



European Prison Education Association - September 21st, 2021

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FOREWORD

**Facing digitalization – by Thomas Wüthrich, RR
Central Region***

English

The EPEA webinars in summer 2020 with teachers from all over Europe

revealed that the classrooms in prisons were (are) connected in a poor and/or ridiculous way to the world outside the walls. Then creativity and the handiwork of the teachers was required. Teachers brought printed learning materials to the prisons where inmates received them gratefully. They appreciated these signs of human care during the lockdown. With this image in mind see/read the interview with Victor Vázquez in this newsletter.

Soon many prisons installed computers for video calls so that the prisoners could be in contact with their relatives and therefore felt less lost in these hard times of the pandemic. Video calls are now well established in many prisons of Europe and are no longer primarily seen as a security problem then as another piece of normal modern life that should be guaranteed in prisons too.

And it has become more than obvious that the pandemic boosted digitalization as much as in our private as in our professional lives. For us, the lucky ones with a fair education and enough resources it meant (or means) not more than a special effort to be in line with this digital change.

But researches and statistics tell us also that the digital gap between the poorest 20 percent of society and the rest grew significantly. The picture went around of how the four kids of a family equipped only with one mobile phone should follow the classes of their respective schools. And maybe these kids will be those we teach in 20 years how to use a computer mouse because they never have had one at home – something I did with two students in a Swiss prison some years ago. Read the article from our Portuguese colleague Paolo Serra in which he mentions the educational background of young inmates.

For sure, every classroom in a prison should have internet connection and some computers so that inmates have at least the opportunity to build and/or to improve their digital skills. But digitalization is not (only) a technical question if and how we should introduce AR and VR in our classroom. Much more it is the question which digital level is most appropriate and effective regarding the needs, the educational background and the goals to be achieved of an inmate in order to give him a fair professional perspective after release.

There are sophisticated risk assessment tools which show which interventions

should be undertaken to reduce the danger of recidivism of an inmate. But there is no institutional tool of equal importance for an educational opportunity check which shows the steps to follow to optimize the professional future of an inmate.

Therefore, digitalization is not an issue of which devices and how many of them should be in a classroom. Much more, digitalization is a process in which professional and dedicated teachers are needed more than ever. We should have enough time and resources to detect chances and opportunities of every inmate, discuss them with him/her and to coach him/her the whole way along. And in this picture it is our noble duty to support above all the most vulnerable inmates to foster their way to a acceptable life - with as less digital support as possible but as much as necessary.

German

Vorwort

Im Angesicht der Digitalisierung – von Thomas Wüthrich, RR Central Region*

Die EPEA-Webinare im Sommer 2020 mit Lehrern aus ganz Europa haben gezeigt, dass die Klassenzimmer in den Gefängnissen nur unzureichend und/oder lächerlich mit der Welt außerhalb der Mauern verbunden waren (sind). Dann waren Kreativität und die Handarbeit der Lehrer gefragt. Lehrer brachten gedruckte Lernmaterialien in die Gefängnisse, wo sie von den Insassen dankbar angenommen wurden. Sie schätzten diese Zeichen der menschlichen Zuwendung.

Bald wurden in vielen Gefängnissen Computer für Videogespräche installiert, so dass die Gefangenen mit ihren Angehörigen in Kontakt bleiben konnten und sich in diesen schweren Zeiten der Pandemie weniger verloren fühlten.

Videotelefonie hat sich inzwischen in vielen europäischen Gefängnissen

etabliert und wird nicht mehr in erster Linie als Sicherheitsproblem gesehen, sondern als ein weiteres Stück normales modernes Leben, das auch in Gefängnissen gewährleistet sein sollte.

Und es ist mehr als offensichtlich geworden, dass die Pandemie die Digitalisierung sowohl in unserem privaten als auch in unserem beruflichen Leben vorangetrieben hat. Für uns, die Glücklichen mit einer guten Ausbildung und genügend Ressourcen, bedeutete (oder bedeutet) es nicht mehr als eine besondere Anstrengung, mit diesem digitalen Wandel Schritt zu halten. Forschungen und Statistiken zeigen aber auch, dass die digitale Kluft zwischen den ärmsten 20 Prozent der Gesellschaft und dem Rest deutlich gewachsen ist. Es machte das Bild die Runde, wie die vier Kinder einer Familie, die nur mit einem Mobiltelefon ausgestattet sind, dem Unterricht ihrer jeweiligen Schule folgen sollten. Und vielleicht werden diese Kinder diejenigen sein, denen wir in 20 Jahren beibringen, wie man eine Computermaus benutzt, weil sie zu Hause nie eine hatten – etwas, das ich vor einigen Jahren mit zwei Schülern in einem Schweizer Gefängnis gemacht habe. Lesen Sie den Artikel unseres portugiesischen Kollegen Paolo Serra, in dem er auf den Bildungshintergrund der jungen Häftlinge erwähnt.

