

*“The Innovation Lab” A unique collaboration between Veenhuizen prison  
and Hanze University, The Netherlands.*



# The Innovation Lab

- Organised around the Family Approach project
- Innovative and unique collaboration in prison
- A (physical) place where students, researchers (research), prison staff and prisoners (experience) meet to co-develop prison programs on actual topics and ensure a cultural change
- A place where students can gain experience on the topic of family approach
- Long term benefits for all parties: prisoners, their children and families, prison system, students, academia, society at large

# Project Background

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- Parenthood in prisons: Switching the focus from women to men
- Children with fathers in prison (25.000)
- Common problems include:
  - Disrupted family relationships
  - Increased risk of emotional and behavioural problems
  - Stigma



# Project Background

## Aims

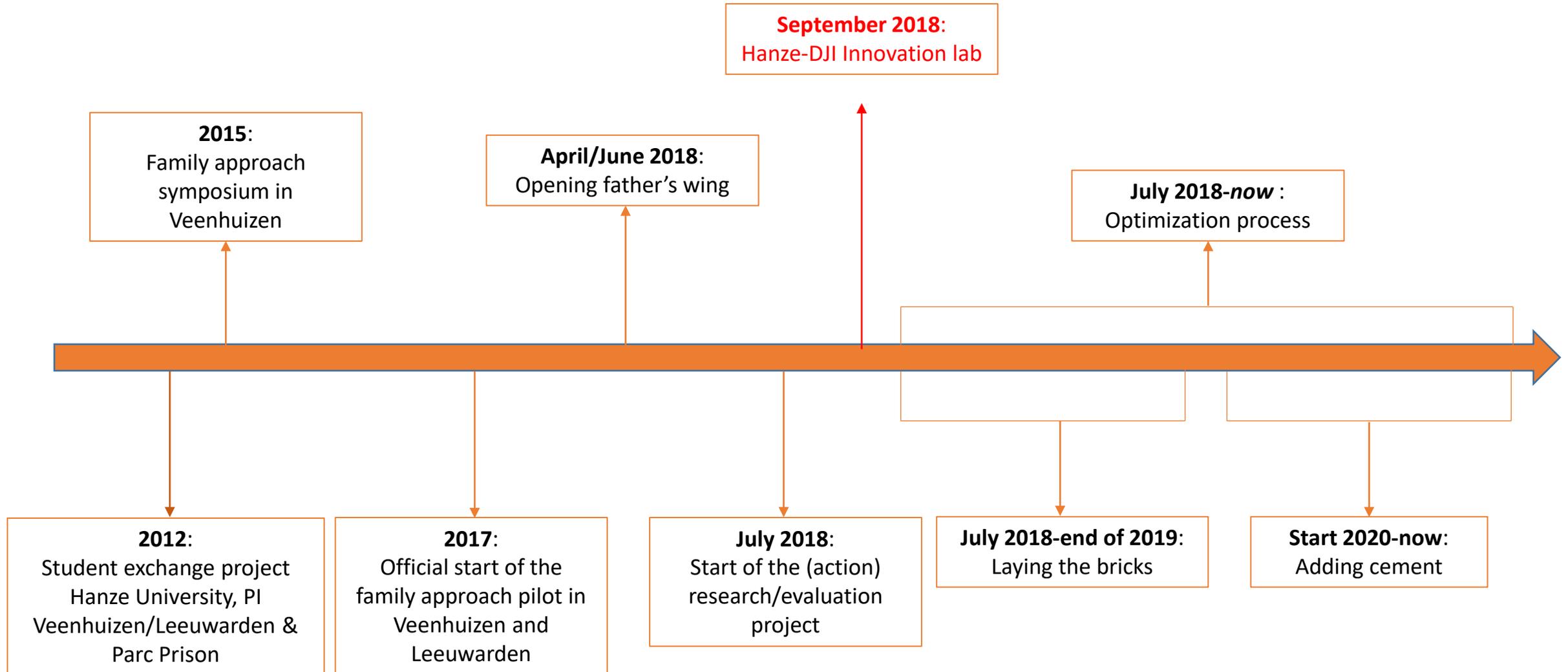
- Prevent detention-related harm of children
- Reduce intergenerational offending
- Reduce reoffending

