

Social Entrepreneurship: a Crucial Component of Prison Reform in Greece - Recommending a SIB model.

Work, and the protection of labor rights, have always been the subject of intense ideological and political conflict. The right to work for people living in detention facilities has been, historically, an issue with significant ramifications as to the capacity of policies and reform efforts aimed at fulfilling the requirements for enforcing a more progressive prison model and for modernizing penitentiaries.

The connection between incarceration and labor has been a huge concern for scientists and scholars. Research the world over has led to the conclusion that working while serving a sentence helps reduce relapse. Moreover, research evidence suggests that inmates who work benefit greatly, both during their term but also afterwards, in their life as civilians.

It's against this backdrop that many countries have exerted efforts to develop enterprises to employ prison inmates, to provide them with job security. As concerns the legal form of such newly-founded businesses, the choice of making Social Enterprises of them was made consciously and not at random since, among others, their philosophy is based on solidarity and teamwork, democratic decision-making, the principle of equity and parity, with each member having one vote while their fundamental aspect doesn't lie with profitmaking: it's social.

There are several examples of countries having embedded social policies in their national rehabilitation models, making them an integral and indivisible part thereof. Those policies focus on enhancing social and work integration for prisoners or ex-prisoners, inside and outside prisons, by involving them in social enterprises with particularly positive results. There are several in-prison counseling programs, preparing inmates for their social and work integration after dismissal, and others offering employment and professional qualifications in prison, the ultimate aim being for inmates to acquire, upgrade or update skills so as to ensure their smooth reintegration.

The economic dimension of the abovementioned ventures is very interesting. In order to reduce costs and optimize efficiency, the model of private, public and third sector partnerships has been adopted with particularly encouraging results. The model was initially implemented in the United Kingdom (Social Impact Bonds or Paying for Success Programs). Partnerships between public and private operators (PPPs) can thus be developed. The government sets specific targets (such as a 10% rate of recidivism) and covers a specified amount of the total budget. The rest of budget is secured through private funding. Once the objectives are met, investors shall receive the amount they had initially invested along with an increment.

The PPP model is a highly interesting approach which can be placed at the core of reforming the Greek prison system. Our article discusses the use, on a pilot basis, of public-private partnerships on Greek agricultural prisons and proposes methods on how can we evaluate cross-sector performance and impact and how are benefits shared across partners and sectors.

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