Sicherlich sollte jedes Klassenzimmer in einem Gefängnis über einen Internetanschluss und einige Computer verfügen, damit die Insassen zumindest die Möglichkeit haben, ihre digitalen Fähigkeiten aufzubauen und/oder zu verbessern. Aber die Digitalisierung ist nicht (nur) eine technische Frage, ob und wie wir AR und VR in unserem Klassenzimmer einführen sollten. Vielmehr geht es um die Frage, welche digitale Stufe im Hinblick auf die Bedürfnisse, den Bildungshintergrund und die zu erreichenden Ziele eines Häftlings am angemessensten und effektivsten ist, um ihm nach seiner Entlassung eine echte berufliche Perspektive zu geben.

Es gibt ausgefeilte Instrumente zur Risikobewertung, die zeigen, welche Maßnahmen ergriffen werden sollten, um die Rückfallgefahr eines Häftlings zu verringern. Es gibt jedoch kein institutionelles Instrument von gleicher Bedeutung für eine Prüfung der Bildungschancen, das die Schritte aufzeigt, die

zur Optimierung der beruflichen Zukunft eines Häftlings notwendig sind. Bei der Digitalisierung geht es also nicht darum, welche und wie viele Geräte in einem Klassenzimmer vorhanden sein sollten. Vielmehr ist die Digitalisierung ein Prozess, in dem professionelle und engagierte Lehrer mehr denn je gebraucht werden. Wir sollten genügend Zeit und Ressourcen haben, um die Chancen und Möglichkeiten eines jeden Insassen zu erkennen, sie mit ihm zu besprechen und ihn auf dem gesamten Weg zu begleiten. Und in diesem Bild ist es unsere vornehme Pflicht, vor allem die schwächsten Häftlinge zu unterstützen, ihren Weg in ein akzeptables Leben zu fördern – mit so wenig digitaler Unterstützung wie möglich, aber so viel wie nötig..

Short introduction by the newsletter editors



Ana and Thomas present this newsletter.

See the introduction video in the original version with English subtitles

>[Link to video](#)<

You need the ability to connect and relate, to have social skills



Victor is a retired teacher who worked 40 years in prison. He has a fascinating personality and a lot of experience as a teacher in the two prisons of Granada, southern Spain. He has received several official recognitions for his exceptional work, but the biggest recognition for him is the respect he got from his students ...

read more >[here in English](#)< or >[see the original video in Spanish](#)<*

*Our goal is to do the interview – if ever possible – in the native language of the teacher and make a translation into English of the written answers given by the interviewed teacher.

The education of the unwanted



"Professor, teach me, I don't want to go back to prison" is the most striking phrase I keep from my almost 30 years of teaching. Hence the importance of the School and its professionals, as they have the responsibility to give effective answers to the many expectations raised in prison time.

A column from Paolo Serra, member of EPEA from Portugal.

>[Link to article \[EN/PT/GE\]](#)< Translation by DeepL.

Basic education in prison “BiSt” for the first time in a remand prison in Switzerland.



Just six years ago, Pfäffikon remand prison in the canton of Zurich was reprimanded by the National Commission for the Prevention of Torture NKVF for having too many prisoners locked in their cells for 23 hours a day. The reorganisation that began in 2018 has given the remand prison a completely new look. In general, the conditions of imprisonment have been brought closer to those of regular imprisonment. In addition, BiSt basic education in prison has been offered for six months now. In two learning groups, up to 12 interested inmates can attend classes twice a week for two 90-minute sessions. Somewhat differently than in the regular correctional system, even more room is given to individual support, but the same subjects are taught: General education, German, mathematics and ICT.

