Women, Integration and Prison: An Analysis of the Processes of Socio-Labor Integration of Women After Prison in Europe

Comparative Report
Based on
National Reports' Fieldwork Findings

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March 2005
Budapest

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Introduction

The MIP research set out to analyse in six European countries the processes that characterise women prisoners' life after release and to assess in-prison and post-prison integration measures as well as the impact of prison life on women's life after release. Even though among the six countries - Spain, Germany, England and Wales, Italy, France and Hungary – there are considerable differences in the legislation, the criminal justice system, prison regulations and certainly women's prisons as well; the comparative part of the research aimed to identify key issues that proved to be valid across countries. This report provides a summary and a comparative analysis of crosscutting issues based on the research findings produced by the national research teams in the form of National Reports.[1]

Key Concepts of the MIP research[2]

Present-day definitions of 'social exclusion' have a long and complex history and a varied nomenclature. In that history, both the causes of, and remedies for, social exclusion are contested. Yet the position taken as to the causes of social exclusion inevitably help fashion the remedies to be recommended. Nor can it be assumed that social exclusion is always defined by social theorists as regrettable, remediable or an unintended consequence of other, more benign social forces; though this is how it is often presented by modern governments - an example being seen in the definition of the EC Report quoted below, which refers to social exclusion 'by default'. As far as penal law is concerned, it is merely stating the obvious to say that imprisoning lawbreakers necessarily excludes them from at least some of the rights of citizenship, while research in many countries indicates that imprisonment is a punishment which is imposed disproportionately upon the already-excluded. Nor, it seems, would many in the populations of most societies have it otherwise: built into most penal and welfare systems (either legally and explicitly, or illegally and implicitly) is a notion that people should not be better off because they have committed a crime. This is called the principle of 'less eligibility' and at popular, agency and institutional level, it can be one of the greatest - though often unstated - barrier to implementation of measures to decrease social exclusion.

In the theoretical framework of the MIP project, an understanding of the concept of social exclusion was developed on the basis of a mainstream definition of social exclusion. The Commission of the European Communities in its *Background Report: Social Exclusion – Poverty and Other Social Problems in the European Community,* ISEC/B/11/93 defined social exclusion as follows:

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[1] In addition to the short summaries in this volume, full National Reports are available electronically on the project's homepage at http://surt.org/mip

[2] The MIP research methodology and list of research hypotheses is included in the Appendix. The following section closely follows the theoretical background of the MIP project, written by a member of the KEELE team from England and Wales, Pat Carlen.

Social exclusion refers to the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society. Poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in housing, education, health and access to services. It affects individuals and groups, particularly in urban and rural areas, who are in some way subject to discrimination or segregation; and it emphasises the weaknesses in the social infrastructure and the risk of allowing a two-tier society to become established by default.

Although this appears to be a very comprehensive definition, it ends by implying that social exclusion is an unintended consequence of structural and/or cultural arrangements, rather than a deliberate effect of law and/or politics as in the case of prisoners, asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees. However, the MIP project focuses not only on processes of exclusion which are the effect of market and cultural forces, but also on those, which are the direct result of penal law and political responses to lawbreakers, migrants, asylum seekers and others seen to pose a social or political threat.

Furthermore, the MIP inquiry reflects the conviction that studies and approaches to the matter of exclusion must be examined from a 'gendered' point of view, taking into account **gender** as a fundamental variable in social differentiation. The MIP research considers gender as a vital factor in producing specific forms of exclusion – and treats dimensions of social exclusion as gendered phenomena, interpreting each dimension through gender as an analytical lens. Even though this comparative report reflects on the gender throughout the presentation of research findings, a separate paper[3] in the volume takes account of research findings with the gender perspective in its exclusive focus.

Thus the three main inter-related and overlapping sources/dimensions of social exclusion – already seen through a gendered lens – are the following:

i. Economic: global changes in markets and major cutbacks in welfare have led to large-scale male exclusion from the workforce; the feminisation of poverty through the increase in the numbers of female headed, single-parent households and the increased casualisation of female labour; and in many countries greater inequalities of income. Especially affected groups are: the unemployed; women heading single parent families; families in deep and permanent poverty; itinerant workers and families; the homeless and the physically and mentally ill; ex-prisoners. The exclusion takes the form of: unemployment; homelessness or insecure housing; low income and/or low pay; increasing debt at exploitative rates; consumption inadequate to basic needs; and effective exclusion from certain areas: for example, better residential areas with superior schools and medical care and adequate leisure facilities.

ii. Cultural: the excluded groups mentioned above sometimes suffer further from the operation of exclusionary laws, bureaucracies, or social mores (that is, discrimination on the grounds of gender, race, class and status – for example, age, or situation, such as being a victim of domestic violence or sexual abuse). Especially affected groups are:

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[3] See SURT's paper on the gender dimension of the MIP research in this volume.

women, especially single mothers, lesbian women, female workers unprotected by labour laws and victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse; minority groups, especially ethnic groups or people with a non-heterosexual orientation); young people in state institutions or accused of 'status' crimes (that is, offences punishable at law which would carry no criminal sanction if committed by an adult – for example, truancy, staying out late at night), and immigrants.

iii. Political: Certain groups (who usually suffer a concomitant economic and cultural exclusion) are excluded from full rights of citizenship either because of their social status, for example young people whose age makes them ineligible to vote or have consensual sexual relations with their own or the opposite sex; prisoners who become ineligible for certain welfare benefits while in prison; and people working in legally marginal occupations – for example, women engaged in prostitution; or: because they are in stereotyped categories of people seen to pose a risk to a populace itself already exhibiting many of the above indicators of social exclusion. The groups thus seen as other and therefore creating a perceived risk include: immigrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants; people legally living unconventional lives of all kinds; and ex-prisoners.

In relation to the specific social exclusion of women's prison populations, studies of the demographic characteristics of women prisoners from a range of countries round the world suggest that, in relation to the indicators of social exclusion discussed above, a high proportion of women ex-prisoners were already suffering some degree of social exclusion prior to their imprisonment (see Carlen 1988 and Social Exclusion Unit 2002 for UK; Almeda 2002, for Spain; Platek 1999 for Poland; Owen 1988 for US; Cipollini, Faccioli and Pitch 1989 for Italy; Lagree and Fai 1989 for France; Kersten 1989 for Germany).

An additional consideration of exclusion produced by **penal characteristics and processes** may have been explicitly added to the above three dimensions of social exclusion – despite some overlaps with the above dimensions. Already at the start of the MIP project it was clear that an earlier 'penal career' substantially contributes to the risk of imprisonment thus further exclusion, and that the selective nature of penal processes may further disadvantage vulnerable groups. Imprisonment itself may increase the risk of social exclusion further, however, according to national legislations, a number of in-prison measures are targeted at the reintegration of prisoners. One of the objectives of the MIP research was to investigate whether and how social exclusion is reinforced and produced by the prison – and also to assess the existing integration-oriented measures in prisons.

Thus, the MIP project was launched under a theoretical framework which worked with a very complex understanding of social exclusion in regards to women ex-prisoners. Even though the multiple dimensions of exclusionary processes are intertwined and mutually reinforced by each other, the MIP research aimed to improve our understanding as to the specific factors and patterns most characteristic to the primary exclusion of women prisoners in the given countries, as well as to the prison's contribution to furthering social

exclusion or potentially, to the enabling of some women's integration. Throughout the research, the potential links between the various forms of exclusion were addressed as well. Thus instead of asking how the prison impacts women's opportunities for integration after release, the MIP research aimed at understanding how the prison impacts differently various groups of women, depending, especially on their primary level of exclusion.

Chapter one of the comparative report introduces the patterns of primary exclusion identified among women prisoners, based on secondary data as well as data collected during the fieldwork of the MIP research. The research findings on prison's contribution to social exclusion/ integration are summarised in chapter two and three. Chapter two considers the general impact of imprisonment on women's life and focuses on the losses and ruptures women experience, while chapter three assesses the integration-oriented measures applied in prisons. Chapter four summarises research findings regarding women's life after release. The structure of chapters follows the main research hypothesis of the MIP project, which are included in the appendix. The structure of the six National Reports follows the same logic provided by research hypotheses, thus, the corresponding chapters of national reports offer the detailed research findings in the six countries. The comparative report closely follows the national reports, all references to national data or research findings are available in the corresponding chapters of national reports.

I. Primary Exclusion and Imprisonment

The comparative report summarises research findings related to the economic, cultural and political dimensions of social exclusion among women prisoners in the various countries and also introduces the specific forms of gender-related exclusion identified during the research. References to imprisoned women's penal characteristics will also be made where relevant. We will argue that taking into account all of these factors, meaningful patterns of social exclusion can be identified - as shown by several national reports – among the imprisoned women, which patterns may influence women's experiences during imprisonment and after release as well.

I/I. Key Dimensions of Primary Exclusion

Poor economic conditions

Starting with the economic dimensions of social exclusion, national reports clearly indicated a range of evidence regarding the (pre-prison) poverty and poor labour-market integration of many of the women prisoners as shown in the secondary literature, and in most cases, illustrated by the small sample of women prisoners in the current research as well. While this particular report does not give an overview about the relevant national data on poverty and other exclusionary factors, it illustrates the importance of these factors on the small research samples. Thus, even though the following information cannot be considered as quantitatively valid evidence, its value lies in its illustrative power.

The dominant majority of women interviewed during the German research indicated a subjective experience of poverty, and also the majority suffered from indebtedness. The great majority of the women received welfare payments from the state, and many lived exclusively on such state support. The German report emphasises that in the German system this is proof to the fact that they had been already excluded from the labour market several years earlier.

The dominant majority of women interviewed during the research in Catalonia, lived in circumstances characteristic of exclusion or economic vulnerability – either living below the poverty line or in situations determined by low economic income.

The French and the Italian reports found that only the minority of imprisoned women were employed prior to their imprisonment, while many of them were unemployed in both countries or did not have registered employment. The Italian fieldwork for the MIP research has fully reinforced women's difficulties in the labour market – already prior to their imprisonment.

Regarding the gendered aspects of poverty of the women in prison, the Social Exclusion Unit of the UK reported that at least a fifth of the women lived as single parents before their imprisonment. The Spanish report found that in their research single mothers addressed the difficult economic conditions experienced by them. Recent statistics and studies in Catalonia regarding the links between single parent families and labour market,

as well as single parent families and level of education, suggest the growing problem. The report emphasises that the Spanish state has been one of the countries where - compared to other European countries - these realities were largely ignored and the state only recently started to address the necessity to promote new public policies to minimise the exclusion risk. The French report also makes a reference to lone mothers, however it also remarks that the majority of imprisoned women actually declare to live alone and without a child.

Most reports emphasise the close links between poverty and other dimensions of primary exclusion - most often education, drug abuse, or ethnicity/ foreign nationality – as well as its links to selection mechanisms in the penal systems. Both the interconnections of these factors and selective mechanisms will be addressed in later sections as well.

Education

The generally poor level of education of imprisoned women was reinforced by all country reports unequivocally.

During the German fieldwork it was found that a significant number of the interviewed women have not completed school, while many others have only completed only the basic, elementary education. In terms of vocational training, the great majority of women either dropped out of vocational training or did not start it. The fieldwork in Hungary reflected very similar ratios: the great majority of the interviewed women did not have education above the level of basic education. Dropping out of school was found to be very frequent in both countries among the women. While in both countries among the reasons women mentioned early pregnancies and other family reasons, in Germany the most frequent cause was early drug consumption. In fact, the French research also confirms early school leaving for both reasons: due to 'life needs' brought by family situations on the one hand; and, leaving the difficult/ violent family situations and starting a drug career on the other hand.

National statistics on women prisoners' educational level also suggest a generally low level of education in other countries as well. The Social Exclusion Unit in UK reports that the educational achievements of women in prison are significantly lower than for women in the general population. The French report also refers to the generally low level - primary - education among women entering prison and notes that the high ratio of women who are declared illiterate or whose level of education is not measurable, is related to the significant number of foreigners among women prisoners.

In fact, data from Italy and Hungary suggests that women prisoners' level of education is generally poorer than men's in prison – at least, significantly more women than men are illiterate and have not completed any school. In both reports there is an indication to the presumably high number of Roma women without formal qualifications, however, such indication only relies on the limited samples and fieldwork experience, rather than on officially published data or research. In addition, poor qualifications and illiteracy among Roma women inmates in the research in Catalonia has also been mentioned. In fact,

Spanish research quoted in the report indicates, that 32% of Roma women in prison are illiterate, 28% can read but cannot write and additional 25% of them have started but not finished primary education – altogether above 80% of Roma women in prison have a very poor level of education.

Despite the fact that on average women inmates' poor educational level was clearly indicated across the national reports, it must be noted, that women prisoners are not a homogenous group – and despite such general truth, some women in prison have very high-level educational achievements. Both the Hungarian and Italian statistics indicate that while significantly more women prisoners are illiterate than men, more women than men have a university or college degree as well. Nevertheless, both reports emphasise that for the great majority of women with very poor educational background, the current labour markets do not offer much. As a matter of fact, demand for unskilled female workers is down – in Italy, also influenced by the first wave of immigrants who filled such jobs – yet similar tendencies were reported from Hungary by the interviewed labour-market agents.

Foreign Nationals

The very high ratio of foreigners among women prisoners was shown in most national reports both on the basis of national statistics as well by the actual research samples – the only clear exception was the case of Hungary, where foreigners' presence in prisons is insignificant.

Almost half of the Italian women prisoners' population is a foreigner. In France, more than one third of imprisoned women are foreigners, while in Spain they represent a quarter of women prisoners and in England and Wales every fifth woman in prison is a foreign national. As an agent in the English research revealed, many of them are convicted for the illegal importation of drugs.

The Italian report argues that being a foreign national in Italy represents a disadvantage that is translated through various selection mechanisms into a likelier and more difficult penal and penitentiary path – compared to Italians. Due to new immigration policies, access to Italian citizenship is strictly regulated and difficult, without appropriate housing and employment – hardly a realistic perspective for many foreigners. Immigration quotas also increase the number of people expulsed from the country. If foreigners stay in Italy despite the expulsion, they can be charged with illegal immigration and thus can be arrested. Yet, the Italian report points out that not only immigration policies, but the culture of control and actual crime control practices also encourage the arrest and criminalisation of immigrants: the focus on street crimes makes immigrants especially good targets. Indeed, foreigners in Italy are most often persecuted for minor offences. Once the criminal procedures are launched, foreigners face a further disadvantage: due to lack of financial means and language abilities, their access to adequate defence is much reduced. Lastly, racial prejudice against foreigners was documented during this particular research by the Italian team, on the basis of the interviewed women's experiences with their lawyers, employers etc.

In fact, some of the most marginalized and 'excluded' women in our research came from among the foreigner women: especially those who – on top of other exclusionary factors as poverty - did not possess any identity card or any other official document, were therefore not eligible for allowances, healthcare, etc.

Their cases and the detailed Italian argument clearly shows the ways in which political sources of exclusion, cultural dimensions of exclusion and penal and penitentiary selection mechanisms – on top of poor economic conditions – escalate and produce extreme marginalization on the one hand, and the image of immigrants as criminals on the other hand. In fact, as the Italian Report points out, due to such mechanisms immigrants (in particular, the Roma) and drug addicts are criminalized in that the foreign nationality and drug addiction are seen causes of deviancy by themselves.

