

RESEARCH INTO THE IMPACT OF ARTS IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

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INDEX

p. 1		INTRODUCTION
p. 2	1.	RATIONALE Art-forms
p. 7	2.	CONTEXT
p. 9	3.	METHODOLOGY Background/ Methods
p.13	4.	CONDITIONS AFFECTING PRISON ARTS & MEDIA INTERVENTIONS IN EUROPEAN PRISONS Education v creativity/ Funding/ Spaces/ Access/ Limiting factors
p.19	5.	ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES IN EUROPEAN PRISONS Regular arts activities/ One-off arts activities/ Form of activities/ ICT access/ Activity organisers/ Future provision
P.24	6.	FEEDBACK FROM PRISONERS <i>'The Fortune Teller'</i> in Lovech Prison/ Self-reflection/ Socialisation/ Public awareness
P.29	7.	FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS & ARTISTS
p.31	8.	CONCLUSION
p.32	ANNEXE	SUMMARY OF PRISON ARTS PROJECTS
P.34	REFERENCES	

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

INTRODUCTION

For ten years, from 2006 to 2015, I was involved in 6 projects - 5 of them as coordinator – funded by various education and arts initiatives of the European Union and supported by the *European Prison Education Association (EPEA)*. Through these I and over 40 partners from across Europe were able to focus on identifying and highlighting arts and media activities in the prisons of many countries. Working as an international consultant, initially through *The Manchester College (TMC)* and later *The College of Teachers (TCOT)*, I was able to oversee background research into the impact of the arts on prisons in 3 projects – *Movable Barres*, *Art & Culture in Prison* and the *PriMedia Network*. In the first two we were able to include detailed analysis of the responses; in *PriMedia*, for reasons which will be explained below, only more generalised impressions collected from the different partner countries, which nevertheless provided useful information, especially on the impact of ICT and multimedia behind bars.

Two of the projects where major research was undertaken – *Movable Barres* and *PriMedia* - had an educational focus whilst *Art & Culture in Prison* was concerned with interventions by artists and arts organisations. However, given the amount of cross-over between these areas and the fact that their aims are so similar, I have treated the research information from all three projects as reasonably compatible. Partners from 12 countries contributed to this research although in most cases and for understandable reasons only a partial reflection of the cultural activities in each country could be achieved. In addition I have taken information and examples from the other prison arts projects in which I was involved to provide as comprehensive an overview as possible.

Although these projects were completed some years ago, I suspect that the overall situation of prison arts has not changed significantly – if anything the possibility of arts and media interventions behind bars has worsened along with the overall deterioration in financial and other support for prisons. However, a future project will explore this in more detail. I should like to thank all those who have contributed to this process, too many to name individually, although I shall of course reference specific contributions.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

1. RATIONALE

Research undertaken by the Vilnius Pedagogical University, a partner in *The Will to Dream* project, identified the arts as an important element in the rehabilitation (*resozialisation*) of inmates:

*One of the alternative means of the resocialization of imprisoned people is artistic social education. ... the major role of art is to harmonize human living and to improve the forms of social communication, and for that reason, art always acquires social forms in its manifestations. The major quality of the function of art in social communication is the emotional self-expression of the individual and shared spirituality while exchanging experiences and feelings with others.*¹

This idea is reflected in the three projects which are the focus of this study. In an interview for *Movable Barres*, I defined as project coordinator the reason for promoting prison arts:

*Education in general, and the arts in particular, are essential not only to providing a positive alternative to the harsh reality of prison life but in encouraging inmates to develop new attitudes and skills, different from those which led them into crime.*²

In a similar vein Corrado Marcetti, the director of the *Fondazione Michelucci*, described the aims of the *Art & Culture in Prison* project:

*Whoever has a deep knowledge of prisons knows how, beyond all appearance, art and culture cannot be considered as mere casual guests within the walls of a prison. Even when conditions are not so favourable to art and culture, they appear through unpredictable pathways as sources where one can tap new life elements.*³

The *PriMedia Network* also emphasised the importance of ICT and multimedia for inmates as fundamental to contemporary education and skills development:

*Such skills are equally important for those currently in prison, who at some time will be seeking gainful employment in the outside world. It is crucial then that ICT & multimedia form a key part of the offender learning programmes offered in Europe's prisons, given the tremendous benefits for prisoner learners – access to a wider range of information, ability to develop a variety of new communication skills, being able to study on one's own, ease of storing material, etc.*⁴

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

In their different ways all three projects recognised the fundamental importance of arts and media in supporting those unfortunate enough to be incarcerated in prison, not as luxury items but as essential elements in the survival and rehabilitation of prisoners. This idea, based on a range of personal, collective and institutional experiences, needed to be underpinned by solid research and the three projects featured here attempted to provide this.

Art-forms

Whilst the various projects confirmed the overall beneficial effects of arts and media on inmates, each art-form helped them develop different skills. For example the *Movable Barres* project identified the specific qualities provide by **music and dance**:

*Dance and music are particularly suitable for those in prison, who generally have a low level of literacy and self-confidence, because they are essentially non-verbal and readily accessible, demanding a high level of self-discipline and producing outcomes which can be easily communicated to others. The fact that these art-forms are not linked to a particular language makes them more attractive to the wide diversity of nationalities, which currently inhabit European jails.*⁵

Music was the most popular choice for the prisoners in most partner countries, partly because of its easy accessibility and broad range of genres, applicable in both acoustic and electronic form, but also in part because it can be practised and enjoyed in a prison cell, where most detainees spent a good proportion of their time. It can also have a highly personal impact, as the music teacher Torbjorn Rodal from Norway emphasises:

*In my job it is important to help inmates to express their feelings and inner lives through music. I try to create an environment where the students can express in music what cannot be said in conversation within the setting of a rough prison.*⁶

It can though work equally well with groups, as The Irene Taylor Trust's *Music in Prisons* confirmed:

*(We run) high quality creative music projects in prisons which teach participants valuable life skills such as team-working and perseverance as well as dramatically improving self-confidence and encouraging further constructive educational activity.*⁷

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

For the *Caught By Chance Rock Band* from Italy this aspect is even more fundamental:

*Group interaction is fundamental in prison art: the experience represented and expressed in music and/or words must not be a simple externalisation of an individual participant's feeling or ability, but on the contrary, it must combine different insights.*⁸

The benefits of **dance** for inmates are due to its communal nature as well as the discipline required to participate in it. On the other hand dance is problematic for male penal institutions in many countries, particularly where it is not regarded as an appropriate activity for men:

*It was acknowledged that male Prisoners would likely have resistance to the idea of a dance class and would need to be enticed into moving their bodies in any kind of expressive or creative way.*⁹

However, in countries such as Greece and Bulgaria where traditional folk dance involves male dancers, it is more acceptable, as increasingly is street dance, which has been introduced in at least one Norwegian prison.¹⁰

The **visual arts** too are less dependent on formal language skills and also have the advantage for many inmates, as with many music activities, of being able to be carried out individually in cells. Discussing the visual arts in *Art & Culture in Prison* Matthew Meadows writes:

*Whatever the scale of their creative ambitions and the varying circumstances of its production, art is a vital and nurturing activity for many prisoners, detainees, and secure patients in the UK's criminal justice system. How and where do they make it? Some have discovered creative vocations and have come to think of themselves as artists, but are less interested in qualifications and prefer to work in their cells, away from an art class in education. They get sufficient approval and acknowledgement of their creativity from family, other prisoners as well as officers in their wing or landing, and sometimes a regular income from portraits. In fact within their prison community they might seem to have more respect, recognition and prestige than many bona fide artists outside.*¹¹

On the other hand many prisons encourage the public application of visual art to improve the environment both for inmates and custodians. In Lovech Prison, Bulgaria, funding through a European project was used to transform the drab entrance corridors with brightly-coloured paintings by inmates, inspired by a quote from the Russian writer Dostoevsky:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

“The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons!”¹²

Under the auspices of the *PAN Network*, Lovech also hosted a public exhibition of prison art work¹³, whilst in a Northern Irish prison the inmates, with help from an artist-in-residence, created ceramic tiles for a Diversity Wall.¹⁴

Literature is also an activity that prisoners can undertake alone in their cell, although access to outside sources and contacts is important, as stressed by Martin Jankowski, Sarah Grobelny and Rebecca Jany in the *Art & Culture in Prison* publication:

