

## The European Union and Prison Education – Cooperation, innovation, policy support:

### *A historical review of the first two decades*

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*This paper constitutes the first comprehensive review of the European Union's involvement with Prison Education during its first two decades, spanning broadly the multiannual periods for EU policy and programme planning from 1995-1999, 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. Its purpose is to help ensure that this rich period for European cooperation in the Prison Education field finds a documented place in collective memory – as a legitimate object of enquiry in its own right, but also as the foundation and starting point for further developments in the future.*

*The paper examines the relevance of the salient EU policy areas – education and training, social affairs, justice and fundamental rights – for Prison Education in the broad sense of the term, paying special attention to Adult Education policy initiatives at EU level. Against this background, the financial support provided by the EU for Prison Education through such programmes as “Grundtvig” (adult learning) and “Leonardo da Vinci” (vocational training), but also via the European Social Fund (ESF) is analysed, and support in other areas such as research and justice mentioned.*

*For the first time, the paper attempts a complete statistical overview of cooperation projects and learning partnerships in Prison Education up to 2013 and draws out some defining features and outcomes from these and the related support for European mobility of Prison Education staff. Special attention is given to specific initiatives of the EU relating to Prison Education, notably the major 2010 European conference “Pathways to Inclusion”, the appraisal of research and analysis in this field, and the state-of-the-art survey on the situation of Prison Education in EU Member States. Finally, a number of “key messages” for Prison Education are identified as emerging from the EU-supported cooperative ventures during the period under review.*

***The paper was initiated in the context of the history of the European Prison Education Association (EPEA) which is currently in preparation, and special reference to the EPEA's role relating to EU support is highlighted at various relevant points in the text.***

*The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission*

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*About the author:*

*After initial positions with the German university rectors conference and as senior researcher at the European Institute of Education and Social Policy (Paris/Brussels), Alan Smith (\*1947) played a key role in developing and managing the European Union's landmark higher education programme "Erasmus" and its predecessor, the Joint Study Programmes Scheme. Positions as Director for Education at the European Cultural Foundation and founding Director of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) followed, before Alan joined the European Commission in 1995. There he held various senior posts, notably coordinating "Socrates", "Erasmus", "Comenius" (for schools) and especially the "Grundtvig" programme for adult learning which he led from its inception in 2000 until the end of 2005 and again from 2008 until his retirement in 2011.*

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## 1. Introduction

*“Thank you for giving prisoners the opportunity to paint while they serve a sentence. My involvement in a European project opened new horizons for me. I never dreamt that anything like this could happen to me. The project was the turning point of my life.”*

The words are those of Sava Kostadinov, a former prisoner from Bulgaria who, while serving his sentence, took part in a project supported by “Grundtvig”, the European Union’s programme for European cooperation in Adult Learning<sup>1</sup>. The project had brought together partners from several European countries dedicated to improving the delivery of arts education in prison, and after his release, Sava pursued his studies in icon painting at the Veliko Tarnovo University in Bulgaria. There, he made a copy of an icon exhibited in the Danish National Gallery depicting Nikolai F.S. Grundtvig, widely recognised as the father of Adult Education, and when in February 2010 the European Commission organised its landmark conference entitled “Pathways to Inclusion – Strengthening European Cooperation in Prison Education”<sup>2</sup>, Sava donated his icon to the Commission to acknowledge the positive impact that participating in “Grundtvig” had had on his life. He has now dedicated his career to heritage preservation and icon painting, and his gift, reproduced at the end of this paper, is a permanent reminder to visitors and officials at the Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture in Brussels of what projects like this can achieve. The conference marked the end of the first – and very productive – decade of European Union (EU)<sup>3</sup> support for transnational cooperation in the field of Prison Education<sup>4</sup> in Europe, and many more testimonies like that above are doubtless waiting in the archives for discovery by future research.

In a very real sense, the history of European cooperation in Prison Education would be incomplete without a reference to the EU’s role, particularly in the decade from 2000 on. For just as the Council of Europe’s work on the philosophy and principles underlying Prison Education has been and in many ways continues to be the bedrock on which good practice – and the credo of the European Association for Prison Education (EPEA) – are based, so the EU has been instrumental in helping to bring about tangible and effective operational cooperation across the national borders in Europe, stimulating innovation through exchange of experience and joint developmental activities, improving the quality of provision, helping to put Prison Education on the political agenda and contributing strongly to the emergence of a community of European professionals in the Prison Education field.

There is a real danger that as EU funding instruments move into a new generation, the legacy of those early years will be forgotten and the opportunity to build on promising

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<sup>1</sup> “Grundtvig” ran from 2000-2006 as part of the European Union’s “Socrates II” programme, then from 2007-2013 as a sectoral programme within the “Lifelong Learning Programme” of the EU. Since 2014, the name may be optionally used to denote the Adult Learning strand of the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport, “Erasmus+”.

<sup>2</sup> See section 4.1 below.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘European Union (EU)’ will be used throughout the present paper, although this title only became effective with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout the present paper, and notwithstanding the ongoing debate in the Prison Education community on this issue, the term ‘Prison Education’ is used – unless otherwise specified – to embrace the whole range of learning activities available to prisoners, including general education, vocational training and non-formal learning relating in particular to the acquisition of personal and social skills. This approach has been chosen to reflect the broad profile of projects supported in this field by the EU.

initiatives foregone. Against this background, the present paper seeks to trace the story of those early years, setting out the rationale for the EU's involvement, describing the main pillars of that involvement, highlighting some of the main 'messages' to emerge and assessing in a preliminary way some of the outcomes achieved.

The time-frame covers the period up to the end of the EU's "Lifelong Learning Programme" (LLP)<sup>5</sup> in 2013, with only cursory references to developments since. This period has been chosen for two reasons: firstly as the inception of *Erasmus+*<sup>6</sup> from 2014 on marked something of a caesura in the instruments for EU support, and secondly to contribute to and coincide broadly with the history of the EPEA currently in preparation and which provided the initial stimulus for producing the present paper.

