

Mapping survey

**Collaborations between Third Sector Organizations (TSOs)
and Prisons in Europe**

Introduction

The survey was conducted as a mapping exercise in January–February 2025 within the framework of the WORKPRIS project. We targeted third-sector organizations (TSOs) and prison services across 17 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey. Our goal was to better understand existing collaborations between TSOs and prison services. The mapping results will serve as a foundation for further exploration of best practices and future discussions on cooperation.

Main Objectives

Quantitative Analysis from Close-ended questions

- Existing co-operation between TSOs and Prisons in respondents' countries
- Is co-operation regulated by law or agreements?
- Areas of improvement, difficulties, and success
- Vacuum for services to be provided to prison staff

Qualitative Analysis from Open-ended questions

- Support needed by TSOs and Prisons
- Type of services currently being provided
- Ways of managing difficulties
- Pros and Cons of collaborations
- Improvements that could be made

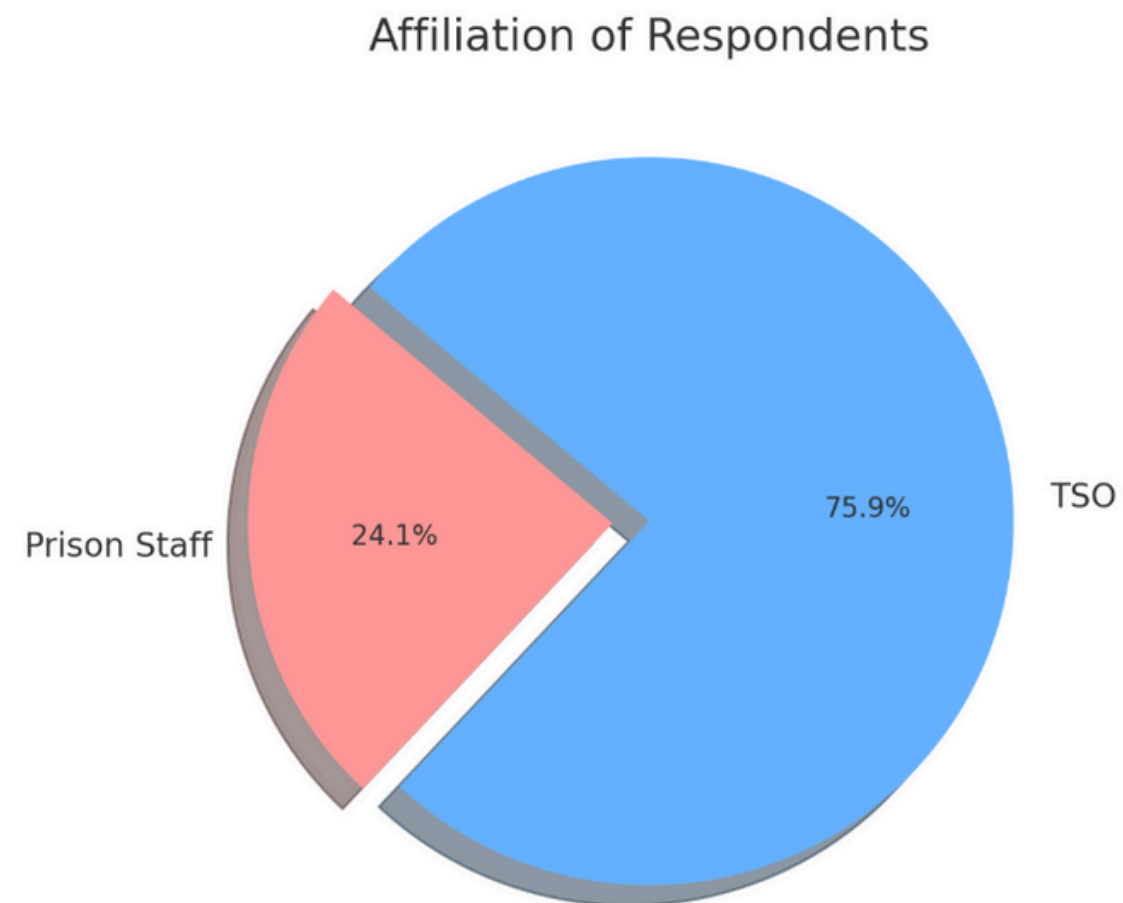
Reservations

This survey was an effort to map the expert opinions and impressions of professionals working in TSOs and prisons around Europe.

