Summary

This study into the psychosocial and neurobiological criminogenic characteristics of detainees in the Dutch Caribbean was requested by the Research and Documentation Centre and the correctional institutions service due to the fact that prison personnel noticed that behavioural problems among detainees within the correctional institution in Bonaire (JICN) were increasing. There is currently no satisfactory overview of the characteristics of the detained population within the JICN, and therefore this report provides this overview based on both psychosocial and neurobiological characteristics, including the indication for a mild intellectual disability. Furthermore, we describe the conditions within the JICN, as well as how the JICN is embedded within the society and the judicial system.

Various neurobiological tests were completed by 43 male detainees within the JICN, and – if permitted and available (N=25) – their psychosocial characteristics were requested from the custodial agency on Bonaire (Stichting Reclassering Caribisch Nederland). This sample is small yet quite representative of the total population within the JICN (N=112). Due to the heterogenous population, the test instruments were available in Spanish, Papiamentu, English and Dutch.

Based on this sample, we conclude that detainees show reduced executive functioning, specifically attention, concentration and screeners for mild intellectual disability, but that these functions seem relatively comparable to the detainees in European Dutch prisons. Furthermore, the detainees reveal problems on various psychosocial characteristics, most notable on their financial situation, education, antisocial behaviour and drug (ab)use.

These results are in line with our expectations, as well as with the notion of the prison personnel and provide a starting point for research on this topic within the Caribbean context. The interpretation of the results is limited by the small and heterogenous population, societal differences as well as differences in detention conditions between the studied population and the reference populations in the European Netherlands or North-America. This study should therefore be considered as a valuable starting point or baseline and should be repeated and expanded.

Based on the above-mentioned results, several recommendations are made; (1) increased attention and resources should be directed towards the needs and abilities of the detainees, specifically regarding (psychological) healthcare and guidance during and after detention, (2) especially for detainees with (an indication for) a mild intellectual disability. This could include training personnel or increasing treatment or guidance options, which (3) should (also) focus on increasing practical skills. The newly developed ‘Ban pa Kambio’ program lines up well with these recommendations. Furthermore, (4) diagnostic instruments as well as screeners for various psychosocial, psychological and neurobiological problems should be made available for the (Dutch) Caribbean context, as these could assist in assessing the needs and abilities of the detained population. Also, (5) a digitalized information system regarding the characteristics of detainees should be put in place in the new JICN. And finally (6) this study should be repeated an expanded in order to acquire a more stable and reliable overview of the psychosocial and neurobiological risk factors. This should include an expansion to the other islands within the region (Aruba, Curaçao, Sint-Maarten).