

Active Citizenship in (Prison) Communities

Prisoners Active Citizenship



What is active Citizenship?

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

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

Active citizenship: the action of engaging with issues, ideas, people and communities - whether on a local, regional or national scale



Benefits of AC

For participants

Building knowledge, skills, empathy and a sense of empowerment

For the prison

Better morale and wellbeing among prisoners

Better relationships between prisoners and staff

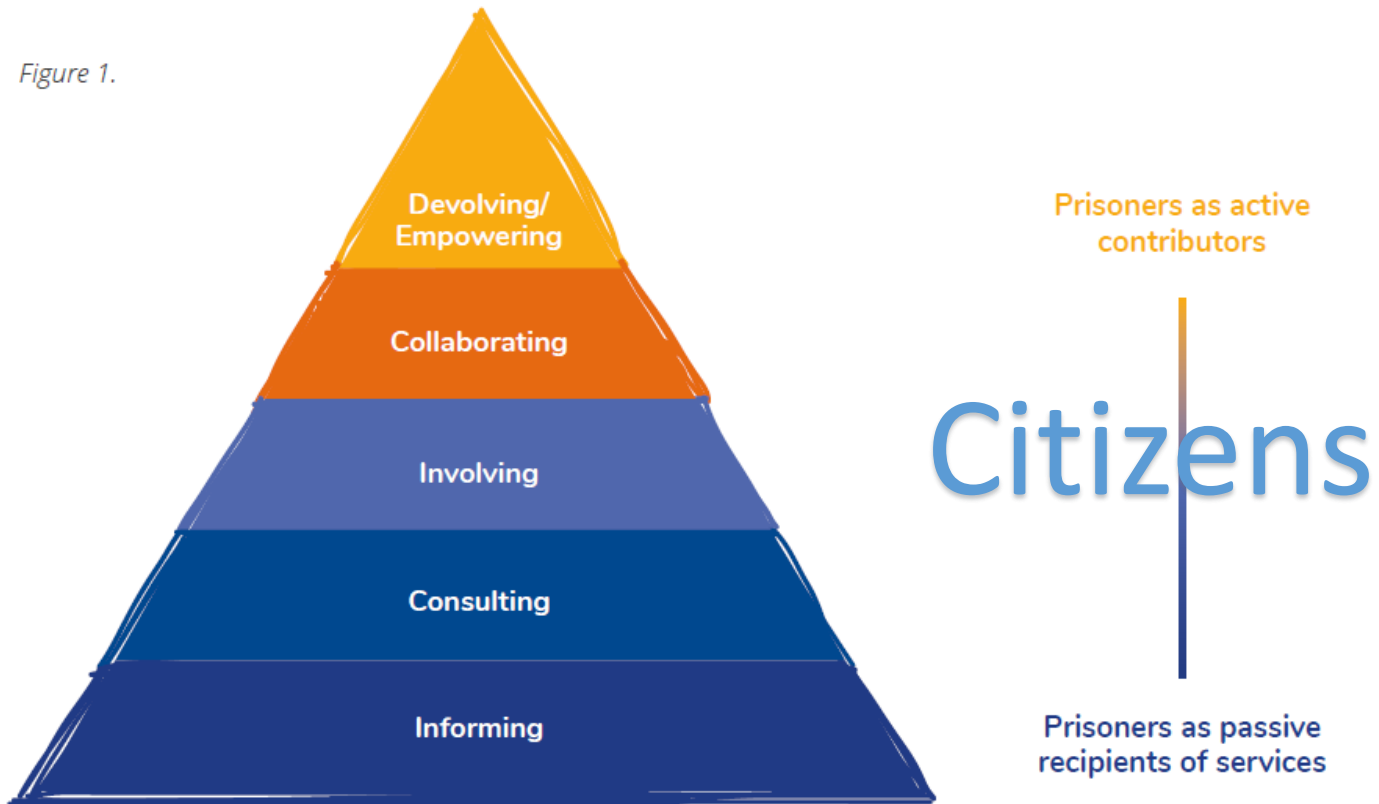
For society

Released prisoners with better skills and qualifications

Citizens who are ready to engage with society



From PAC to AC



An example to translate to the community

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

Informing: Spreading information about books is available

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

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

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

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

Thematic classification in prison environment

- Organizing and supporting prison/leisure activities.
 - E.g. Organizing a quiz or sport activities for fellow prisoners, taking care of animals
- Democratic participation = Involving prisoners in decision-making about the prison regime
 - E.g. Prisoner councils, prisoner forums, inmate committees, representative councils, prison forums, student councils
- Activities that bring members of the community into prison
 - E.g. Prison-university partnerships, singing together in a choir, using gym facilities

