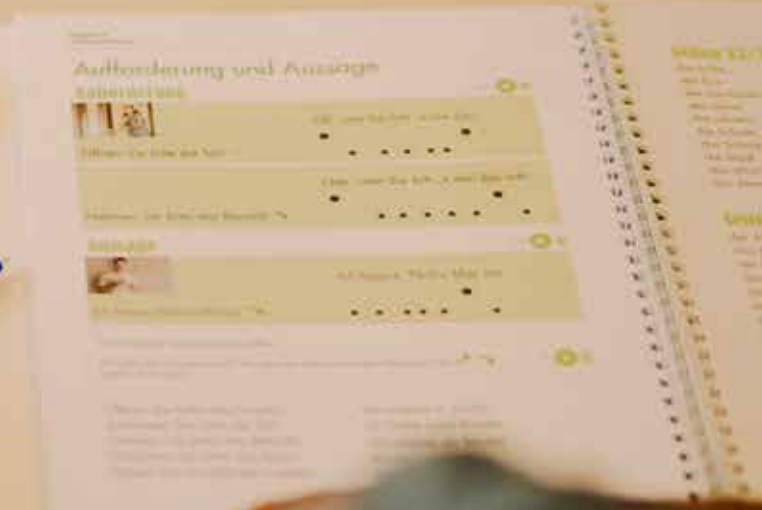
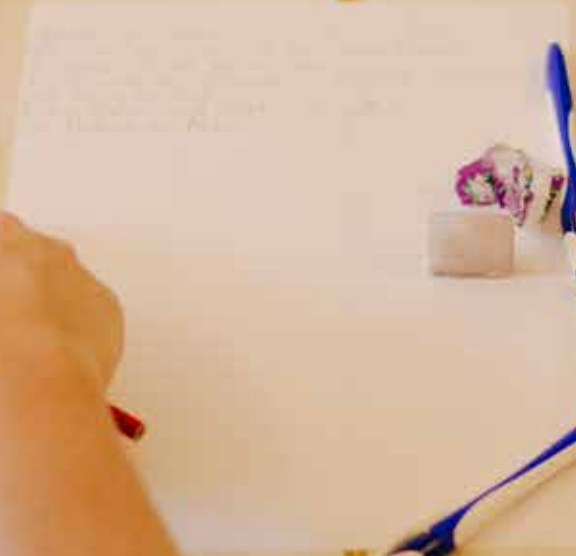


# School in prison - Why?

62 statements  
about education in prison  
from incarcerated men  
in a Swiss prison





# Dear reader

Between sixty and seventy prisoners at the Pöschwies prison take part in the classes offered by Bildung im Strafvollzug (BiSt - Education in Prison) every week. The BiSt teachers at Pöschwies asked the participants what the education means to them. The results of this non-representative survey are presented in this brochure. The occasion for our project is the International Day of Education in Prison on 13 October. On this day in 1989, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted 17 recommendations concerning education in prisons. For example, all prisoners should have access to education and training, and should be able to develop their personalities. In remembrance of this, the day is now celebrated in many countries on the initiative of the European Prison Education Association (EPEA). From this year 2022 onwards, the day will also be observed in all Swiss correctional facilities where the BiSt specialist unit of the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Prison and Probation (SCEPP) is present. The texts on the importance of education in the penal system were all written during lessons in the BiSt learning groups in Pöschwies prison. We have selected two or three particularly meaningful sentences from each of the inmates' texts. The quotes show the whole range of our students: from persons with little

our students: from persons with little writing and school experience to the articulate and highly educated, from native speakers to German beginners. We have corrected and/or translated the texts of the non-native speakers very cautiously.

Many of the students are very grateful for the opportunity to attend school in prison. *BiSt* is important for them not only because of learning the local language, but it also makes everyday life in prison easier for them and gives them motivation for the time afterwards. The quotes make this clear. Some also express wishes about education in prison and ideas about what could be improved in the prison education system.

We would like to thank all the participants in the classes for working so closely on this project and the prison management for making this brochure possible. We wish you an interesting read and look forward to a personal exchange.

The BiSt teachers at Pöschwies prison:  
Zeno D'Aulerio, Daniel Gut, Franziska Keller,  
Barbara Peyer, Michael Schmitz

Regensdorf, Zurich, Summer 2022



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**1** School in prison is good for communication. At school I benefit for my vocabulary. School in prison means resocialisation, integration, general education. With this we can organise and coordinate ourselves for a better life. It is good for me to be active. Education in prison is the enlightenment.