Ethnicity

Although in some countries there is a considerable overlap between foreigners and ethnic groups – especially the Roma – among women prisoners, the two categories should not be treated as identical. As we shall see, different dimensions of exclusion are dominant regarding the two and there are significant differences between the researched countries in both aspects.

In Hungary, despite the lack of official data due to reference to data protection regulations, estimates from several sources suggest that up to 50-70% of women in prison are Roma women. Apart from the long-term poverty experienced disproportionately by Roma families, cultural stereotypes linking Roma people with delinquency are strong. Recent studies document the police profiling of the Roma, e.g. the Roma are likelier to be checked by police on the streets, or Roma convicts spend significantly longer time on remand, etc. Interviews with the Roma women in the MIP research revealed that many of them experienced ruptures very early in their lives, dropped out of school thus often did not complete primary education, or had early pregnancies and thus family responsibilities. This often included committing of petty crimes – most often thefts. Most agents were aware of the social, economic etc. factors, and some spoke about the selective mechanisms in place in the crime control and criminal procedures.

In Spain, a quarter of women in prison are believed to be Roma. The Spanish report addresses the economic, political and legislative changes that caused the increased social exclusion of Roma communities and led to the strong overrepresentation of Roma women in prison. From the late 70-ies the industrialisation and formalisation of the economy, together with the inflow of immigrants gradually narrowed the economic space available for traditional professions of the Roma. Yet, their opportunities were limited in the regular labour market as well, partly due to poor educational qualifications and also, to discrimination against them. Not only economic and labour-market factors, but also town planning and the arrival of immigrants to the cities contributed to the emergence of slum neighbourhoods. Even if efforts against shantytowns were implemented from the late 70-ies, segregated gypsy settlements and urban ghettos continued to exist in the 80-ies –

more and more associated with the dealing of drugs. The drug trafficking often serves the drug consumption of family members. In fact, 60% of Roma women are imprisoned for drug trafficking and 40% for crimes against property. The narratives of Roma women interviewed during the research in Catalonia, describe both the phenomena of supplying family members with drugs, as well as the responsibility for providing subsistence for the family. Despite the high ratio of Roma women among women prisoners, interviewed agents did not address ethnicity as a relevant exclusionary factor.

In Italy, there is a significant overlap between foreigners and Roma women in prison. About a quarter of foreign women in prison are Roma – the Italian Report suggests that they are mostly from the former Yugoslavia and Romania. The Italian Report indicates that in Roma communities women's role in providing resources for their families through thefts is accepted – thus they do not face stigmatisation in their own communities, but certainly are heavily stigmatised in the larger society. As mentioned in the above section on foreigners, even among foreigner women, it is especially the Roma women in Italy who are criminalized.

The French research refers to ethnicity when describing people coming from a travelers milieu: gypsies, Romanians, travelling showmen and booksellers. The report points out that even if some women were well integrated into such communities, the communities themselves are marginalized in the larger society. The research found that also in France, agents associate the most disaffiliated, the most excluded, 'deviant criminal' women with the juvenile Rumanians (who steal), and girls from the Eastern European countries (who are prostitutes). Thus there seems to be a degree of overlap and certainly, association here between the Roma / Eastern European girls and extreme social marginalization as well as criminalization.

Under ethnicity, in all of the above reports, Roma women's issues were addressed – however, there may have been other ethnic minorities among the women in the particular research and among the women prisoners. In the English Report racism as a factor of exclusion was emphasised throughout. In the German Report the role of ethnicity in primary exclusion as such was not emphasised as a separate dimension.

If it was said that some of the most vulnerable and excluded women in the research were found among the foreigners, we may add, that in those countries where there is an overlap between foreigners and Roma women in prison, those 'some' were likely to be Roma. Apart from the political dimensions of exclusion addressed in the above section, cultural dimensions of exclusion seem to be especially relevant in the case of Roma. Historically, as the Spanish argument has shown, it is clearly observable how certain activities and occupations performed by certain Roma groups previously in full legitimacy were gradually redefined as informal and perhaps illegal with changes in the economy and economic policy. Powerful cultural conceptions link together the Roma and delinquency in several countries, often very specific conceptions are developed, e.g. regarding their recidivism, or linking them to specific crime (theft/ prostitution/ drugs) – which are then reinforced by the corresponding selective mechanisms in crime control, and during the criminal proceeding.

Substance abuse

The role of drugs in the life of many of the women in our research was found to be very significant in several countries – and was supported by national statistics and expert opinions as well.

The dominant majority of women in the research in Catalonia were imprisoned related to the consumption or trafficking of drugs: some of them were convicted with drug-related charges, others with crimes against property. In either case, the majority of them were addicted to drugs at the time of committing the crime. They consumed heroine, although many used other drugs as cocaine, alcohol or pharmacology etc. The great majority of the drug addict women were HIV positive. The Spanish Report points to a multitude of other exclusionary factors experienced by these women, but especially to the role of segregated neighbourhoods, ghettos in the 'production' of drug addiction of family members and thus the importance of multigenerational exclusion. According to national statistics, 41% of women in prison are there due to drug related crime – as mentioned above, among Roma women in prison, this goes up to 60%. Yet, recently a significant part of foreign women in prison are there due to international trafficking in drugs, especially from South-America. In addition, women involved in prostitution and small robberies are often found to engage in crime in order to cover their drug consumption. The Spanish Report argues that the focus on prohibitionism, punishment and repression which has been applied in relation to the problem of drugs in Spain since the 80-ies, contributed to the criminalization of drug-related issues and has filled and continues to feed prisons.

In the German MIP research it was found that the majority of the interviewed women consumed drugs prior to their imprisonment and actually, most of them were involved in a 'drug career' marked by polytoxic use: cocaine and/ or heroine for daily use, often accompanied by daily consumption of cannabis or alcohol. Most women started their drug careers as early as 13 and 14 years of age – many have used drugs for 10 years or more. Other research in Germany had revealed connections between drug career and poverty, violence, auto-aggression and a lack of resources. It was found that those women are at particular risk of starting a drug career, whose parents are addicted, who have been neglected, rejected, or sexually abused: 30-50% of women who are treated in institutions due to drug addiction, were sexually abused in their childhood/ adolescence. Based on national statistics, the German Report concludes, that while 18% of women prisoners are there due to the use or trafficking of drugs, it seems that many more consumed drugs and – usually imprisoned for theft – committed actually drug-related crime in order to secure their needs. Agents in the MIP research stated that about 60-80% of women in prison have a drug problem.

According to data from the Social Exclusion Unit in the UK, over 50% of women prisoners are likely to have used drugs (including alcohol) in the year before their imprisonment. Another research found that women with drug dependency experienced violence at home in great numbers (57%) and sexual abuse (35%). Agents interviewed in the course of the MIP research named addictions among the top three reasons for

women's crime – many placed it in the first place. The life-story interviews in the MIP research also illustrated the importance of drug use in the two women's life paths, especially its links to prostitution/ sexual abuse and dependence on men. In fact, another research quoted in the Report found that social networks and neighbourhood have an especially strong relationship to prostitution and drug-related crimes: in both cases, returning to the same neighbourhood brings with it a great risk of recidivism. The Report of England and Wales found that in fact sentencers are nowadays more likely to send drug-user women to prison (instead of giving them a community-sentence) precisely because they believe that women need the drugs treatment available in prison.

The French Report also notes the strong overrepresentation of women with combined addictions (alcohol, drugs and psychotropic drugs) among women in prison. Especially the profile of 'deviant penal customers' – women particularly disaffiliated and excluded - features often drug consumption and addiction – as also supported by examples from interviewed women's life trajectories.

As already mentioned in previous sections, the Italian Report notes the strong criminalization of immigrants and drug-addicted people, while the Report of England and Wales makes a special note on foreign, drugs' couriers women and their responsibilities in ensuring their families' subsistence.

In Hungary the role of drugs in the primary exclusion of women - or in actual imprisonment due to committing drug-related crime – is exceptionally low so far, both based on national statistics, and on interviewed women's narratives. However, most interviewed agents expect a clear increase in drug-related crimes and drug-consumption in prisons.

Especially the Spanish and German Reports convincingly support the notion that many of the women actually imprisoned for thefts or other crimes, are addicted to drugs and their crimes are related to this – thus the magnitude of drug-related problems would be greatly underestimated if only national crime statistics were taken into account. In both countries the number of women in the MIP research who developed a drug career, is alarmingly high. A potentially strongly related factor to this seems to be the role of the immediate neighbourhood – a point illustrated by the Spanish Report best, yet also noted by the French and English research as well. Another striking point across several country reports is the role of previous sexual abuse in developing a drug addiction – as suggested by secondary sources in various countries.

Even though the section did not address alcohol abuse separately, as it was mentioned, multi-addiction emerged in several reports as an important pattern, which involved the consumption of alcohol in addition to the use of drugs.

Neighbourhoods, Family and Social Networks

Above, in relation to substance abuse, the role of neighbourhood was discussed based mainly on the research findings in Catalonia. It was also noted that research in the UK

suggested that the role of neighbourhood is especially strong in the case of drug-related crime and prostitution: return to the same neighbourhood increases strongly the risk of recidivism.

In various reports the role of the family was addressed as well. The Italian research found that the majority of interviewed women have had at least one relative in prison. About every other woman in the research in Catalonia have had drug-addicted brothers or sisters – in some cases even death by overdose. Examples for multigenerational influence also in the research in Catalonia include the alcohol-abuse of fathers and sons / parents in prison – yet such examples were found in other reports as well. A special example for the role of family and social networks is presented by the Mafia related crimes in the Italian report.

I/ II. Gender and Exclusion

Gendered violence

The frequency and role of domestic violence in shaping many women prisoners' lives has been recorded in most national reports, usually based on secondary research, but also reinforced by women's narratives[4] and agent opinions. Recent research in England and Wales indicates that over half of the women in prison reported about having suffered domestic violence, and one in three has experienced sexual abuse. Pat Carlen points out that criminal careers of many young women are launched when they leave home after having had experiences of physical or sexual abuse. Other research in the UK suggests that young women who run away from state care are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse as children in prostitution[5]. Both life-story interviews recorded in the English MIP research are dramatic illustrations for the life-long affects of early violence on the women's lives and criminal careers. Agent interviews emphasise the critical importance of experiences of violence in many women prisoner's lives – in fact, many agents named domestic violence and/ or sexual abuse as one of the two most important reasons for women's crime. Some agents referred here to the role of abuse in provoking violent crime (e.g. against the violent partner), while others pointed to examples when violence was used to force women into crime. The MIP research conducted in France also found various examples for domestic violence among the women interviewed – for both 'types' of connections: women imprisoned due to violent crime against their former abuser, and women imprisoned as accomplices of a violent partner in e.g. drug-related crime.

Both the Spanish and the Hungarian report point out that such experiences of severe violence have influenced many women's lives decisively. In both countries during the interviews several women revealed various forms of such violence including abuses by father and male relative in childhood, rape, battering by male partner etc – often in a strikingly detached and factual way, interpreting it as an individual problem. In both countries the public discourse on domestic violence was started relatively recently – after

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[4] The only exception here is the Italian research where interviewed women did not reveal domestic violence experiences and there were no women in the research imprisoned for domestic violence related crime. In Germany, domestic violence experiences were revealed in a life-story interview.
[5] A woman's story in the research in Spain revealed the direct link between her experience of sexual abuse and her involvement in prostitution.

the mid 90-ies – and in both cases the research found that the women received no assistance from relevant state actors (e.g. social or health services) prior to the perpetration of crime. Also, in both countries agents showed very different degrees of awareness regarding the importance of gendered violence. The Hungarian research argues that apart from the high ratio of women imprisoned for rather obvious examples of domestic violence related crime (e.g. murder of violent partner/father), several other women revealed domestic violence experiences, which may indicate a particularly high number of victims of domestic violence among imprisoned women in Hungary.

Patterns developed in the French and Hungarian reports associate the paths of victims of domestic violence with a degree of social integration in their lives prior to committing a usually serious crime. While both reports argue that most women in this pattern were not socially excluded prior to their crime/ imprisonment – many possessed educational qualifications, were integrated either in their work or at home or both – the French report especially emphasises the importance of gender conformity in their lives. Women in this pattern in the French report often referred to themselves as mothers and/ or wives and many acted as "submissive wives". The Hungarian report describes the details of domestic violence influencing and ultimately interrupting these women's lives, who in some cases complied with more traditional gender roles, while in other cases developed rather subversive or not typically traditional gender identities.

Dependence
Conceptual interpretations of women's dependence on men varied across the country reports. The National Report of England and Wales introduced various types of women's dependence on a man: not only financial and emotional, but also cultural dependence. The latter refers precisely to the above-discussed phenomena: to women not challenging the culturally accepted dominance of men in male-female relationships. The Spanish report challenges whether women responsible for the livelihood of entire families should be pushed into the oversimplified discourse over dependence. Yet, we will suggest that these interpretations actually are not incompatible with each other.
One particular example for women's dependence on male partners was already mentioned above: victims of domestic of violence are usually (made) dependent on their partners – and as mentioned above, may be forced into crime or used 'voluntarily' as accomplice.

Not only women who are victims of domestic violence are used for such a purpose: many reports list examples for women acting as accomplice and often, covering up for their male partners. The fieldwork in England presented plenty of examples for women's emotional dependency; male domination manifested in blackmail and even threats of violence in increasingly demoralising women and leading them into criminal careers. Sometimes women in such situations are aware of being used – several women in the German and Hungarian reports discuss their male partners' responsibility for the crime openly. However, as found in the Italian research, sometimes women are not aware of being used – or only women with better education or agents with plenty of experience address the dependence in such cases. In fact, agents in several countries very explicitly discussed women being used by their male partners in most cases.

The Spanish Report argues against the general underlying notion of women's dependence; against the perception of women as passive, dependent, submissive or victim. In particular, the Spanish Report emphasises that women in prison share values similar to mainstream society. As their possibilities for economic autonomy and independence are very limited, they must secure income from various sources. The Report draws on the example of the many women, who are responsible for the subsistence of their entire families due to absent or passive (alcohol/ drug addict/ unemployed) men. The report points out that the matrifocal model better describes the actual reality of life in such families, than the adherence to stereotypical images about passive or dependant women. The authors argue that even though economically these women are responsible for the survival of their families, they do not dominate in the power domain necessarily: a distinction should be made between the power exercised and the responsibility carried. In summary, it must be noted that the patterns and phenomena discussed under emotional dependency/ coercion in various reports and the notion of (economic) responsibility do not necessarily contradict each other.

Motherhood and Women's Needs
The role of motherhood was very strongly emphasised sometimes in women's narratives, and certainly so in agents' perception about women's identities and women's needs. During the research in Hungary, the great majority of interviewed women – regardless of their life paths, crime etc. – referred to motherhood and children as an issue of foundational importance in their lives. Good mothering was defined above all as not letting children into state care, and it involved mother's responsibility for providing subsistence for the family by all means. Even some of the women who otherwise developed 'subversive' gender identities, continued to address motherhood as the first and foremost responsibility. In agents' discourse motherhood was perceived to be by far the most often mentioned – and often the only - distinguishing factor between women and men prisoners.
While the majority of women in the Hungarian research had children, this is not the case in some other countries: in Germany the majority of women interviewed in the MIP research did not have children, and in France the majority of interviewed women declared to live alone and without children. As pointed out by the French Report, this relativizes agents' discourse about the significance of motherhood among women in prison.