*Today, it is not only the passive consumption of literature (reading books) but literature is also more and more seen as an active instrument of education (literacy), character building (self-reflection) and creativity (artistic expression) that verifiably advance the life skills, enhances the standard of knowledge and strengthens the self-confidence of prisoners.*¹⁵

Drama however is essentially a social activity involving a group of people coming together for a common purpose. As the inspirational Mike Moloney, the late creative director of the *Prison Arts Foundation* in Northern Ireland, put it in an interview reprinted in the *PriMedia* journal :

Drama ... creates interactions, and sometimes conflicts. ... Ideas can be developed to afford a better exchange. ... Artists-in-Residence; professional artists in this criminal justice setting allow people with ‘time’ on their hands to be creative, to produce without any rehabilitation agenda – they are recruited because they subscribe to a ... policy that “Art is a medium for change – Prison is just a venue”.¹⁶

Theatre, the performance extension of drama, is unique in potentially combining all art-forms:

*It is ... when the drama has an audience. This is when community is built; when sets need to be made, uniformed and non uniformed officers can be involved, resources pooled. In an ideal situation the whole prison can become part of this process. When a prisoner can stand alongside the work they have produced and say ‘this is what I have done’ in a creative way with confidence then they have a positive reinforcement to the other changes they must make to address their offending behaviour.*¹⁷

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

This view of the impact of theatre in prison is reinforced by Anthony Vella from the University of Malta in an article for the *PAN* magazine, *pARTners*:

*Theatre anywhere, but particularly desirable in prison, promotes interpersonal and group communication and debate after exposure, thereby enhancing learning and behaviour change.*¹⁸

With regard to **ICT**, the dependence on sophisticated technology – originally a hindrance to its application in prisons – is gradually being overcome as information technology becomes an accepted norm in most aspects of everyday life. Thus the research undertaken by the *PriMedia* partners, which identified a range of specific areas where the implementation of ICT was beneficial, is increasingly relevant. The benefits include reducing tension and restoring calm in an active way; helping detainees to take responsibility for themselves; improving communication and language skills, especially for foreign prisoners; boosting digital confidence; and even helping prison staff to gain further qualifications through E-learning.¹⁹

Although a range of **multimedia** examples have been identified in most of the projects covered by this report, usually in the form of film, video or DVD, multimedia is generally identified merely as an adjunct of ICT, rather than as a specific discipline in its own right. Yet it can provide a distinct creative outlet:

*In fact multimedia provides a vast range of opportunities, including YouTube, Skype, blogging, PowerPoint, internet forums/message boards, Facebook, Twitter, open on-line courses tools for making videos and music, and educational games.*²⁰

Prisons in many countries recognise this and it was a key reason for setting up the *PriMedia Network*. One of the few examples of multimedia being acknowledged as part of formal education was in the BBC's *Bitesize* exam revision programmes for 14-16 year olds, which stressed that multimedia has brought fundamental changes to the way young people learn, play and find information:

*(The programme) identifies a number of ways in which multimedia can be utilised, including: for e-learning purposes (education), entertainment, promotional and advertising aims, e-publications, modelling and simulation, and public information.*²¹

Adapting these applications to a prison context has proved extremely beneficial as is illustrated by examples identified by *PriMedia* partners in Denmark, Norway, Italy, Catalonia and Greece. ²²

2. CONTEXT

... the prison must create the right environment so that prisoners can feel free in order to be able to express themselves through art. ...art should be the tool to assist both the mental and social rehabilitation of the individual. ²³

This assessment by Dr Michael Hadjidimitriou, former Director of the Cyprus Prison Department, in his key-note speech to the *PAN* Sofia Conference, underlined the importance not only of enlightened support from the prison governor or management but also on the national or regional context in which penal institutions are allowed to operate. The *Art & Culture in Prison* publication devoted a whole section to identifying the legal parameters in which the prison system operates in its four partner countries.

These parameters tended on the whole to be closely linked to education, training or personal development, although their implementation varied from prison to prison. In **Italy** the prison reform of 1975 saw the arts as *“one element in the path of rehabilitation that the prisoner is required to undertake”* whilst prohibiting a range of actions which could be involved in the artistic process such as *“singing, ... and all talking in conventional or in any case unintelligible language”*. This would appear to be a severe limitation on creative expression:

Underlying this rule there seems to be the idea that the place of detention admits exclusively of predefined or pre-negotiated behaviour and refuses any form of expression which cannot be measured or controlled by the pre-constituted authority. ²⁴

However an Italian Presidential Decree of 2000 seems to counter this by establishing the right to undertake such activities as *“handicrafts, intellectual and artistic activities”* in order to encourage *“the possibility of differentiated expressions”* ²⁵

In **England and Wales** under the 1999 Prison Rules there is no direct reference to artistic activities although educational activities are seen to be ...

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

*... not only a fundamental feature of prison treatment, but also, in a wider sense, an opportunity for inmates to access the cultural and artistic experiences available in prison.*²⁶

Despite the failure to explicitly grant prisoners the possibility of carrying out activities of a recreational and cultural nature, such activities nevertheless frequently occur. In **Northern** Ireland, which has its own Prison Service, the overall guidelines are similar to those in England and Wales, although recreation has been added to the traditional elements of work and education.²⁷

The situation in **Germany** is complicated by the constitutional reform of 2006 awarding the individual regions the competence to legislate on questions of the prison system. The Prison Act lays down that recreational activities, including artistic and cultural experiences, must be ensured in each penal institution. The legislator seems to attribute to the programming of leisure-time activities the role of an element of treatment backing up work and education. This limited objective is, however, frustrated by the scarcity of economic and human resources:

*... besides being insufficient (on account of the scarce resources available), the recreational and cultural offer of prison is far from meeting the real needs of individual prisoners and, in any case, is only capable of involving them to a very slight extent.*²⁸

Since Catalonia does not have exclusive legislative autonomy in prison matters, the penal regulations in **Spain** apply there, many of which cover artistic activities. These include allowing prisoners being allowed to develop their own cultural heritage, to practice “handicrafts, and intellectual and artistic” types of working activity, and the prison administration being bound to promote ...

... the utmost participation of prison inmates in carrying out the cultural, sports and back-up activities envisaged”.²⁹

Even more encouraging, along with the support of the Cyprus Prison Department under Dr Michael Hadjidimitriou – which incidentally promoted a range of artistic activities from art and craft to theatre³⁰ - is the approach of the *Kriminal Forsorgen* (Prison and Probation Service) of **Denmark**, presented to the *PriMedia* Conference at Kolding in September 2014. Whilst not specifically referring to cultural activities it made it clear in its mission statement that its top priority was focused on “human worth”, achieved through working along five strategic themes:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

- *Close collaboration with the outside world*
- *Flexible capacity*
- *Efficiency at work*
- *Security and fair treatment for everyone*
- *Less recidivism* ³¹

Clearly, as well as reducing re-offending – at that time to 28%, half of that in the UK - such an approach encourages the use of creative and artistic approaches in prison.

3. METHODOLOGY

Background

The *PAN European Network (2006-9)* was the first EU-funded project which attempted to look at prison arts in a holistic way, both in terms of Europe and in terms of art-forms. Before this there had been some individual projects covering specific areas such as theatre or visual arts but many people working in prisons felt that there was a need for wider approach. This was exemplified at the 2005 International Conference of the EPEA in Sofia where a number of workshops were devoted to arts approaches and where the idea of a prison arts network was first broached. *PAN's* primary aim was:

“To form an interactive network of organisations involved in prison arts education across Europe” ³²

In this it proved extremely successful with an initial partnership of 15 organisations from 12 countries, 3 well-attended conferences, a website with over 200,000 hits, 4 editions of its online journal and a range of other activities. As the external evaluators stated in their report:

“PAN has provided ample and effective opportunities for networking of organizations and individuals involved in prison arts education and thereby already accomplished an important task to make an impact on the field of prison arts education.” ³³

This was further emphasised in the official feedback from the European Commission:

“Taking into account that prisons are a difficult environment with different implications in the various countries the project nevertheless achieved a notable success.” ³⁴

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Although PAN's remit didn't specifically cover detailed research, the contacts and information gathered through its website, online journals and conferences formed the basis not only for future more specific projects but also for detailed investigations. This challenge was taken up by two projects which succeeded PAN: *Movable Barres* and *Art & Culture in Prison*. Following *The Will to Dream* project (2007-9) which covered theatre and drama behind bars, *Movable Barres* focused on music and dance in prison. Amongst its aims was:

"To create, pilot & disseminate a practical educational model for the use of music & dance inputs into adult prison education across Europe." ³⁵