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**2** Education brings people together, because group work promotes mutual respect. Education keeps people young. BiSt is like a big market, it offers a variety of contents. Education has an impact on my personality and thus on my identity. BiSt lessons are fun and inspiring.

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**3** The school gives me freedom. All the doors are open. School is like a lake in the mountains. I was born in the mountains, in the village. Everything was quiet there. My mother taught me.

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**4** My opinion is that school in prison is very important. First of all, because it is socialisation and a good motivation for the future. It is also important to give our brain work to develop and not to degrade. I believe that life in prison would be very bleak without school. So I am happy that I have the opportunity to learn in prison.

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**5** I come from Holland and I am a gypsy (\*the participant explicitly asked for this term). I grew up in a caravan and have never been to school. I speak 12 languages, but I can't read or write. Now I can. I have never touched a computer and now I can use it. Sometimes I have to laugh at myself: "What have I missed!" I want to work on the beach with the tourists, but if I can't fill out an application form, they'll never hire me.

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**6** Education in prison is a great help for the future of the prisoners. It can help the inmates to integrate into the outside world. But the problem is that we don't have enough time to learn. That's why I would rather go to school more and work less.

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**7** I never went to school as a child. I taught myself to read and write. Now I want to learn properly. I am always embarrassed to make so many mistakes as a grown man. I feel ashamed. I like coming to school, I am positively motivated here.







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**8** I think education is important in prison because it helps you to understand what you need or to communicate with others or to ask questions. And I hope that it can help a person not only in prison, but also outside of prison. Yes, education is important. It helps in one way or another. I believe that no education is wasted.

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**9** School is important for personal development, for understanding modern society and for a favourable future perspective after release. Education is the engine of humanity's evolution. Without education we are like Tarzan: savages.

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**10** For me, education in prison is like a navigation, because with a navigation you can understand all directions, understand in which of these directions we should go. It shows or guides us everywhere very well. With a navigation you can plan where you want to go. It also helps us to know well where we are. With education in prison, you can criticise the system policies and regulations when they are not going well and understand everything very well.

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**11** For me, education in prison is very important. There are many prisoners among us who do not have a degree. And we would like to do vocational training or a degree to integrate into society, so that we don't have to become criminals for lack of work and money.

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**12** Soon came the next topic, where we researched how today's form of society came into being. Texts from Rousseau to Machiavelli were read and discussed. This led to a new understanding of the world we live in. I realised that many problems and conflicts lack knowledge and understanding. I am sure that I can benefit a lot from the BiSt class for my personal development and also for later in freedom.





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**13** Education in prison means that there are always good people. That's why I thank my teacher and his colleagues for their achievements in prison. Despite the negative environment, I want to take an exam for the B2 language level. It's not easy, but financially it's better than taking one outside, and I'll be happy when I walk out with the B2 certificate. Education is the light that keeps my hopes up.

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**14** Education means a lot to me: that I can do everything better in the future, that I can change, that I can see my future better. Education is a future. Education in prison is for me a hope that we all had lost.

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**15** School in prison is very good. You can hear and learn something new. Proper writing, reading, and socialising with different nationalities. School is important to take away the daily monotony and stress.





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**16** As a child, I never really wanted to go to school, and certainly not as a teenager. But now I think about it differently, I would have preferred to learn something and complete an apprenticeship. I can't catch up on what I missed at school, but I can still learn a lot for the future in the field of general education in BiSt classes, even if it's not the world now and I can't save the world with it.

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**17** On Monday mornings I like to go to BiSt classes to broaden my knowledge. We learn a lot about different topics like politics, economics or the environment. The prison should be able to offer prisoners at least one other national language, for example Italian or French. BiSt classes should be offered to the prisoners several times a week.

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**18** I go to school because I want to learn something for my life. I want people to respect me. For example, school helps me for my life outside at work. So I can talk to people. If I don't know the language, I have no social contacts and I am alone.

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**19** For me, education is the most important thing for all people, because with education we can have a better future - especially for those of us who are in prison. For this reason, I would like to work less and go to school at least three times a week.



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**20** Like many people here, I am hungry to study. We have to learn something, so we are ready for freedom. Classes twice a week, I think, would be better for us. We have to pay for our mistakes, but this way we would be ready for life. I didn't know German before. Here I got the Goethe certificate A2 and am now doing the second part of B1.

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**21** I come to school in prison to write, read, have fun and learn for life. And for a career in the job.





