing crimes.

• More than 66% of the students indicated that following the course would make it easier to find a job after release from prison, and they also thought that this job would be a better and more pleasant job.

Reference: Brosens, D., Croux, F. & De Donder, L. (2017). Distance education for citizens detained abroad. Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel

The FORINER model: providing distance education for foreign national prisoners

The FORINER model can be regarded as a reference model designed to stimulate European cooperation between European Member States to implement distance education for foreign national prisoners. The model comes to support many countries that need a structure to provide education for their citizens imprisoned in other prisons across Europe.

The FORINER model was developed taking into account the results of the pilot project evaluation report. This report provides a concrete perspective on the methods by which foreign prisoners can be given access to the education offered by his or her home country in his or her native language. Besides these results, the evaluation report also includes good practices shared by the project partners about the methods used to deliver education to their citizens detained abroad.

The structure of the FORINER model

A wide variety of national contexts

The FORINER research results show that national contexts on detention and prison education vary seriously among European Member States. This applies not only for the national legal framework, but also for national policy, practice and the level of priority given to the topic in a specific country or region. The FORINER consortium has therefor developed a model that has a sound base for cross-European cooperation, but that is also flexible enough to fit into the variety of national and regional contexts. The base of the model is depicted below and consists of a pan-European cooperation model with four key elements to be applied in each European Member State: ownership on sending education, ownership on receiving education, sending partners and receiving partners. These key elements are indispensable for an efficient and qualitative delivery of distance education to foreign prisoners. Local cooperation can be set up without this structure, however significant impact on European scale can only be reached when implementing the entire model.
The model doesn't determine how the four key elements have to take form in the national contexts. That should be done with the involvement of national key stakeholders to safeguard the construction of a realistic FORINER model that fits the needs of the national detention and educational context.

Below the cooperation model and the four key elements are shortly explained, indicating some options of how to implement them nationally based on the FORINER research and insights gained during the project.

OWNERSHIP
SENDING
EDUCATION

SENDING
PARTNERS

COUNTRY

OWNERSHIP
RECEIVING
EDUCATION

RECEIVING
PARTNERS
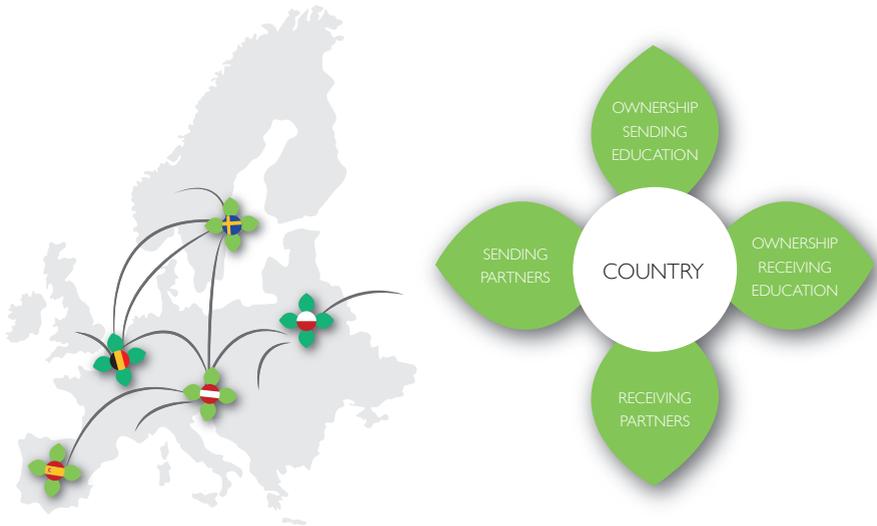
A pan-European cooperation model

The FORINER model is a pan-European cooperation model. It builds on the assumption that each European country is involved in the implementation and cooperates with each other European country. The graphic below depicts the model of pan-European cooperation in a simplified form.

Ownership on national and European level

A second pillar for implementing the FORINER model is ownership of responsibility to structurally implement the FORINER model in European countries. Ownership is adopted when a national or European body accepts responsibility to ensure all is done within its power to implement the FORINER model.
Ownership on national level is vital both on the sending and the receiving side to find and encourage national sending and receiving partners to cooperate on providing distance education for foreign national prisoners. Ownership on European level is needed to create a policy framework in which European countries can adopt national ownership and cooperate across European borders.