Thematic classification in communities

- Cultural participation
- Social participation
- Community participation
- Political/ civic participation

from passive



to



active



There are two main ways you can introduce active citizenship into a (prison) community

Embedding: changing the degree of participation in existing work

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



PRISONERS' ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: AN INSIGHT IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

Besides deprivation of liberty, prisoners preserve all their rights as human beings, including their rights on 'active citizenship'.



SURVEY RESEARCH

PARTICIPANTS

129 professionals, working in 73 different prisons across Europe

Belgium: 37	Croatia: 36
the Netherlands: 20	Italy: 14
Hungary: 9	the UK: 6
Ireland: 3	Norway: 2
Bulgaria: 1	

TYPES OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Peer interventions: Prisoners often provide **emotional and practical support** and **mediate** between other prisoners in case of conflict in an unorganized, informal manner and this every week.

If consultative types of **democratic participation** are organized, and if prisoners are involved in **activities with people coming from the outside**, this only happens very rarely.

MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS OF ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

- Improvement of team work skills
- Implementation of prisoners' suggestions and ideas
- Better relations between prison staff and prisoners
- Better atmosphere in prison

MAIN BARRIERS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- Safety/ security rules
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of knowledge about prisoners' active citizenship
- Lack of prison staff



Examples of projects ‘Learning Areas’

- Involving prisoners in organising activities
- Democratic voices
- Peers together
- Outsiders in



From evaluation of the LA to the Toolkit

- Builds on the experience of partner projects
- Draws on literature around prisoner engagement
- Brings together practical tools to support active citizenship



Main chapters

1. Deciding your aims
2. Outcome planning tool
3. Levels of participation
4. Basic conditions



Deciding your aims

Thinking about the end goals
of your active citizenship project

Activity Deciding your aims — key questions



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

Why is this project important to you?

What will be the impact on everyone involved?

On prisoners?

On prison staff?

On facilitators?

On you/your organisation?

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

How will you measure the project's impact?

How will you disseminate the results of the project?

Outcomes

- Identifying your aims, defined for each person and organisation involved in your project, and helping measure the success of your project.

