

Calypsos Project

| Advocacy Letter |

Dear Sir/Madam,

The "**Calypsos**" Project, "Supporting social inclusion, specific needs, and the improvement of basic skills for prisoners in Europe", with Erasmus + reference number 2016-1-ES01-KA204-025656, has been developed as a strategic action involving four European universities (Universidad de Almeria, Universidade do Minho, Università di Roma Sapienza, and Universidad de La Laguna), two NGOs (Plena Inclusión Canarias and Asociación Meridianos), the Spanish General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions, and an Italian public entity, the Istituto degli Innocenti. The project has been coordinated by the Adult Education Centre of Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

The priority of the CALYPSOS Project was to focus education in prisons on diversity and to fight against the discrimination and segregation of the prisoners, following the European principles of Longlife Learning. This is true considering the excessively low rates of school success and qualifications of people in prison result in greater social exclusion, which makes it even more difficult for them to reintegrate into today's society. From this perspective, CALYPSOS Strategic Association considers that the characteristics of the prison population indicate that a considerable part of them had specific needs in educational support (SNES) that mediate their academic performance. These SNES include cognitive deficits related to attention, planning, memory, problem solving, and self-control, among others. As these deficits have been related to executive functioning, CALYPSOS Strategic Association proposes that the improvement of current academic success and qualification rates involves the detection of specific deficiencies in executive functions of inmates attending education for adults in prison.

As in other matters, there is a gap between academic outputs and real-world practices. Often, practice is not scientifically based and research outputs are not applied by professionals. Additionally, often there are legislative barriers or organizational structures, public or private, that do not facilitate the adoption of scientifically-based practices. The CALYPSOS Partnership, involving academic and professionals entities, is attempting to bridge this gap by promoting a real change in basic skills for prisoners in Europe. More than a Transfer of Knowledge issue, this partnership is trying to empower institutions and all professionals that work with this population.

To ensure an effective change in Europe and to bridge the gap between research and practice, it is crucial that decision-makers influence public policies. This is even more important when considering that public funds are supporting this kind of projects. To be consequent on the research investments is to promote the impact of science based results, facilitating the application of the results and changing public policies.

In this context, in the end of the project, the CALYPSOS Strategic Association have agreed that the recommendations below, part of the project's scientific final report, should be shared to the entities that can make the difference in the improvement of the basic skills for prisoners in Europe. The importance of your institution could has a relevant role in this work.

Among the Project conclusions, it is recommended:

- To address the assessed cognitive deficits and use strategies to enhance planning by training, taking into account that the levels of flexibility and memory

- To work with more practical assumptions, increasing the capacity of reasoning and extending the working memory
- To start working with young inmates

In the end of the project, certainly all agree that a new phase is starting. The CALYPSOS Strategic Association has the commitment to employ efforts to inform political bodies about the conclusions of this project, their main achievements, and the recommendations produced. The Stakeholders have the power to promote changings.

The end of a project is a new start, but at centre are always the people. As T.S Elliot wrote in *Little Gidding*,

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring...
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Thank you for your time. In attachment we are sending the scientific report of the project. We hope that we can count on you for your support.

Brussels, October 30th, 2018

The coordinators CALYPSOS Strategic Association