Sending and receiving partners

The term sending partner refers to an education provider located in a European country (most often, but not necessarily) coming from the home country of the foreign national prisoner. For example, the role of the sending partner can be taken on by :

- a private education provider for adult education
- a centre for adult learning specialised in prison education
- a higher education institution

The term receiving partner refers to an institution or an organisation from a European country where the foreign national prisoner is detained. For example, the role of the receiving partner can be taken on by:

- a prison that receives educational material for the foreign national prisoner
- an NGO working in prison with foreign national prisoners
- an organisation responsible for prison education in the receiving country

Main tasks and responsibilities of the sending partner

★ Disclose the course offer provided in the sending countries (and the prisoners) official language
★ Provide detailed information about the course offer to the receiving partner before starting a course
★ Register the student at the school/organisation where the course is being offered
★ Provide an appropriate assessment (pre-assessment) before starting the course in the mother tongue of the student
★ Provide support for the student on the content of the course (i.e. content support), for the selection and provision of the study materials (i.e. instrumental support)

Main tasks and responsibilities of the receiving partner

★ Initiate cooperation with a sending country interested in sending educational materials

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- ★ Provide proper learning infrastructure for the student
- ★ Facilitate communication between the sending partner and the prisoner
- ★ Coach the student (i.e. motivational support)
- ★ Ensure privacy protection

Sending and receiving coordinators

The project consortium found that ownership is of vital importance to structurally implement activities of sending and receiving partners in European countries. Without ownership, the main aim of the project of finding a model for structural implementation cannot be reached.

On a practical level, ownership on the sending side can be taken up by a sending coordinator. This term refers to a governing body from a European country that operates as sending coordinator on national level and thus overarches all sending partners. For instance, the sending coordinator can be represented by the Ministry of Education or be delegated by the Ministry to another national coordinating body.

Ownership on the receiving side should be taken up by a receiving coordinator. The term receiving coordinator refers to a governing body that operates as receiving coordinator on national level and overarches all receiving partners. For instance, the receiving coordinator can be represented by the Ministry of Justice from the receiving country. The Ministry of Justice can delegate the operational coordination to one or more institutions responsible for prison education or adult education in general.

Main tasks and responsibilities of the sending coordinator

- ★ Initiating cooperation between the sending and receiving countries
- ★ Install mutual trust by designing partnership agreements to be used for the cooperation between countries
- ★ Cooperate with the embassies in reaching their citizens abroad
- ★ Ensure quality control of the sending offer
- ★ Facilitate communication between sending and receiving partners

Main tasks and responsibilities
of the receiving coordinator

★ Install mutual trust by designing partnership agreements to be used for the cooperation between countries
★ Facilitate communication between sending and receiving partners
★ Signal issues that need solving
★ Disclose the educational offer to the receiving partners based on the population in their local prisons
★ Provide support to the receiving partners in receiving digital education

Digital support
in delivering education

Based on the experience in the pilot projects the FORINER consortium decided to distinguish between three levels of online or digital support in the communication between the sending institution and the prisoner The lack of internet access in many prisons forces the sending and receiving partners to think of new ways to establish communication between teacher and student. The three levels are as follows.

Level 1: direct online access - online courses and online communication on a learning platform directly accessed by the prisoner

The preferred way of working is that direct access for the prisoner to the platform of the education provider is provided. Therefore, (secured) internet access is required. This is the same way learners outside prison are provided with distance learning. Existing online platforms of education providers should be used for prisoners as well as much as possible.

Level 2: indirect online access - access to courses is provided online but communication between student and teachers is facilitated by the receiving partner

If direct online access is not possible, the receiving partner can support the prisoner in accessing online learning platforms and act as an intermediary in online communication between teacher and student. To facilitate this indirect form of access to online communication, the FORINER consortium advises that acentral European prisoner learning platform is established. The content of this platform may include:

• Static course material (pdf's, videos, audio fragments, MOOC's);
• Contact information of the sending and receiving partners and national sending and receiving coordinators;
• Information about existing partnerships and good practices;
• Communication facilities for partners: forum, chat, and so on;

The prisoners have the possibility to access some areas of the platform, notably those with the course materials of their country of origin (or in their mother tongue).