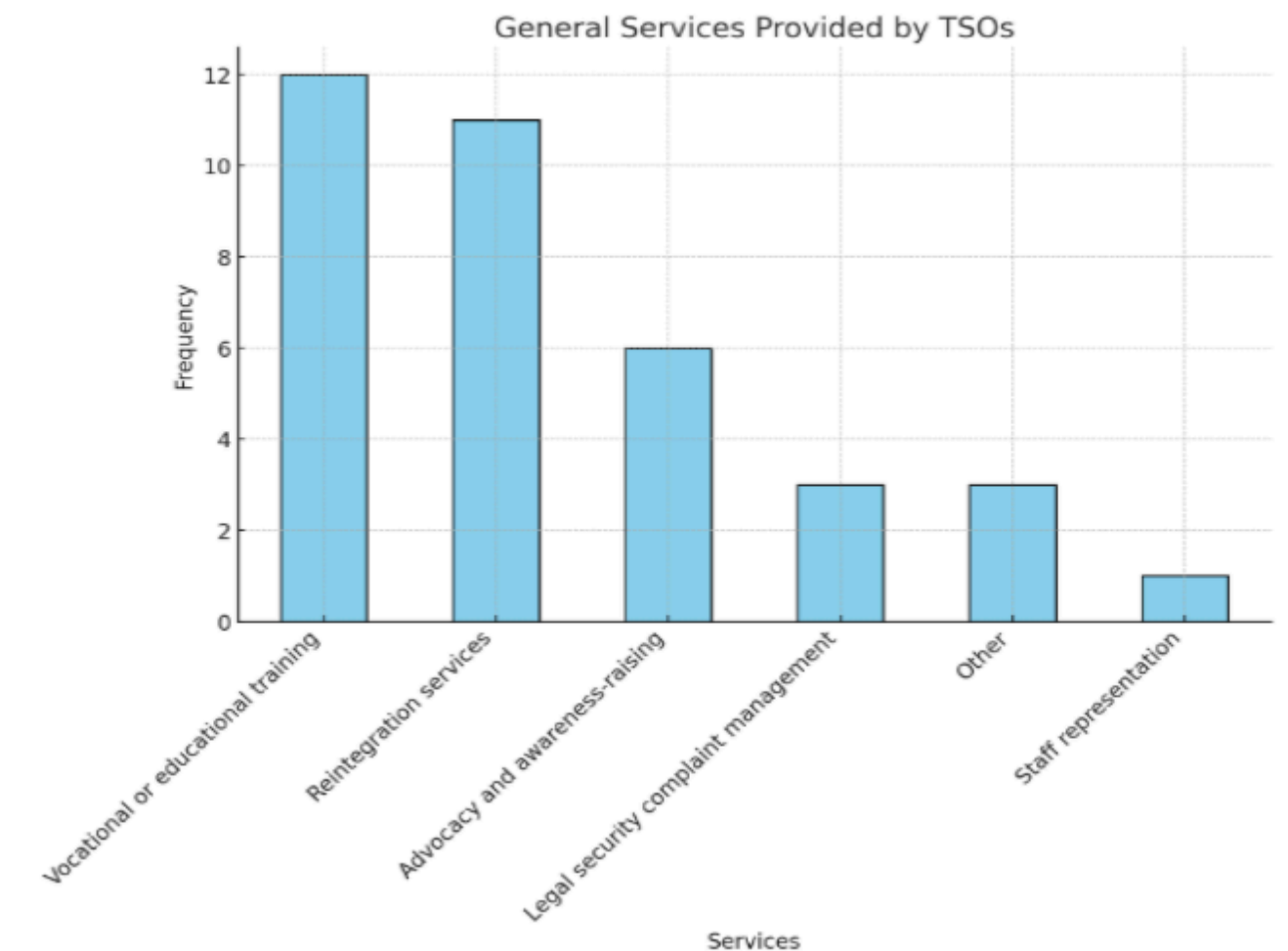
It can not be used as a representative piece of research. This is because there are variations in the number of respondents from different European countries.