Achieving this was incorporated in a Work Package headed "Current Practices" which Jo Tilley-Wiley from *Music in Prisons* agreed to lead. As she stated in her introduction to the research findings:

"A crucial starting point in building and developing good practice in the delivery of music and dance projects in prisons across Europe was to get an overview of the current level of provision: How it was being delivered; what the aspirations of different countries were; and what the obstacles were that were preventing the realisation of these aspirations." ³⁶

Although the project concentrated on music and dance, more general information on prison conditions were needed to identify the atmosphere in which they could be practiced. The resulting survey produced 159 responses from 350 institutions approached in 6 countries, providing a strong indication of what each country faced:

"From the reports it is clear that provision is very different across Europe, and that different countries face very different challenges in delivery." ³⁷

Whilst *Movable Barres* primarily had an educational emphasis, *Art and Culture in Prisons* was more concerned with encouraging *"a profitable connection and exchange of experiences between cultural professionals from different countries working on the prison scene."* ³⁸ Despite its cultural emphasis, the information-gathering was organised by *The Manchester College*, covering 3 main areas:

- Statistical information from prisons & artists in the 4 partner countries
- Descriptions of arts activities, artists & arts groups working in prisons
- Specific examples of good practice in written, video, audio and other formats ³⁹

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

A grand total of 216 responses from artists and prisons were received, although the returns varied both in numbers of contacts and in the nature of the responses.⁴⁰

These last two factors – varying numbers of returns and the differing character of the responses – were also present in the survey undertaken for the *PriMedia Network*, one of whose aims was:

*“To create a system for supporting and measuring the contribution of ICT & multimedia to the lifelong learning of prisoners”*⁴¹

Unlike the other two projects, however, *PriMedia* was unable to appoint a specific research leader. This role was undertaken by the Network coordinator on behalf of *The College of Teachers* who oversaw individual partners taking responsibility for gathering information from particular geographical areas. Under the circumstances it was not possible to produce a summative evaluation, although a number of these individual reports did provide useful statistics.⁴²

Methods

In her introduction to the research process for *Movable Barres*, Jo Tilley-Wiley described the methods used to collect information:

*“ ... the partners agreed on a range of questions which they felt would help to give a broad picture of the current situation in their country. Music in Prisons brought these questions together into one combined questionnaire covering both music and dance provision. All country partners were then asked to disseminate the questionnaires to all prisons within their country, and to aim for a response rate of at least one-third.”*⁴³

Accompanying these questionnaires was a letter from the project coordinator, briefly outlining the project and explaining the rationale behind the survey.⁴⁴ The response rate from the 6 countries in most cases exceeded expectations, with only Norway failing to reach the one-third target with 21% and 3 countries – Denmark, Greece and Italy well over 50%: the overall rate was just under 50%.⁴⁵

As the lead partner on this aspect of the project, *Music in Prisons* then collated the information into an easily accessible form:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

“As the questionnaire results came back, Music in Prisons led on drawing the findings together into succinct reports, outlining current provision, barriers to provision, and aspirations for future provision.”⁴⁶

A similar procedure was used for *Art & Culture in Prison*, led by *The Manchester College*:

*In order to carry out ... these objectives, we agreed that the most effective method was to get each transnational partner to circulate common questionnaires to its contacts concerning arts & culture in prison, focusing on two main recipients: prisons and artists. Through this we hoped to get a overview of the situation in each country or region, to compare the results from each country to see if more general patterns emerged, and alongside this to identify concrete examples concerning the effective practice of arts in prisons in a European context.*⁴⁷

As already mentioned above, there was a wider disparity between the returns from the 4 partners, with Italy on the one hand receiving 131 responses and Catalonia on the other only 11, enough however to identify general trends:

*Nevertheless many common issues did emerge and some general conclusions can be reached concerning the current state of arts in European prisons and suggestions for improving their status.*⁴⁸

Also previously referred to, the nature of the *PriMedia Network* did not allow for one partner to control the collation of research, partly due to the range of other activities which needed to be undertaken by the Network, partly due to the wide difference in circumstances in which the partner countries operated, and partly due to the nature of ICT and media in prisons, with its reliance on specific technologies. Instead each partner gathered information as far as they were able and this was fed back to the Network Coordinator:

“Using a common template, partners provided detailed information on the situation regarding ICT and multimedia as implemented in their justice systems. On the basis of these reports, covering 10 countries (Bulgaria, Catalonia, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Turkey and the UK), the Coordinator produced a summative report ...”⁴⁹

Despite this more haphazard approach, sufficient evidence was produced to draw some useful conclusions:

“A number of key issues were raised concerning the problems and advantages of using the new technologies in offender learning, and these were very helpful in informing the Network’s further actions.”⁵⁰

4. CONDITIONS AFFECTING PRISON ARTS & MEDIA INTERVENTIONS IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

Education v creativity

As already mentioned, the main emphasis of the *Movable Barres* project and the *PriMedia Network* was on the educational aspect of prison art whilst *Art & Culture in Prison* focused on the artistic impact. However as Jo Dilley-Wiley stated in her *Movable Barres* introduction:

*Although the specific focus of the project is concerned with offender learning, it was agreed that a more general approach to prisons ... would provide more useful and representative information.*⁵¹

On the other side *Art & Culture in Prison* also recognised the link between the artistic and wider aspects of these interventions:

*One of the main aims of the ‘Art & Culture in Prison’ project was to identify and evaluate the level of arts activities ... in European prison institutions so that it could, amongst other aims, “promote awareness of the connection between rehabilitation methods and the successful implementation of cultural activities”.*⁵²

For ICT this link was even more fundamental, with most activities directly dependent on their formal function within the prison structure:

*The degree to which ICT has developed in a prison context is a product of the overall national environment that applies in different countries: the philosophical attitude to the desirability of giving IT access and/or education to prisoners; and the resource that the government gives to funding teaching staff, hardware and software as part of the national educational process.*⁵³

Overall though, despite such restrictions, the effectiveness of new technologies in improving conditions for prisoners within and without the educational context was increasingly being acknowledged, as in this example from Greece:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

*Every school year the Avlona Prison School takes on numerous extra-curricular activities involving art, music, dance, school newspaper, literature, environmental subjects, etc. In many of them, the inmates under supervision, use the internet to collect material or examples of good practice related to their tasks.*⁵⁴

The rationale for arts activities in prisons revealed a similar picture in most partner countries, identified as chiefly either for educational or creative purposes.

*In each country the rationale tends to be roughly equal between creativity & education. A reasonable number of activities are also introduced through therapeutic & specific interventions. In Italy a high proportion take place as promotional or purely entertainment events.*⁵⁵

The educational objective seemed more dominant in Greece and Norway, the creative rationale more in Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany and Italy, whilst the creative and educational were divided almost equally in the UK and Spain (Catalonia). The use of arts for therapeutic reasons was fairly strong in all countries except Bulgaria and Denmark; there were a reasonable number of specific interventions involving the arts in Denmark, Germany, Italy and the UK; whilst in Italy a large number of activities identified as promotional and entertainment were recorded.⁵⁶

Funding

Funding for cultural activities in prison came from a variety of sources, reflecting the differing priorities and circumstances in each country or region. In many countries the main funding for cultural activities in prison came from the general prison budget, although in the UK, Greece and Norway the education budget was the largest source, and in Italy and Germany a large proportion came from regional or local authority funds. Individual artists and arts organisations also financed some activities.

*Funding is the area with most diversity between countries, reflecting the various prison systems. In the UK funding comes mainly through the education & prison budgets plus considerable support from charities; in Catalonia it comes mainly through education & arts groups; in Germany chiefly from the prison budget, with some help from education & charities; in Italy however none of the funding comes through education - instead the local authorities share the main support with smaller contributions from arts groups & charities.*⁵⁷

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Spaces

Research undertaken by the *Movable Barres* and *Art & Culture in Prison* projects identified a range of locations where cultural activities took place. A large proportion of these – almost 40% - took place in what was defined as “dedicated arts spaces”, especially in Italy, the United Kingdom and Catalonia. The *Movable Barres* survey identified around half the prisons with dedicated music spaces although far fewer for dance.⁵⁸ The main specialist spaces would have been art and craft rooms or multi-purpose halls with stages for performances and concerts; in Italy cinemas frequently hosted the popular film showings.

