



Virtual reality for training inmates

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Virtual reality for training inmates, is an initiative from [Greta du Velay](#) (FR), CIRE, [Centre d'Iniciatives per a la Reinserció](#) (ES), [Innovative Prison Systems](#) (PT) and [SQLearn](#) (GR) supported by the Erasmus+ program of the European Commission (2020-2022).

Our project

The Virtual Reality for Training Inmates (ViRTI) project was born out of the need to broaden the training offer for inmates, who have limited access to technical platforms. Thus, ViRTI aims to use virtual reality technologies to compensate for the lack of resources in correctional facilities, with an application in the construction sector to learn about the different jobs, their conditions of practice and their requirements. In addition, the interactive and gamification features integrated in the learning content should attract more participants and maintain their motivation, thus reducing dropout rates.

What is virtual reality?

Virtual reality (VR) is a technology that allows to immerse in an artificial world created digitally. It can be a reproduction of the real world or a constructed one. The experience is both visual and auditory thanks to a dedicated high-resolution headset with a wide field of view and, in some cases, haptic with the production of a feedback effect. When the user is equipped with interfaces such as gloves or clothing, he can experience sensations related to touch or certain actions (blow, impact...). For training purposes, it allows learners to experience, through immersion, any possible situation and training content.

Why using virtual reality in training environments?

- Learners can engage with virtual scenes and face risks in a safe environment where they can make decisions that do not impact equipment, workers, or customers. They can thus develop skills in areas that would be too dangerous, expensive, or harmful to study otherwise.
- It can increase motivation to learn and motivation to participate in learning activities, in particular thanks to the interaction and gamification features made possible in virtual environments.
- It helps capturing and maintaining learners' attention, resulting in better retention of information.
- Learners can gain hands-on experience with activities such as product assembly and the operation of complex machinery. They can move around and use controllers to pick up, push and explore virtual objects. For technical education, VR avoids the need for expensive machines and also helps keep up with the evolution of technology in the industry.
- It facilitates the acquisition of job skills: For example, supply chain personnel can be placed on a virtual production line to train them to stack items correctly. The software can identify and correct errors, ensuring that trainees perform the activity correctly in the real world.
- Because our motor and visual processes are inextricably linked, theories of cognition assert that physiological cues and interactions in a virtual world could stimulate a higher level of cognitive processing.



Use of virtual reality with inmates

In recent years, the use of virtual reality in correctional setting has increased due to a variety of expected benefits. Among them, we can mention:

- Therapeutic uses
 - fight stress and anxiety
 - act against alcohol and drug dependence based on the cue exposure treatment
 - rehabilitation of aggressors in gender-based violence by living a crime from a different perspective
- Cultural uses (e.g. to participate to a theatre play, to create virtual environments)
- Developing social and behavioural skills through storytelling
- Maintaining a link with the family that is filmed with 360° camera
- Preparing the exit to develop awareness of the world as it is now for long-term sentenced
- Discovering jobs using off the shelf product based on 360° videos
- Preventing recidivism by developing a satisfying life plan

The potential of virtual reality for education and training in prisons

Although all experts and practitioners stress the potential benefits of virtual reality for education and training of inmates, we could not identify any initiative targeting vocational skills but only a few of them aiming at developing soft skills. Among them:

- [STEPS](#), *Supporting Ties in the Education of Prisoners*, to develop self-esteem through the understanding of one's behaviour and motivations (supported by Erasmus+).
- [TRAIVR](#), *Training of Refugee Offenders by Virtual Reality* to improve their coping skills (problem-solving and emotion regulation skills), supported by Erasmus+.
- At Lledoners Penitentiary Centre, a set of soft skills (social skills, cognitive restructuring, problem solving, emotional self-control, values and self-esteem) is developed through the elaboration of a story materialised in a 3D environment based on 360° videos.

If you want learn more about these activities and read the full report about virtual reality for education and training in prisons including the analyses of case studies from European countries and other places in the world and become aware of all the requirements for integrating virtual reality in your training offer:

Visit our web site: <https://virtual.reality.for.inmates.training/>

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