About Our respondents

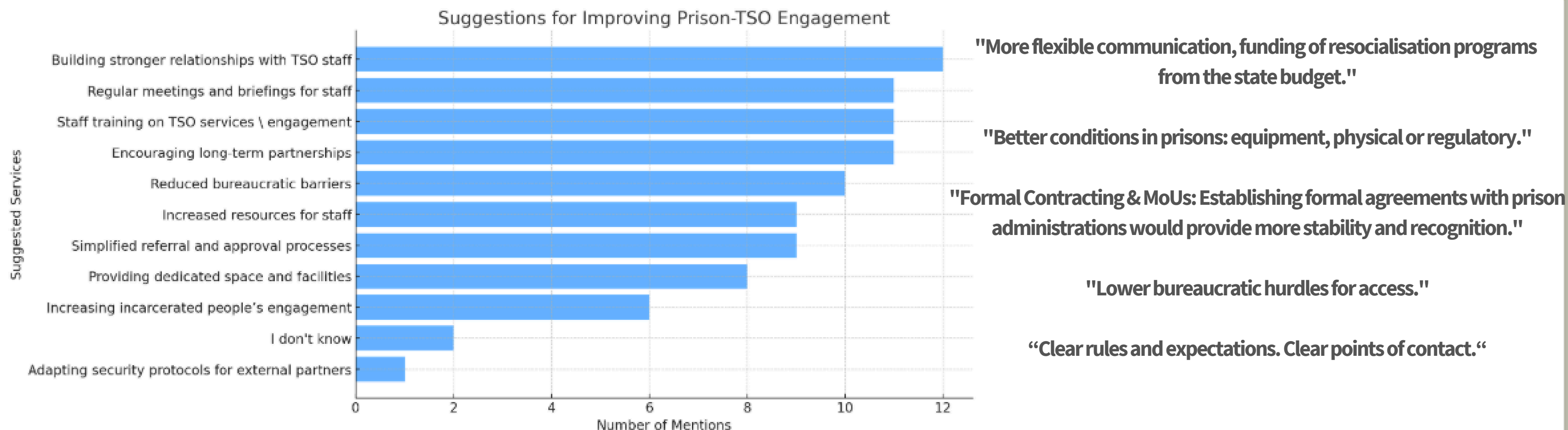
Most respondents were from Third Sector Organizations



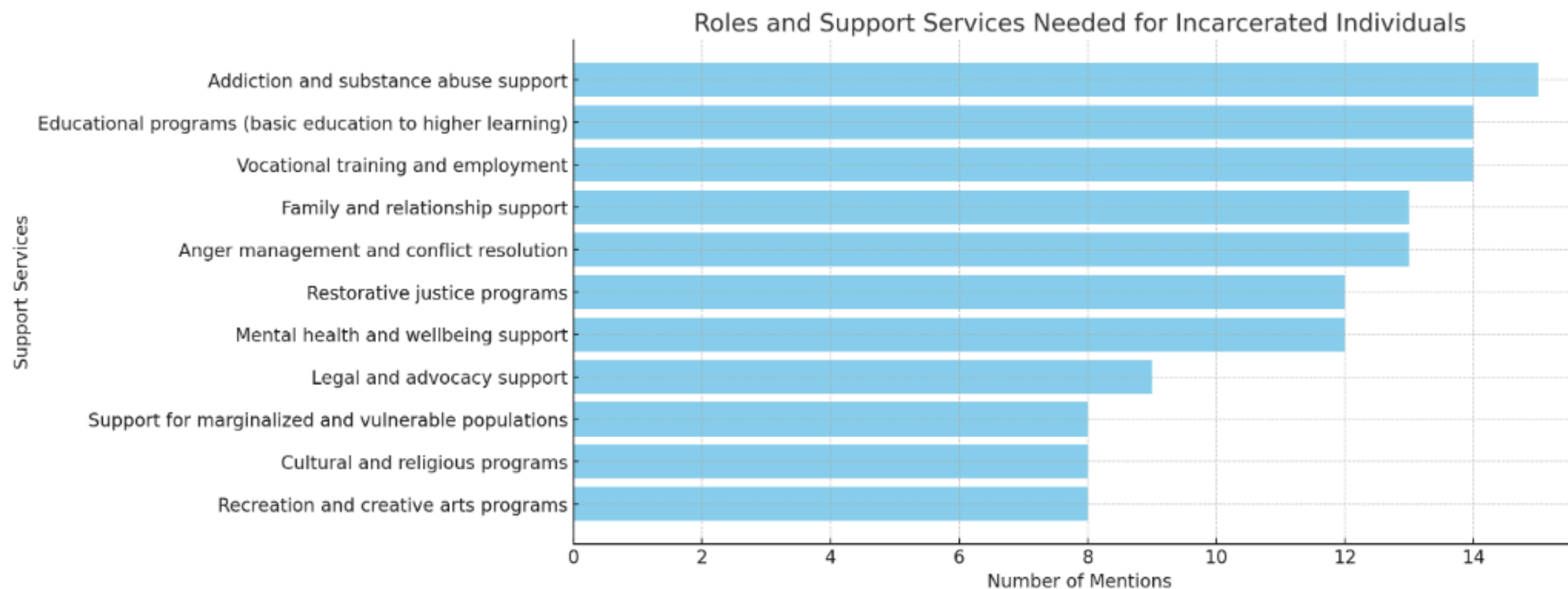
Wide variety of services are being provided