Other less specialised spaces included the chapel, which was occasionally used as an art venue as was the sports hall, especially in Germany, though the exercise yard and canteen rarely featured. Particularly in the UK and Italy ‘other spaces’ were identified as the location for over half the arts provision, including workshops, school classrooms and even corridors.⁵⁹ However space was cited as the second major factor after finance in restricting arts initiatives (see below), as an Italian artist commented:

*There is a general need to create more suitable spaces for artistic & cultural activities.*⁶⁰

Access

*“One particular side of the prison curriculum which has recently generated more comment than others is Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Of particular concern to prison educators across Europe is the lack of access to ICT (and other new media technologies), which is hampering the digital literacy of prisoners. A lack of even basic digital literacy serves to marginalise prisoners even more and significantly hinders their employment prospects.”*⁶¹

The *PriMedia Research Report* identifies two contrasting aspects of this issue. On the one hand a review of prison education and training from the European Commission stresses the limited access to ICT and other new media technologies, which is hampering the digital literacy of prisoners, stressing that the “lack of even basic digital literacy serves to marginalise prisoners even more and significantly hinders their employment prospects”.⁶² This even includes the Scandinavian prisons which are widely regarded as the leaders in this field. On the other hand a UK report, *Digital exclusion or learning exclusion?* suggests that internationally technology for education in prison is improving:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

*In some countries, Internet access has been accepted for some time now, especially in Northern Europe, without jeopardy to the security of prisons.*⁶³

Examples from Norway indicated that a communications technology infrastructure had been created, which encouraged prisoners to become e-citizens, and student-inmates could access university learning platforms outside the prison and undertake research online.⁶⁴

In other countries however access was more difficult. In France there was wide-spread resistance to ICT use by prisoners and, although in principle all inmates should have been able to access the new technologies, this was not carried through in practice. Little information was available from countries in Eastern Europe although limited computer access was observed by partners from the *Will to Dream* and *PriMedia* projects during visits to Bulgarian prisons.⁶⁵

Limiting factors

*In terms of factors restricting music and dance provision in prisons, the largest one in all countries was money, followed by lack of suitable spaces. Security restrictions played some role in all countries, and lack of trusted or qualified artists in Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy and England. In the last-named country media scrutiny caused by some negative reporting was an additional issue.*⁶⁶

Apart from Catalonia where lack of space and security issues provided the main restrictions and Italy where other factors limited arts activities, insufficient **funding** was identified as the key element in restricting the practice of all art forms in European prisons. Given the overall economic pressures on prison and arts budgets and the general tendency in national economies dominated by austerity to limit funding for anything but essentials, this lack of support is understandable though regrettable.

*I am a strong supporter of art activities in its many guises as a method that supports reducing re-offending. However, these all tend to be 'soft' option outcomes & thereby difficult to prove as valuable recourses especially in our present financial climate and public opinion arenas.*⁶⁷

After funding, the lack of suitable **space** for arts activities was the second biggest factor. All countries questioned suffered from this problem, as an overview of the difficulties of working in prisons the *Movable Barres* publication noted:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

*These are different in each country – and even each prison - but most agree that the most common obstacle is appropriate accommodation for such activities, which are often too small or even non-existent. The first priority in facilitating music and dance activities inside prison therefore should be a suitable, dedicated working space.*⁶⁸

In many centres **security** issues were a real problem, especially in Italy, Germany, the UK and Spain. The reduction in prison officers that so many countries are experiencing due to staff cuts was a particular concern:

*There are a lot of difficulties related to the continual movement of prisoners for transfer or release. ... The shortage of prison staff does not allow an improved scheduling of activities.*⁶⁹

Another obstacle to attracting male inmates to participate in cultural events is the prevalent macho or gang culture which so often dominates prison life. This however can be overcome with a sensitive approach, as Torbjorn Rodal from Norway indicates:

*Throughout the years I have noted the rough masculine codes that exist in the prison. Making music can contrast with this culture. Even if the inmates are tough out on the block, many make themselves vulnerable through writing lyrics and presenting their music.*⁷⁰

Other negative factors included lack of suitable tutors, continuity of arts interventions, time for staff to organise events – often linked to funding – and for some art-forms adequate language skills. In a section entitled ‘Difficulties of working inside prisons’ the partners on the *Movable Barres* project identified other problems which they regularly encountered:

- *suitability and continuity of prison contacts*
- *ensuring adequate time and information for security clearance*
- *pace and conditions of prison life*
- *attitudes of prisoners and prison staff*
- *multi-ethnic nature of prison populations*
- *awareness and experience of external practitioners*
- *flexibility of approaches*
- *appropriateness of conduct and dress of facilitators*⁷¹

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

The Bulgarian partner identified even more fundamental issues concerning accessing arts activities in prisons: underdeveloped outdated infrastructures, underdeveloped legislation, and underdeveloped systematic approaches to educational and cultural activities in prisons.⁷² Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the music teachers from Denmark, Northern Ireland and Norway who undertook a music workshop in Sofia Central Prison, the first such event in the country, saw the experience as a significant breakthrough.⁷³

A constant feature with regard to arts interventions in English and Welsh prisons is **negative media** reports, despite the recognised need for more public awareness of such activities:

*It is important to provide more visibility to the outside society on the content delivered by prisoners in art activities.*⁷⁴

The problems for **ICT and multimedia** were rather different, the main ones being security and access.

*On the one hand, ICT is a natural and necessary part of a modern education. On the other hand, the execution of the sentence causes the inmates to have different degrees of limitations on their communications due to security concerns. ICT can be a challenge to the demands for security.*⁷⁵

Whilst security continued to be a difficult obstacle, although some hopeful developments were being made in some countries like Denmark and Norway, progress was being made in many prisons concerning access:

*Despite the security concerns ... access, particularly the use of ICT for educational or training purposes, is in many cases – but by no means all - becoming increasingly easier.*⁷⁶

Examples were given of positive if limited actions in Norway, Greece, Catalonia, France and England, though the opportunities at that time were quite constricted:

*In most prisons, however, and particularly in the “working” prisons, conflicting stakeholder perceptions result in higher level distance learning being marginalised, with a corresponding lack of interest in student-inmates’ IT needs.*⁷⁷

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Even when the problems of security and access were resolved, there were a number of other obstacles to be overcome, including the impact of economic cutbacks, technical unreliability, lack of assessment and portfolio of achievements, lack of competent trainers and poor basic ICT skills of users.

*... prison learners' access and use of technology is hampered by conflicting priorities amongst the multiple organisations controlling prisoner activities. This can lead to a prison in which menial work is valued far higher than learning. Technology-enhanced distance learning, perceived by many to be a lifeline in a desolate environment, is heavily restricted in such prisons.*⁷⁸

5. ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

Despite the many obstacles facing attempts to introduce arts and media activities into prison outlined above, a huge number and wide range of cultural interventions took place in European prisons during the ten years covered by this survey. The specific responses to the *Movable Barres* and *Art & Culture in Prison* questionnaires from prisons and artists numbered more than 550, approximately 50% of those approached.⁷⁹ Extending the research to include all six European projects covered here, over 150 examples of good practice in 22 European countries were highlighted, offered in most art forms and a diversity of contexts, both for internal and public consumption. These included art exhibitions, theatrical performances, concerts, workshops and publications, print and online. In the majority of these events prisoners were actively involved, in many cases taking on the main responsibility.⁸⁰

Interestingly music provision in the high security men's prisons was unusually high, although not surprisingly no dance sessions were provided.

*Music provision within the high security estate was notably high. Of the 6 high security prisons that responded, 3 have on-going music classes and 5 have one-off music projects.*⁸¹

Although there are relatively few women's prisons, in the UK at least they received a higher proportion of artistic activities than their male counterparts:

*Arts provision was highest in the women's estate. Of the 9 women's prisons who responded, 1 has on-going music classes, 1 has on-going dance classes, 7 have one-off music projects, and 6 have one off dance projects*⁸²

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

With regard to ICT and multimedia, many of the previous problems in using new technologies in prison were being overcome, allowing increasing numbers of inmates to access computers and other hi-tech facilities:

Whilst the overall picture regarding ICT & multimedia activities in European prisons – at least with regard to the countries covered by this survey – is mixed, concerns about access and application are to some extent offset by some encouraging initiatives, both at national and regional and at local level.⁸³

Regular arts activities

Of the 286 respondents from the 5 ACP partner countries, 242 confirmed that regular arts activities took place in their prisons – around 85%:

A high proportion of respondents in all countries have regular arts activities.⁸⁴

The most popular art-form was music, offered by around 30% of the respondents, particularly in Italy, England, Germany and Catalonia. Theatre/ drama was popular in around 18%, especially in Italy and Germany, but not in England – probably due to organisational difficulties in British prisons. Dance events – around 12% - took place mainly in England, Italy and Bulgaria, whilst the visual arts were only identified in 14% of centres, although this might partly due to the lack of focus on this area in two of the projects undertaking the research. The rest of the regular arts activities are made up by multimedia (11%) – chiefly Italy although much of this is taken up by film showings; literature (8%) - mainly in Germany; and “other” (6%), primarily specialised art & craft areas.⁸⁵

One-off arts activities

Somewhat surprisingly, there were slightly less **one-off activities** identified – 248 out of 342 returns (just under 73%) – and the contrast between the different art-forms was less marked.