While it some countries agents' discourse on women's needs was mainly related to motherhood, the National Report of England and Wales emphasises that the various aspects of women prisoners' primary exclusion and women prisoners needs had been recognised in a range of research studies and also in official reports largely from the 90-ies. However, the Report adds, that recognition of such needs does not mean that they had been adequately addressed (in prison). In fact the authors of the Report are critical with the focus on psychological reprogramming, which puts the emphasis on the individual's 'beliefs', e.g. about her constraining social circumstances and thus focuses on achieving change at the level of her 'beliefs'. Pat Carlen argues that the faith in the ability of psychological programming to reduce recidivism, may convince sentencers that prisons

are able to help women with multiple problems and thus increase their willingness to send such women to prison.

III. Summary on Dimensions and Patterns of Social Exclusion

While the MIP research project did not investigate sentencing practices and criminal justice procedures in detail – as secondary data allowed, references were made in the national reports to certain discriminatory aspects of such procedures, e.g. to selective mechanisms. Yet, the National Report of England and Wales addresses several aspects of sentencing practices for women offenders, from which we will only point to one observation which seems particularly relevant. Although the majority of women may be actually treated more leniently than men by the courts, this is not true for women who commit drugs or violent offences. Furthermore, women who are seen as lacking family ties - thus discipline – are likely to be punished more severely than both their male and female counterparts. This is likely to be so for women who have been state reared, who live apart from men (maybe due to domestic violence), are homeless or rootless due to poverty, mental illness etc.

Even if the MIP research did not address the actual workings of the selective mechanisms, nevertheless the analysis of women prisoners' social background, penal characteristics and specifically gendered experiences has convincingly shown that most women prisoners in all countries have experienced multiple forms of social exclusion already prior to their imprisonment. Links between dimensions and factors of exclusion were demonstrated, often enabling the analysis to show tendencies across countries. In general, the criminalization of poverty, and in particular, the criminalization of immigrants and Roma women, as well as the criminalization of drug users was found to be valid in several countries. These trends reinforced that especially women with a combination of various dimensions of exclusion (economic, political, cultural) get criminalized. However, reports demonstrated that other, gendered forms of exclusion e.g. violence against women must be taken into account as it disrupts women's live who earlier may have had socially integrated lives.

Further, it may be argued that agents (and certainly women themselves) are aware of certain dimensions of exclusion while are ignorant about others. For example, most agents do not interpret domestic violence as a gendered form of exclusion leading to prison – and in most cases, not even as a need of imprisoned women. Motherhood remains to be the one and only legitimate gender-specific need of women prisoners named by agents in most countries.[6]

The French Report takes the above-mentioned dimensions of exclusion further and develops three patterns – as ideal types. The Report emphasises that even though women in general have lesser chances for incarceration than men - due to still powerful gender representations and positions in the social structure – there are two groups of exceptions

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[6] With the exception of England and Wales, and possibly, Germany. In Germany while the law continues to focus on motherhood as the only official 'need', agent interviews revealed awareness about various other aspects of women prisoners' needs and lives.

among women. Firstly these are women who commit serious crimes - regardless of their social positions - and secondly, women who present socio-penal characteristics similar to the traditional male penal customer from disaffiliated social groups – regardless of the actual crime committed. Women in situations of multiple exclusion resemble most the typical male delinquent, the 'penal customer': recidivists, drug addicts, marginalized people – thus these women are likelier than others to become penal customers themselves. Women in the second profile – 'the normal criminal women'- were relatively well adopted to some form of social integration and conformed to gender roles, yet often they were victims of male violence or accomplice in crime committed by their partners. Generally they were imprisoned for the first time, and due to a relatively serious crime (murder, child abuse or drug trafficking). Lastly, women in the third profile – 'out of frame/ out of gender'- did not conform to mainstream gender roles, and were often well integrated: demonstrated strong professional integration, or strong cultural capital. These women were always imprisoned for a serious crime.

The three profiles thus provide a framework which combines social characteristics (degree of social integration/ exclusion) with penal characteristics (recidivism, seriousness of crime, etc.) and with gender (conformity/ non-conformity) – and offers an integrated approach to comprehending and analysing the different pathways of the women. As we shall see, imprisonment is likely to impact differently the various groups of women.

II. Exclusion by Prison – Institutional Context

Introduction: Agents on Prison's Dual Function

In this introduction we focus on presenting data from agent interviews regarding the dual function of prisons and barriers to reintegration, while women's actual experiences on imprisonment will be discussed in part I of this chapter. Part II addresses a specific issue, the consequences of women's imprisonment's minority position.

Before discussing findings from agents' interviews, it must be noted that penitentiary legislation is generally very supportive of reintegration-related principles and activities. Legislation on prisons in each of the six countries contains frequent references to prison's mission in aiding reintegration generally and specifically through activities as education, training, work, preparation for reintegration, personal development etc. While there is usually also reference in the legislation to the protection of the public, the contradiction between the two objectives is certainly not addressed by the legislation.

However, most interviewed agents were aware of the dual and often contradictory function of prisons, as well as of the damages, pains and deprivations people suffer during imprisonment. In fact, many agents believed that prison should be the 'last resort' and expressed support for broadening the scope and application of alternative measures, open regimes, etc. In terms of the mission of prisons, many agents named reintegration as either the first and foremost priority of prisons, or expressed that reintegration and the protection of society should both be aimed at by prisons. Generally, agents seemed to be aware of the tensions between their dual institutional objectives – reintegration and security. Yet many believed that it was possible to reconcile the two in general, and in case of women's prisons in particular – due to a lesser emphasis on security needs. The English report especially emphasises the recently launched initiative in order to review which security measures in women's prisons are really necessary. However, the notion that even women's prisons are becoming more and more security oriented and similar to men's prisons, also appeared in agents' accounts.

Many agents – in all countries - shared the opinion that prisons often fail in their reintegrating function, and as to the reasons of the failure, a number of factors were named; some theoretical-structural, but mostly rather pragmatic reasons. Among the more abstract reasons, the increased requirement for safety by the public was mentioned by several agents, or an increase in social punitiveness - a requirement that is actually channelled through the media and politicians. The principle of "less eligibility" was also addressed in some cases as a barrier related to the public's image and expectation regarding prisoner's status. The recent hardening of penalties in some countries, or related changes in sentencing was also linked to actions of politicians and public opinion. Some reports noted that especially higher level penitentiary experts discussed such structural limits to the reintegrating function of prisons and pressures for the security imperative.

Many believed that prisons should do more for reintegration, however, were often to some extent disillusioned or pessimistic and pointed to the lack of financial resources and personnel as a key barrier to such work. Agents' discourse showed strong similarities across the countries, perhaps agents in England and Germany were more explicit about airing their critical opinion about the sufficiency of reintegration efforts in women's prisons and detailed knowledge about women's needs and imprisonment.

However, National Reports often went beyond agents' discourse and presented the unfavourable ratios between personnel employed and budgets spent on security vs. reintegration in prison. With these arguments, national reports demonstrated that while national legislations in all cases and even agents' discourse very often remains very supportive of the principles of reintegration, in actual reality the security imperative controls most of the budgets and personnel in prisons. Other barriers to reintegration discussed by agents will be included in later parts of the report.

II/ I. The Impact of Imprisonment on Women and their Perspectives on Reintegration

As the French report notes, imprisonment leads to certain losses and deprivations that are not gendered – they impact both imprisoned women and men in similar ways. However, in the MIP research we aimed at understanding women prisoners' experiences and the various types of exclusion they suffer prior to, during and after imprisonment and the connections between these. Therefore, our findings are necessarily 'gendered' – although we would not be able to determine exactly the extent to which this is so. Thus, instead of arguing that women suffer more than men from e.g. the loss of contact with their children, we focus on showing women's experiences, the differences in women's experiences related especially to their primary exclusion, and on the impact of various prison regulations and initiatives on their experiences.

1. Ruptures and Losses

Entry to Prison and Basic Aspects of Prison Life
Based on the experiences of the women interviewed in the French research, for some women especially, the court trial and entry to the prison constitutes a real shock. The report points out that especially for women with higher social status, involvement is criminal proceedings represents a sudden drop in social status – while others, e.g. the least educated women, may experience it with incomprehension. Both the French and the Italian reports mention that racist behaviours were reported by the women especially from encounters with the police. Arrival to prison means eventually a degree of safety and certainty – bad treatment, physical harassment by prison personnel was typically not reported. (Although examples of humiliation were, as will be discussed later.) A unique perception of prisons as 'safe heavens' was actually stated by several women victims of domestic violence who either 'escaped' into the prison or enjoyed the fact that no unwanted visitor could have access to them while they were in prison.

Yet, difficulties of life in prison and inappropriate living conditions were often recalled by the women, especially fears and difficulties related to mixing with others: murderers or child abusers – as mentioned by women interviewed in France and Germany. The report of Spain/ Catalonia emphasises the failure to comply with the principle of separated modules by age/ penal situation in women's prisons. While women prisoners' needs vary according to age, type of crime, length of sentence etc. – such needs cannot be addressed due to the absence of separated modules. A very general related problem was the loss of privacy, emphasised in most reports – made especially difficult by large cells and overcrowding in the case of Hungary.

Loss of Social Status, Ruptures in Family and Motherhood Responsibilities

The French report argues that loss of work with imprisonment was especially a significant rupture for those women who enjoyed a high degree of professional integration and success previously. Similarly, imprisonment often meant a drastic rupture of a training formation for some of the young women in the French research. Even if such losses were less frequently emphasised by the women and agents, they were indeed present also in the Hungarian research, mentioned by the few more successful and educated women, who e.g. run their own business and suffered especially from lack of stimulus, action and achievement in their lives. The Report of England and Wales also reinforces that through the rupture of education or employment (and other factors) the prison narrows the social options available for prisoners.

Losses and ruptures due to separation from family members and especially, children, were very much emphasised by all country reports as a major source of pain in prison for the women. In fact, many of the women understood primarily their children and possibly parents under 'family', only in fewer cases, their partners. As mentioned in the first chapter, many imprisoned women are actually mothers[7], and motherhood featured as a topic of foundational importance in many of the interviewed women's narratives about their lives, and especially, in their discussions about the pains of imprisonment. The feeling of failure as mother, and guilt feeling were especially strong, as evidenced by all national reports. The interviewed mothers readily expressed their worries about their children, often related to the ultimate fear of children being placed into state care. Some mothers preferred to conceal from their children that they are in prison – while others did not want the children to see them imprisoned, or believed that it is more painful for the child to see their mother so infrequently – and thus resigned of visits by children, although these were usually the exceptions and most of them preferred to see their children. Mothers usually continued to see themselves responsible for their children, some of them actually saved up from the very small earnings made in prison to send money home to the children in need. Fears that children would turn away from their criminal mother, were also discussed in some cases. Many women feared that not only them, but especially their children would suffer from the separation. Actually, women feared that children would also suffer if they are allowed to stay with them in prison.

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[7] According to data from secondary sources, in Spain 70% of imprisoned women have children, while 66% of women prisoners in England and Wales have children under the age of 16, and about at least 50% of women inmates have children in Italy.

Among women facing special difficulties in the field of motherhood while in prison, problems of (illegal) immigrant mothers in contact keeping were addressed. Also, difficulties in access to children in case of domestic violence incidents were reported, as well as Roma drug-addicted women who are caught between the role required by Roma women to be fulfilled in providing for the families and the negative, bad-mother image associated with drug addicted women. Lone mothers and mothers with exclusive responsibility for family subsistence were also in a difficult position, due to fear of loss of children, inability to help and thus accelerated guilt feelings.

In summary, we must emphasise the very straightforward conclusion based on women's accounts in most countries: imprisonment causes serious ruptures in the life of women due to separation from their children, which becomes a key source of everyday stress, guilt feelings, worrying and experience of failure – despite which most women continue to feel and act with responsibility for their children.

2. The Impact of Imprisonment on Social Contacts, Networks

As noted above, in most cases children and parents, rather than partners were defined as 'family' by the imprisoned women. In fact, while of course not all women who entered prison had a partner, from those who had, contact to partners was maintained in some cases – in other cases partners and less often, the women broke up the relationship. Generally speaking women's approach to their partners was rather pragmatic, as noted by the Italian and Hungarian reports. It is the parents – and especially, the mothers – who maintain contact and offer support for their imprisoned daughters and help out with the children. This finding was confirmed by the majority of reports as well. While some women stated that family ties have become stronger because of their imprisonment, in many cases family relationships suffered and in a few cases, were disrupted. Often, friendships suffered even more - in some case women believed that only their best friends continued to support them and even that proved to be difficult. In a few cases, women decided to break the relationship with their 'criminal' friends, especially in case of drug-related circles.

The development of relationships with family and friends is certainly influenced by prison regulations regarding visits (to the prison, or home from the prison), communication (telephone, correspondence), the type of regime (closed/ open, high-security/ low security etc.) and special measures to encourage the maintenance of relationships. Without a detailed analysis of all these measures in the six countries, a few key points will be made that seem to be relevant in a comparative perspective.

In several countries, only some of the women in our research had regular visits - while a number of women did not have any visitors at all: e.g. in Italy a significant number of the women did not have any contact with relatives. In the Italian case, receiving visitors by immigrant women is especially difficult – either because their families are not in Italy, or because they do not have official documents. Furthermore, since mobile phones cannot be authorised, and often foreigners – especially the Roma – do not have regular phones, contact keeping is basically disabled in their case. However, the German research showed

that the majority of the interviewed women had regular contact with their families, either through visitors or one-day weekend visits home. The financial burden of long-distance calls from German prisons is mentioned as a difficulty for foreign women in prison.

Perhaps the most important barrier to having regular visits is presented in all countries by the distance from home – due to the financial burden, the time and difficulty of travelling it involves.[8] Since the great majority of women come from poor families, regularly financing lengthy trips for several family members is a luxury many cannot afford. There are examples for women's prisons which physically could not be visited by women's families if they wanted to return home the same day by public transport – and certainly could not afford the hotel costs. In the case of Hungary, Spain and Germany, several women's prisons are located far from urban centres, locations to which public transportation is especially problematic. In such prisons, women asked frequently for transfers to other prisons in better locations – which were likely to be overcrowded. The French Report notes that some women sentenced for long imprisonment ask to be left in the local prison, closer to their families, even at the cost of giving up the better conditions (e.g. open doors), that they would receive in a more far-away detention centre.

Although there are variations among the countries and also among the prisons in every country in the amount and duration of visits (approx. from once a month 2 hours, to four times a month 1 hour) and also in the availability of appropriate visiting rooms, it must be noted that in our research it was not the regulations on visits frequency that posed the biggest barrier against the visits. At the same time, strict regulations on the use of phones, the financial burden of phone calls, and in some cases the lack of infrastructure posed difficulties in the use of phones, as discussed in several reports.