Room for Improvement



Services Needed



"Legal advice, ideally with the possibility of supervision for professional staff."

"Educational & vocational offers are missing."

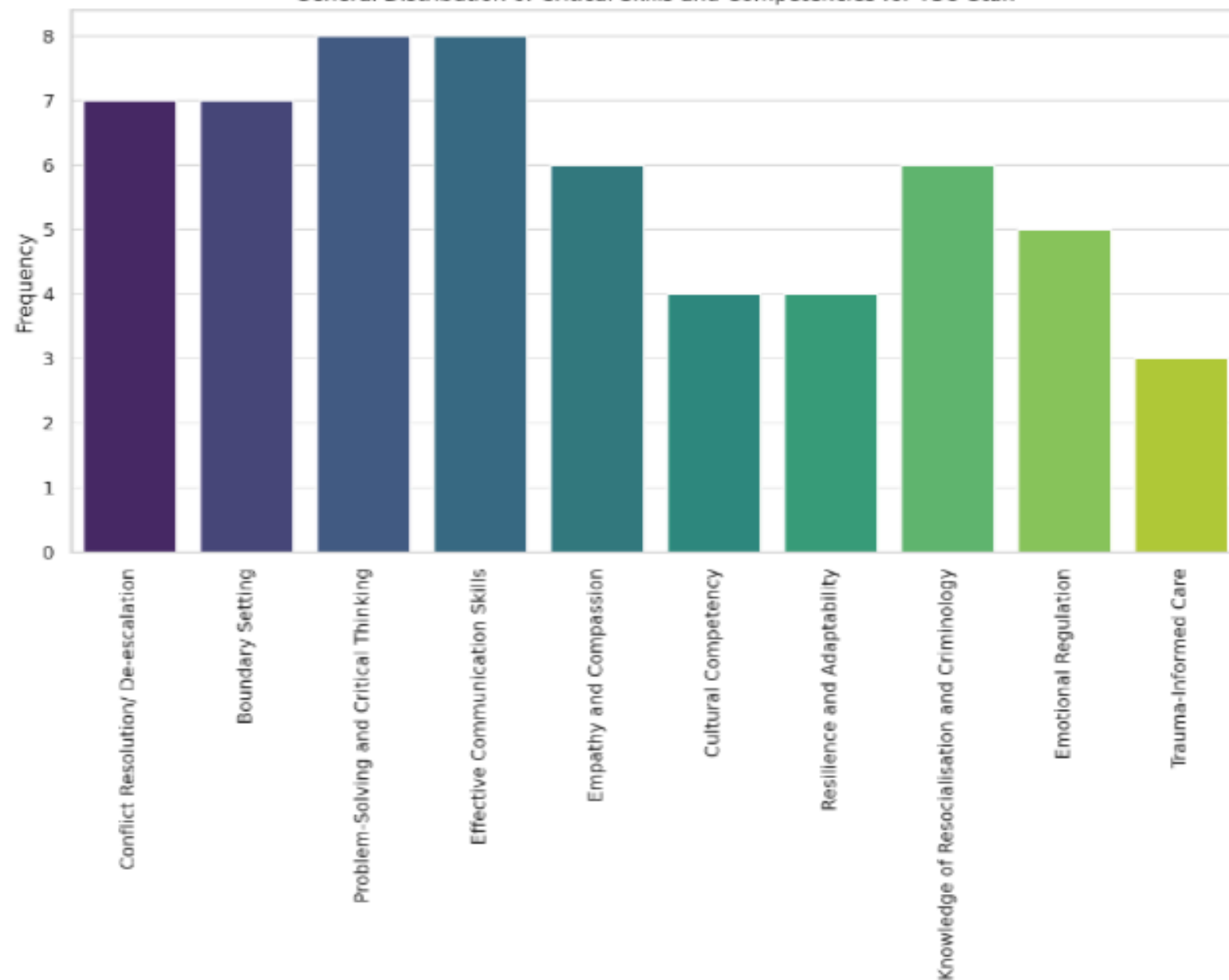
"If it were possible, some activities could take place outdoors—of course, within the prison grounds."