The EPEA itself played an active role in the context of EU support for Prison Education during this period – as an active partner in European projects and networks, either in its own right or in support of various member organisations in the field; as a beneficiary of EU support for the purpose of pursuing the Association's goals; and as a valued advisor to the EU in providing input to important analytical and policy-related documents and events. This role will be highlighted at various points throughout the paper (and indicated by the same shading as in the present paragraph).

## **2. The place of Prison Education in EU policy**

Before turning to the concrete ways in which the EU has sought to promote Prison Education in Europe, it is useful to examine the rationale for the EU's involvement in this field. This is important, since the EU can only take initiatives on a given matter where there is sufficient justification in the European Treaties, and the nature of this "legal base" also influences the nature and extent of its action.

At first glance, Prison Education might be regarded as commanding a strategically strong position in the EU legislative framework, standing as it does at the intersection between three policy areas: justice and human rights policy, social policy and education and training. Closer inspection, however, reveals quite the reverse in the sense that all three of these areas are ones in which primary responsibility lies firmly with the Member States and not the EU itself. The decision-making 'machinery' in Brussels (Commission, Council and Parliament) does not determine the course of social or justice policy in the countries which together make up the Union, and the EU is explicitly required to respect fully "the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems"<sup>7</sup>.

Nonetheless, in all three areas of policy, specific objectives for the Union are enumerated in the European Treaties, as amended over the years. Thus:

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<sup>5</sup> Decision No.1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning. Official Journal of the European Union (OJ) No. L327 of 24 November 2006, pp.45ff..

<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU) No.1288/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2013 establishing *Erasmus+*: the Union programme for education, training, youth and sport. OJ L 347 of 20 December 2013, pp.50ff..

<sup>7</sup> Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ 2012/C 326/01 of 26 October 2012, Art. 165. Similar provisions applying to vocational training, where the Union has marginally greater powers, are set out in Art.166.

- the EU is required to “contribute to the development of quality education by supporting and complementing” the Member States, notably by developing a European dimension in education, encouraging mobility of teachers and learners, promoting cooperation between educational establishments and developing exchanges of information and experience on issues common to the education systems of the Member States;<sup>8</sup>
- similarly, while Member States’ primary responsibility for social policy is not called into question, the Union’s role in this area has been significantly enhanced by successive Treaties and in particular the completion of the Single Market. Thus, the Union is now called upon to support and complement the activities of the Member States in a wide range of social policy fields, including working conditions and the combating of social exclusion<sup>9</sup> and, while respecting Member States’ competences, to “contribute to a high level of employment by encouraging cooperation between Member States and by supporting and, if necessary, complementing their action”;<sup>10</sup>
- in the area of justice and human rights policy:
  - Article 69A of the Lisbon Treaty contains important provisions on mutual recognition and the need for closer European cooperation resulting from this, and the subsequently introduced European Arrest Warrant with its arrangements for transferring sentenced prisoners to their country or origin has strong implications for ensuring high prison régime standards across the Union;<sup>11</sup>
  - furthermore, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, initially proclaimed on 7 December 2000<sup>12</sup>, sets out essential principles with strong relevance for our theme, notably that: “Human dignity is inviolable” and must be protected and respected” (Art.1), that no-one may be extradited to a country where sentenced persons suffer degrading treatment or punishment (Art.19.2), that the “severity of penalties must not be disproportionate to the offence” (Art.49.3)<sup>13</sup> and, crucially, that

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Art.165.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., Art.153.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Art.147(1).

<sup>11</sup> The (Justice and Home Affairs) Council of 30.11.-1.12.2009 which followed the Stockholm informal meeting of Ministers in July that year, gave rise to proposals to the European Council that efforts be undertaken to strengthen mutual trust and render more efficient the principle of mutual recognition in the area of detention. See ExOCOP: *Lessons Learned No.3: The Seminar Reports*. Bremen 2012, p.64 and the references to ExOCOP in section 3.2 of the present paper. The Commission’s Green paper on the application of EU criminal justice legislation in the field of detention, *Strengthening mutual trust in the European judicial area* (Brussels, 14 June 2011, COM(2011)327 final), followed this up but makes few references to education.

<sup>12</sup> Adopted on 12 December 2007, OJ 2007/C 303 of 14 December 2007, p.1f. and OJ 2012/C 326 of 26 October 2012, pp.391ff..

<sup>13</sup> Compliance with these principles is also a concern for the European Parliament. In 2017 it issued a “Briefing in the field of Civil Liberties” in which prison conditions in the Member States were reviewed and attention was drawn to European standards and best practices:  
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/583113/IPOL\\_BRI\(2017\)583113\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/583113/IPOL_BRI(2017)583113_EN.pdf).

“Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training” (Art.14.3).<sup>14</sup>

The area of education and training in EU policy is of particular interest in our present context.<sup>15</sup> Here, the Union’s role in supporting national policy development is now universally welcomed in the Member States and finds expression in the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training (“ET2020”)<sup>16</sup>, a process designed – on the basis of the EU’s “Open Method of Coordination (OMC)” procedure – to gather and disseminate knowledge and to further educational policy reforms at the national level, enabling Member States to cooperate in building best practice across Europe. Based on the lifelong learning approach, ET 2020 addresses all stages and sectors of education and learning, whether formal, non-formal or informal. A set of evolving common European objectives underpinned by monitored benchmarks for Member States’ education system performance agreed at European level, as well as working groups, peer reviews and the analysis of specific issues in reports and expert meetings combine to form an ongoing policy dialogue regarded by Member States as an important contributor to high quality policy development.<sup>17</sup>

In the area of vocational training, the “Copenhagen Process” for European cooperation initiated in 2002<sup>18</sup> and the “Bruges Communiqué”<sup>19</sup> of December 2010 also underscore the arguments for regarding education and training as having a major role to play in addressing the EU’s economic and social challenges.