In terms of the type of regime and special measures applied to encourage contacts, a few examples are worth mentioning. The German Report introduces the measure of one-day leaves for housewives, who can go home during the day and take care of their children or ill family members. In Hungary, the few women who received the so-called Lenient Executive Rules, were entitled for a monthly weekend-visit home. All of the women appraised the positive impact of LER on their family contacts and in general, on their continuing relationship to the world outside and stated that LER greatly facilitated their reintegration through the maintenance of social contacts. While the Spanish Report appreciates the value of the 'third degree'- which in an open regime allows for the inmate to work outside the prison during the day - it notes the difficulties of implementation. While the appropriately located prison in Barcelona has been overcrowded, other prisons in the countryside are inappropriate locations: these do not offer any work or other activity to participate in outside the prison. Because of the same countryside location, several of the theoretical benefits cannot be used in the case of the low-security Hungarian prison in Mélykút as well.

All reports emphasise that generally during imprisonment the social contacts and networks of imprisoned women are weakened. Internal contacts among prisoners do not

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[8] This is linked to the fewer number of women's prisons, and is one of the most important consequences of the structurally weak position of women's imprisonment, to be addressed in section II in detail.

replace family ties or other contacts. Several agents emphasised that especially women with lengthy sentences suffer from a loss of contacts.

In summary, women received most support from their immediate families, especially from parents and in some cases, from their partners. Even though family ties were in some cases reinforced during imprisonment, as a matter of fact, in general social ties became weaker. Immigrant women faced especially serious barriers in keeping contact with their families and others – also, women with long sentences usually experienced more damages to their social network. The application of special measures makes a difference to women's ability in maintaining social contacts: even one-day leaves, but especially access to regular leaves or open sections has a positive impact on social contacts. Unfortunately many women - in some countries, the majority of women prisoners - do not benefit from such measures.

3. The Impact of Imprisonment on Social Skills Needed for Reintegration

National reports addressed this topic in rather different ways. The following analysis introduces the survival strategies / resistance strategies developed by the women during their imprisonment – a logic of analysis used by the Spanish, the French and the Hungarian Report. All three reports argue that while obedience/ submission to prison rules is a rather popular strategy among the women – in the end various groups of women benefit or suffer rather differently from imprisonment, depending often on their previous social exclusion, most decisively, on their level of education and perceived social status.

The Spanish Report argues that women with a better educational background who know prison rules well and are able to play according to these rules, are usually given better opportunities in prison and also benefit from their external resources. The Hungarian Report also reinforces that better educated women are able to acquire the best prison jobs, build a certain respect with staff and other inmates, and employ good survival strategies. Such strategies are either based on collecting as many rewards as possible, or on building good relationships with personnel. In either case, these women usually had very conscious survival strategies focused on long-term benefits and plans, including reintegration. The French Report also mentions the importance of legal knowledge, symbolic and linguistic capital for some of the women in prison, in building their status. In fact, such a status can be achieved through other means than education/ middle class position, e.g. in France, the high-risk political-prisoner profile of Basque women ensures them a certain power and status that is used to gain benefits.

The French Report points out that the most excluded women, the so-called 'penal customers' adopt a strategy that focuses only on survival from one day to another, thus women may be involved in various deals and trafficking, and sometimes may get locked up due to disciplinary failings. The Spanish report describes a similar pattern of 'penal customers' – usually drug addicted women with poor health condition from marginalized social groups – who have very little contact with e.g. treatment personnel, and are sanctioned more often than others. While in Hungary no such pattern was identified, it was found that the full passivity, full invisibility and obedience adapted by many women,

led to being forgotten among the hundreds of other prisoners and thus was not sufficient to gaining benefits. A strategy of withdrawal/ submission was identified also among women in the 'normal criminal' pattern in the French research.

In short, a significant degree of adaptivity – if not submission – is required for survival in prison. However, without a certain degree of power – either education, or status-related power – and good relationships with personnel, such a survival strategy tends to lead to survival only. This situation is largely related to the lack of individualised treatment in many instances and the overload on treatment personnel experienced in many countries. The Italian report points out, that as long as in certain prisons an educator is responsible for hundred inmates on average, individualised treatment is hardly possible. Another crucial difficulty is that educators' disciplinary and the reintegrating functions are not separated from each other.

Women prisoners tend to accept the disciplinary role of prison and most of them aim at building workable relationships with personnel – it is apparently a key condition for survival. In many cases, women talked rather appreciatively about personnel and emphasised that prison staff reacts the same way to prisoners as they approach them. In particular, the German research reflected rather positive relationships between women inmates and personnel: women felt that staff members were available and helpful, communication was open and based on partnership. In a German prison efforts were made to integrate women's opinions into the shaping of prison life. Yet, examples for long-remembered humiliations were mentioned even here and certainly in most other reports as well. While only a few women filed complaints, most of them did not think they could assert their rights, and many were not fully familiar with their rights.

In summary, survival strategies built on a certain degree of obedience - and successful strategies on good relationships with prison personnel – do not encourage behaviours linked to initiative-taking, responsibility, autonomy; skills considered to be vital after release.

4. The Impact of Imprisonment on Women's Health

Physical Health
The prison's impact on health is an area where according to most reports, a differentiation has to be made between various groups of women. For some women who suffered from poor health either due to lack of resources/ insurance or led a lifestyle which destroyed their health (e.g. drug users), the prison was found to offer health services and potentially, treatment that led to an improvement or stabilisation of their health condition. In the German research, the majority of the women who suffered from addiction stated that their health condition improved during imprisonment, and that imprisonment had a controlling and limiting affect on drug-taking. The Spanish research also reinforced the potential improvement in health condition of drug addicted women. Yet, it must be noted that drugs are available in prisons and that some women may actually start using drugs or switch to more serious drugs while in prison. Furthermore, agents in various countries agree that even if some women stop or reduce their drug

consumption while in prison, this is often temporary; to be continued after their release, especially if they return to their original neighbourhood and lifestyle. Some of the women interviewed expressed the same concern about a potential return to drugs after their release.

The Spanish Report points out that integrated programs must be supported that embrace both physical and psychological aspects and future impact of drug consumption on the women's health. The Report argues that currently there is a contradiction between treatment and punishment principles that influence drug treatment in prisons, since currently in Spanish prisons drug consumption continues to be punished. According to the Report, the current contradiction must be resolved, the reality of illegal drugs in prison should not be denied, and treatment should be changed accordingly. Currently in Spain health treatment in general, as well as methadone programs belong to the national health system, while other programs are run by the penitentiary system. In France and Italy the drug treatment and health service in general belongs to the national health service, rather than to the penitentiary system. Yet as the Italian report notes, especially the treatment of drug addicts remains to be a source of conflict between the two ministers. Several reports point out that there are very significant differences in the level of drug treatment available among prisons in the same country.

The French Report refers to the experience of a doctor who talked about prisons being an excellent site for young doctors to meet pathologies that have otherwise disappeared from developed countries. In the Hungarian research there was an example for a woman receiving a quality of health service for her chronic and serious health problem that she did not receive prior to prison – similar examples were mentioned in the English research as well. However, many other women who did not suffer from uncured diseases or addictions, believed that their health status remained the same or actually worsened during imprisonment. In the Hungarian research several women with longer sentences talked about the illnesses developed during their imprisonment and examples of maltreatment were recorded as well. Illnesses developed due to bad hygiene and from other prisoners were mentioned in the French report. While reports argued that the medical provisions and service in prisons are generally appropriate, interviewed women pointed out to delays in medical service, or inadequate quality of medical examinations or inattention from medical team. The Spanish Report points to deficiencies in attention to gynaecological problems due to lack of personnel resources.

In summary, while healthcare in prisons brings a clear improvement for some women – in particular, for women with drug addiction or chronic diseases – for many others, time in prison does not bring any improvement in the health status, or may lead to the development of illnesses.

Mental Health and Therapy Needs

As mentioned above, addiction-related issues should be treated in an integrated approach, thus the division between physical and mental health is not quite appropriate in the case of addiction-related problems. However, in the MIP research it was found that with very

few exceptions, such integrated approach to addiction or other health problems is not available in most prisons. In fact, emphasis on medicalization in access is mentioned by several reports and so is the lack of emphasis (and resources) dedicated to therapy. There is no therapy for alcohol addicts in Italy, while such therapy comes very late and is mainly medicine-based in Hungary. Victims of domestic violence do not receive any therapy or counselling in many countries – despite the high ratio of women prisoners who were victims of sexual or physical violence, and the known links between such abuse and other phenomena (e.g. drug consumption, lasting psychological trauma, future consequences for repeated abuse or victimisation, etc.)

MIP research findings from several countries confirm that women in prison may suffer from the trauma related to previous domestic violence, but also may experience depression, stress and anxiety, due to prison deprivations (e.g. those related to living conditions, lack of privacy, mixing with others, inappropriate hygiene, ruptures as separation from children) Yet, most interviewed women received no psychological therapy. Among the reasons, in many reports insufficient personnel and financial resources for psychological assistance or straightforward budget cuts are mentioned.

In summary, while many women who enter prison suffer from addiction problems and/or traumas; ruptures due to imprisonment, as well as prison deprivations, and lack of appropriate psychological assistance only further their problems. While it could be argued that prisons are probably not equipped to handle women with very serious mental health problems, for the great majority of women prisons must become places where a degree of personal stability can be maintained or achieved. In the absence of appropriate attention to this, a crucial precondition for reintegration remains unaddressed.

5. Summary: Differentiated Impact

While certain prison deprivations necessarily impact all women in prison, our research evidence supports the notion that mothers in prison suffer especially due to the separation from their children.

Largely due to the limited possibilities for individual treatment in most prisons, and the generally applied obedience-based survival strategies, there is a tendency for certain patterns of primary exclusion to be reinforced by the prison experience. Women with better educational records or privileged status tend to acquire more attention, better positions and more benefits in prisons. However, in terms of basic health service, women in the least privileged groups may enjoy access to medication or treatment which was not available for them prior to imprisonment. Yet, in terms of mental health provisions, with a few exceptions we must conclude that insufficient attention to mental health problems and therapy aggravates existing health problems.

II/ II. The Impact of Women Imprisonment's Weak Structural Position on Women's Perspectives for Reintegration

In general, the small number of women in the prison systems leads to various disadvantages for women prisoners. In fact, earlier research in several countries pointed to the disadvantaged position of women prisons' compared to men's prisons in access to budgets, programs, work and training opportunities, and general attention. Most national reports confirm that the small number of women prisoners - 4-8% of the total prison population in each of the six countries - brings important disadvantages in terms of the attention devoted to them. However, while in most countries women's prisons themselves may be disadvantaged as well, in England this is not the case any more. Yet, important differences were found between women-only prisons and women's units annexed to men's prisons in all countries. Thus, overall, the small number of women prisoners in most cases brings significant disadvantages.

As discussed earlier in this report, distance from home constrains women's ability to maintain family and other ties due to the excessive financial, time and physical burden. This problem is linked to the fact that there are fewer women's prisons, thus distance from home is often considerable. As we saw on a French example, women in some cases prefer to stay in a prison near to their family, even if they have to sacrifice better conditions that they would be entitled for in a more distant penitentiary institution. Another difficulty resulting from the small number of women's prisons and their larger, regional or even national responsibility, is that this contradicts the necessarily local nature of reintegration-related work - as shown in the French and Hungarian fieldwork. Most organisations and individuals involved in reintegration after release (local authorities, NGO-s, employers, etc.) work at a local level, thus in case of a national prison, women can hardly meet with the appropriate agencies and individuals prior to their release.

In some cases women prisoners are located in dedicated units within men's prisons. In fact, there are prisons with a small group of women prisoners - who are often in a fully ignored position in terms of access to activities, services, and attention. In these cases even within the small group among the women there are different penalties, needs etc. in the same institution. Thus women not only suffer from being locked up with "child murderers and drug addicts", but in effect, targeted treatment becomes impossible due to the large variations in needs and small group sizes. Very often, the more limited education programs and activities available for women stem from this 'lack of economies of scale'.

In several cases the reports found that women's prisons are inappropriately located or distributed which further aggravates the above-mentioned numerical problem. In France, women's prisons are strongly concentrated on the Northern part of France, especially significant is the concentration of 'establishments for sorrow': three of the four such prisons for women are situated in the North. The fourth prison actually does not accept women with sentences above 7 years – thus all such women prisoners must be placed in the North. Another problem noted by the German, Hungarian and Spanish Reports is that

several women's prisons are located faraway from urban centres, sometimes in locations not accessible by public transport and not offering opportunities for work outside the prison, social contacts etc. This is highly problematic in case of low-security regimes, or open regimes – since such a location fully contradicts the objective of reintegration emphasised in case of open or light regimes.

Overcrowding of women's prisons was described as a key problem in all reports, an issue also often to be found in men's prisons. Overcrowding is a problem by itself – due to the lack of privacy, reduced possibilities for individual treatment, poor hygienic conditions - however, if it appears in concentrated and often poorly located women's prisons, it further aggravates women's chances for being transferred closer to their families and also, the availability of already scarce programs and activities. The Report of England and Wales has identified overcrowding in women's prisons to be one of the key barriers against the implementation of integration-related programs.

Agents in general pointed to such pragmatic reasons behind the failure to deliver the reintegrating function of prisons: lack of sufficient means, budgets, and personnel were among the most frequent reasons identified by professionals. Overcrowded prisons were also very frequently named as a key difficulty in reintegration-related efforts. Such budgetary and personnel constraints to reintegration-related work were mentioned by agents in all countries with a strong emphasis. Some agents – although not all of them - discussed the difficulties related to the minority position of women prisoners and women prisons explicitly.

The issue of women-only prisons versus women's units annexed to men's prisons was addressed in several reports – since in all countries there are examples for both types of women's prisons. Based on the MIP research the conclusion is that women-only prisons generally are more favourable for the women inmates. As the Italian report argues, women-only prisons take advantage of their independence in organising activities according to women's needs and also in attracting attention from the outside world. German experts also point to the ability of women-only prisons to direct their budget planning, to adjust social and vocational reintegration to women's needs, as well as to use the possibilities offered by the lower security standards often associated with women's prisons. The French Report underlines the ability of such women-only prisons to engage in innovative projects targeted at women's needs – while also emphasises women's limited access to services in men's prisons. The disadvantages of women's units annexed to men's prisons are presented by the Spanish Ombudsman Report: poorer infrastructures, limited activities, less jobs, poorer medical treatment. The Italian Report also points to the limited sport, social, religious, educational and recreational activities available to women in men's prisons. Such disadvantages influence many women prisoners: e.g. in Germany, about half of the women are located in men's prisons, but the Italian numbers are also telling: there are 7 women-only prisons in addition to which women can be housed in 63 male prisons.

Yet, there are large differences among the various prisons within the same country – as many reports point to the consequences of decentralised management. For example, an

open and active prison management in the smallest unit in Hungary was able to create a range of reintegration-related activities for a small group of 70 women annexed to a men's unit. The Italian Report notes the prison director's role in achieving co-operation with local authorities and other agents. The French Report actually concludes that differences among women's prisons are so significant and women prisoners in certain cases enjoy such advantages (compared to men, e.g. in terms of security), that altogether the issue that women prisoners are disadvantaged, cannot be declared. Even though other reports noted the importance of these factors – e.g. the more lenient security standards in case of women's prisons in Germany - most still argued that women prisoners' position is disadvantaged.