## How?

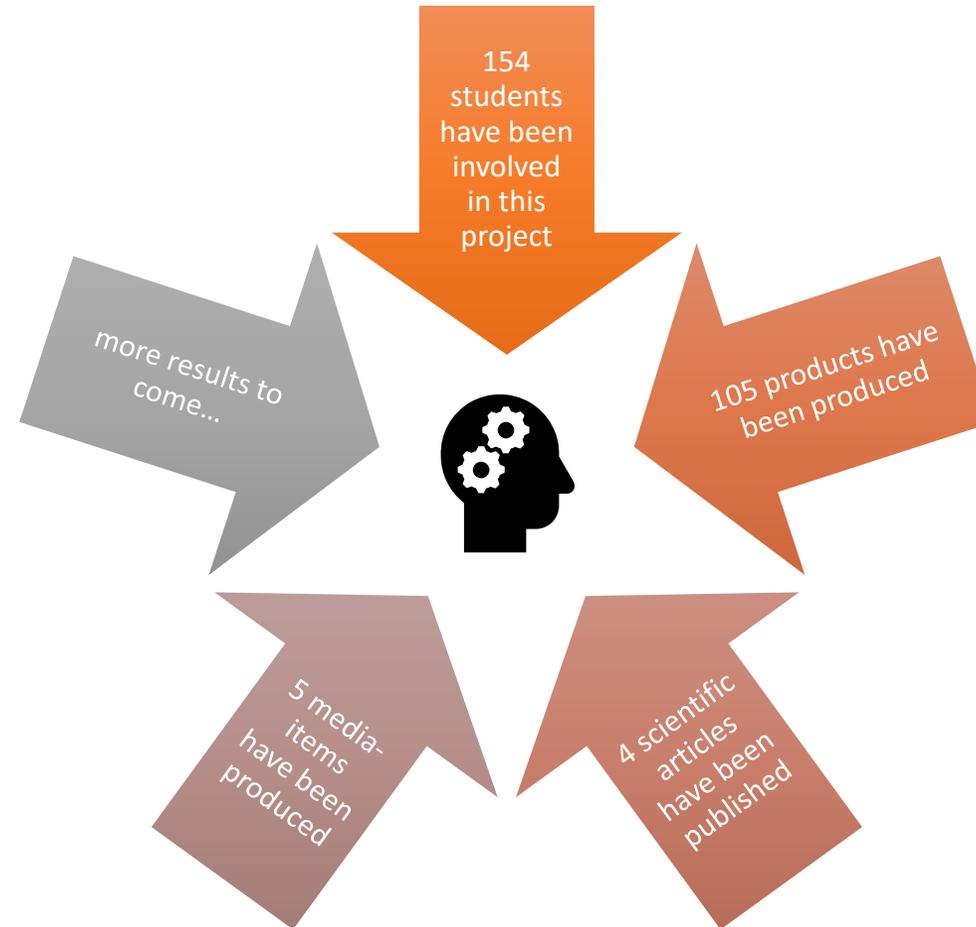
- Dedicated family wing (23 cells)
- Family-friendly visiting room
- Organise regular family activities
- Video calls in cells
- Family mentor