Drama and multimedia most frequent in UK, visual arts in Catalonia, drama and music in Italy. Again little dance anywhere.⁸⁶

Drama (27%) was slightly more popular than music (23%), mainly due to the increase in theatre inputs in England, whilst visual arts (13%), multimedia and literature (12%) were much on a par, with ‘other’ just behind on 10%. One-off dance inputs were very limited at 3%.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Form of activities

As already indicated the kind of interventions that took place were extremely varied, although approximately half of them were performances, 637 out of 1253 activities.

*Drama & music main one-off activities, less in visual arts, multimedia & literature. Again little dance. UK offers more drama as one-off than regular, Catalonia only drama & music.*⁸⁷

Of the 637 performances identified, 287 were by outside groups, especially in the UK, whilst slightly more were created by the prisoners themselves, especially in Italy and Germany. Just over 10% of the activities were presentations and exhibitions, 13% workshops and nearly 20% identified as education classes or therapy sessions, with “other” at just over 5%.

ICT access

As far as ICT access was concerned this tended to vary depending on national policies and to a lesser degree local conditions:

*The degree to which ICT has developed in a prison context is, of course, a product of the overall national environment that applies in different countries: the philosophical attitude to the desirability of giving IT access and/or education to prisoners; and the resource that the government gives to funding teaching staff, hardware and software as part of the national educational process.*⁸⁸

Despite this an overall increase in the use of ICT in education was noted in Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria and the UK and prison-related initiatives were making encouraging progress. This was applied especially to the Northern European countries: Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and England, although Greece, Catalonia, Italy and Turkey also showed ongoing access improvements.⁸⁹

Activity organisers

The organisers of arts and media interventions also varied according to the conditions in each country, region and individual prison:

*Overall a large proportion of arts activities were organised by the prison authorities, with the education staff close behind in UK and Catalonia, less so in Italy and none at all in Germany. In Italy, Germany and the UK, the artists themselves were far more involved in this aspect.*⁹⁰

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

In fact the surveys indicated nearly 30% of all arts activities were organised by education staff, 20% by prison officers, almost 27% by artists or arts organisations and 24% by others, including voluntary groups. Education staff were the prime initiators in England and Italy, prison officers in Catalonia and arts groups and voluntary organisations in Germany.⁹¹

ICT is linked directly to formal educational needs in almost all prisons, with the education staff the key organisers of ICT provision:

“E-learning gives inmates the chance to not only learn subjects for their general or vocational education but also provides them with the opportunity to acquire digital literacy.”⁹²

In Norway, students were able to access educational websites under strict control; in Catalonia the prison administrations were authorised to offer access to correspondence courses; in Greece the student-inmates had the use of well-equipped computer rooms though on a limited time-basis; and in England most education departments had at least one IT suite with modern computers, some of which could be internally networked, though often with limited expert support.⁹³

Obviously there was more flexibility regarding multimedia, normally excluded from the official curriculum:

A rare exception is to be found in Sonder Omme, the only prison in Denmark that teaches multimedia as a school subject. The reason for this probably lies in the fact that multimedia is not specified on the list of subjects given by the Ministry of Education, and does not therefore meet the demands of the official educational board.”⁹⁴

Thus activities such as video and film-making, electronic music, online journals and magazines, radio programmes, digital storytelling, etc. tend to arise from the initiatives of individual motivated education or prison staff, although in Catalonia a range of multimedia projects were used to promote learning and skills development, supported by the Catalan education authorities and the Ministry of Justice.

The AlfaDigital program (digital literacy and cultural dynamization) has been carried out in Catalan prisons since 2007. This programme aims to incorporate ICT in everyday life prison.”⁹⁵

Related ICT and multimedia projects from Catalonia include *Cyberaules*: computer recycling and free software; *ICT/Omnia* points: Internet access for inmates; *ACTIC*: accreditation of ICT skills; and *DigiTale* Project: promotion of ICT skills through the production of digital storytelling.⁹⁶

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Future provision

Asked whether the centres would like more arts activities, the overwhelming response was in the affirmative. Out of 565 responses, 491 (87%) replied in favour.

*Music, drama & multimedia were the most wanted activities, with less for visual arts. There was a reasonable interest in more dance, especially in Catalonia where there was no interest at all in literature, although there was some in the other countries.*⁹⁷

Only Greece's response with 7 out of 9 was negative, though this was just for music and dance, presumably centres feeling they already had sufficient inputs in these areas.⁹⁸

The most popular area for increased activities was drama, especially in England, followed by music, particularly in Germany. Italy plumped equally for more initiatives in drama, music and multimedia (including film), whilst for Catalonia it was drama, dance and the visual arts. There was a reasonable interest in more literature in Italy, Germany and England, although little in Catalonia.⁹⁹

Despite the positive reaction from most respondents to the involvement of the arts in prison life, the need for more innovative and imaginative inputs was also identified. Although this comment from *Movable Barres* focuses on music and dance, it could equally well be appropriate for other art-forms:

*Clearly there is much work needed both to increase the amount of music and dance provision in European jails and to encourage teachers and practitioners to explore more varied approaches, eg the use of electronic technology in music or the introduction of more contemporary dance forms. The exchange workshops which followed up this initial research clearly showed the importance of music and dance specialists from different countries sharing their expertise and collaborating with each other.*¹⁰⁰

The situation for ICT and multimedia was more difficult to ascertain as they were as dependent on official action and policy as individual initiatives. It was encouraging therefore that the national and regional partners in the *PriMedia Network* offered positive encouragement, along with a range of local organisations:

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Particularly innovative were the contributions on ICT practice from the Dutch and Catalanian Justice Ministries and South West College in Northern Ireland, and there were also examples of original practice in multimedia from the Izmir Governorship in Turkey, Sonder Omme Prison in Denmark, Halden Prison in Norway, IMOTEC in Lithuania, and the Avlona Prison School in Greece.¹⁰¹

6. FEEDBACK FROM PRISONERS

Whilst statistical information regarding the frequency of arts and media activities in European prisons is important, especially given the scepticism of many politicians and others responsible for supporting such interventions, the most convincing argument is seen in the reactions of those at the receiving end – prisoners and ex-prisoners. Five of the projects covered in this analysis identified and in some cases organised a wide range of excellent examples of the impact that the arts can have in a prison context. Many of these include feedback from participants, almost all positive, fully justifying the time and effort put into such activities by teachers, prison officers, artists, etc. In this section I will therefore use examples from all the projects to try to identify some the main points arising from such feedback.