The Report of England and Wales argues that due to the past years' efforts invested in research, awareness raising and projects by specialised units as the Women's Policy Group, and the Prison Service's Women's Team, women's prisons are less disadvantaged than they were previously. Generally, there is an official recognition that women prisoners' needs are different, and targeted projects and efforts are launched to improve the position of women prisoners – including even e.g. advertising campaigns to attract women into the Prison Service. An innovative new initiative of the Prison Service's Women's Team is to examine security aspects to assess which security measures are really necessary in women's prisons. However, mainly due to women's small numbers, they are still largely in a disadvantaged position. While agents' discourse, as well as official documents, program proposals etc. in England show a significant degree of awareness regarding women prisoners' disadvantaged positions and women's needs, this is not reflected in other countries' experience.

As the French Report points out, women prisoners are never defined as a target group of penitentiary policies, in fact, women are not mentioned in most recommendations or policy proposals. Statistics are hardly available on women prisoners, and generally the French research found that this silence results in the ignorance of women prisoners' needs. However, apart from their small numbers this is supported by the powerful universalistic and egalitarian principles applied in France for adult populations. There is insufficient attention to women prisoners needs' in Italy: specifically female needs are not addressed by the penitentiary administration. The Spanish Report argues that the state's failure to address women prisoner's needs pushes the responsibility to the families and individuals. The Hungarian Report also points to the lack of official recognition of, as well as a lack of discourse on, women prisoners' needs.

Needs of women prisoners appear mainly as those related to motherhood in the official discourse – the exclusive focus on motherhood is clearly supported by most reports. Yet, as the Spanish report emphasises, this is already tangible in penitentiary laws: those are the only specific articles as regards to women prisoners in Spain. In terms of agents' discourse, the French research concluded, that the concept of maternity tends to entirely define the 'specificity' of the problems met by the women inmates in general. In fact, even attention to mother-child relationships is often supported by arguments which emphasise the child's socialisation, the higher interest of the child, the rights of innocent children versus criminal mothers etc. In some cases women in mother-child units were

considered to be privileged compared to other women - yet women themselves often worried about the impact of imprisonment on the children. The conditions in mother-child facilities are often more favourable than general conditions. However, conditions vary greatly among countries and also within countries, as found in France, - where 25 penitentiary institutions are assigned to offer places for women and their children – or Italy, where the lack of day nurseries is one of the key problems. In Hungary there is one such unit in the country, in the middle of a men's prison, in Catalonia there is also one such unit only - while in Germany also mother-child units are concentrated to very few locations, raising problems of access and distance. In addition to mother-child units, early release is possible for mothers with children below 10 years of age in France, house arrest for women with children below the age of 3 in Italy - yet in both cases several conditions have to be fulfilled. Women with children below 10 years of age enjoy better visiting arrangements in Spain - and in Germany weekend-visits and one-day leaves can be granted for mothers to 'work' at home with their children during the day.

In summary, exclusive attention to motherhood as women's needs found in agents' discourse is problematic for various reasons. In some countries most imprisoned women do not have children, and even where they do, many of the actual needs of mothers are not addressed. This is partly because in reality the consideration of child welfare is often a priority over women's needs as showed above, and partly because women have other identities and needs apart from motherhood. In some cases attention to motherhood at the level of agents' discourse does not translate into actual measures at all. Yet the greatest problem is that through some attention paid to motherhood, women prisoners' many other specific needs can be considered to be dealt with.

III. Reintegration-Oriented Measures in Prison

While reintegration appears as a general objective of imprisonment in national legislations, there are a few areas of prison life that are primarily responsible for delivering reintegration-related purposes. It is primarily work, education and training which is meant to supply useful practices and skills also for life after release. In addition to these areas, in this chapter measures related to in-prison preparation for release will be discussed as well.

1. Work

Even though in several countries legislation has moved away from interpreting work as an obligation towards discussing it as a right of prisoners, as the national reports point out, work in prison can hardly be interpreted fully as a right. Firstly, work is defined as the expected standard behaviour, deviation from which must be explained and may lead to disadvantages – thus work and non-work cannot be really chosen freely as a right. Secondly, if work-related rights are regulated in Labour Codes, working prisoners' rights are never quite ensured: e.g. prisoners do not have a written contract, access to unions and cannot go on strike. Not only work-related rights are curtailed, but access to work-related social services and benefits is also limited, e.g. access to unemployment benefit, and social security-related services in some countries, e.g. in Hungary.

Nevertheless, work in prison is strongly associated with reintegration, both in the penitentiary legislation as in agents' discourse. Some of the interviewed agents talked about the value of prison work in training people to follow rules, schedules, perform according to expectations – while many emphasised the value of prison work for prisoners as a source of revenue and a way to pass time. In fact the interviewed women only emphasised these two benefits of working in prison, but were often very thankful for getting out of their cells and making a little money. As we discussed in the first chapter, the great majority of women and their families came from poverty, thus they need the money to secure basic items for themselves, to stay in touch with their families on the phone, and in many cases, even for sending money home. As we shall see, it is an admirable achievement in most countries given the very modest level of remuneration in prison.

However, currently work is not ensured for all women inmates in the studied countries. While almost 60% of women prisoners work in Hungary, only about 33% of women have work in Italian prisons, and 40% of inmates in French prisons and as little as 13% of women prisoners (with a drug addiction problem) in Spain/ Catalonia. In England on the other hand, almost 90% of women surveyed in 1999 had at least one job during their imprisonment. While in most countries interviewed women explained that they wanted to work – as many said: it does not matter what, any work will do – several women refused to work among those interviewed in Germany. However, other data from Germany suggests that in a Bavarian prison 23% of the women who are obliged to work, are without work and have to stay in their cells.

The range of work available for women inmates was predominantly unskilled and focused on traditional women's work: mostly on housekeeping jobs (cooking, cleaning, laundry), assembly-line work in light industry or packing. Such jobs clearly do not develop the skills or competencies of women, neither prepare them for new challenges at the labour market – if anything, only reinforce what they are 'worth' for. Yet exceptions must be mentioned: in some German prisons and in England, a more varied range of jobs was available for women. However, as German experts noted, the standard jobs also in Germany continued to be cleaning and assembly line jobs, while in England the delivery of the range of offers was found to be patchy.

Returning briefly to the minority position of women's prisons, it must be noted that women imprisoned in men's prisons were found to be in an especially disadvantaged position. Either it was explicitly stated that in access to work, men enjoy a priority over women due to perceived differences in productivity (e.g. in a French prison), or women were doing the housework while men had access to other work. In addition, for women in smaller it proved to be especially difficult to develop a range of work opportunities due to small numbers and lack of economies of scale. Lastly, women's prisons situated faraway from cities, often only provided housekeeping jobs or seasonal agricultural work – and certainly were not able to attract employers or organise women's access to work outside prison. Indeed, working outside the prison would be a major step in preparing a smooth transition towards life after release and reintegration. While in most countries the legislative background is there to allow work outside the prison, as long as women are employed in the above-mentioned areas within prison walls, only a very narrow segment of women prisoners can benefit from the theoretically available measures. While with the permission of the prison directors many women even from closed regimes could have access to work outside, this is practically not happening. Open regimes would be especially suitable for allowing women's work outside, as well as special measures and licenses as day-releases in Germany, third degree in Spain, LER in Hungary, or community placements and other licenses in England would make a real difference – if they were broadly implemented. Among the interviewed women in the MIP research in England, actually two 'lifers' worked outside the prison in the last year of their sentence during the day and returned for the nights – the women were satisfied with the arrangements that facilitated their gradual return after their long sentences. Yet they were among the very few exceptions in our research who worked outside the prison.

There are important barriers against the appropriate use of prison work that must be taken into account. Short sentences are very typical in certain countries among women prisoners: half of them serve up to 9 months in Germany and average sentence length is 10 months in England - which clearly is a barrier to work, but also to training and preparation for release as well. Lack of previous work experience is also a common problem, yet drug addiction often furthers difficulties – as again was especially emphasised by the German and English reports. Although gradual occupational therapy is available in Germany, budget cuts make its application problematic in experts'view.

Remuneration of work in prison is set at levels far below the wage level outside, in most countries below the minimum wage as well. There are significant variations in the system

of wage setting as well as in their actual value. In Spain and in Hungary, women in prison are very poorly remunerated and as the Spanish report emphasises, women prisoners' remuneration is not only very poor, but it is significantly worse than male prisoners'. Yet, interviewed women in Germany, England, France and Italy also addressed the very little wages they get for their work. An underlying problem is that such wage levels contradict the basic principles of work defined in Labour Codes (e.g. equal pay for equal work). Indeed, in some countries criticisms were voiced about such a relative application of Labour Codes. From their low wages women often pay various deductions and contributions - in some cases for prison upkeep, or for tax/ social security – e.g. in Hungary and France. From the remaining money women purchase basic items for themselves in prison shops, and many still send money home to families in need or spend it on calling relatives – thus women cannot make savings from such wages for their life after release. As the German report points out, women who already struggled with indebtedness, are not able to stabilise their situation and may accumulate further depths through not paying interests. The interviewed women in all countries clearly expressed that their remuneration was inadequate, however, most of them accepted it with resignation.

Another important aspect of prison work for reintegration, the acquisition of marketable skills, was already referred to: most jobs available in prisons for women are unskilled and traditional women's work, thus they do not contribute to women's skill development. In fact, women with a prior skill are often not able to maintain their previous skills due to lack of appropriate practice – only a quarter of these women could actually apply their skills during imprisonment in England.

As a result of the above-mentioned significant shortcomings found in many countries in the area of prison work, several reports emphasised that patterns of primary exclusion may be further reinforced by this. Women with higher levels of education, skills, and assertiveness were able to acquire the (better) jobs in Hungarian women's prisons. Women suffering from multiple disadvantages were more likely not to have access to work or only to poor quality work with a health impact. As the French report notes, women from such families are so much in need of work, that if they must choose between work and training in prison, they certainly choose the first. The necessity of choice between work and training was also found in Hungary, which, according to an expert should be resolved through part-time work in prisons.

In summary, while the current availability of prison work in women's prisons is far from ideal in many countries, there are important barriers to its increase, presented mainly by short sentences. The current profile of work in most countries does not facilitate the acquisition of useful skills or the practice of existing skills – the emphasis still is on housework and light assembly work in most cases. While this certainly should be changed, women's prisons face barriers to significant diversification of work opportunities due to their size and minority status. However, promoting and organising work outside the prison would make a real difference for many women prisoners both during the imprisonment as well as for future reintegration – a move which in most countries is enabled by legislation, but seldom applied in practice.

2. Education and Training

Given the very serious educational and professional skills deficit found among women prisoners in all countries, a natural minimum priority would be the focus on providing basic education for all, as well as vocational qualification in a marketable occupation. These educational objectives are spelled out in national legislations and enjoy a widespread awareness among the agents interviewed. It should be noted that the need to acquire both basic education and professional qualification is absolutely necessary for a labour-market entry in the regular economy – where increasingly, vocational qualification documents are required for most jobs in most countries. Also, increasingly, basic computer literacy is a standard requirement in any job, and job search itself had become a skill that people must possess in order to find work. Familiarity with the language of the home country should be considered as a prerequisite for not just labour, but in general, social integration.

Providing primary education to all prisoners and focusing especially on the elimination of illiteracy was reflected in all country reports as a priority for education in prisons. In some countries primary education was compulsory for those without such qualification, yet it was enabled and encouraged in other countries as well. The research could not assess the actual impact of these educational efforts, however, primary education was found to be available for women inmates. It should be noted that even if basic literacy can be achieved, some women have educational deficits which makes even the completion of primary education a challenge especially in the traditional school system where it takes years to complete grades and materials do not adjust to adult learning needs. In some countries it was found that women without completed primary education cannot qualify for vocational training – which excludes a number of women from access to professional qualifications e.g. in Hungary. A more flexible, so-called modular approach to education was applied in some prisons in Germany (EDP qualification), which enables people with short sentences to start certain modules at flexible times, and if necessary, proceed with other modules after release.

Even though some vocational training courses were offered in all countries, the range of courses as well as their availability showed significant differences both according to country as well as from prison to prison. The limited availability and selection of vocational training courses was specifically addressed in the case of Hungary and Italy. Even though the system of vocational training for women prisoners is more developed in England, actual delivery of educational offers was found to be patchy. In many countries and prisons, vocational training for women prisoners focuses on traditional female occupations e.g. cooking, cleaning, textile -or leather goods manufacturing, waitress, barmaid. The few exceptions included courses in computer graphics and desktop publishing in Germany and Italy. It must be noted that both reports explicitly underlined that such a vocational skill proved to be very useful for reintegration: women with such a training and experience gained in prison, managed to find work after release. With the exception of these few women however, many others did not believe that the completed

vocational courses improved their skills or their labour-market potential – and considered the courses as an opportunity to pass time.

Language courses for foreigners are provided in many German prisons for women, yet also in Spain and France special programs are available. Interviewed women in France talked very appreciatively about the value of such language programs for their social integration.

Courses for basic computer literacy (and other computer-related courses) are available in many women's prisons in Germany, and in some cases in Spain and Hungary. In France researchers found that an introduction to basic computer skills was integrated into all vocational training programs, covering office programs, and introduction to multimedia and internet. In England, developing the use of modern technologies was one of the tasks of the Prisoners Learning and Skill Unit set-up in 2001. Despite all these advances however, the use of internet and other computer-related applications cannot be considered natural in all prisons – due to the security argument some prisons are reluctant to encourage the use of computers, especially, the internet. Through the use of computers not only basic computer literacy can be gained, but access to several other modular training programs becomes possible, as well as new methods of learning open up, e.g. e-learning/ distance learning. This is especially important for women's prisons, where small numbers thus group sizes, lack of teachers and overcrowding are important limits to courses – which all can be overcome by an intense use of such technologies. Interviewed women in Catalonia believed that the computer training was indeed valuable for them.

Access to medium- and even higher education is enabled in most countries, however, it is very exceptional among women prisoners e.g. in Hungary, and regulations regarding access to university education from prisons are unclear. During the fieldwork in England, two of the women interviewed – both imprisoned for very long sentences – revealed that they gained degrees in social science during their imprisonment. Access to medium and also to higher education is possible – and is rapidly growing - in France, although the latter only concerns a fraction of inmates. While further education and higher education can only be an option for a minority of women inmates in all countries, there are women with basic or medium-level educational background who often serve long sentences. For them obtaining a degree would bring a meaningful occupation for the years in prison and access to better jobs later.

As mentioned above, some of the barriers to education are related to the general problems found in prisons (e.g. overcrowding or frequent transfers), and are often linked to the minority position of women's prisons and prisoners. Scheduling problems due to competing demands between education and work or other activities are an issue in several countries. Women in mother and child units often have no or limited access to education/ work due to limited day-care. The French Report reinforced that women in women-only prisons have better educational offers while programs for women in men's prisons are fewer. These indeed are very strong barriers in most countries which limit good intentions and even the delivery of good plans and educational offers. Financial constraints and budget cuts were also addressed in most reports. Other limitations are

linked to the penal characteristics of women prisoners, most importantly, to their short sentences – as referred to above.