For privacy reasons it is important to safeguard that the central platform doesn't contain personal data on the prisoner.

Level 3: offline access - offline courses sent by the sending partner and communication through the receiving partner

In this level of communication sending and receiving partners cannot provide online platforms or courses for prisoners (level 1 – direct online access) neither can they support the prisoner to access digital content indirectly (level 2 – indirect online access). This is the least preferred option from a theoretical point of view, but may well for many years remain to be the most successful and efficient way for providing distance education for foreign national prisoners. The importance and potential impact of level 3 communication should therefore not be underestimated.
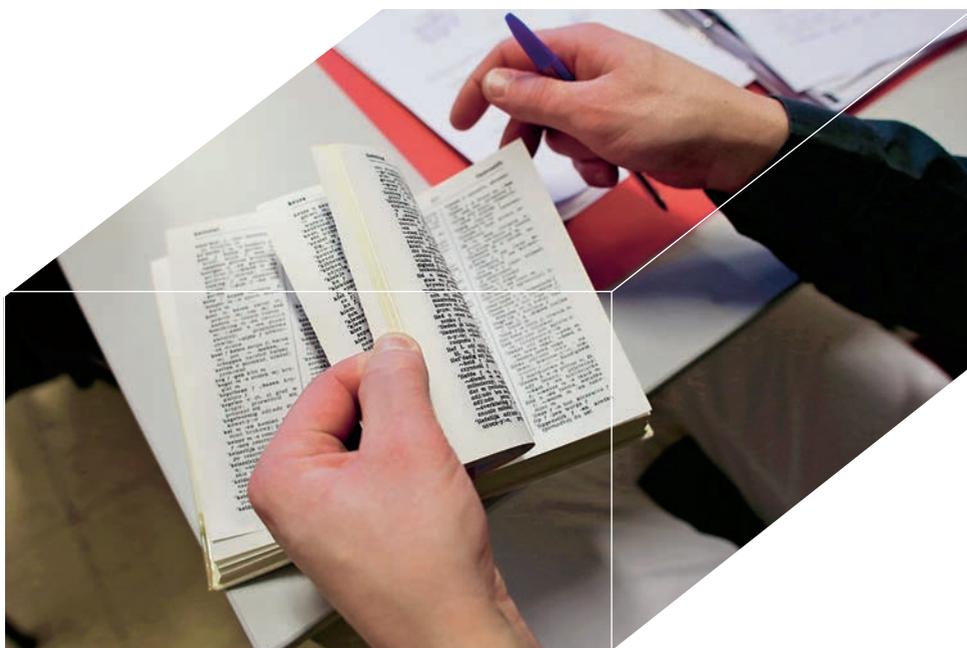
How to start a cooperation between EU countries to provide distance education for foreign national prisoners

1 The sending or the receiving partner detects a need and decides to take action.

2 The sending and receiving partners find each other, for instance using contact information on the FORINER website.

3 Sending and receiving partners initiate communication and express their interest to start a potential cooperation.

4 Cooperation arrangements are made to install mutual trust between partners. This can be done using the FORINER blueprint available on the FORINER website.

5 The cooperation between the sending and receiving partners officially starts and the partners exchange basic information: educational offer of the sending partner and basic profile of the potential student(s).

6 If the use of digital communication between student(s) and sending partner is possible, cooperation on the technical realisation is started.

7 The receiving partner matches potential students with the offer of the sending partner.

8 The receiving partner communicates the available educational offer to the potential student(s) and facilitates registration of the student(s) for a specific course.

9 The sending partner delivers the course materials and homework assignments to the receiving country (online or offline).

10 The homework assignments are sent back to the sending partner and students wait for their feedback.

11 The student finishes the course and the sending partner issues a certificate/or proof of admission.

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Policy Recommendations

What policies are needed to structurally implement distance education for foreign national prisoners?

The FORINER consortium has designed a set of policy recommendations on European and national level which, if implemented, would enable policymakers across the EU and potentially more widely to cooperate on implementing the FORINER model. The recommendations have been carefully chosen to fit the need for structural implementation in very diverse contexts.

The room for flexibility in the recommendations will facilitate tailor-made implementation of the FORINER model in the specific and varying national situations regarding prison – and prison education – policy. The first set of recommendations is addressed to policy-makers at European level, the second to national governments.