*[Faint handwritten text on a piece of paper, possibly a student's work or notes.]*



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**22** I would like to complete a vocational training. That's why I want to make good use of my time now and in the future. With education and learning, I can understand my weaknesses and strengths well. I can learn well and also get better motivation for everyday life. You can be more independent and get self-confidence. I think there is no limit and no end to education. Life itself is an education, no matter where!

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**23** I want to learn German because I hope to find a good job and a wife later and thus improve my situation.

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**24** Through education in prison, I want to become a better person and be a role model for my children and family. I also want to stand on my own feet and have a better manage of my life. I want to start my own business again and pay off my debts and help my victims. I even want to do further training and improve myself for the job market.

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**25** Here in prison I learn with fun. We learn by playing. I use the time to do a German certificate. I have already passed one with success.

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**26** I want to learn German to work in a restaurant or bar later.

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**27** Education in prison is something important, at least for me, and I want the time I spend in prison to be something useful to learn and grow as a person. And learning a new language is always good, but I would like us to have more classes per week, because education is something that is better the longer it lasts.



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**28** For me it is very important to be able to talk and understand without problems, especially to be able to say what I need and what I feel. I find it good to be able to talk to people without language problems and that people can understand what I really want to say without problems. And I enjoy learning a new language and being independent.

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**29** My reasons for going to school: to get better educated, to communicate in a new language, to find my way outside my country, to open my brain; through education I increase my chances of finding a job in other countries later.



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**30** School in prison is important because it helps the inmates to become more social and to communicate with others. It is also good to forget a little bit about the stress. The school in this prison is also important for the management of the prison to show that they are progressive. Overall, I think that the school in the prison is important and a good thing.

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**31** The training in prison motivates me for my future. In the future, I will be a better person with a completed education, because I will have many more chances on the labour market. It is very difficult to get a permanent job without training. I will also have better opportunities in my home country and I will not be afraid of the future.





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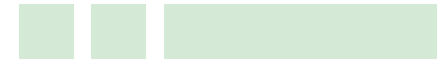
**32** Education is generally important if one wants to live life independently and crime-free. Because no education leads to very few job opportunities, which means a correspondingly low income or none at all. This automatically drives some people into delinquency. So education is certainly just as important in prison as it is outside, but the time for it is much greater here. This time should definitely be made use of.

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**33** My education in prison means learning German very well because everything in the prison is in German. I not only learn German, but also about world history and see many friendly people. That's why school is important in prison.

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**34** Here I have time to learn. I can now build a better life: a better job, a better career. Education in prison is free and fun. It is important to learn while having fun. I learn German, general education, communication, social skills, listening and discussing.



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**35** I learn German in prison to better understand things in life. I will speak three languages in the future. I like it in class. I dream of speaking five languages one day.

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**36** As an adult, caught up in the flow of life, BiSt classes give me a new perspective on the important things in life. Participation allows me to engage with my peers in a way I have never experienced before. The teacher is blessed with the incredible gift of being able to trigger each adult in the right place for them. For me, a great role model and an essential part of education.

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**37** Learning German is good. It's good for my brain.



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**38** For me, education in prison is a light of knowledge about economics and general education. It is good for the brain. It is new knowledge for communication. I improve my German and get ahead. I didn't have school in my childhood because there was war. That's why I use the chance in prison, for the future, for education.

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**39** Training in prison also gives me a distraction from therapy. I can relieve the stress in prison that I get from the therapy sessions or in the unit. The motivation gives me the awareness of having a concrete goal that I want to achieve. The vocational training takes away my fear of the future, because it opens up new opportunities for me on the labour market.

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**40** It's good to speak different languages. I want to learn German because I will need it one day.



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**41** Unfortunately, when I was in secondary school, I didn't take school seriously. Now, once a week, even if it is too little, I do my best in prison. I have understood that school is important because it gives me a possibility for my future. Besides, school helps me to bear my current situation. I hope that all people in my situation will make use of this opportunity.

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**42** Education in prison means more knowledge about economics, politics, knowledge about different countries and cultures. That's why education and German lessons are important for me. Any education is good for concentration and motivation for other things in life.

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**43** I am in a Swiss prison and everyone speaks German, and I have to learn German to communicate, and it is a good idea to master other languages to communicate.

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**44** The BiSt classes have broadened my horizons and made me a bit more circumspect. It is important to be able to have new views and opinions. We live in fast-moving times, so it is essential to keep developing. I can feel a bit freer in the BiSt classes than in my prison cell.

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**45** School guarantees education. Education guarantees a career. A career guarantees a regular life and a regular life is less prone to criminal tendencies. School promotes tolerance and tolerance facilitates living together.