Challenges of co-ordination and quality insurance of educational programs both at the national level and at individual prisons was addressed in some reports. While in several countries, Educational Ministries and Justice Departments or prison authorities are jointly responsible for educational programs in prisons, this co-operation is problematic in Italy, while proved to be workable in France and the UK. In both latter countries a dedicated organisation was set-up, in the form of regional pedagogical centres in France, and the Prisoners' Learning and Skills Unit in England. These bodies have a strategic-conceptual role as well as a quality insurance function, without which education in specific prisons is left entirely to the discretion of individual teachers, often volunteers, – an issue found to be problematic in Italy. Lack of concepts, systems, quality insurance and monitoring was found to be an issue in Hungary as well.

Yet, even if such national bodies and structures are in place, co-ordination at the local level may still produce vary different results in various prisons, due to the need to co-ordinate state actors and volunteers, and manage limited space and financial resources. A key aspect of co-ordination to be done at the local level is related to building relationships with schools, NGO-s, and especially employers, as well as with agencies involved in women's lives after their release. An example for prisons' taking an active role in building such networks, is presented by prison Hahnhöfersand in Germany, where a so-called 'company contactor' position was created. This person collects information on educational and training programs, on demand on the job market, builds relationships with job centres, companies and provides individual help for women to be released. Also, the 'company contactor' continues to help the released person, which ensures continuity.

In summary, women with major educational deficits have access to literacy courses, primary education and increasingly, to basic language training in many women's prisons. Yet due to short sentences and many other barriers, not all women in need of such basic education will actually gain it. If they do so, it will enable a better degree of cultural and social integration – they will be less excluded from everyday aspects of life – however, their labour-market chances will not be improved by that. Women who already possess basic educational qualifications, currently have some - but varied - access to vocational courses or further general education. As noted, the variety of possible courses is limited and often remains to be focused on traditional female jobs. Based on the small sample of women interviewed, those few who gained qualification in marketable skills (e.g. desktop publishing) clearly had better chances to gaining employment. Women with a medium level qualification in some countries may access institutions for higher education, however, this seems to be very exceptional. A word of caution was raised in several national reports – both by agents as well as the authors - about forming realistic expectations regarding the actual possibilities in training and education or prison work. It was emphasised that prisons will not be able to compensate for all educational and skill deficits.

3. Preparation for Release

Supervision and Guidance, Individualised Treatment

'Preparation for release' in the broadest sense includes all reintegration-related activities addressed so far in chapter 2 and a general attention to inmates' individual needs – a process that is meant to start at the time of entry to prison. In fact, legislation in several countries reflects this broad interpretation of preparation for release through e.g. introducing the requirement of drawing up development plans for inmates. Such plans should be based on the prisoner's personality, needs- and skills assessment, and would draw up targets and concrete plans. Development plans should be prepared with the involvement of the prisoners. However, according to research findings in several countries, such plans are often not prepared or followed through in practice. In England the above described, so-called sentence plans should be prepared in co-operation with probation, also taking into account pre-sentence reports and an informed risk-assessment carried out by prison and probation staff. The sentence plan should also provide the basis for the so-called supervision plan that covers prisoners who are released on license. Unfortunately recent reports indicate large variations in the actual preparation of sentence plans covering 10-100% of eligible prisoners. During the Hungarian research, none of the interviewed women was aware of the existence of development plans, and agents also confirmed that plans are often neglected or not prepared at all due to the overload of personnel. In a German prison, Hanhöfersand, a so-called profiling is carried out through which skills and educational background of the women are assessed and further development needs are identified for the duration of imprisonment – which also facilitates building bridges between internal programs and employment. However, apart from such exceptions, generally our research found a significant lack of individual attention to women's development needs during imprisonment. Overload of personnel was named to be the biggest reason for this failure in all countries – with often as many as 60-80 or more prisoners belonging to the responsibility of a single contact person or educator.

Such lack of individual attention to women and their resettlement-related needs is reflected in women's assessment as well. The great majority of the interviewed women stated that they did not receive support from the prison in preparation for release. Support in preparing for release was evaluated to be better in Germany by the interviewed women, especially women who were released from the social-therapeutical institution appraised positively the help received. They emphasised the individual attention received from therapists and social workers as well as the gradual release from the institute. In the past seven years the Berlin institute has only reported about one woman's return to prison.

However, many others did not receive support in the psychological preparation for release. At its broadest interpretation, such psychological preparation should include the processing of the crime, and treatment of domestic violence or other traumas. While regarding the first, in English prisons 'offending behaviour programs' are available – recently a woman-specific version of the program was rolled out – these are criticised for their exclusive focus on psychological (re) programming. In other countries no organised

efforts were identified to support coping with either crime-related processing, domestic violence traumas or other damages related to e.g. deprivation or family ruptures. Psychologists, even if available, are not able to tackle such issues at the individual level. Psychological preparation for release in the narrower sense, would help women overcome fears, anxieties, help them identify positive projects for the future, etc. – which was found missing as well.

In summary, while legislation in all countries emphasises the need to prepare individual development plans for the duration of imprisonment in order to enable successful reintegration, in many cases such plans are not prepared or followed through, most often due to overload of personnel. For the same reason, other forms of individual attention from educators or other agents in prison was found to be inadequate – perhaps with the exception of Germany where most interviewed women felt encouraged to talk to their educators. Nevertheless, attention to psychological preparation for release both in its broader sense (processing of crime, handling of traumas etc.) and in its narrower sense (fighting anxiety and stress, working out positive projects etc.) was found inadequate in most countries and most prisons.

Measures to Aid Gradual Transition
The range of possible measures, through which imprisonment can be 'moderated', is rather broad in all countries. Very often the possibility to gain access to such measures determine women's desires, survival strategies, and their actual chances and efforts for reintegration. One of these measures, release on license, is practised in all countries, usually on the basis of 'good behaviour' – indeed a powerful tool in the punishment-benefit treatment regimes to achieve compliance with rules and steer women's behaviour in the appropriate direction. Move to a lighter security regime is another frequently used measure in many countries. In Hungary, women who serve long sentences in a high-security regime, are often moved to a mid-security regime – if their behaviour allows such a move. Also, women who serve long sentences, are transferred to a so-called transition group for the last two years of their sentence, where living conditions are less controlled and a few visits for home are allowed. Interviewed women confirmed that a move to the transition groups was vital in allowing a gradual readjustment. While their first visits home after years were shocking, through repeated visits by the time of their actual release the women felt more prepared. In England, women prisoners with long sentences, may go out to training or work and return when they have finished. Yet not only women with long sentences can be moved to a more lenient regime. In Germany, a move to an open regime is enabled as part of preparation for release, while in Spain/ Catalonia, women can be moved to 'third degree' – including a move to open regime.

Women in some cases had access to programmed leaves, during which, accompanied by prison personnel, they could familiarise themselves with the environment or engage in activities with organisations. Short leaves home in order to facilitate women's gradual readjustment, as well as the reestablishment of social contacts and practical preparation of release, are also available in most countries. Day-releases practised in Germany, or weekend-releases available for women in a lenient regime (LER) in Hungary, were considered to be very useful by the women and helped them maintain social contacts,

visit authorities, or start organising other aspects of life after release. In England prisoners may ask for day release in order to attend housing or job interviews. In Catalonia similar one-day permits issued at the end of the second-degree period, were critically evaluated by agents, as they do not effectively allow for e.g. taking up jobs due to conditions of imprisonment. Agents emphasised the need to have follow-up and ongoing support for women who acts as a 'bridge' between the period in prison and that after release. Based on the MIP research it Italy and Hungary, it must be noted that only a minority of interviewed women were given short leaves prior to their release. Thus, most women in these countries had to satisfy with no or very limited preparation for release.

In short, while certain measures as release on license or move to a more lenient measure are available in all countries, these are not applied as part of a conscious transition plan in most cases, but are granted for inmates with 'good behaviour', often based on the evaluation of educators, prison directors and penitentiary judges. Thus the danger is that such decisions are steered by the internal logic of the punishment-reward system of prisons, rather than by any real reintegration-related need of the inmate. While short leaves from prison prior to release are in principle also available, our research found that many of the interviewed women – especially in Hungary and Italy – did not have access to such short leaves. Those women who were allowed on such visits, highly appreciated their value. Our research supports the notion that women with long sentences especially need a carefully designed transition process – good examples from the English research prove that women with decade long sentences can be prepared successfully for release through gradual adjustments. However, regarding a very powerful 'transitional' measure – daily work/ training activities organised outside the prison with return for the night – we may conclude that its application is very limited, despite the enabling legislation and the widespread notion that women prisoners may be especially good candidates for such measures.

Pre-Release Courses, Counselling and Arrangements for Life After Release
In most countries no evidence was found during the MIP project on the consistent delivery of pre-release courses to that would help women plan for housing, employment, health, benefits, drugs, alcohol and family issues. As the Italian report points out, the Council of Europe has suggested from 1992 to organise courses in order to prepare prisoners for release – however, no such strategy was tangible in the Italian prisons covered by the MIP research. In Hungary, only in one of the three women's prisons was a course organised on job search techniques. In Spain no orientation about the labour market or job search was organised for the women as part of the vocational training courses (with the exception of a special DAE unit). On the contrary, in Germany social competencies are integrated into vocational training courses in prison Vechta, and in some prisons courses are available on job search skills. However, prison agents argue that still not enough social training programs are run due to budget cuts. Indeed, the German Report emphasises the lack of adequate number of social training courses. In the UK more comprehensive programs are in place: in addition to pre-release courses on topics including housing, employment, health, benefits, drugs, alcohol and family issues; prisoners may ask to attend groups if they have behaviour/ drug/ alcohol/ sexual problems, and in some prisons job clubs are organised to assist prisoners in looking for

jobs, and prepare for interviews. However, despite the generally good provisions, interviewed agents pointed to several shortcomings also in England. There are not enough gender-specific programs for women, and generally there is not enough in-prison resettlement provision. In particular, foreign women do not get equal access to courses. Several agents pointed to the frequent mismatch between women's needs and content of resettlement courses, as well as to the impact of budget cuts.

In terms of practical advice and actual arrangements for life after release, most women prisoners receive little help. Such a work is often perceived to be not the responsibility of prisons, but that of other agencies, e.g. parole officers, NGO-s, job centres etc. – and mainly, that of the prisoner. Prisons often see they role in providing information, contact and meeting opportunity for the various actors. In Hungary for example, probation officers organise general lectures on what to expect after release, yet no individual practical help and problem solving is available. Thus, despite the increasing openness of prisons for co-operation with probation and other agencies including NGO-s, the important period of transition and preparation for release remains to be a 'grey area' in terms of responsibility and ownership among the various agencies. Yet, in the case of Germany, the co-operation with probation and 'external advice services' worked well according to most agents. However, some agents pointed to the consequences of budget cuts resulting in less frequent visits to prisons, and interviewed women confirmed that probation officers are overloaded by case numbers as high as 200. Yet, a number of interviewed women in Germany believed that it was possible to get help in prison and secure access to flats and jobs. This was not the experience of the overwhelming majority of women in the Hungarian, Italian and Spanish research, who did not gain access to or orientation on jobs and housing from the prison. In many cases not even basic personal documents are settled for the women, documents without which services or benefits can be denied. In addition to problems of responsibility and co-ordination among the various state and non-state agents, in some cases the available infrastructure (e.g. halfway houses, appropriate shelters etc.) was considered to be insufficient.

Only in a few cases did the research identify agents in prison with a definite mission to help reintegration. One example, the so-called company contactor in a German prison was already mentioned. In principle in England in every prison there should be a person to give housing advice – yet the quality of the service still needs more attention. In France, while theoretically so-called reintegration agents are at work in prisons, due to their very small numbers and large overload, they often fail to deliver effective individual help in reintegration.

It must be noted, that the women themselves have often limited possibilities to make practical arrangements from the prison: they may lack the necessary information on jobs, housing, benefits etc., as well as the authorisation for making arrangements. Women who are not granted one-day leaves, and have no access to internet (as is the case in many prisons), neither the ability to communicate freely with any individual or agency they wish to, can hardly organise their life after release from the prison.

In summary, training and counselling measures for release of women prisoners are in most cases insufficient, uncoordinated and not individualised. Insufficient, because in many prisons pre-release courses and counselling are not available on a regular basis and the scope of existing sporadic measures is narrow: focusing mainly on labour-market knowledge and job-search skills. Efforts are uncoordinated among the various state and non-state agencies not just at the practical, but often at the conceptual/ structural level, leaving the issue of 'preparation for release' without real ownership. As a result, even if some agencies provide some services in some prisons, no inmate is likely to receive comprehensive and individualised help in preparing for release and making actual arrangements. While in England and in Germany more comprehensive and numerous programs are available, budget cuts and lack of personnel cause permanent problems in the actual delivery of such programs.

Barriers to Preparation for Release
In addition to the insufficient financial and personnel means available for prisons for such purposes, other important barriers to preparation for release were identified by the interviewed agents. Especially prisons with a larger regional or national coverage face the problem of having no contact with the agencies and organisations who operate in the geographical area where the released women will ultimately return. Resettlement work is more effective if the agents who will ultimately work with the women after their release, are able to go to the prisons and build personal relationships with their future clients.

In many cases the release date of women is unknown or uncertain, or is communicated too late – as mentioned specifically by the German and French Reports as a barrier to preparation for reintegration. Other difficulties addressed by agents in the French research were related to people on remand, women with short sentences and people from different geographical areas or even countries. In addition, women who have an open criminal process against them, feel that they cannot prepare for life after release because of the uncertainty of returning to prison. It is especially women who suffer from drug addiction whose preparation for release is considered to be very difficult by the agents, and also the women themselves are often very pessimistic about their chances for reintegration and believe that they may easily go back on drugs after their release.

IV. Life after Release from Prison

Although this chapter belongs to the core of the MIP research, this is the topic where differences in the emphasis, contents, findings, as well as the issues addressed among the national reports were most tangible. This diversity has a few reasons which we felt was important to be pointed out in this introduction. Firstly, while as the authors of the Report of England and Wales remark: a prison is a prison is a prison, – yet the diversity of both the larger social context, as well as the institutional setup after release introduce great variations into the experiences of the women after release. Secondly, also the differences in the fieldwork that characterised the period after the release[9], led to different type of data and thus the analysis of data towards differences in the emphasis of reports. Nevertheless, key aspects of women's life after release as well as findings about the institutional support emerge in all reports.

I.   Life of Women After Release and the Impact of Prison

While most women looked forward to their release and were convinced that they would never return to prison, a minority of them was less confident about this: especially recidivists, or women who had permanent drug-problems. Most women did not have comprehensive plans for various aspects of life. Experts is several countries asserted that women often have unrealistic expectations about their actual possibilities - yet it must be noted that planning and making arrangements is increasingly difficult in the absence of information and guidance.