‘The Fortune Teller’ in Lovech Prison

One of the first initiatives organised by the *Will to Dream* project was to fund a professional actor to direct a theatre production with inmates at Lovech Prison in Bulgaria. This was the first of its kind in the country and the play - based on a folk tale “*The Vrazhalets*” (*The Fortune Teller*) – was premiered to an international audience attending the 2nd PAN Conference in Sofia, held jointly with *Will to Dream* project. Not only was it a unique event for Bulgarian prisons but also an important milestone in encouraging prison arts interventions in countries with little experience of it. The rapturous reception given to the performers at the end of the play, shown on the internal TV channels of all Bulgarian prisons, and the subsequent discussions between conference delegates and cast gave some indication of the positive impact of the event. However it was only later when the director and the event organiser, Valentina Petrova, read letters from the prisoners involved that the full impact on them became clear:

“It was the first time in my life when people applauded what I have done. All inmates envied our reception to the governor. It is really great to be someone.”¹⁰²

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Some of the reactions were predictable for anyone performing to a strange audience for the first time: scared and wanting to hide before the performance, elated afterwards; realising that boring repetition during rehearsals was necessary for a successful performance. Another wrote of his potential embarrassment at having to take on a female role:

*Thank you so much for convincing me to play the female role! You were right when you told me that I would not become the laughing stock of everyone. Although I didn't understand any word in English, I felt that the audience likes my play. Strangely, but also the other inmates stopped making fun of my role after the premiere. I feel really proud and a stronger man now.*¹⁰³

Another wrote of bursting into tears in the dressing room afterwards, again without any mockery from his fellow inmates. A couple expressed their frustration at not being able to talk in English to the audience afterwards, and their determination to study harder in language classes. One wrote a long letter about how he was expelled from the group for selling props for cigarettes, how hard it was to summon up the courage to apologise and be reinstated, and how determined he was to learn from this experience:

*I would like to reintegrate me in a group of serious people after my release. I don't want to come back to the prison, believe me. I will never forget the feeling of being accepted by the audience. Thank you for giving me these moments!"*¹⁰⁴

Other drama activities with inmates supported by *The Will to Dream* project were held in Austria, Lithuania, Norway, Northern Ireland and a circus workshop in Sweden.¹⁰⁵ Amongst a range of cultural events during the PAN conferences, exhibitions of prison art were held in Ireland, Bulgaria and in a former prison in Denmark.¹⁰⁶ The music and dance activities organised by the *Movable Barres* initiative included workshops in Denmark, Norway, Northern Ireland and again Bulgaria.¹⁰⁷ The *PriMedia Network* hosted a good practice workshop in video with ex-prisoners in Lithuania and another using ICT, video and *Photoshop* with inmates in Turkey.¹⁰⁸ Prisoners and ex-prisoners involved in these activities provided positive feedback on a variety of aspects, whilst the *Art & Culture in Prison* survey included sections on the impact of the arts on prisoners and artists.¹⁰⁹

Self-reflection

“A prisoner in prison meets and has to spend time with the one person he/she did not think they would meet – themselves.” (Carlo Gébler – Writer in Residence for Northern Irish prisons) ¹¹⁰

Given that those behind bars spend so much time on their own – many can be locked in their cells for up to 23 hours a day – it is not surprising that so many arts interventions are focused on encouraging critical self-reflection. The process which led someone to commit a crime and is consequently given the punishment of a prison term often leads to a sense of failure, low self-esteem and a negative attitude towards the outside world. Given also that so many inmates have a very poor level of literacy and suffer from psychiatric problems, it is not surprising that they resort to alcohol and drugs to relieve the boredom and isolation.

“If you can't read or write, and you're not into TV or music, you're in trouble. You'll get depressed and wound up.” (Prisoner in Wakefield Prison, England) ¹¹¹

The reflection offered through arts activities, especially visual arts, music and creative writing, can help improve both the prisoner's mental wellbeing and his/her ability to cope with the worst aspects of prison life. As one 'lifer' in Mountjoy Prison, Dublin, put it:

When I first came to prison I was in a terrible state ... I didn't like school as a kid so when a friend suggested I try the prison school I told him that it wasn't for me. He kept at me to go with him. ... So about ten or eleven months ago I came ... My confidence and self esteem were very low and I nearly gave up. But I did have two fantastic tutors ... They encouraged me to stick at it and told me I had great talent. ¹¹²

The opportunity to reflect on what brought them to their current position and to express it in creative form without external judgement was what many prisoners found positive in creative activities. Whether discovering the “magical power of colours” ¹¹³, playing drums in a music workshop ¹¹⁴, or expressing “resignation, anger, indifference, misguided love, melancholy, desire, distrust, hostility, self-punishment, fear and hatred” through creative writing ¹¹⁵, involvement in artistic creation can help inmates deal with their inner fears.

When I paint it is like cleaning up the messes. ¹¹⁶

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Another feature of arts activities in prison is the way in which a prisoner can forget the restrictions of his/her environment and escape into a world of the imagination:

*I hope it will give me a brighter focus and view towards music. It will take my mind away from prison and focus on something interesting and achievable.*¹¹⁷

It also helped the participants to forget their prisoner status and become if only for a short time actors, painters, musicians or video-makers:

*Cultural & artistic activities offer the opportunity to mitigate the sense of depersonalization & of inactivity typical of situations where freedom is restricted*¹¹⁸

Socialisation

Another major problem for prisoners is having the social skills to relate and work with others. Most of them have had limited interaction with others outside their immediate family or peer group, and many find it hard not only to mix with others behind bars but to prepare for the social interaction they will need when they are released. Certain arts activities were particularly fitted for encouraging this, especially theatre productions, dance performances and music concerts: as the actors in the Lovech Prison production of the 'Fortune Teller' confirmed; as the participants in the *Music in Prisons* workshops related; as the Maltese young offenders taking part in a video of the drama performance *When you hear My Voice*, attended by the country's President, attested¹¹⁹; and as the mother of a 16-year old male participant in a *Dance United* performance testified:

*It's amazing, I've seen a real change in him. Just his general confidence, and the way he talks to people. He used to just sit upstairs on his own on his computer every night ... it's amazing that he can stand up there in front of this many people and do something like this. Without even having had a drink!*¹²⁰

Other art-forms too offered opportunities for collaborating with fellow prisoners, such as organising exhibitions of prisoner art, producing prison magazines or making a video:

*It was a nice work and I felt happy to be together with different people. To shoot a movie in prison was like a story of a real movie for me.*¹²¹

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Another important aspect of socialising is attending education classes, although many inmates – often suffering from dyslexia - have previously had negative experiences of school, associating it with failure and humiliation. The arts provide an effective pathway to overcoming such fears, especially if used as a learning tool.

*Artistic & cultural activities stimulate the capacity for integration, self-esteem & achieving educational objectives.*¹²²

Although in the feedback from the *Art & Culture in Prison* project many prisoners appreciated how the arts helped bring them into education as a way of “delivering key skills”, as “instruments of knowledge” and by using “creative thinking” as a learning tool, there were reservations about the way arts activities were separated from the formal educational and training processes, especially with the narrowing of the curriculum to focus almost entirely on key skills:

*Arts and culture are sadly lacking, everything is vocationally focussed with little self development.*¹²³

Public awareness

A further aspect of arts projects was the chance to reveal to the outside world the positive aspects of the prisoners’ existence. Many felt that they had let down their families, in particular their children, and were grateful for an opportunity to redeem themselves.

*"By making beautiful things I have contact with my family again, and especially with my children, who have begun drawing too".*¹²⁴

Particularly successful in this respect was ‘*Storybook Dads*’, a project where inmates read a storybook for their children, a recording of which was put on a DVD and sent to the children for their bedtime reading.¹²⁵

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Collaborations between prisons and outside arts organisations and community groups also had another purpose. A strong reason for wanting to present art created by prisoners to the general public was to combat the predominantly negative attitudes in many countries towards those in prison. This was especially important in places like England with a background of media hostility towards any attempts to improve the quality of prison life. By showing the general public their willingness and ability to engage in creative actions, detainees could start to convince them that they were capable of positive change and deserved a second chance.

It is important to provide more visibility to the outside society on the content delivered by prisoners in art activities. ¹²⁶

7. FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS & ARTISTS

If prisons are awful places for those locked up in side, they are also difficult places for those who deliver arts there, both one-off and regularly: teachers, artists, even prison staff. Although the work is usually seen as worthwhile and rewarding, many deliverers have difficulty in coping with its demands. The *PAN Network* identified some of the problems faced by artists:

“When you’re teaching or working in a prison, especially the people who are working as teachers, when you’re working directly, it’s hard to get overviews and it’s also sometimes hard to see what we do ... ¹²⁷

For many, getting sucked into the humdrum routine of prison life with its strict regulations and restrictions, working in such a controlled atmosphere – just the opposite of what they are trying to create, felt extremely demoralising. Delivering arts in prisons requires a high degree of expertise in two disciplines: arts and education. Most teachers had recognised teaching qualifications, having undergone officially sanctioned courses. Most professional artists had been through some kind of art-form related training. However few in either group were specifically prepared for delivering cultural interventions in such an intense and at times hostile atmosphere as the one they would encounter behind bars.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

For this reason the *CredAbility* project developed a comprehensive *Training Course for Artists Working with Prisoners*, accredited at Levels 3 and 5 by The College of Teachers, later to be joined by a similar course for practitioners working in ICT and multimedia, created as part of the *PriMedia Network*.¹²⁸ These courses not only contained sections on “*the essential background and skills*” needed to function in the prison environment (Module 1), and on “*practical issues relating to the delivery of arts*” (Module 3) but also one that focused on “*the critical thinking and personal reflection required to prepare artists for such work*” (Module 2)¹²⁹ with relevant adaptations for media practitioners. This last module, initially developed by the artist Hannah Hull, was particularly important in preparing deliverers of arts and media activities in prison to cope with the rigours and stresses of their task. It aimed to raise ...