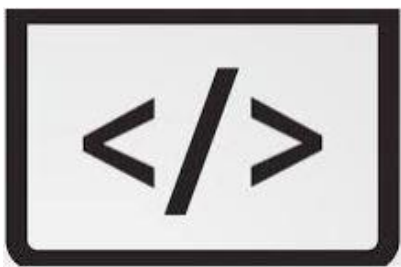
>[Read more the original article in German, here the translated article in English](#)<

Ten inmates in a Brazilian prison could graduate from a car repair course



The Secretariat of State for Citizenship and Justice, graduated last Friday, 13, 10 prisoners in the course of Car Repair in the Criminal Treatment Unit Barra da Grotta (UTPBG), through the Program New Time. The course was run by the Superintendence of Administration of Penitentiary and Prison Systems, through the Management of Social Reintegration, Work and Income to the Prisoner and Excluded, in the format PPL Monitor, in which a person deprived of freedom teaches others. The course had 200 hours/class and guaranteed the right to certification and remission of sentence by the study to prisoners.

>[Link to article - Read more](#)<



Snippets (external links)

</> 3D Jail – Printing the Future

The project aims to give an answer to such issues by involving detainees in one the most innovative phenomenon of ICT economy: 3D-printing, by focusing the skills needed in order to set up and use a 3D-printer. As a matter of fact, 3D-

printing is going to play one of the most relevant roles in the creative and productive processes for small and medium enterprises all around the world in the fields of fast prototype-making, industrial design, engineering, architecture, clothing, jewelry, medicine and scientific research. Notably, such revolution is happening in a European industrial framework, where the demand for personnel with appropriate technological skills increases but is not covered by the existing labor-market. EPEA was present at the dissemination event of the partners from Genova, Italy.

See website ([English](#)), ([in italiano](#))

</> Education – a driver for change –

(online) conference in Switzerland 24th /25th November 2021

The fourth Forum on Detention and Probation organized by the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Prison and Probation is dedicated to the topic of “Education – a driver for change”. It will take place on 24th and 25th November at the Beaulieu Congress Centre in Lausanne. The core of the event will focus on skills required in Corrections to enable professionals to complete their tasks as well as the further and continued training of sentenced individuals to support them on their journey back to a life without crime. The aim of the conference is to share new knowledge and exchange ideas on education and training issues in Corrections with decision-makers, practitioners, educators and researchers, among them Cormac Behan, chair of EPEA, and Per Thrane, webmaster of EPEA.

The conference can be attended online also. Inscription is open now! [>Register here<](#)

</> BLEEP – developing digital skills

The BLEEP project is developing a digital tool that will guide participants through the skills needed for the 21st century in a creative and informative way, to monitor the learning process of each prisoner.

Project participants in the Netherlands, Turkey, Romania and Portugal are ready

to start user testing of the learning platform and it is hoped that a full version will be launched in late 2022. EPEA is a partner in this project.

>[Project Website](#)< or on the >[EPEA website](#)<

>[Youtube Video](#)<

We keep you informed about the project.

</> **UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)**

has published a literature review on education in prison

Many prisons are overcrowded and at crisis point, unable to provide education – a fundamental human right to which all prisoners should have access. To identify current trends, progress and challenges in prison education at a global level, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has published Education in prison: A literature review. The author of the review is EPEA chair [Cormac Behan](#).

The publication recognizes the variety of understandings of the concept of education in prison and aims to provide a renewed approach to the subject, as well as to build a solid knowledge base. It surveys the literature in English and focuses on some of the unique characteristics and challenges concerning the provision of education in prison. It also documents what remains an unserved domain of education and penal policy and can inform actions and reforms by governments, policy-makers, concerned organizations and other stakeholders engaged in ensuring that incarceration does not become a barrier to the right to education.

>[See website of UIL with download link for the publication](#)<

</> **Why most of inmates in Swiss Prisons are foreigners**

In Europe, on average 15.9% of detainees are foreigners; in Switzerland the figure stands at 71.4%, according to >[a recent study \(SPACE I\)](#)< on prisons in Europe by Marcelo Aebi and Mélanie M. Tiago of the University of Lausanne, commissioned by the Council of Europe.

That this high percentage of foreigners in Swiss prisons is quite a particular

challenge for teachers in prison education will be discussed in one of the next newsletters.

>[Read More \[EN\]](#)<

- [En français](#)
- [In italiano](#)
- [Em português](#)

* The views expressed in the foreword are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the EPEA as an organisation.

* Die im Vorwort vertretene Meinung ist diejenige des Autors und muss nicht derjenigen der EPEA als Organisation entsprechen.

The next newsletter will be published beginning of December

We wish you a good start into the new school term!

Take care and stay safe!

Ana & Thomas

Editors

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