In turn, ET2020 forms part of the Union’s “Europe 2020”<sup>20</sup> strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth which acknowledges the role of lifelong learning and skills development as a key contributor to pursuing these goals. One of the headline targets of Europe 2020 is to reduce the level of early school leaving, and as young people without school-leaving qualifications are particularly prone to becoming involved in crime, this is clearly relevant for our present context.

Further relevant policy statements in this context are the Commission’s 2012 Communication *Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic*

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<sup>14</sup> The UN and Council of Europe conventions and declarations are, of course, also of particular relevance in this context but are not dealt with in the present paper due to its focus on the EU dimension. For the wider picture, see Hawley 2010-Background, section 2.1.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed consideration of the various policy documents, see: Hawley et al. 2013 p.14f., available at: <http://klasbak.net/doc/EC.pdf>.

<sup>16</sup> Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). OJ C 119 of 28 May 2009, pp.2-10.

[https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en).

<sup>17</sup> See the proposal for a similar policy process in the field of prisons (“PAROLE”) in section 3.2 below.

<sup>18</sup> *Declaration of the European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, and the European Commission, convened in Copenhagen on 29 and 30 November 2002, on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training - “The Copenhagen Declaration”*. Available at:

[http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/copenhagen\\_declaration\\_en.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/copenhagen_declaration_en.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> *The Bruges Communiqué on enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the period 2011-2020*. Communiqué of the European Ministers for Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the European Commission, meeting in Bruges on 7 December 2010 to review the strategic approach and priorities of the Copenhagen process for 2011-2020. Available at :

<http://ecvet.ua.gov.tr/Uploads/5ef499fe-5004-40f8-a10b-03d45df711a9.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> *EUROPE 2020. A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. Communication from the Commission of 3 March 2010. COM(2010) 2020 final. Available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>.

outcomes<sup>21</sup> and the 2012 *Final Report* of the High Level Group on Literacy which emphasised the problem of low literacy levels among a large share of the adult population in Europe and the fact that people in this situation are more likely to experience disadvantage, have social problems and break the law.<sup>22</sup>

In some instances, the EU education and policy dialogue has led to the adoption of concrete instruments which have subsequently been rolled out in many Member States and are of direct relevance for Prison Education. Two Recommendations of the European Parliament and of the Council are of special importance in our present context: the Recommendation of 18 December 2006 on Key competences for lifelong learning<sup>23</sup> and the Recommendation of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning<sup>24</sup>. The Key Competences form a comprehensive framework covering and codifying not only cognitive aspects but also the key competences needed to access employment and achieve personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship – a vital backdrop for Prison Education. Similarly, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the related European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET), as well as the national qualifications frameworks which have evolved on this basis, offer greater opportunities to prisoners in terms of acquiring skills, competences and knowledge, having their learning outcomes recognised and validated irrespective of where they were achieved, and in terms of benefiting from greater transferability of their qualifications.

In the Adult Learning sector, the period under review in the present paper witnessed a whole series of important policy statements at EU level, commencing with the Commission's *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning* (2000)<sup>25</sup> and in 2001 its formal Communication on *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality*<sup>26</sup> which addressed the whole lifelong learning continuum but already had a special emphasis on the Adult Learning dimension. Later, the 2006 Communication *It is never too late to learn*<sup>27</sup> and the 2007 *Action Plan on Adult Learning - "It's always a good time to learn"*<sup>28</sup> made Adult Learning the centre of attention, focusing in particular on disadvantaged learners in society and on strategies to help remove the barriers which prevent them from engaging in learning activities, as well as on improving the quality and efficiency of the sector.

The main policy breakthrough for Adult Learning at the European level, however, came in 2011 with the adoption by the Council and European Parliament of a resolution establishing the **European Agenda for Adult Learning** (2011)<sup>29</sup> which is not only a

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<sup>21</sup> COM(2012) 669 final of 20 November 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Available at :

<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/96d782cc-7cad-4389-869a-bbc8e15e5aeb/language-en>.

<sup>23</sup> OJ L 394 of 30 December 2006, pp. 10–18.

<sup>24</sup> OJ C 111 of 6 May 2008, pp. 1-7.

<sup>25</sup> *A Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Commission Staff Working Paper of 30 October 2000. SEC(2000)1832. Available at:

<https://uil.unesco.org/i/doc/lifelong-learning/policies/european-communities-a-memorandum-on-lifelong-learning.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Brussels, 21 November 2001. COM(2001)678 final. Available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0678:FIN:EN:PDF>.

<sup>27</sup> COM(2006) 614, 23 October 2006.

<sup>28</sup> COM(2007)558final, 27 September 2007. Available at:

<http://www.foragenetwork.eu/database/item/180-2007-it-s-always-a-good-time-to-learn-action-plan-on-adult-learning/>.

<sup>29</sup> Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, OJ C 372 of 20 December 2011, pp.1-6.

policy document but also an ongoing process by dint of the budget provided each year for activities in the Member States designed to further its implementation. The whole spectrum of Adult Learning contexts is addressed. Nonetheless, given the significant deficiencies in adult knowledge and skills levels which still abound in Europe, one of the main focal points of the Agenda has always been the emphasis on providing opportunities for less well qualified learners, and on the related role of Adult Learning in helping to combat social exclusion. The need for a holistic approach to Adult Learning embracing not only general but also vocational learning, not only cognitive elements but also personal development and social skills, the importance of a learner-centred approach to Adult Education and the urgent need for effective strategies to give credit for informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences – all these have been traditional hallmarks of the EU's approach to Adult Learning, and they combine to create a policy environment highly propitious to the needs of Prison Education.