*... The level of critical thinking to be expected in a prison environment: from the learner, the prison service, the participants, and the obstacles to critical thinking to be faced, including awareness of the rights of artists and inmates.*¹³⁰

Another factor which made life difficult for those delivering arts in prison was isolation, both within prisons and from those undertaking similar roles elsewhere. Although some prison officers were supportive and even assisted in helping organise arts and media activities, such as the staff choir in Halden Prison in Norway¹³¹, many felt that artists and teachers were a hindrance to them carrying out what they saw as their primary task of ensuring security. So for the deliverers of arts interventions the international meetings organised by the various European prison arts projects, especially the Network conferences, were a welcome opportunity to meet with others in a similar situation:

*I think having these kinds of meetings and people exchanging what they do is vital, it's so supportive. It's like it gives you the strength to carry on. It's cliché, but it's true.*¹³²

Such meetings led not only to exchanges of approaches between deliverers but also to collaborations between artists and others in different countries.

*It's inspiring because it takes you out from your local and transports you into a broader context. So it lifts your horizons and the possibilities for further collaborations with other organisations in other countries have been very good.*¹³³

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

A vivid example of such collaborations was illustrated by Niels Bak, a teacher in *Sonder Omme Prison* in Denmark, in his contribution to the methodology section of the *Movable Barres* publication, when describing how he and his colleague Marianne Schandorff decided to combine two different teaching approaches from Norway and England experienced during the project:

*Marianne and I have decided that we want to combine the two methods. We want to use the recording principals from GVO (Grønland Voksenopplæringscenter, Oslo) with the electric drums and the instruments connected directly to the mixer. We will then combine this setup with the MIP (Music in Prisons) methodology by playing the music from the mixer through a PA system - in other words using new technologies and combining them with a more traditional band setup.*¹³⁴

Feedback from the artists, teachers, prison staff and others working in jails to their interventions was similar to those already highlighted earlier:

- improving relations between the detainees;
- facilitating integration and mutual cooperation;
- providing prisoners with productive work that they can do in their cells;
- assisting with rehabilitation;
- including the arts as core offender curriculum and employability opportunities.¹³⁵

*The main thing is that it raised awareness about the fact that art can take place in prisons. That there is literally no risk in it, that it's worthwhile. And most of all, it is educational – educational in the wide sense of the word. That it does things to people. And 99.9% what it does is change them to the better, give them a new horizon.*¹³⁶

8. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of 2020 BBC television showed an edition of *The Choir*, in which the choirmaster Gareth Malone was invited by the governor of Aylesbury Prison to form a singing group of inmates.¹³⁷ The programme was interesting in a couple of crucial ways: It showed the inherent problems of an outsider organising arts activities in prison, and In particular it revealed the difficulties of arranging group arts activities in a prison environment.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Overall the attempt felt a bit like “inventing the wheel”, especially, given that only one other prison choir was identified, ignoring the many arts organisations who have been working consistently in English prisons for years, including *Music in Prisons*. The most interesting comment came at the end of the two-part programme when, after a small but reasonably successful concert had been presented to an invited public, the governor was asked what she would like to happen next. She replied that she would like to have a musician in residence for a few months, as she felt that this would have a positive impact on many prisoners.

This highlighted some basic issues confronting the organisation of arts activities in prisons, issues which I have tried to identify in this research evaluation:

- The need for such activities to be regular and consistent over a lengthy period of time.
- The need to fund and resource such activities.
- The need for them to be an accepted part of prison life.
- The need for such activities to be part of a coordinated regional or national programme.

To many this is mere wishful thinking but for others it is a dream worth pursuing, like those who participated in the six prison arts programmes funded through the European Union, which are the subject of this report.

ANNEXE: PRISON ARTS RESEARCH PROJECTS

Movable Barres (2009-10)

Funded through Grundtvig 1 of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU

Coordinator:	The Manchester College
Research organised by:	Jo Tilley-Wiley, Music in Prison & Alan Clarke, The Manchester College
Research focus:	Music and dance in prisons in 6 European countries
Partners/countries involved:	10 partners from Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Organisations contacted:	Prisons
Responses:	159
Research published:	Project publication

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

Art & Culture in Prison (2010-12)

Funded through Grundtvig 1 of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU

Coordinator:	Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci, Florence, Italy
Research organised by:	Alan Clarke & Chloe Gill, The Manchester College
Research focus:	Cultural activities (visual arts, performing arts, literature) in prisons of 4 countries
Partners/countries involved:	6 partners from Germany, Italy, Spain (Catalonia), UK (England & Northern Ireland),
Organisations contacted:	Prisons, artists
Responses:	216 (<i>Italy = 131; Germany = 39; Catalonia = 11; UK = 35.</i>)
Research published:	Project publication

PriMedia Network (2012-5)

Funded as a Grundtvig Network through the Life Long learning Programme of the EU

Coordinator:	The College of Teachers
Research organised by:	Alan Clarke, The College of Teachers
Research focus:	ICT & multimedia in prisons of 10 countries
Partners/countries involved:	15 partners from Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain (Catalonia), Turkey, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Organisations contacted:	Prisons,
Research published:	Network publication, PM Journal (4 editions), Training Programme accredited at Levels 3 & 5 by TCOT

OTHER EUROPEAN PRISON ART PROJECTS

PAN Prison Arts Network (2006-9)

Funded as a Grundtvig Network through the Socrates programme of the EU

Coordinator:	City College Manchester/ The Manchester College
Partners/countries involved:	15 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Netherlands, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Publications:	'pARTners' online journal (4 editions)

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

The Will to Dream (2007-9)

Funded as a cooperation project through the Grundtvig 1 programme of the EU

Coordinator: City College Manchester/ The Manchester College
Partners/countries involved: 9 partners from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Sweden, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Publications: "The Moral Compass" (DVD)

CredAbility (2012-4)

Funded through the Leonardo Transfer of Information Programme of the EU

Coordinator: SEEDS for Growth/ The College of Teachers
Partners/countries involved: 7 partners from Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, UK (England & Northern Ireland)
Publications: Training Programme accredited at Levels 3 & 5 by TCOT

REFERENCES

Most of the research evidence collected by the *Movable Barres* and *Art & Culture in Prison* projects is identified and summarised in the online publications of the projects, the information gathered by the *PriMedia Network* was disseminated in a more disparate fashion and is therefore identified through three sources – the Final Public Report and two research summaries. These are identified below through their initials:

MB: 'Movable Barres', online Publication, 2010, edited by Dr Alan Clarke and Marta Volterra
ACP: 'Art and Culture in Prison', online publication
PMFR: *PriMedia Final Report – Public Part*
PMRS: 'ICT & MULTIMEDIA IN EUROPEAN PRISONS - Results of research undertaken as part of the *PriMedia Network*. Compiled by Dr Alan Clarke, The College of Teachers, UK, with assistance from James Kennedy
PMRR: *Background Research Report, ICT & Multimedia in European Prisons, PriMedia: reproduced in Movable Barres online journal, edition 4, October 2015*

All these sources are included with this report, submitted to the Evidence Library of the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance. Further material identified in the report can be acquired from the author, Dr Alan Clarke at: alanruscoe@yahoo.co.uk.

