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Jail craft of prison officers in post-authoritarian prisons: a comparative research in Belgium and the Netherlands

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Jail Craft of Prison Officers in Post-Authoritarian Prisons

A Comparative Research in Belgium and the Netherlands

Jail Craft of Prison Officers in Post-Authoritarian Prisons

*A Comparative Research in Belgium and
the Netherlands*

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Acknowledgements

Four years ago, standing on the balcony of the Town Hall on Brussels' Grand Place, I took a deep breath and, with a smile, said the word I had been waiting to say for years: "finally." At that moment, it marked the end of my time as a Criminology student and the start of a new chapter. Now, as I bring this dissertation to a close, I find myself thinking it again, "finally," but this time with an entirely different weight. It carries not relief, but rather a sense of gratitude, pride, and an awareness of how many people, moments, and opportunities have shaped this work.

When I first began my studies, the idea of pursuing a PhD was far from my mind. At that point, I was focused on simply finding my place, exploring subjects, and discovering what I cared about. It was during this period that I stumbled into a field that would change my path: penology. Until then, the carceral world was something distant, something I encountered in books or headlines, but never up close.

That changed when I joined a research project conducted jointly by the VUB and NICC on prison climate and digitalisation in Belgian prisons. Walking through prison gates for the first time and witnessing daily life behind the walls brought into focus the everyday realities that quietly unfold there. And I would like to thank Anouk Mertens, Luc Robert and Eric Maes for that opportunity.

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So, here I am, at the end of another chapter, standing, this time metaphorically, on that balcony. And once again, I can say, with joy, pride and no small amount of gratitude: finally.

List of Abbreviations

DG EPI	Directoraat-Generaal Justitiële Inrichtingen (Belgian prison service)
DJI	Dienst Justitiële Inrichtingen (Dutch prison service)
PO(s)	Prison Officer(s)
PBA/PO ^{BE}	Penitentiair Bewakingsassistent (Belgian prison officer)
PIW/PO ^{NL}	Penitentiair Inrichtingswerker (Dutch unit prison officer)
BEWA/SO ^{NL}	Complexbeveiliger (Dutch security prison officer)
ZVG/IMP	Zelfstandig Verplaatsen Gedetineerden/Independent Movement Detainees (preferred abbreviation throughout the text)
GVM/ESRD	Gedetineerden met een Vlucht-/Maatschappelijk risico/Escape and/or Societal Risk Detainees (preferred abbreviation throughout the text)
P&D	Systeem van Promoveren en Degradereen (Promotion and Demotion)
MDO	Multidisciplinair overleg (multidisciplinary team)
PI	penitentiary institutions