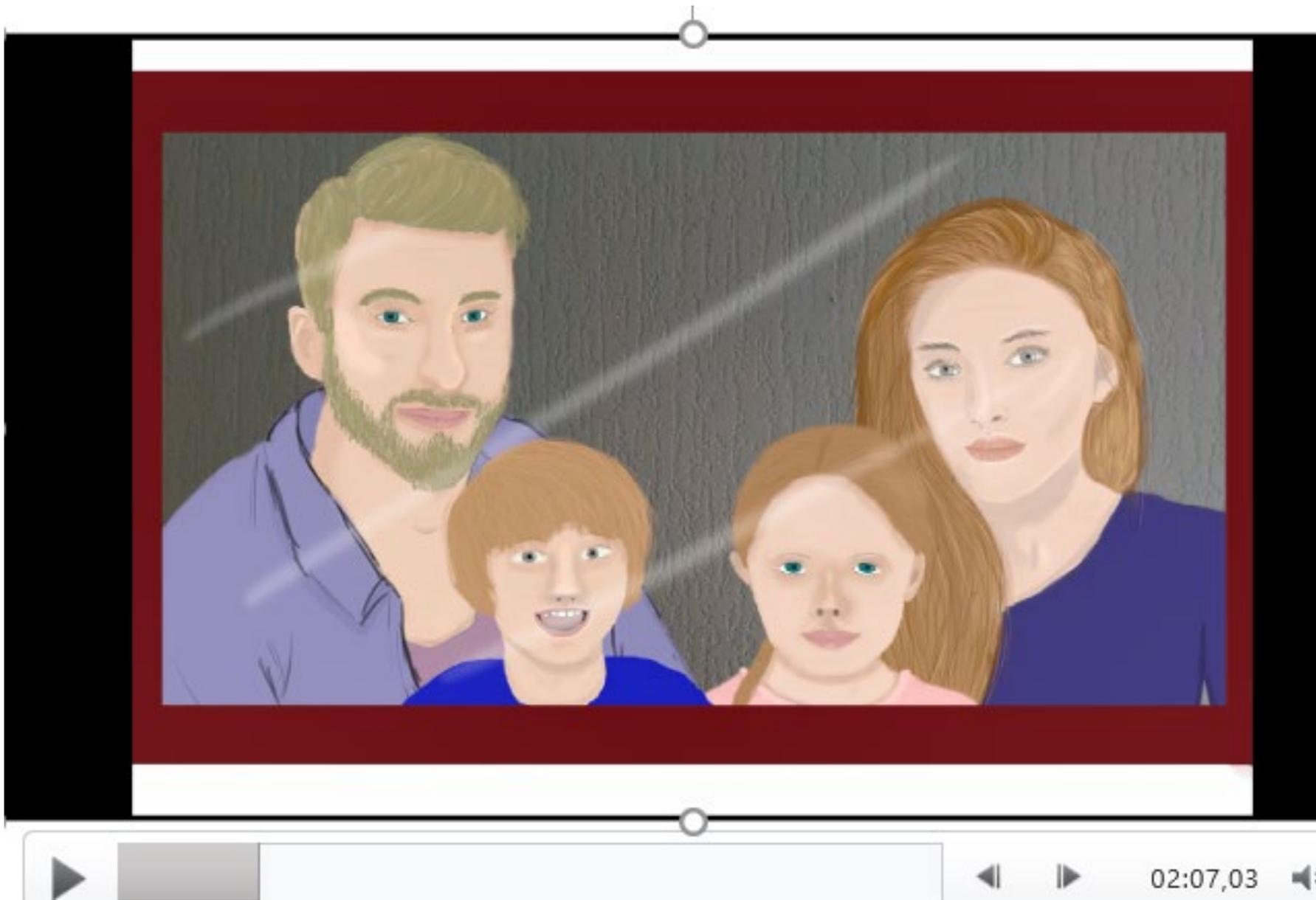


# A short history



# The topic Family approach





# The Innovation Lab



An “office” where students can work and meet the prisoners and the staff



## Benefits for the children and their fathers

- Students are independent parties in civil clothes. They connect with children more easily. They are easier to talk to and express their feelings about a parent in prison.
- Students are innovative in the use of online tools. They have developed an online information/website for children with a parent in prison.

# Benefits for students

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- Students learn to understand how prisons work. They can see how they can improve our prison system in the long term.
- Students gain practical experience to prepare them for future jobs within prison system.



# Benefits for the prison and university

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- The Innovation Lab is a permanent part of the prison. Students rotate every half year.
- The Innovation Lab has helped the prison staff to understand more about prisoner-child relationships and future preventative measures.

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# Challenges and Goals

- Funding for professors / researchers
- Implementing innovation lab in multiple locations
- Involvement and support of prison staff

## **Our Goals**

This has the potential of improving  
the Dutch and European prison system



Towards more co-creation,  
collaboration and innovation