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**46** Before prison, I dropped out of two vocational training programmes and lost my connection to the world of work. My second prison sentence gave me the chance to do an apprenticeship and thus access to a structured educational curriculum again. Since I've been at school in prison, I notice that my curiosity is coming back and it feels satisfying to learn new things. It is also good for my mental fitness, as I can escape from everyday life, my drug addiction is a distant memory and I can do something sustainable for my future.





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**47** I go to school so that I can write and speak German. So I can understand all the information. Because now I can't understand the information for the computer, I can't speak German and I can't write with the computer.

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**48** Write, read, have fun learning and learn to integrate. That's the reason for school inside and outside. I hope for a better job afterwards.

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**49** I learn a lot in prison education, also something about solidarity with others. Education in prison will make you learn about values and the importance of a good attitude. Education in prison will make you think about your future so that when freedom comes, you will focus on something that cannot bring you back to prison.

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**50** Before, my German and my education were not so good. That's why I didn't have any alternatives, which put me on the road to prison. Now I have improved my skills and have planned a crime-free future, where education helps me to enter professional life and to get a serious job. But for my future I need much more schooling, once a week is much too little, preferably five times a week for half a day, like in the Spanish prisons.

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**51** For me, education is like a chair that gives me support and that I can lean on. Learning is fun and makes me want to explore further. I have made great progress in BiSt classes in writing, vocabulary, reading, listening and general knowledge.

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**52** I think education in prison is very good because I don't have time outside. Now I have the opportunity to use my time to improve my German and learn new things. It's good for me mentally, for concentration, and I'm active to catch up on my education. I am very grateful that I can go to school here in prison.







masculin    neutral    feminin    neuter

der    die    ein    ein

von    keine

Der Mann ist  
Die sind Männer

SINGULAR  
PLURAL

Schweizer  
Schweizer



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**53** With the vocational training, I was also able to work on parts of my life story and write an extended essay about it, which helped me personally. Education is important, but an apprenticeship in prison is not that easy, because there are many other issues that play a role. I am also learning the correct way to deal with other students, especially the annoying ones. That increases my frustration tolerance.

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**54** I found it more important to spend time with friends and pursue my hobbies. I didn't take the whole thing about school and education seriously, which I now regret. I am glad that I can broaden my education here in prison and learn a foreign language.

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**55** I think if you get an education, you have a much better chance of rehabilitation and a better life. We are already paying for our mistakes. Therefore, we should not have to work. In this sense, I think that as citizens and fellow human beings, formal education brings us much more than the obligation to work.



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**56** For me, education is the best thing for a good future. The problem is: we don't have too much time for school. Most of the time we are at work and four hours a week is not enough for learning. If we had more time for school, it could help us to become better people in the future.

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**57** School is like water. Without water, there is no life. Many people have no family and no money. If you can read and write, you don't have to ask other people. You can win better. I hope that all the people in prison go to school.

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**58** I tried to set foot in the world of work, but never managed it. Now I'm in Pöschwies prison and I'm trying to benefit as much as possible from the education and language classes they offer me. In my opinion, education is the greatest resocialisation there is in prison..

# Im Bus

Frau Meier

Guten Tag! Ich heiße Andrea Meier. Und Sie?

Herr Talli

Ich heiße Marco Talli.

Frau Meier

Woher kommen Sie?

Herr Talli

Aus Italien. Und Sie? Kommen Sie aus der Schweiz?

Frau Meier

Ja, ich bin Schweizerin. Ich wohne in Basel.