To pretend that this has led to Prison Education's becoming a major priority in the EU's education policy dialogue, would be a gross exaggeration. On the contrary, those of us who believe strongly in the importance of this field would have liked it to be given much more explicit emphasis. Nonetheless, the *European Agenda for Adult Learning* contains the **first formal reference to Prison Education as a priority for the EU and Member States**, and this deserves acknowledgment. As part of Priority 3 (equity, social cohesion, active citizenship) for the *Agenda* in the period 2012-2014, Member States were encouraged to focus on "Addressing the learning needs of people [...] in specific situations of exclusion from learning, such as those in [...] prisons, and providing them with adequate guidance support." Other priorities from this period, too, are of direct relevance for Prison Education, such as:

- Providing a second chance route to learning and life opportunities
- Improving adult literacy and numeracy
- Acquiring basic skills and forms of literacy needed for active participation in modern society (economic and financial literacy, civic, cultural and political awareness, learning for healthy living etc.)
- Increasing the supply of learning opportunities
- Promoting individuals' engagement with learning
- Enhancing creativity and innovative capacity of citizens
- Making better use of ICT in Adult Learning (widening access, distance learning, e-learning tools and platforms)
- Improving data collection and analysis on Adult Learning (participation, providers, financing, outcomes and benefits of Adult Learning for participants and society at large)
- Monitoring the Adult Learning sector.<sup>30</sup>

In the area of social policy, too, "Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning" (expressed in this way as a key thematic objective in the context of the EU's Cohesion Policy for the period 2014-20)<sup>31</sup>, has been a prominent

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<sup>30</sup> For the period 2015-2020 the detailed enumeration of priorities was abandoned in favour of a shorter, more generic list of four, but all of these remain highly relevant for Prison Education: Better governance (including coherence with other policies); Increased and improved supply and take-up (including through better guidance, counselling, motivation to learn); Greater flexibility and improved access to learning (use of IT, skills assessment, second chance learning); Quality assurance (monitoring and analysis, better initial and in-service training of Adult Education staff, better data).

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/how/priorities](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/how/priorities).



priority underlying the EU's involvement in social policy development and implementation in the Member States over past decades. The strong emphasis on enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings, upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce and promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences, make the relevance of the EU's social policy objectives for education and training in the prison context evident.

This brief review of relevant EU policy areas is important as the starting point for analysing the Union's concrete support for Prison Education, as the funding provided through EU instruments derives its justification from the necessary legal provisions in the Treaties and the resulting detailed legislation: no EU Education and Training programmes, no European Social Fund and no Criminal Justice programme without the required and appropriate "legal base".

### **3. Financial support for Prison Education**

On the basis of the various aspects of EU policy identified above as providing the rationale for EU action in the Prison Education field, the present section seeks to review the concrete support for Prison Education initiatives provided by the EU in the period up to 2013, this date being chosen as the final year of the relevant multiannual funding period agreed at European level.<sup>32</sup> As we shall see, support has been provided to promote European cooperation between organisations at the grass-roots level and also authorities with a more strategic role, to encourage the transnational mobility of staff engaged in many aspects of Prison Education, to strengthen European organisations active in the field, and to support the development of effective and innovative policies and approaches, based on the sharing of experience across the national borders.

In this context, it should be noted that the EU's programmes in the field of education and training covered not only the EU Member States as such during the period in question, but were also open to a number of additional countries, namely the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries belonging to the European Economic Area (EEA), i.e. Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, and the countries formally seeking accession to the Union. In this way, the programmes were in particular instrumental in promoting closer cooperation between existing Member States and the countries in central and eastern Europe which acceded to the Union in 2004 and later. Prison Education was an area which benefited considerably from such cooperation during this preparatory step towards full membership of the Union.

Furthermore, the professional networks developed partly through participation in the multilateral EU programmes have been complemented by closer bilateral or regional cooperation. The Nordic-Baltic cooperation on Prison Education<sup>33</sup> is a case in point,

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<sup>32</sup> Since 1993 the EU has organised its budgetary planning in 7-year cycles, now referred to as "Multiannual Financial Frameworks". In this paper, we are concerned in particular with the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013.

<sup>33</sup> During the period under review in this paper, a highlight of this cooperation was the conference held at Jurmala/Latvia on 28-30 May 2002.

but also the bilateral link between the Portuguese and Rumanian authorities which was nurtured by the countries' cooperation within the European Social Fund activities<sup>34</sup>.

### **3.1 Education and training programmes of the EU**

2000 was a landmark year in many senses – and not least for the support of Adult Education by the European Union. True, Adult Education had been allocated a sub-chapter in the “Socrates” programme for educational cooperation (1995-1999)<sup>35</sup>, and in addition to its intrinsic value in helping to improve the quality and strengthen the European dimension of Adult Education<sup>36</sup>, this played a significant role in helping to define priorities, build transnational contacts and lay the foundations for what was to follow. It was not, however, until the launch of “Grundtvig” in the year 2000 as a dedicated sectoral programme for “Adult Education and other educational pathways”, equal in status (if not in budget!) to those for higher education and schools within the overall EU education programme “Socrates II” (2000-2006)<sup>37</sup>, that the importance of this sector was truly acknowledged for the first time at EU programme level. This reflects the increasing attention given to Adult Learning in the EU’s education policy statements at this time, as described above. According to Action 3 of the Annex to the Decision, “Grundtvig” was “addressed to people who, at whatever stage of their life, seek access to knowledge and competences within the framework of formal or non-formal education or by means of autonomous learning, thereby increasing their intercultural awareness and employability and enhancing their capacity to progress in education and play a full and active role in society.”

The same goes for education in the context of prisons. During the “Adult Education Action” under “Socrates I” (1995-1999), Prison Education was not identified as a distinct thematic category, prisons were not listed specifically among the types of organisations to be supported, and (ex-)prisoners were similarly absent from target groups specifically addressed. Not surprisingly, therefore, only one of the 189 projects<sup>38</sup> selected focused primarily on the Prison Education field.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, in the 14-year period which followed, no fewer than 152 further projects focusing on Prison Education were funded through the EU’s education and training programmes, more than four-fifths of them (126 or 83%) by “Grundtvig”, first within “Socrates II” (2000-2006), then within the “Lifelong Learning Programme” (LLP) (2007-2013). Together with the additional projects supported by the “Leonardo da Vinci” programme

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<sup>34</sup> See section 3.2 below.