Many women have reported that they were lost and disoriented in the first few weeks if not months after their release, and experienced even basic life situations often as unmanageable challenges. Some women – especially those who served long sentences – had experienced various symptoms related to prisonization - depression, insomnia, a strong desire to return to the daily routine of prison. The notion that many women develop a certain mistrust towards others, but especially state institutions, was noted in several countries by the women and agents as well. The impact of prison on women's social skills was also tangible in their accounts recorded a few weeks after their release: many of them discussed difficulties in organising their time, setting priorities, listening to others at length, taking initiatives, making decisions, etc. These are precisely social

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[9]As it was known from the beginning of the project, in certain countries following up prisoners to be released from prison was expected to be nearly impossible due to objective geographical constraints (e.g. England) or very difficult in case of immigrants who may get immediately expelled after release or just prefer to be hiding (e.g. Italy or Spain). Yet other difficulties were foreseen in all countries due to women coming out homeless, facing frequent moves and experiencing a general desire to cut all connections to prison life and start a new life. While research teams generally managed to adjust the methodology in each country to the specific conditions, the resulting differences in the actual fieldwork contributed to the differences in the emphasis of the national reports. Thus for example the corresponding chapter of the Report of Spain/ Catalonia includes an informed analysis of women's experiences in 'third degree' – a transitionary phase between close regimes and full liberty, while the same chapter of the Report of England and Wales focuses on analysing agents' discourse and building a comprehensive framework of barriers to reintegration.

abilities that are not rewarded in prisons: as discussed in chapter 2, most survival strategies in prison must necessarily build on submission and/ or withdrawal.

Nevertheless, this is not meant to suggest that women remain passive after their release – on the contrary, they often start to rebuild their life at various levels simultaneously. Upon leaving prison most women have a combination of the following issues to take care of at once: ensure housing, regular income, heal relationships with and provide for children or other dependent family members, and break relationships with drugs, related neighbourhood- and friendship circles. Before addressing the items on the list, it must be emphasised that several of these issues occur simultaneously and in combination with each other in women's lives, often forming a vicious circle. As some reports pointed out, as soon as they leave prison, women are overburdened with the gravity and combination of these issues to be solved at once – an unrealistic expectation that would be a heavy burden even for people with much more resources and support.

Agents in many countries encourage women to focus on finding a job and ensuring housing – while women's priorities after release proved to be different to some extent. Many women actually focused in the first weeks after release on coping with everyday life challenges, and on starting to rebuild the often-damaged relationship with children and family members. As several reports found, such family relationships may have been idealised during prison and women may not be fully aware of the damage done either. Often there is some explaining that needs to be done and/ or a gradual readjustment to be achieved with the children. As noted in chapter 2, women in prison often develop a strong guilt feeling due to their failure as mothers – and face it only with difficulties if their relationship with their children is less than ideal after release. Or, even more challenging is the situation if the women first have to reclaim their children from family members or from institutions – this may prove to be impossible or delayed until other issues are settled. Our research confirms that even if family ties are maintained during imprisonment and the women are thus 'lucky', such relationships are influenced by the imprisonment. Thus, after their release, often a significant part of women's energies goes into repairing such ties. Thirdly, women often have to spend a considerable time on arranging expired personal documents, locating organisations, familiarising themselves with application forms, updating registries, filling in forms at various offices. Such a background work costs time and money, mainly related to travelling or fees to be paid for documents, which women have often difficulties financing.

An important additional burden for the first few weeks was to manage the control and limitations imposed by authorities on the women straight after their release. As recorded by the research in Italy, in some cases they were not allowed to leave their house for weeks or had to report with weekly regularity at the police. Reporting at larger regular intervals to probation officers was required in Germany and Hungary, which was experienced by some of the women in Germany and by the great majority of women in Hungary as a control function primarily. In Hungary many women had difficulties with financing the trips and worried permanently about being sent back to prison if they fail to meet the requirements set by parole officers. The Italian report argues that the control in

some cases was not only intrusive, but caused difficulties for the women in e.g. job search.

The financial situation of women released from prison is usually very vulnerable. While during imprisonment it is not possible to produce savings from prison work, some women indeed inherit or increase previous debts. While in many countries a so-called discharge amount is paid upon release, this money is not sufficient to cover living expenses for the first weeks or months or until any revenue – wages or welfare benefits – would arrive. The great majority of women suffers from serious if not everyday financial difficulties in the first few weeks and months after release. Yet there are important differences among countries. In Spain and in France ex-prisoners can at least apply for targeted financial assistance if they fulfil certain criteria (e.g. minimum length of sentence, type of sentence etc.) and in Germany prisoners who worked in prison, can apply for unemployment benefit. In Hungary ex-prisoners received no targeted financial assistance and the work done in prison does not entitle them for unemployment benefit either, since it is not recorded in the social security system.

Often it is the families who must provide for basic necessities of the women – either the parents or in some cases, their partners. In several countries the majority of women named their primary families as the biggest source of support in the first weeks and months after release. Apart from this situation creating or reinforcing a form of dependence, many families are themselves very poor for whom it is not possible to support the women permanently. In some cases women end up moving back to their parents together with their children and even possibly with their partners – a situation which is filled with conflicts due to overcrowding, poverty, lack of independence and intimacy. Women often have to face difficulties and conflicts due to the earlier addressed ruptures and the negative influence of imprisonment on family ties. Generally, many women consider the family support as temporary and wish to start their independent life as soon as possible – a project that is very difficult to realise. Women without family ties, or with seriously damaged family relationships, obviously cannot rely on this crucial family support in the first period after release, thus they are often in the worst situation.

Thus in terms of housing solutions, many women go back to their original family, most often to their parents or partners. Although it is known that a number of women leave the prison homeless[10], and agents in most countries point out that housing must be a key priority to be settled, the number of transitional homes, or halfway houses for women ex-prisoners is by far insufficient in most countries. Homeless shelters are not considered to be real options – partly because the institutional setting, the rules etc. are likely to remind women of the prison – as indicated by the French research - partly because of the pride and the perception of homeless shelters to be a place for people at the bottom end of society, as found by the Hungarian research. Housing solutions were found to be inappropriate in Catalonia: the lack of housing measures was emphasised in the report.

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[10] Data from other research in the UK indicates that while 10% of women are homeless upon entering the prison, one third of women loose their homes and possessions during imprisonment. According to the prison administration in France, 10% of prisoners who leave the prison do not know where they will live and 18% lost what they possessed before prison.

The available few places are offered by three shelters, yet only for women on third degree or probation. Some of the shelters apply various selection criteria for admittance. On the positive side it must be noted however, that the (external) mother and child unit provides appropriate service for women leaving prison with children. Germany should be mentioned as one of the few positive examples in housing solutions: a regulation ensures that the rent of the imprisoned is paid for one year, and also, housing departments seem to offer tangible help for those released in finding affordable accommodation. Several women in Germany reported that their flats were maintained during imprisonment or that they found flats quickly after their release with the help of social services, NGO-s or the housing department. Yet it must be noted that currently a major reform takes place in Germany from January 2005 and its potential impact on such welfare benefits is unclear. In summary, housing is proved to be one of the most neglected aspects of resettlement – while it is considered to be an absolute precondition for reintegration. Without housing, women can hardly get a job, education, attend drug programs and last but not least: even think about regaining their children.

All in all, getting employment was not the first priority for some of the women in the research in the first weeks after release. Quite a few women consciously postponed looking for a job because they did not feel ready for employment until more important things are settled. This was especially emphasised in the research findings of the National Reports of Germany and England/ Wales. While in Hungary on the other hand, the majority of women attempted to find work in the very first weeks after release. Also in the Italian research some women were very motivated to find work immediately after release. The French Report points out that women belonging to the three different patterns approached the issue of work and reintegration differently. For 'penal customer women' due to their lack of skills and multiple disadvantages, stable and regular work was not a realistic target, while 'normal criminal women' believed they would be able to find work without much difficulty.

While there could be differences in the timing and intensity of job search, it was clearly shown in all countries that only a few women gained work within 1-2 months after release and even this work was usually low-skilled and -paid, insecure and gendered. Lack of skills and education for the great majority of women prisoners is an objective difficulty, however, the prison did not improve their labour-market position either. Women after release tend to search for jobs that they did inside – as the Italian Report notes. Thus cleaning, domestic work, clothing industry, assembly line work are among the most likely work gained. However, in many cases women are given part-time, temporary or seasonal contracts - or no contract at all and thus they become part of the black economy, which only further reinforces their vulnerable position. Research in Hungary found that several women experienced gender-specific vulnerability, some of them employed as housekeeper or domestic aid were sexually harassed, while other women ex-prisoners were approached with offers for prostitution and surrogate motherhood. Another gender-specific difficulty identified in several reports, was women's struggle to cope with family obligations, especially childcare – while searching for and especially, keeping a job – a situation which often led to a hardly manageable double burden. As the Spanish report notes, the difficulties women faced after release in

finding work, are linked to structurally difficult position of women in the labour market in Spain and in other European countries.

The criminal record formally, and stigmatisation informally caused a varying degree of difficulty for the women in the job search. Especially in Hungary the criminal record was found to be a major barrier: all interviewed women named it as the key problem, since most women were asked to present it as part of the recruitment process at both public and private employers. The criminal record was thus a very real, practical barrier yet in some cases women did not apply for jobs fearing that the 'certificate of no criminal record' would be anyway asked for – this way the criminal record also acted as a barrier against further job-search. Yet in other countries as well the criminal record presented a barrier to employment for some women: in France, due to a differentiated regulation of the criminal record, ex-prisoners especially for public jobs may be refused, as it happened to one of the women in the French research. Many women in the German research mentioned stigmatisation against ex-prisoners as a real difficulty, although the German regulations require the applicant to inform the employer only in certain cases about their record. In the UK there are legal and insurance company prohibitions against employing people convicted of certain crimes in certain jobs, however, the informal stigma 'works' in other cases as well. In fact, the ex-prisoners' stigma, according to several reports, became an important determinant of women's self-perception.

The few women who were successful in gaining employment contracts due to their own initiative, usually did not reveal their ex-prisoner status to the employers. A few other women started to work in the family business, and yet others found employment through contacts made in prison (e.g. through NGO-s[11]) and through official job schemes specifically designed for ex-prisoners or for marginalized people in the labour market (e.g. in France, Germany and Italy). As the Spanish Report points out, those schemes were considered successful where only 1 or 2 ex-prisoners were employed together with other employees at so-called insertion companies – in contrast to projects only employing ex-prisoners or people in third degree which often reproduced the dynamics and problems of the prison setting. All in all, it must be emphasised that only very few women succeeded in gaining any income from employment – and the majority of these few who did, often could not cover all their expenses from the part-time/ temporary and underpaid jobs.

Once again, for some women the labour-market integration is not a realistic target, given their responsibility for their 'matrifocal' families or the long list of their other needs and problems which disables any engagement in work. This is especially problematic since according to the Report of Spain/ Catalonia, access to jobs increasingly defines citizenship – and if the unemployment benefit is considered to be the main social benefit offered by the welfare state, these women will remain to be completely marginalized. The Italian Report argues that in the recently transformed labour market in Italy, even temporary interruption of the labour activity may lead to an inability to return to this

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[11] There are several examples for women working in third degree in Catalonia for ARED, a private foundation – and also in the French Report women who found work through associations met in prison.

crucial context of social integration. In fact, repeated reflections on the underlying transformation and deficiencies of the welfare state were included in most reports.

Access to welfare benefits varied greatly among the countries as well as among the women. While in Germany many women gained benefits from the job centre (e.g. unemployment benefit) or social welfare benefits, in Hungary only very few women gained access to any meaningful benefit – in most cases, to childcare benefits. In Hungary there are no benefits targeted at helping ex-prisoners' reintegration. Even prisoners who worked are excluded from unemployment benefit due to prison work not contributing to social security. Also, most interviewed women in Hungary were not fully aware of all welfare options – and felt especially lost in the various bureaucracies. Ex-prisoners in some countries e.g. France and Spain, are entitled for release benefits if they meet the selection criteria, from which often prisoners with short sentences or drug addicts may be excluded. Yet, access to all benefits requires official documents – thus illegal immigrants are often excluded – and in some cases, also homeless people. In several cases women talked bitterly about the number of application forms to be filled out, or about their confusion and lack of ability to navigate among the agencies. Some women actually felt that there was too much talk about helping and too little actual assistance for them.

In some cases agents interpreted women's ability to cope with difficult circumstances in a gendered way, sometimes attributing special value to women's ability to maintain their social networks or benefit more easily from the help of family – e.g. mentioned as a reason for women's reluctance to use the assistance of state institutions (e.g. in France). However, in some cases agents actually use the discourse about women's natural abilities and resourcefulness without realising the danger of justifying the enormous pressure on women who have to cope with the above-detailed list of serious challenges simultaneously, as pointed out by the Spanish report.

In summary, upon leaving prison most women have to face an extraordinarily long and broad range of crucial problems simultaneously, in a period when they suffer from very real symptoms of post-prison disorientation. In this period an attitude of mistrust was found to be characteristic for many women, especially towards state institutions. Many of them can at best rely on the support from the family, despite the often deep damages and conflicts such relationships suffered due to imprisonment. Our research supports the view that in most cases prisons do not give vocational skills and training that would improve women's labour-market opportunities, and do not prepare women for the realities of the labour-market e.g. with the much needed job search skills. In the field of housing support, major deficiencies were found in most countries. In terms of financial assistance, the first few months proved to be critical for many women – and lacking a comprehensive funding strategy practically in all countries. Apart from one or two exceptional success stories, many other women – perhaps the majority – struggle in one or more key aspects of their life, while a few women find themselves in fully marginalized, excluded positions. Both the French, the Hungarian and the Italian Reports point out that patterns of primary exclusion tend to be reinforced by the prison and during the period after

prison. While the reasons for this are various, a few key issues are addressed below in the section about the institutional setting.

II.   Institutional Support for the Transition and Issues of Co-ordination

Problems and difficulties of in-prison preparation for release were covered in chapter three of the report. Next, the continuity between in-prison and post-prison services will be addressed as reflected in women's experience and agent's discourse. In most countries agencies such as probation service play theoretically a key role in ensuring transition from prison into life after release – therefore, research findings regarding probation will be summarised below. Also, NGO-s increasingly are seen to provide the role of 'bridge' between the two worlds, thus their involvement in the process of women's reintegration will be discussed as well. Finally, issues of co-ordination among various agents will be addressed in the analysis.

Several reports listed examples for women experiencing a lack of continuity between in-prison and post-prison services, among others, in the field of education or training, healthcare and drug treatment. The latter was especially emphasised by the National Report of Spain/ Catalonia, where the discontinuity and difficulty of harmonisation was due to the different approaches and aims of treatment of drug addiction as exercised within the prison on the one hand and by the association after prison on the other hand. In other instances healthcare treatment of even severely ill women could not continue immediately after release due to lacking access to social security, medical certificates or personal documents as preconditions to treatment. The importance of pre-release measures in ensuring continuity between in-prison and post-prison services was reflected in the findings of the German research. Women who had access to outside contacts and services during their imprisonment through e.g. day-releases or open regime, experienced a smooth transition, since the needed contacts were already established and continued to assist them with supervision after release. On the other hand women who had no special measures for preparation, experienced a lack of continuity. And women certainly need the continuity not only in order to gain vital medication, but also to make years of training meaningful: a woman interviewed in France actually wrote to the public prosecutor to enable her to stay longer in prison so that she can finish the last unit of her course. Apart from these examples, the most significant discontinuity is experienced in the lack of arrangements for the time after release: in all countries there are still women leaving prison homeless, without savings, jobs, skills or even documents.