"Soft skills, tailored to the specific group of incarcerated individuals."

"Protecting the mental health of staff and incarcerated individuals."

Skills and Competencies

General Distribution of Critical Skills and Competencies for TSO Staff



The most frequently highlighted skills for TSO staff working in collaboration with Prisons are:

- Problem solving and critical thinking
- Effective Communication
- Boundary Setting
- Conflict Resolution and de-escalation

“Be more open to change and focus on solutions rather than problems.”

Skills and Competencies



RICH TUNGS-
WECHSEL

VOLONTÉ
willing to help

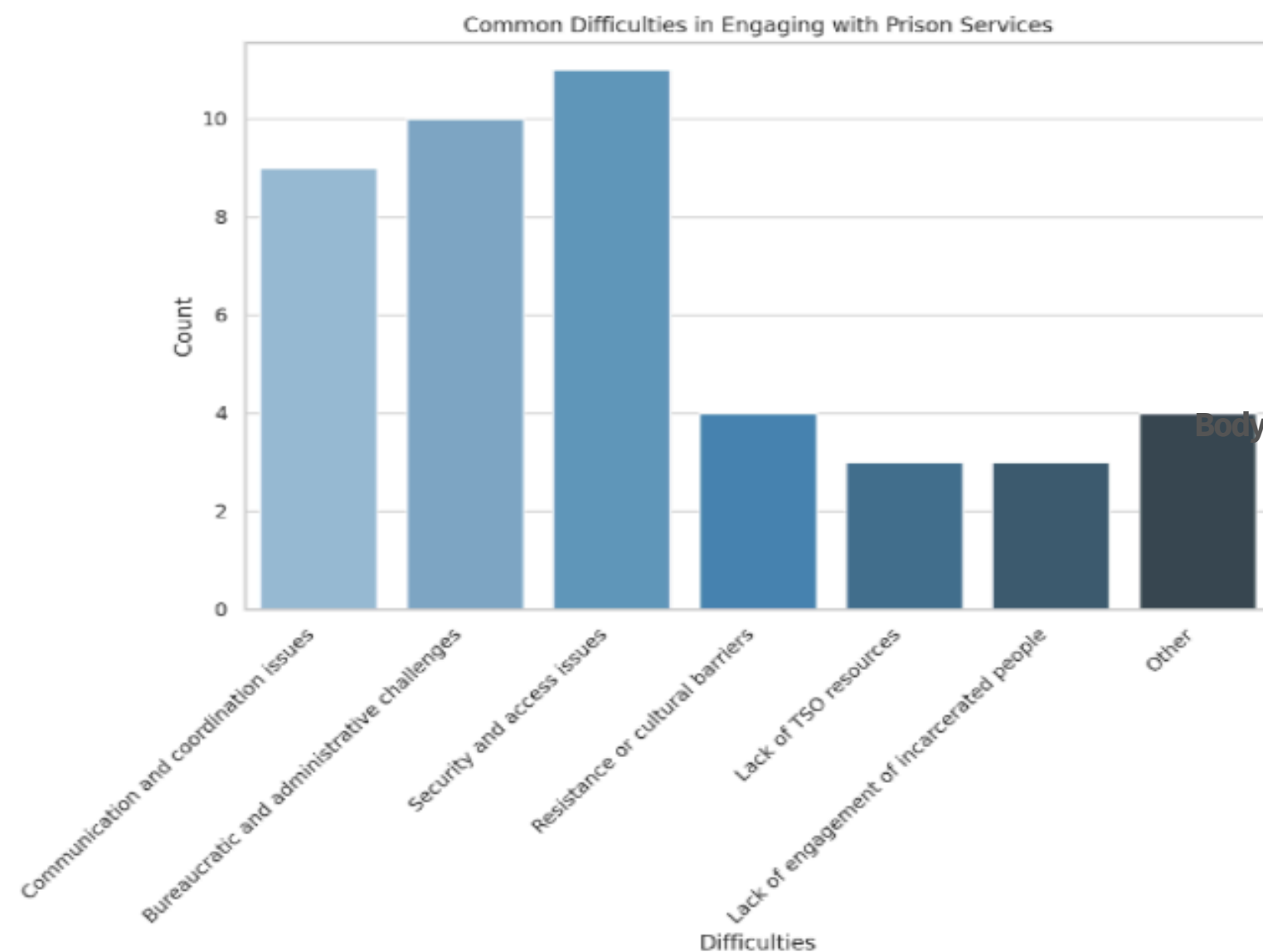


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Common Difficulties



Most commonly faced difficulties identified by respondents are:

- Security and access issues
- Bureaucratic and administrative challenges
- Communication and co-ordination issues

“The negative aspects: building partnerships is very, very slow, a lot of resources are needed to build trust and overcome bureaucratic hurdles.”

"Easier access, better communication, cooperation with other prison staff."

Qualitative Analysis

TSO fields of expertise

Prison service job titles

Sport
Mental Health
Restorative Justice
Education
Legal
Housing Services
Justice Programmes
Health Support
Family Support
Support

Adult education organizer
Practical training teacher (cooking)
Head of the Prison Department
Governor
Social worker
Educator
Judicial officer

Qualitative Analysis

“Different prisons - different experiences.”

POSITIVE

