Smart prison and digital innovations in prison and probation service of Finland

Pia Puolakka

Smart Prison project was accomplished during 2018-2022. The project implemented Finland's first Smart Prison in 2021 and various new digital services for offenders. Our intention was to create a new prison concept: a prison as a learning environment for a life without crime, where digital services would support this concept. It was also the intention to support digital inclusion of inmates, hitherto digitally marginalized, and provide equal access to public services compared to other citizens. An important part was to increase collaboration with our partners like NGOs via digital means. The project was a success both nationally and internationally (see References). Thanks to the work done in the project team and with the chosen vendor, we are now ready to implement the Smart Prison concept to every closed prison unit in Finland. Digitalized prisons support modern, independent and collaborative rehabilitation and reintegration.

Our first Smart Prison was a women's prison for 100 inmates in Hämeenlinna, Finland. In every single cell of this prison there's a personal cell device with a digital system installed for inside prison management and communication and to a limited extent to outside communication. The digital system was named **Doris**, a woman's name known in many European countries! All prison staff, prison's health care unit, Assessment center (sentence planning of inmates) and Criminological library are using the system besides inmates. The features of the Doris include:

– Requests: appointment requests and other inquiries from inmates to staff and back to the inmates
– Chat messaging: from staff to inmates for quick daily communication and informing

– Electronic calendar: for inmates' own entries and reservations made by staff users
– Notice board: for prison wide notices and shared information about events, visitors and exceptions in the daily routines
– Electronic material bank: guidelines, forms and self-help material in electronic form
– E- and audiobooks
– Online canteen
– E-learning opportunities: Moodle-platform and online video lessons from a nearby school
– Video calls inside prison with staff, health care unit and Assessment center
– Video calls to outside of the prison with relatives / close ones, public service providers, NGOs and other partner organizations including telehealth solutions
– Inmate e-mail: with relatives, close ones and officials outside prison
– Restricted access to Internet: websites for rehabilitative, health care, educational, vocational and social services
– Open Office tools: for writing documents and other official papers and homework for school

It seems that the inmates find the system easy to use and the majority is using the system daily. Especially the possibility to use services and contact to relatives directly from the cell has been really welcomed in closed prison circumstances. The collaboration with various outside partners has also started in a totally new way thanks to cell devices. Online studying opportunities and digital skills courses have been used a lot, and there's a growing need

Pia Puolakka, Senior Specialist, Team Leader, Prison and Probation Service of Finland

for services like these. We have collected feedback from both staff and inmates to make sure that the content we provide in cell devices is meaningful and targeted to inmates' rehabilitative needs. In this way, we thought, it would be possible to even reduce recidivism – and fulfill the main strategical target of our work.

Hämeenlinna Smart Prison is supposed to function as a pilot environment for new innovative and digital practices before extending them to other units. The development of Doris has proceeded well, and the refining and modifying of features will continue to make the system better fit the inmates' and staff's needs. Thanks to the rapid development, we were able to extend the concept to the second Smart Prison, **Pyhäselkä**, in East Finland in December 2022. This closed unit for men inmates has now cell devices in one ward, and all wards will follow during Spring 2023. The third Smart Prison will be implemented in **Kylmäkoski** in Autumn 2023.

Some new innovative services, besides Doris, piloted in the Hämeenlinna Smart Prison have been already extended to other units. In three prisons inmates are training Artificial Intelligence (AI) as prison work, which provides a very non-traditional way of prison work and trains inmates' digital and cognitive skills. In all our units we have also enabled access to Helsinki University's online courses on the basics of Artificial Intelligence – **Elements of AI**. Digital and AI literacy are basic skills in a modern digitalized society. Some of our units are also testing virtual reality (VR) programs assisted by prison psychologist to increase well-being and manage f. ex. social anxiety. These VR programs can also be used for relieving withdrawal symptoms.

Prison and Probation Service has lately been interested in the use of AI in offender management too. The latest innovation we're currently testing in three units, is a platform for automated public service recommendation and guidance which is based on **Aurora AI** – a national artificial intelligence program intended to provide access in a co-ordinated way to all public service providers. A similar AI program, **RISE AI**, is to be implemented in our new offender management system (OMS) for analyzing offenders and suggesting them suitable services for their sentence time as a tool to help with the placing of inmates to our units. The test version will be implemented and ready for pilot use in February 2024.

We are waiting that these new modern ways of rehabilitation, vocational training and overall offender management will increase in the future. The modern society requires skills not typically taught in prisons like digital skills and self-management, and even understanding the role of AI in modern society's everyday life and tasks. Prisons' practices should mirror the practices of society in general – we can't lack behind!

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