Recommendations to the European Commission and non-governmental European organisations

To optimise the impact of the FORINER project results, the FORINER consortium recommends the European Commission and non-governmental European organisations (such as EPEA, Europris, EAEA [1], …) to develop one central strategy on distance education for foreign national prisoners across the European Union and to do everything in its power to ensure its adoption by the Member States.

Such a strategy should encompass action on all aspects which are of importance to the implementation of the FORINER model. To this end, the Commission and non-governmental organisations are is specifically urged to take the following measures:

1. Provide a framework to ensure that each Member State accepts responsibility both for the education of foreign national prisoners within its custodial estate and for the education of its own citizens who are detained in prisons abroad. This framework should lead to national strategies on education for (outgoing and incoming) foreign national prisoners in all Member States.

[1] European Association for the Education of Adults

2. Promote the development of a positive learning environment [2] in prisons in all Member States. A positive learning environment is essential to motivate foreign national prisoners to take part in educational activities and stimulate learning outcome.

3. Encourage improvements to prison education, especially for foreign national prisoners, in the context of monitoring the implementation of Council framework decision 2008/909/JHA.

4. Facilitate appropriate internet access for educational purposes in all prison environments in Europe.

5. Create a European standard on minimum requirements for ICT facilities and ICT security in prisons.

6. Organise an ongoing structured exchange of experience regarding distance learning platforms of (prison) education providers in the Member States with a view to ensuring interoperability between them as a basis for delivering education opportunities for foreign national prisoners across the EU.

7. Facilitate a central European prisoner learning platform.

Recommendations to the national governments and national civil society organisations

In conjunction with the overall strategy development at European level, the FORINER project partners recommend the national governments and national civil society organisations in the European Member States to develop a national strategy on distance education for foreign national prisoners. This national strategy should be a translation of the European strategy into national policy, in accordance with the national detention and educational context.

Such a strategy should encompass action on all aspects which are of importance to the implementation of the FORINER model and which fall within the competence of the Member States. To this end, the national governments and

[2] Examples on how to realise a positive learning environment are the provision of suitable classrooms and educational equipment, motivational support from prison staff, financial compensation for absence at work during educational activities, combining educational activities with other basic provisions in prison such as the work places, cultural activities, sports, daily prison regime activities, etcetera. Creating a positive learning environment also includes taking care of basic needs of prisoners, such as access to showers and other hygiene provision, privacy, proper food, visits and time out of cell.

national civil society organisations are specifically urged to take the following measures:

1. Acknowledge and actively embrace its responsibility both for the education of foreign national prisoners within its custodial estate and for the education of its own citizens who are detained in prisons abroad.

2. Oppose any tendency to reduce the quality of detention conditions, including notably the provision of education in prison, as a means of avoiding the repatriation of its country's prisoners pursuant to Council framework decision 2008/909/JHA.

3. Eliminate any discrimination against foreign national prisoners, compared with other prisoners, in terms of formal permission to access educational opportunities.

4. Ensure the development of a positive learning environment in all prisons. A positive learning environment is essential to motivate foreign national prisoners to take part in educational activities and stimulate learning outcome.

5. Ensure appropriate internet access for educational purposes in all prisons, in particular by meeting the European standard on minimum requirements for ICT facilities and ICT security.

6. Enable foreign national prisoners to have access to digitally available educational programmes from abroad, including notably those accessible from the central European prisoner learning platform.

7. Issue guidelines for its country's embassies in other EU Member States on how to deal with education for foreign national prisoners.

8. Install national coordinating structures responsible for distance education both for foreign national prisoners in the country concerned and for the educational needs of the country's citizens detained abroad.

The project outputs are available in full version on the website **www.foriner.com**

- Full version of the FORINER model and policy recommendations
- Full version of the research on educational participation of European citizens detained in a foreign European country
- Full version of the FORINER pilot projects evaluation report

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our great appreciation to all organisations and persons that have been involved in the FORINER project (e.g., participating in our conference in October 2016, setting up a pilot project and exchange education across borders, being a member of our advisory board, participating in the research). Besides, our special thank goes to the students that participated in the pilot projects.

And last but not least we would like to send our gratitude to the FORINER project partners and associated partners for their involvement and dedication during the two years project implementation.

Foriner partners

Associated partners