“Trust is the key word. We are grateful for this opportunity and have nothing to appoint to our prison and probation services.”

“For me, the cooperation has improved significantly compared to previous years.”

“In general quite positive, once the trust is built.”

NEGATIVE

“Trust from the prison staff is a big issue.”

“Building partnerships is very, very slow, a lot of resources are needed to build trust and overcome bureaucratic hurdles.”

Qualitative Analysis

Training and professional development

“Know-how transfer during recruitment!”

“...on the positive side, people who get involved, especially in tailored training, are committed to new initiatives in the long term.”

“Development of additional skills and knowledge that are specific to work in prison – for example, in the form of a workshop led by an expert.”

Conclusion

The survey responses reveal a mix of perspectives on collaboration between third-sector organisations and prison services. While some respondents express frustration over systemic resistance to change, others highlight the positive impact of dedicated prison staff members who facilitate cooperation. Respondents repeatedly emphasised the need for structured cooperation frameworks and training for professionals working both within prisons and as external partners. The WORKPRIS project aims to create spaces for such professional discussions and contribute to the development of frameworks that better support TSO engagement and prison services.

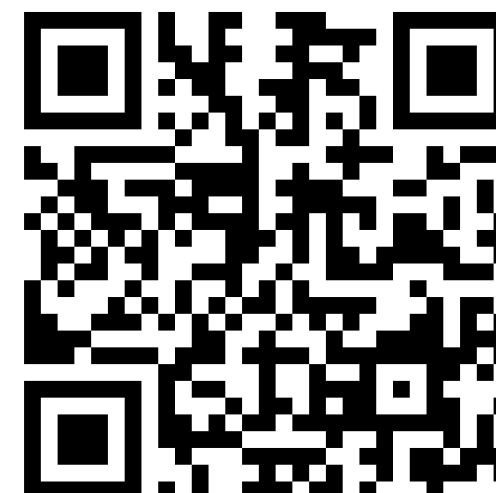
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