Activity

Outcome planning tool



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

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

Example

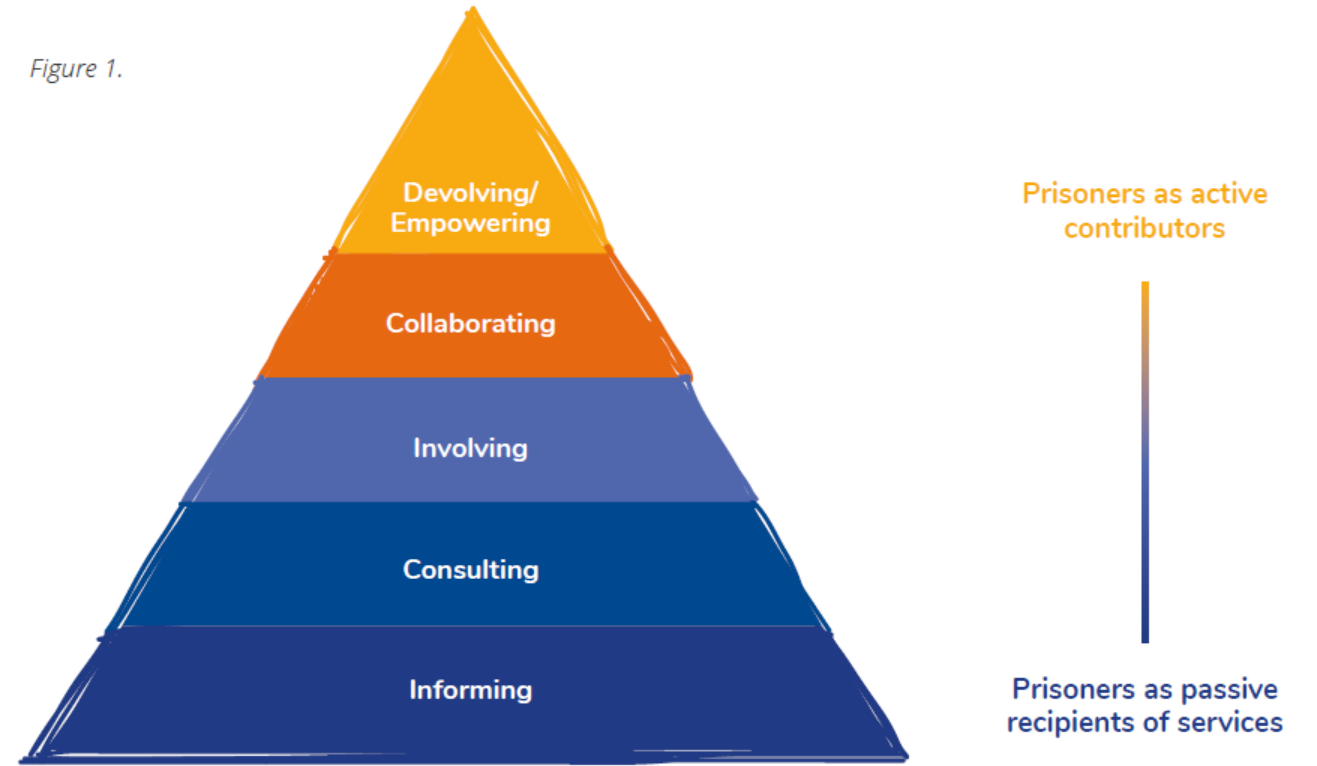
Overall aim: *Write this along the top of your grid*

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

Level of participation

What would different levels look like for your project?

Figure 1.



What issues might you face? How could you overcome them?

- Time
- Location
- Resources
- Support of staff
- Prisoner support
- Language
- Security
- Communication
- Difference in feelings and approach to prison life topics

2.2 Basic conditions

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

Basic condition	Tips
Time Time needed to plan, find support, recruit participants, build relationships within the prison and deliver your work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Take time to inform all stakeholders (potential participants, prison staff, prison management, and other stakeholders) about the purpose of the project. Be as clear and complete as possible in providing information about the purpose and goals.2 Allow enough time to create support for the project. If this means that you need a few months (or more) to do this, you should. Allow relationships and trust to be built.3 Be clear about time limits — when the work will begin and end, and what will happen afterwards.4 Ensure enough time given within the project to account for disruptions (e.g. strikes, delays in receiving authorisation, slow group progression).5 Assign a dedicated project coordinator who will make up a time schedule. Ensure everyone is aware of this time schedule.6 What time commitment from prison, education or other staff is needed for the project to succeed? Whose agreement is needed to make this available? This includes your own time.
Difference in feelings and approach to prison life topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Make sure that everybody understands that within the 'process' all topics are valid.2 Explain that some topics within process activities or meetings (even those which are difficult) are necessary to ensure better results.3 Understand that this is not always self-evident for prison staff.4 Creating room for a natural process to happen is very important for the participants.
Location Where the activity takes place — in which prison and in which space within that prison	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Choose a prison setting that will allow you to deliver your work, in terms of understanding and supporting the project, security restrictions, ease of access, etc.2 Explain to the prison management why a good space is important for the project — make clear what you need and why. In this way, you can ensure you have a dedicated space to work in as early as possible.3 This space should be accessible to all, where participants feel safe. It should have sufficient light, ventilation and comfortable seats.
Resources The materials needed to complete your activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">1 Establish as early as possible what materials are needed for the project.2 Explain to the prison management why certain materials are important for the project — make clear what you need and why.3 Establish what can be brought into prison under security restrictions.4 Source materials — approach the prison to see what they can provide, but also approach external contacts (e.g. source textbooks from local colleges or branded T-shirts from an outside charity).

How to access resources

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

Coming soon to the webpage

- Downloadable activity worksheets
- The PAC project report researching the evidence base for active participation
- The PAC team's set of policy recommendations for governments across Europe

Thank you!



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