<sup>35</sup> Decision No 819/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 March 1995 establishing the Community action programme 'Socrates'. OJ L 87 of 20-April 1995, pp. 10–24.

<sup>36</sup> See Nuissl 1999 and Gruber/Summers 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Decision of the European Parliament and the Council No. 253/2000/EC of 24 January 2000, establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education “Socrates” (OJ L28 of 3 February 2000).

<sup>38</sup> Of the 189 projects selected, a small number were finally not supported due to contractual difficulties etc.. Final reports on 175 projects were available for evaluation in the studies by Nuissl and Gruber/Summers referred to above.

<sup>39</sup> The project, selected in 1997 (39735-CP-1-97-1-DE-ADULT EDUC-ADU), was entitled “Erwachsenenbildung im Strafvollzug – Erhöhung der Resozialisierungschancen durch Erweiterung der sprachlichen und kommunikativen Kompetenz” and dealt with methods for improving prisoners’ chances of reintegration into society by helping them develop their communicative and linguistic competences. See Nuissl (ed.), op.cit., p.89.

for vocational training, which combined with “Socrates” to form the “LLP” with effect from 2007, as well as the “Socrates” Accompanying Measures and the Joint Actions linking these two programmes, the period 2000-2013 can be seen as a golden age for EU support of education and training in the context of prisons. True, this still made Prison Education a relatively small “player” in the overall picture, but at the very least it can be said to have placed it on the European Union map for the first time and to have given it a visibility and weight more commensurate with its role in national education and training systems in the participating countries.

This significant upswing in EU support can be attributed to a number of factors, notably:

- Prisons and juvenile detention establishments were explicitly mentioned from the very start of “Grundtvig” as eligible to participate, as were “(ex-) offenders” among the eligible target groups of learners<sup>40</sup>;
- From 2001 on the programme introduced a range of cooperation types far more accessible to the Prison Education community than had previously been the case. In addition to the “centralised”<sup>41</sup> projects, applicants could now opt for:
  - smaller-scale “Learning Partnerships”, with smaller budgets but managed with much less onerous application and reporting procedures by the “National Agencies” on a “decentralised” basis and with fewer requirements regarding the expected outputs;
  - exciting new possibilities for individual staff mobility for the purpose of attending courses for in-service training or conferences or less formal types of further training such as study visits and “job-shadowing” of colleagues abroad;
- In some of the programme years, Prison Education (including the role of education in the social reintegration of ex-prisoners) was designated as one of the specific priorities for support under the “centralised” actions (for example in 2002 for the Joint Actions linking “Socrates” and “Leonardo da Vinci”, in 2005 and 2006 for the Grundtvig Transnational Cooperation Projects and in 2006 for Grundtvig Networks)<sup>42</sup>;
- Preparatory measures such as visit grants and contact seminars (two of these were devoted to Prison Education: Lancaster/UK in 2006 and Lisbon/Portugal in 2008) were introduced to facilitate effective project initiation;
- With the advent of the National Agencies (NA) in the Adult Education sector, the Prison Education community had a partner in the ‘programme management hierarchy’ at national level to turn to for advice and support – an important factor in stimulating participation in a sector lacking a tradition of international cooperation;

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<sup>40</sup> Guidelines for Applicants, June 2000 edition.

<sup>41</sup> Under the “centralised” actions, project selection is carried out in Brussels, with assessment by external experts. The “decentralised” actions are managed via National Agencies (NA) located in each participating country. During “Socrates II” and the “LLP”, grants for decentralised action partnerships were awarded separately to each partner involved, by the NA in the country concerned.

<sup>42</sup> For the decentralised actions there were no priorities specified at European level.

- Strenuous efforts were made to inform the Prison Education community of the grants available and to publicise the positive results and achievements, both at national and European level.

In particular in the early years of the programme, making the case for Prison Education (as for Adult Education as a whole in the context of the EU's programmes) was not a self-starter and considerable patience and diplomacy were required to overcome reticence and simple lack of awareness of the field. The nomination of Torfinn Langelid by the Norwegian authorities to serve as one of the country's two representatives on the Grundtvig Working Group, the steering group for "Grundtvig" in the first phase of the programme, was important in ensuring that the voice of Prison Education was consistently heard. Adult Education staff at the European Commission – as also many of the NA staff responsible for "Grundtvig" – soon became convinced of the importance of Prison Education, and the Commission was actively involved in all EPEA conferences from 2001-2011.

*A personal reminiscence from the author... "Shortly after my appointment as Grundtvig Coordinator, I was invited to participate in the regular meeting of 'Directors and Coordinators of Prison Education' held in Qawra (Malta) in November 2000. I was new to Adult Education as a whole, let alone Prison Education, and the discussions (formal and informal !) with Prison Education representatives at that meeting left an indelible impression on me – of the social importance of the field, of the enormous commitment of the people working in it, and of the pressing need to help develop concrete forms of European cooperation through the support which the European programmes could offer."*

Tables 1 and 2 contain the first fully comprehensive statistical overview of the EU support provided for all forms of transnational projects, partnerships and networks in the Prison Education field in the period from 2000 until the end of the Lifelong Learning Programme in 2013:

**Table 1: EU-supported projects in Prison Education (2000-2013) (by year)**

Year	?	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
Grundtvig		0	3	1	4	9	14	12	15	6	9	7	15	11	20	126
Leonardo	1	0	3	1	2	0	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	3	3	22
Accompanying Measures				1												1
Joint Actions				1												1
Jean Monnet (European Associations)												1				1
TOTAL	1	0	6	4	6	9	15	13	17	7	11	9	16	14	23	151