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

1. RATIONALE

- 1 *'The Peculiarities & Possibilities of Artistic Social Education as Resocialization for Prisoners'*
by Vilma Petriešytė, Vilmantė Aleksienė & Renata Katinaitė, Vilnius Pedagogical
University, Lithuania, in *Partners 4*, PAN online journal, Spring 2010, p.28 ff
- 2 *'An interview with Dr Alan Clarke'*, MB, p.3
- 3 Corrado Marcetti, *'From the objectives to outcomes'*, ACP, p.9
- 4 *'Executive Summary'*, PMFR, p.3
- 5 *'An interview with Dr Alan Clarke'*, MB, p.3
- 6 *'Computer-based composing as teaching'*, MB, p.86
- 7 *'Music in prisons'*, MB, P.80
- 8 *'Caught By Chance Rock Band'*, MB, p.90
- 9 *'The Body as an Instrument'*, ACP, p.89
- 10 *'Dance as a Teaching Method'*, MB, p.94
- 11 *'How art is made in the UK's criminal justice system'*, ACP, p.105
- 12 *"Policies and Approaches in European Prison Art Education"*, *Partners 1*, Autumn 2007,
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- 13 *Conference Report*, *Partners 3*, November 2009, p.14
- 14 *Essay by Cathy Moore, Artist-in-Residence with the Prison Arts Foundation*, in ACP, p.127
- 15 *'Literature'*, ACP, p. 97
- 16 *Interview with a performing arts student at Wakefield College. PriMedia Journal 1*,
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- 17 *Ditto*
- 18 *'Drama as Redemption'*, *Partners 4*, Spring 2010, p.32
- 19 *'Benefits of ICT'*, PMRR, p.2
- 20 *'Multimedia'*, PMRS, p.8
- 21 *Ibid*
- 22 *Ibid*, pp 8-9

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

2. CONTEXT

- 23 *'The role of arts in European prisons', pARTners 3, p.6*
- 24 *'Art & culture in prison systems', ACP, p.52*
- 25 *Ditto, p.53*
- 26 *Ditto, p.54*
- 27 *Ditto, p.55*
- 28 *Ditto, p.58*
- 29 *Ditto, p.60*
- 30 *'The role of arts in European prisons', pARTners 3, p.12*
- 31 *'Outline policy of the Danish Prison & Probation Service', PM Journal 3, March 2015, p.13*

3. METHODOLOGY

- 32 *PAN aims, 'pARTners' 1, Autumn 2007, p.15. (amongst other sources)*
- 33 *'External Evaluation Report of The PAN European Network' by Judith Galla, Die Berater, p.21*
- 34 *'SOCRATES Final Report Assessment Sheet - PAN European Network' Section 3*
- 35 *Project Overview, MB, p.7*
- 36 *'Research introduction', MB, p.23*
- 37 *Ibid*
- 38 *'From the objectives to outcomes', ACP, p.14*
- 39 *'Comparative research on the experiences', ACP, p.63*
- 40 *Ibid, p.64*
- 41 *'Project Objectives', PMFR, p.8*
- 42 *See PMRR, p.2 ff*
- 43 *'Research introduction', MB, p.23*
- 44 *'Letter to prisons', MB, p.27*
- 45 *'Questionnaire responses analysis', MB, p.31*
- 46 *'Research introduction', MB, p.23*
- 47 *'Comparative research on the experiences', ACP, p.63*
- 48 *Ibid, p.64*
- 49 *'Collation of research into ICT and multimedia', PMFR, P.14*
- 50 *Ditto*

4. CONDITIONS AFFECTING PRISON ARTS & MEDIA INTERVENTIONS IN EUROPEAN PRISONS

- 51 *'Research introduction', MB, p.23*
- 52 *'Comparative research on the experiences', ACP, p.63*
- 53 *PMRR, p.1*
- 54 *PMRR, p.7*
- 55 *'Comparative research on the experiences', ACP, p.65*
- 56 *See Section 2: 'Background research', MB, p.23 ff and I.4: 'Cultural and artistic activities in partner countries', ACP, p.63 ff.*
- 57 *'Prison responses', ACP, p.65*
- 58 *'Questionnaire responses analysis', MB, p.32*
- 59 *See, MB, p.23 ff and ACP, p.63 ff.*
- 60 *'Individual responses', ACP, p.70*
- 61 *'Introduction', PMRS, p.1*
- 62 *'Introduction', PMRR, p.1*
- 63 *Quoted in 'The Use of ICT in UK Prisons', by Matthew Taylor, cited in PMRR, p.1*
- 64 *'Introduction', PMRR, p.1*
- 65 *Ibid, p.2*
- 66 *'Research evaluation', MB, p.24*
- 67 *'Individual comments', ACP, p. 71*
- 68 *'Difficulties of working in prison', MB. p.77*
- 69 *'Individual comments', ACP, p. 71*
- 70 *'Computer-based composing as teaching', ACP p. 88*
- 71 *'Difficulties of working in prison', MB. p.77*
- 72 *'Difficulties of working in prison', MB. pp.77-8*
- 73 *'Partner exchanges', MB pp. 72-3*
- 74 *Ibid, p.72*
- 75 *'Security', PMRS, p.4*
- 76 *'Access', PMRS, p.5*
- 77 *Ibid, p.6*
- 78 *'Other Problems', PMRS, p.6*

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

1. ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES IN EUROPOEAN PRISONS

- 79 *'Questionnaire Responses Analysis', MB, p. 31 ff. and 'Comparative research on the experiences', ACP, p.64 ff*
- 80 *Particularly useful in identifying good practice examples were the online journals of the two Networks: 4 editions of 'pARTners', the PAN publication, and 4 editions of the PriMedia journal.*
- 81 *'Questionnaire Responses Analysis', MB, p.33*
- 82 *Ibid*
- 83 *'Conclusion', PMRS, P.10*
- 84 *'Prison responses', ACP, p.64*
- 85 *Ibid, pp 64-68*
- 86 *Ibid, p.66*
- 87 *Ibid, p.65*
- 88 *'Prison-related initiatives', PMRS, p.3*
- 89 *Ibid*
- 90 *'Prison responses', ACP, p.66*
- 91 *Ibid, p. 65*
- 92 *From 'E-Learning in Prison Education in Europe', quoted in PMRS, p.1*
- 93 *'Access', PMRS, pp 5-6*
- 94 *'Multimedia', PMRS, p.8*
- 95 *'Digital Storytelling in Catalonia', PM4, p.27*
- 96 *Ibid*
- 97 *'Prison responses', ACP, p.65*
- 98 *'Results in each partner country', MB, p.36*
- 99 *'Prison responses', ACP, p.65*
- 100 *'Conclusions', MB, p.26*
- 101 *'International Conference 1', PMFR, p.14*

EUROPEAN PRISON ARTS

2. FEEDBACK FROM PRISONERS

- 102 *'A new role of the arts and creative activities in Bulgarian prisons', pArtnr 3, p.27*
- 103 *Ibid.*
- 104 *Ibid.*
- 105 *See Annexes to 'The Will to Dream' Final report*
- 106 *See pARTners 1, 3 & 4*
- 107 *MB*
- 108 *'Undertaking good practice workshops', PMFR pp 15-16*
- 109 *ACP, pp 69-70*
- 110 *Quoted in 'Tribute to Mike Moloney', PM Journal, p. 27*
- 111 *From "A Day Inside", The Guardian, March 2007, quoted in 'Arts & Literacy in European prisons', PAN 2, p. 14*
- 112 *'Art for me in Mountjoy', pARTners 2, p.9*
- 113 *'Arts & Creative Activities in Prisons' pARTners 1, p.5*
- 114 *'Music methodologies: UK', MB, p.84*
- 115 *'Change of paradigm: prison literature since the 1970s' by Helmut Koch, ACP, p. 144*
- 116 *'Art in (Dutch) prisons', pARTners 2, p.10*
- 117 *'Music methodologies: UK', MB, p.84*
- 118 *'Impact on prisoners', ACP, p.69*
- 119 *'What's new from England', PM Journal 2, p.21*
- 120 *'The Academy Dance United', in MB, p.111*
- 121 *Prisoner feedback from 3rd PriMedia Workshop in Turkey, Annexe to PMFR*
- 122 *'Impact on prisoners', ACP, p.69*
- 123 *'Education & training', ACP, p.70*
- 124 *'Art in (Dutch) prisons', pARTners 2, p.10*
- 125 *'What's new from England', PM Journal 2, p.21*
- 126 *'External links', ACP, p.72*

3. FEEDBACK FROM TEACHERS AND ARTISTS

- 127 *'PAN external evaluation', quoted in pARTners 4, p.7*
- 128 *'Training Course for Artists Working with Prisoners' (Level 5) and 'PriMedia Training Course for ICT and Multimedia Practitioners' (Level 5), The College of Teachers*
- 129 *'Training Course for Artists Working with Prisoners', p.3*
- 130 *Ibid, p.6*
- 131 *See the 'Diversity' project in PM Journal 4, p.20*
- 132 *'PAN external evaluation', quoted in pARTners 4, p.7*
- 133 *Ibid.*
- 134 *'Music methodologies', ACP p.89*
- 135 *See 'PAN external evaluation', quoted in pARTners 4, and 'Impact on artists', ACP, p. 70 ff.*
- 136 *'PAN external evaluation', quoted in pARTners 4, p.8*

4. CONCLUSION

- 137 *'The Choir', BBC 2, January 2020*

ONLINE LINK

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