The lack of throughcare was identified as a key issue in all countries – perhaps in Germany results were slightly better. In general, responsibility for throughcare tends to be lost among the various actors and agencies which results in women being left alone in the critical period of the transition. Prisons ultimately see their duty ending on the day of release, 'at the prison gate' – as some agents put it in the Hungarian research. In most cases, while prisons must enable or encourage preparation for release, it is not considered to be their responsibility that all released prisoners must have at least basic preconditions to start a new life. Prison agents in the Hungarian research argue that throughcare is primarily the responsibility of probation and possibly, that of NGO-s – while the job of

the prison is to enable their work as much as possible. In fact prisons and prison personnel often do not even have feedback on prisoners' reintegration – only if the women ultimately return as recidivists.

Probation Service and Throughcare

Our research shows that the probation service[12] does not deliver adequate throughcare in most cases. Firstly, 'throughcare' would indicate that the relationship of the women and the probation officer/ social service agent[13] starts prior to the women's release and lasts until after release. None of these two conditions is secured in most cases. As to the start of the relationship, it is not ensured by legislation in all countries that the probation officer has to meet the person prior to release – and often this is disabled by the geographical mismatch between regional/ national women's prisons and the actual residence of the women. As to the end of the relationship, in most countries probation officers' responsibility lasts until the end of the penal sanction: thus, mostly as long as women are on conditional release. However, if someone is released after the full delivery of the penal sentence in prison, usually no probation officer is assigned for the time after release.[14] These women may not even be in touch with the probation service at all. However, the research identified other problems in the working of post-prison probation/ prison social services.

Based on the findings of National Report of Italy, these can be summarised as the following:

-Probation agents are too closely associated with prison authorities, women often see primarily their control function. The interviewed women in Italy and Hungary emphasised the control function of probation agents, and many feared that they could be returned to prison. The Italian Report argues, that as the service also belongs to the Ministry of Justice, the unity and shared ways of working between the agency and prisons are especially tangible. The Report of Spain/ Catalonia also notes the mistrust and hierarchy which characterise women's relationship to their social agents in third degree

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[12] The MIP research did not address the time on probation in Spain/ Catalonia. However, for the women in third degree, the so-called educator fulfils a similar function and the findings of the report are very similar to the conclusions presented above, thus references to the report of Spain/ Catalonia will be made where appropriate. In case of France, members of the prison administration, the so-called insertion and probation councellors are responsible for in-prison preparation for release and orientation, however they do not have responsibility after the release. The National Agency for Employment setup an office, which, through partnership with other public and private institutions helps ex-prisoners in their reintegration efforts.

[13] In Italy it is the so-called Centres of Social Service for Adults (CSSA) that provides control and support for the women released conditionally or moved to an alternative sanction, however, for the sake of simplicity, we will also refer to them as probation agents in this analysis. CSSA belongs to the Ministry of Justice and suffers from the same problems as probation services.

[14] In England all prisoners who had more than a 12 month sentence have access to supervision by the National Probation Service after their release. For some, it may be a condition of their supervision that they attend cognitive behavioral programmes designed to reduce their risk of re-offending (for example, sex offender treatment, cognitive skills). Others may be required to reside in 'approved premises' or hostels run by the National Probation Service. However, in both these examples, provision for women is very limited. For prisoners serving less than a 12 month sentence, there is no state provision of programmes on release. Many women serve short sentences, so have no access to programmes.

and argues that these relationships are very corrupted since both parties know what the other expects to hear and what is at stake.

-Lack of personnel and lack of funds significantly constraints the operation of probation services. In case of Italy and Hungary, agents work on average with 90 people or more, yet financial constraints and staff problems in reintegration-related services were repeatedly emphasised in all other reports as well.

-The training of agents is not adequate to their role, at least not to the role of social enabler, resource investigator and networker. The findings of the German research indicate that it is not impossible to reconcile the control function of probation officers with an effective support function: at least some of the interviewed women considered probation agents to be useful as sources of information and yet others developed a closer, trusting relationship with their probation officers.

-Programs often do not correspond with released women's actual needs, since women do not participate in the design of measures and programs.

-The lack of co-ordination is generally noted between agents active in reintegration, that is, probation and/or other state agencies and NGO-s. Individual programs are launched without co-ordination with other agencies, thus efforts are not as efficient as they should be, which is especially problematic in an underresourced system. A lack of general reinsertion strategy is also responsible for poor co-ordination among agents. The discontinuities in the operation of the large network of institutions that women face after release, was addressed by the National Report of France as well. However, the German Report emphasises that most agents in their research talked appreciatively about the co-operation among in-prison and post-prison agencies despite the generally tightening financial means.

NGO-s and Throughcare
Although the development level of NGO involvement in reintegration-oriented work both in-prison and after prison is very different among the countries, the research shows a number of similar findings regarding the involvement and problems of NGO-s.

Interviewed women often find any contact with NGO representatives not only useful but refreshing during imprisonment – which has a lot to do with their 'civic' status and women's ability to engage in a relationship not fully determined by the penitentiary. However, such contacts are often especially rewarding during the difficult time of transition from prison to liberty – there are a number of examples for women gaining access to continued employment, housing, cash, supportive words etc. through their former contacts, perhaps teachers, trainers or any other function. Certainly due to their civic status, women can develop a non-hierarchical and trusting relationship with them already during imprisonment and maintain these contacts after their release.

However, in many countries there are NGO-s explicitly created to help ex-prisoners' reintegration after their release. The Italian research indicates that many of the

interviewed women used the services of a volunteer agency after their release in e.g. finding a job. The French Report points to the innovative solutions developed by associations, and contrasts it to women's unwillingness to work with state agencies. In Catalonia, only very few NGO-s are directly linked to the closed prison regime – and the report warns that too close operation with(in) the closed prison regime may lead to even an NGO taking over a quasi-prison culture, while the different aims and principles of working may lead to a mismatch and conflicts between prison authorities and NGO-s. While in England many NGO-s offer services for female ex-prisoners, the interviews with NGO experts contributed to a better understanding of the difficulties of NGOs work. Due to the high level of development of NGO activities in in-prison and post-prison integration services, the experiences of agents in England may prove to be especially relevant, thus the research findings are summarised below and complemented by the experience of NGO-s in other countries:

-Lack of funds was mentioned to be a real issue by all representatives of NGOs. A related phenomenon is the tendency of prisons to exploit NGOs: by requesting their help and not paying for it. The very few Hungarian NGOs also confirmed that prisons require their assistance more and more yet often fail to offer any compensation for the services referring to their own poor financial position. This however, may be interpreted as an overresponsibilization of NGO-s, without matching adequate funding to their work.

-Centralisation and accreditation of programs was mentioned by NGO experts in England to be a significant barrier to their work and to flexible services. However, the lack of accreditation or standardisation was addressed by some Hungarian and Spanish agents who talked about lack of standardisation of integration measures and programs, as well as lack of quality control, and evaluation of programs. This contrasts may reflect the different development of NGO involvement and different operation of management models, however, clearly both situation can form barriers to work.

-The fragmentation of services was named to be an important barrier to their work and an important cause of frustration. Most projects only offer services to e.g. drug addicted women or only to mentally ill women – yet most women ex-prisoners have a combination of several problems. It must be noted that lack of strategy and co-ordination was emphasised by these agents, despite the fact that the Prison Service for England and Wales – compared to all of the other countries – has demonstrated the highest level of recognition of women prisoners' needs. Agents argue for the need to organise 'one-stop provision' for the women – where they can have access to services corresponding to all of their various needs.

-As also noted by the agents, despite the efforts of the Prison Service, sometimes NGO workers still experience suspicion and obstruction by prison staff. This was also reinforced by some of the interviewed NGO agents in Hungary as well.

-Prejudice against prisoners in general, and against foreign, ethnic minority and women prisoners in particular was named as a barrier in their work by several agents. Such

prejudice against illegal immigrants was also repeatedly addressed by the National Report of Italy.

Thus it may be concluded that while NGO workers are able to develop a trusting relationship with the women, and while certainly there are many other benefits in having more NGO-s work in prisons and in post-prison reintegration, several difficulties are only reproduced by a more intensive involvement of NGOs – in the absence of more strategic co-ordination or funding. That is, lack of funds and personnel, prison overcrowding, and the fragmentation of services (linked to lack of reintegration strategy) tends to threaten their work as well.

The MIP research has showed that on the one hand, women after release from prison suffer from the uncoordinated requirements of various agencies and are often unable to gain access to even those services and benefits that they would be eligible for. Especially in the first few weeks and months after release, they suffer from competing serious and simultaneous demands in multiple fields of their lives, as well as disorientation and the impact of prison deprivations - which is only reinforced by the lack of competent and co-ordinated assistance in reintegration by the various agencies. The research also confirms that NGOs and often, state agents are aware of the fragmentation of services, the deficiencies in co-operation among agencies and the lack of coherent strategies for reintegration. Despite the many similarities however, we should point to key differences identified in the national reports. While in the case of England, the largest difficulty was found in the field of implementation of insertion programs, - and in Germany delivery was halted by budget cuts - in several other countries various basic structural, contextual, infrastructural and institutional conditions as well as a general awareness about women prisoners' needs for reintegration was found to be insufficient.

Appendix: Research Summary
Women, Integration after Prison (MIP): Analysis of the Processes of Socio-Labor Integration of Women Prisoners in Europe

The MIP research project has been carried out within the European Union's Fifth Framework Programme "Improving the base of socio-economic research", with the participation of academic research institutions and NGO-s from six European countries: Spain, Germany, England and Wales, Italy, France and Hungary, under the co-ordination of SURT, a Spanish partner. The project was launched in November 2002 and will be completed by the spring of 2005.

The objective of MIP has been to develop a comparative research project about the reality of women in European prisons and their life after release – with an emphasis on the efficiency of the social and penitentiary policies which promote their social and labour integration in the six participating countries. The research aimed to identify the key factors that affect the social exclusion or integration of imprisoned women. The evaluation of existing social and penitentiary policies and measures for reintegration of women prisoners was a key objective of MIP. The research aims to contribute to their improvement by formulating recommendations based on the research findings.

The MIP project included an analysis of the policy and legislative context in each country as well as an analysis of reinsertion measures, programs run by the different state and non-state agencies during and after the prison. Reports were produced on the demographic, socio-economic and penitentiary aspects of the national legislation and corresponding policy work in every country. The effectiveness of work, education and training programs, measures in the field of ensuring housing, health -and substance abuse treatment in women's prisons, as well as measures impacting social contacts and family relations as well economic resources were addressed in a separate report. National reports were produced after the closure of fieldwork, based on which this comparative report was prepared.

Secondary sources were used for data collection, yet the core of the methodology consisted of a series of interviews with women in each country as well as agent interviews. The first interviews with the women took place during the last weeks of their prison sentence, and were followed by interviews within 1 and 4 months after their release. The final interviews were recorded about 9 months after the release. Detailed life trajectory interviews with two women in each country were also part of the methodology. Interviews with reinsertion agents added insights from prison personnel, parole officers, NGO-s, penitentiary judges and other decision-makers and professionals involved in reinsertion. Due to national differences, variations in the methodology were unavoidable, and in some countries following up women proved to be difficult, however, most teams conducted first interviews with 20 women, and 25 or more professionals working in the criminal justice and penal systems.

We present here the research hypotheses of MIP, which reflect an overall picture about the main avenues of research thinking in the project. The national reports - prepared after the analysis of data collected during the fieldwork - followed a detailed list of research hypothesis. The statements were in some cases adjusted, or new statements were introduced in national reports depending on the relevant issues in the given country. While the comparative report does not address whether specific statements were refuted

or confirmed by various country reports, the content of the chapters of this report corresponds to the topics addressed by the four main research hypothesis.

1. PRIMARY EXCLUSION AND GENDER

Many women in prison were already suffering a degree of social exclusion at the time of their imprisonment. Their situation prior to imprisonment is characterised by multiple disadvantages. Primary exclusion often has gender-specific aspects. The situation of exclusion and gender determine the type of crimes for which certain women are sent to prison:

>-Economic crimes are typical among women prisoners – this type of crime is related to both exclusion and gender.
>-Domestic violence is often directly or indirectly present as a key factor in women's life course.
>-Some women are imprisoned due to crimes committed as a result of multiple dependence on a man (usually partner, or father, or brother etc).
>-In some cases the social networks, the neighbourhood, or multigenerational patterns may strongly influence the type of crime committed.

2. FURTHER EXCLUSION BY PRISON

Imprisonment excludes women who were not socially excluded before their imprisonment and excludes already excluded women still further. Multiple effects of exclusion are at work due to their imprisonment. Women suffer an irrecoverable loss of roots, due to the separation from children and violation of their gender role as mothers and wives.

Prison frequently becomes a factor of secondary exclusion. It does not contribute to the elimination of exclusion processes and mechanisms, on the contrary, it often aggravates them by recreating social and personal conditions that reproduce criminal conduct:

>-During the prison sentence, social contacts of inmates suffer and deteriorate.
>-Prisons do not strengthen skills that are vital for reintegration.
>-Inmates' health conditions often deteriorate both in terms of their physical and psychological well being. Efforts to help inmates to come to terms with their crime/ guilt / etc. are not systematic.

Women's prisons are marginalized due to their small weight in the prison system. The conditions and consequences of imprisonment are influenced by this, e.g. poorer material conditions and access to work and training opportunities, or difficulties for visitors due to significant distance from home.

There is a contradiction between the principles and the practice of social and criminal justice regarding the function of prisons. Despite the emphasis in legislation on social integration, actual daily prison life does not reflect social integration as a priority. There is a remarkable difference between the level of discourse and actual reality in

prison life, regarding the extent to which social integration is actually addressed. The penitentiary system and social integration cannot be smoothly reconciled, which reinforces the social exclusion of some of societies' most vulnerable groups.

3. REINTEGRATION MEASURES IN PRISONS

Presently applied measures and programs for the social integration or reintegration of women ex-prisoners are inadequate.

-Work within prisons fails to supply inmates with marketable occupational skills or other useful, convertible skills for other areas after release.

-Training and education in prisons does not sufficiently contribute to the acquisition of education and skills needed after release.

-Women do not receive enough preparation and support for their smooth return to family and other intimate ties and integration into the community.

-Programs in prisons are gendered, which often reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles.

4. BARRIERS TO REINTEGRATION AFTER RELEASE

Several barriers to the social reintegration of women ex-prisoners remain. The prison experience is often an obstacle to generating adaptive strategies and to the acquisition of key capacities that are necessary for an effective insertion process. Skills that would be needed after release are not developed by prisons.

In regards to social-labour integration, women find themselves in difficult circumstances, and this can lead to the accumulation of situations of exclusion.

Upon leaving prison, women often face a new "conviction" in that the effects of prison can lead to an increase in their rootlessness or rupture in their lives. Thus new conditions are required in order to overcome the effects of prisonization, as well as to reconstruct their lives.

The necessities for social integration must be attended even before the need for job integration, although both levels of social integration are integrally related, neither of them can be contemplated as being independent of one another.

The continuity between and co-ordination of integration related services is insufficient.

-Continuity is not sufficient between activities of prison authorities and agencies which provide services after the release (including state institutions and NGO-s).

-Ex-prisoners suffer from the uncoordinated requirements of various state bureaucracies. Their access to vital personal documents and welfare is slow, troublesome and often means further financial burden.

-State employees as parole officers are strongly associated with the prison, thus are often not trusted.

Many ex-prisoners cannot be successful in reintegration. Even if they do not return to prison, many remain marginalized and often in a situation worse than their previous situation.