**Table 2: EU-supported projects in Prison Education (2000-2013) (by country)**

	COUNTRY	GRUNDTVIG 2000-6 (Socrates II) & 2007-2013 (Lifelong Learning Programme)			LEONARDO DA VINCI 2000-6 (Leonardo da Vinci II) & 2007-2013 (Lifelong Learning Programme)			Socrates / Leonardo da Vinci Joint Actions (2002)			Socrates II Accomp.Measures (2002) & LLP - Jean Monnet (Europ.Associations) (2010)			TOTAL		
		C	P	T	C	P	T	C	P	T	C	P	T	C	P	T
1	Belgium	6	22	28	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	25	31
2	Bulgaria	4	13	17	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	17	22
3	Cyprus	0	11	11	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	13
4	Czech Rep	1	13	14	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	14	15
5	Denmark	2	15	17	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	16	18
6	Germany	10	37	47	1	3	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	11	41	52
7	Estonia	1	15	16	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	17	18
8	Spain	11	34	45	2	6	8	1	1	2	0	0	0	14	41	55
9	France	7	37	44	2	7	9	0	1	1	0	0	0	9	45	54
10	Greece	1	32	33	1	6	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	38	40
11	Croatia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	Ireland	2	13	15	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	15	19
13	Italy	24	39	63	1	5	6	0	1	1	0	0	0	25	45	70
14	Latvia	0	8	8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
15	Lithuania	6	16	22	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	21	27
16	Luxemburg	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
17	Hungary	1	6	7	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7	8
18	Malta	1	15	16	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	16	17
19	Netherlands	1	13	14	1	3	4	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	17	19
20	Austria	1	13	14	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	15	16
21	Poland	5	21	26	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	22	27
22	Portugal	0	24	24	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	30
23	Rumania	8	26	34	3	5	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	31	42
24	Sweden	1	11	12	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	13	14
25	Finland	0	15	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	15
26	Slovakia	2	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	6
27	Slovenia	2	6	8	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	10
28	UK	17	29	46	5	4	9	0	1	1	0	0	0	22	34	56
29	N.Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	Iceland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
31	Liechtenstein	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	Norway	7	20	27	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	21	28
33	Turkey	1	21	22	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	22	24
	International	4	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	2	7
	TOTAL	126	532	658	22	76	98	1	6	7	1	0	1	151	614	765

C = An organisation in this country coordinates the project

P = At least one organisation in this country participates in the project, but not as coordinator

T = Total number of projects involving organisations in this country

As can be seen from the figures<sup>43</sup>:

- The *geographical spread* of the support for Prison Education was very extensive, with organisations from 29 of the 33 eligible countries<sup>44</sup> participating in projects in this field, 25 of them as the coordinator for one or more projects. Italian organisations took part in more projects (70) – and were also more frequently the coordinator (25 projects) – than those of any other country. All of the other “large” countries were well represented in terms of total numbers involved, but some of the smaller countries’ participation rates were higher than their relative population size, notably Greece and Portugal as project partners and especially Norway, which figured in the “top ten” both as coordinator and participant in projects. Among the newer EU Member States which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, Rumania, Poland and Lithuania figured prominently. In overall terms, it can therefore be said that the support provided by the EU reflected some of the existing strengths in Prison Education in Europe while nonetheless opening up new pathways for countries less frequently involved in European level cooperation hitherto;
- 25 countries were involved in 10 projects or more, 22 countries in at least 15 projects and 14 countries in at least 20 projects. The quantitative potential for innovation – and for future networking to this end – arising from the projects was thus considerable. Further research would be useful to ascertain the extent to which this potential has subsequently been exploited;
- During both “Socrates II” and the “LLP”, the number of Prison Education projects supported under “Grundtvig” rose considerably towards the end of the programme, in the latter case due probably to the intensive networking and comparatively high level of publicity facilitated by the major European conference staged in 2010<sup>45</sup>.

Closer examination<sup>46</sup> reveals that the projects supported covered a wide variety of themes and collectively **addressed a whole range of key issues for Prison Education in Europe**.<sup>47</sup> In their various ways, most projects saw themselves in the context of helping prisoners prepare for their subsequent *reintegration* into society. To this end, improving the *learning environment in prisons* themselves was the focus of several projects. Many sought to improve prisoners’ *basic skills* and competence levels, these being on average significantly lower than those of the population at large, and it is interesting that the emphasis was at least as much on

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<sup>43</sup> The data sources are Hawley 2012-Analysis for 2000-2011, the European Shared Treasure database (for projects under the decentralised actions in 2012 and 2013 (<http://www.europeansharedtreasure.eu/>) and project Compendia compiled by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) for projects selected under the centralised actions in 2012 and 2013 ([https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/2007-2013/lifelong-learning-programme/project-compedia\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/2007-2013/lifelong-learning-programme/project-compedia_en)).

<sup>44</sup> The exceptions were Croatia and the now North Macedonia, both of which were eligible for only a limited part of the period under review, and two of the smallest population countries: Iceland and Liechtenstein.

<sup>45</sup> See section 4.1 below.

<sup>46</sup> The analysis of supported projects in this present section of the paper is based to a considerable extent on the Hawley 2012-Catalogue and Hawley 2012-Analysis.

<sup>47</sup> For the period up to 2011, see Hawley 2012-Analysis, p.6ff. Projects funded between 2000 and 2009 were given the opportunity to self-define their thematic orientation by attributing three keywords from a given list.

developing ‘soft’ or ‘social’ skills as on more cognitive issues related to literacy and numeracy. Linked to this was the attention given by several projects to methods for improving the acknowledgement, **recognition and validation** of informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences, and the related need for improved **guidance and counselling** for prisoners: across the board the principle of “placing the **learner at the centre**” was strongly confirmed.

