

## Introducing Information and Communication Technologies in Prison: A Proposal in Favor of Social Reintegration

**Authors :** Carmen Rocio Fernandez Diaz

**Abstract :** This paper focuses on the relevance of information and communication technologies (hereinafter referred as 'ICTs') as an essential part of the day-to-day life of all societies nowadays, as they offer the scenario where an immense number of behaviors are performed that previously took place in the physical world. In this context, areas of reality that have remained outside the so-called 'information society' are hardly imaginable. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a means that continue to be behind this reality, and it is the penitentiary area regarding inmates rights, as security aspects in prison have already be improved by new technologies. Introducing ICTs in prisons is still a matter subject to great rejections. The study of comparative penitentiary systems worldwide shows that most of them use ICTs only regarding educational aspects of life in prison and that communications with the outside world are generally based on traditional ways. These are only two examples of the huge range of activities where ICTs can carry positive results within the prison. Those positive results have to do with the social reintegration of persons serving a prison sentence. Deprivation of liberty entails contact with the prison subculture and the harmful effects of it, causing in cases of long-term sentences the so-called phenomenon of 'prisonization'. This negative effect of imprisonment could be reduced if ICTs were used inside prisons in the different areas where they can have an impact, and which are treated in this research, as (1) access to information and culture, (2) basic and advanced training, (3) employment, (4) communication with the outside world, (5) treatment or (6) leisure and entertainment. The content of all of these areas could be improved if ICTs were introduced in prison, as it is shown by the experience of some prisons of Belgium, United Kingdom or The United States. However, rejections to introducing ICTs in prisons obey to the fact that it could carry also risks concerning security and the commission of new offences. Considering these risks, the scope of this paper is to offer a real proposal to introduce ICTs in prison, trying to avoid those risks. This enterprise would be done to take advantage of the possibilities that ICTs offer to all inmates in order to start to build a life outside which is far from delinquency, but mainly to those inmates who are close to release. Reforming prisons in this sense is considered by the author of this paper an opportunity to offer inmates a progressive resettlement to live in freedom with a higher possibility to obey the law and to escape from recidivism. The value that new technologies would add to education, employment, communications or treatment to a person deprived of liberty constitutes a way of humanization of prisons in the 21st century.

**Keywords :** deprivation of freedom, information and communication technologies, imprisonment, social reintegration

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