Herr Talli

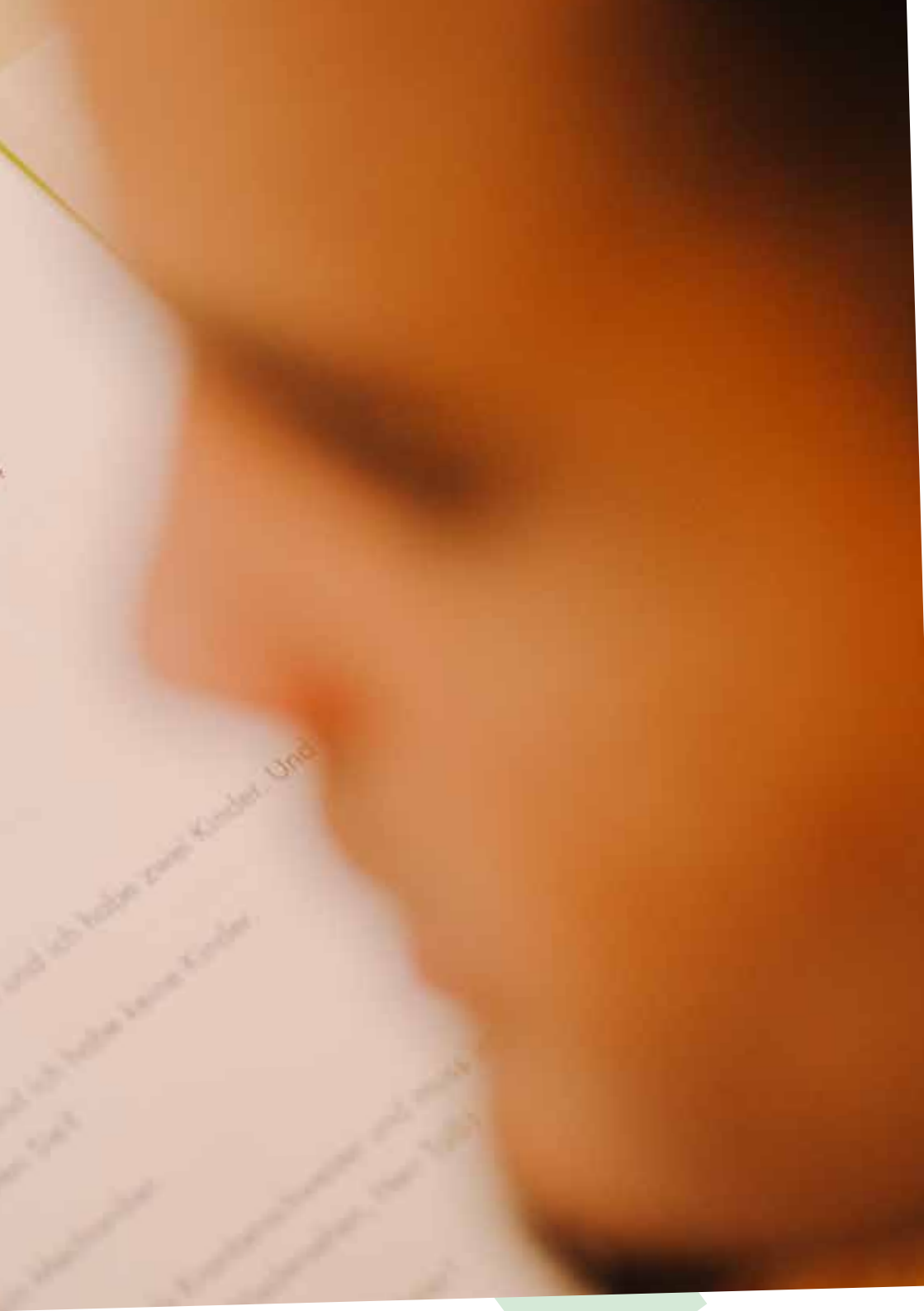
In Zürich.

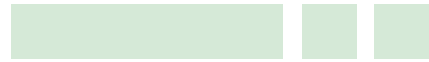
Frau Meier

Haben Sie Kinder?

Herr Talli

Ja, ich bin verheiratet und ich habe zwei Kinder. Und Sie?





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**59** Today, education for me means above all making good use of my time in prison. I have enough time in prison to acquire knowledge and skills that will then help me when I enter the professional world.

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**60** In prison it is important to educate ourselves, because outside we have different thoughts. We have made many mistakes and for these mistakes we have to pay a high price. When we lose our freedom, we start to think and analyse our life and our mistakes. The school can help you to change your life and not to make mistakes in the future.

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**61** Non-recognition: Here in this world I have found a new freedom, a freedom that comes with learning, and with learning comes life, a new life, a life full of confidence, a life full of dreams, yes, yes: dreams. Education is a help to the world and a light and vision for the blind. My mother told me when I was a little boy that education is the key to life. And she said that crime does not pay. Like a little boy, I chose to commit a crime and I thought that what I was doing was right, but today I am in prison.

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**62** I want to learn German to talk to people, to expand my culture and my all-round knowledge and to make friends.



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## Impressum

### Idea, concept and realisation:

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■ S K J V ■ ■  
■ ■ C S C S P  
C S C S P ■ ■

Schweizerisches Kompetenzzentrum für den Justizvollzug  
Centre suisse de compétences en matière d'exécution des sanctions pénales  
Centro svizzero di competenze in materia d'esecuzione di sanzioni penali

Simple  
Plus  
Das ist  
Das sind

Das ist  
Das sind