A number of projects from several countries focused explicitly on **vocational training** as the precondition for effective reintegration at the workplace, but at the same time, one of the largest thematic clusters – particularly as regards Italian-led projects – was in the area of **arts and cultural creativity** (notably theatre), the benefits of which in terms of developing social interaction competences, boosting self-esteem and fostering creative ideas were regarded as just as important factors as more technical skills in providing the basis for a positive future role in society and employment. Not surprisingly, and in line with the reform debate in Prison Education across Europe, several projects also centred around **information technology** and the new **digital media** in the Prison Education context, either as an aspect of learning content (providing prisoners with the digital competence necessary for ‘survival’ after release), or as regards harnessing the new technologies to develop e-learning and blended learning platforms in order to improve the breadth and depth of the learning opportunities at prisoners’ disposal. Finally, in a whole range of thematic areas, the projects sought to improve the **further training of teachers and trainers** (and in some cases other prison or prison-related staff) involved in Prison Education.

While many projects addressed the generality of prisoners and detained persons, a considerable number focused on the **needs of specific groups** such as juvenile and short-sentence prisoners, foreign prisoners, prisoners with special learning needs or mental health problems, as well as female prisoners. Several projects were also concerned with issues relating to ‘after-care’ for released prisoners rather than those currently serving sentence.

The **activities** carried out by projects and the **outputs and results** typically deriving from them involved participating organisations’ sharing and learning from one another’s methods and experiences, identifying good practice, developing new methodologies on this basis or creating new pedagogical resources, toolkits, teaching and learning materials (some of them digitally based) or even e-learning frameworks for use in Prison Education, as well as theatrical productions, magazines, creative art and (sometimes autobiographical) literature. Direct involvement of prisoners was a feature of many projects (especially the Learning Partnerships supported by “Grundtvig”). In some cases, notably where released prisoners were the focus of attention, cooperation between relevant agencies was a special emphasis. Many projects organised conferences, seminars and workshops to facilitate these processes and disseminate results, and sustainable networks for future collaboration are said to have arisen from the cooperative activities undertaken. In this way, and over and beyond the direct benefits to the participating learners such as enhanced self-esteem, increased motivation to learn and improved prospects for reintegration post-release, the projects supported by the EU became a highly valued source of professional development for staff, organisational and pedagogical innovation and – according to



many – improved overall quality of provision, while greatly strengthening the process of European cooperation in the Prison Education field.

Several projects, such as the Spanish led initiatives “The Heart Far Away”<sup>48</sup> and “Second Chance”<sup>49</sup> received national and international recognition for their achievements, and five prison projects supported under the centralised actions of “Grundtvig” were selected for inclusion in the “Compendium of 100 High Quality Projects” prepared for the European Commission after the first decade of the “Grundtvig” Programme<sup>50</sup>:

- “ESTEP: European re-Settlement Training and Education for Prisoners” (coordinated by UK, launched in 2007)
- “Model for Supporting Correctional Training” (coordinated by Bulgaria, launched in 2003)
- “PAN European: European Network for Organisations Involved in Adult Prison Arts Education” (coordinated by UK, launched in 2006)
- “PIPELINE: Partnerships in Prison Education – Learning in Networked Environments” (coordinated by Norway, launched in 2005)
- “VEPS: Virtual European Prison School” (coordinated by EPEA, launched in 2007).

The EPEA was directly involved in a number of projects supported in the 2000-2013 period, notably the ambitious VEPS project referred to above. This initiative was coordinated by the Association itself through its Bulgarian-based European Projects Officer, Valentina Petrova, who played a particularly important role in stimulating the Association’s European project involvement during the first decade of this century, and included as partners a number of important national-level ‘players’ in Prison Education in the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and the UK. Through the development of a mutually available forum and multilingual teaching materials, the project sought – as its name suggests – to create a “Virtual prison school” which would transcend national borders and boost the participation rate of prisoners in lifelong learning across Europe.

Five years previously, the Association had been in receipt of a 2002 grant under the “Accompanying Measures” of the “Socrates II” programme for the purpose of “Implementing Lifelong Learning Policies – Promoting Education in European Penal Systems”. The grant, managed by the Maltese branch of EPEA, facilitated the organisation of a number of conferences and events designed to assist the Association in broadening its membership base and establishing national branches in further countries and thereby, in collaboration with the appropriate national authorities, to contribute to spreading good practice in Prison Education across Europe. A further grant of this kind was awarded in 2010<sup>51</sup> under the “Jean Monnet” part of the “LLP”.

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<sup>48</sup> Launched in 2007, this project received Honorable Mention by the National Authority of Spanish Prisons and the Government of Spain.

<sup>49</sup> Launched in 2013, this Grundtvig Learning Partnership received the “Grundtvig Award” of the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) in 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Guest 2011.

<sup>51</sup> On the basis of the 2009 Call for proposals under this part of the “LLP”.

In the years which followed, the Maltese branch of EPEA, backed up by the professional infrastructure of the University of Malta, continued to play an important role in facilitating the Association's involvement in EU-supported projects, both by assuming the considerable responsibilities as formal contractor and as an active contributor to project activities. Thus the Branch coordinated and led the Multilateral Project "Phototherapy in Prisons", selected in 2012 and designed to explore the potential of phototherapy in promoting prisoners' "emotional learning", and from 2013 it was a formal project partner in the Rumania-led Multilateral Project "European Induction Support for Adult Learning Professionals to the Correctional Criminal Justice System". Taking as its starting point the results of expert work carried out under the Adult Education strand of the EU's education policy activities referred to above, this project focussed on adapting the key competences identified as necessary for Adult Learning professionals to the specific needs of working in the prison environment.

In so doing, it returned – against the background of this new knowledge base – to a topic highlighted by the Maltese Branch of EPEA, acting in conjunction with the Association as a whole, almost a decade before, namely in the project entitled "TTIP – Developing Training Programmes for Qualified Teachers to Teach in Prisons" launched in 2004. Modules were produced on the three key aspects (the teacher, the prisoner and the prison) with a view to preparing Adult Learning facilitators for work in this specific environment, and the Branch followed this up by organising a number of European courses for Prison Education staff in subsequent years, funded essentially through the Mobility strand of "Grundtvig" (see below).

Furthermore, even where the Association or its Branches were not as such formally involved as project coordinator or partner, leading EPEA member organisations have both initiated EU-supported projects and been highly sought-after partners in others. This applies in particular to the authority of the County Governor of Hordaland, responsible for coordinating Prison Education throughout Norway and a key EPEA player. During the period under review, the County authority:

- coordinated the landmark project "PIPELINE" project, mentioned above, which played an important role in creating a digital learning and teaching environment in prisons;
- was an active partner in the "Leonardo da Vinci" project "LICOS (Learning Infrastructure for Correctional Services – European Transfer)" coordinated in Germany and launched in 2008 with the aim of developing a European framework for digital and blended learning in prisons;
- contributed significantly from 2010 onwards to the "BRIDGE (Bridging the Gap: Bilevel Tutorial System for Imprisoned Persons' Career Growth)" project, coordinated in Slovenia, which developed a comprehensive tutorial system with learner and teacher manuals to facilitate effective reintegration of prisoners post-release.

Irish and Northern Irish members were closely involved in some of the early Grundtvig Learning Partnerships in the Prison Education field, such as "Open Doors" (2001) dealing with basic skills and IT competence and "MABEL (Multi-Disciplinary Approach

to Adult Basic Education and Learning” (2002), as were Bulgarian and Maltese members in the above-mentioned PAN network relating to prison arts. A more systematic review would doubtless reveal further instances of such participation by the EPEA membership.

Finally, the Association has also played a useful ancillary role in support of projects in the Prison Education field, for example through the advisory services<sup>52</sup> provided by the EPEA European Projects Officer<sup>53</sup>, and as an important agent for disseminating the results of EU-supported projects to a wider European audience. A case in point was, for example, the highlighting of the “FEFI (Finding Education for Female Inmates)” project (coordinated by Germany and launched in 2013) at the Association’s Antwerp conference in 2015.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, in various ways, the Association has both benefited from and contributed significantly to the success of European projects, partnerships and networks, and the same can certainly be said of the other strand of the “Grundtvig” Programme which was crucially important for Prison Education, namely the action to support the **individual mobility of Adult Education staff**. From 2001 on, such mobility grants were available to enable Adult Education professionals to attend structured courses for further training or engage in other less formal further training activities such as job-shadowing in another European country. Under certain circumstances, and more systematically from 2009 on with the inception of the new “Grundtvig” action “Visits and Exchanges”, grants could also be awarded for the purpose of participating in European conferences and seminars.

Prison Education benefited significantly from this part of the programme. Firstly, the EPEA’s biennial conferences were regarded as training courses<sup>55</sup> and participants could therefore apply to their respective “Grundtvig” National Agencies for financial support to enable them to attend. Secondly, other training courses such as those organised by the Maltese Branch of EPEA as referred to above, stood to benefit in a similar way. And thirdly, the grants enabled staff members involved in Prison Education across the 30+ countries participating in “Grundtvig” – whether working at EPEA member organisations or not – to avail themselves of opportunities for their further professional development in other European countries. Indeed, in its final shape at the end of the Lifelong Learning Programme in 2013, the claim of “Grundtvig” was that it provided openings for any person engaged in Adult Education, including Prison Education, to go to another European country for any professionally related purpose for a period of one day up to one year.

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<sup>52</sup> From more recent years, the EPEA’s “Project Development Webinar for Erasmus+” of 24 November 2015 is a further example of this invaluable advisory role.

<sup>53</sup> The importance attached by the Association to its role with regard to European projects is reflected by the fact that the European Projects Officer has traditionally been allocated a co-opted (though non-voting) place on the EPEA’s Steering Committee.

<sup>54</sup> More recently, the EPEA has sought to provide a consolidated basis for its project involvement by creating the “European Prison Education Initiatives” as a social enterprise, registered as a UK-based Private Company limited by Guarantee in 2016.

<sup>55</sup> The official title “EPEA Training Conference”, still used to this day, is probably to be seen in this context.

Unfortunately, National Agencies were not required to collect topic-specific data on the Staff Mobility strand within “Grundtvig”, so a comprehensive analysis of the involvement of Prison Education staff across all participating countries would require considerable additional research based on each country’s archives.<sup>56</sup> There is, however, considerable anecdotal evidence that the grants played an important part in ensuring a good level of multilateral participation at EPEA conferences, and by extrapolation from the overall number of grants awarded, it can be assumed that several hundred persons engaged in Prison Education were in receipt of individual grants during the period in question.<sup>57</sup> Especially for a field like Prison Education, with its absence of any tradition of European mobility and its particular constraints on the flexibility of staff to participate in European activities, this can be seen as the opening of an important new window on the world, and there is no reason to suppose that the Prison Education staff derived fewer professional and personal development benefits (enhanced knowledge and awareness of Prison Education issues, improved methodologies, increased intercultural and often foreign language competence, increased motivation, forging of personal and professional networks and friendships etc.) from the mobility activities conducted than their counterparts in other areas of Adult Learning.<sup>58</sup>

Alongside support for Projects, Learning Partnerships, Networks and Mobility, the “LLP” was also of service to Prison Education, during the period with which we are concerned, by initiating and supporting the preparations for the **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)**, which has subsequently become operational under *Erasmus+*.<sup>59</sup> “Learning in prison” has been made a specific thematic area under the “Learning Environments” rubric,<sup>60</sup> thereby enabling EPALe to become a useful electronic forum for debate and information-sharing on Prison Education issues.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the national support services for EPALe have an operational budget for

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<sup>56</sup> This has not been possible for the present paper and in many cases, at least for the period dating back to over ten years ago, the material may no longer be available for consultation due to the destruction of documents in compliance with data protection requirements.

<sup>57</sup> Under the 7-year period of the “Socrates II” programme (2000-2006), 5311 Grundtvig Mobility grants were awarded to Adult Education staff (see McCoshan et al. 2008). By 2009, under the “Lifelong Learning Programme”, the annual number of grants awarded had risen to 2525 (see PPM1 2010, p.78. Prison Education accounted for around 5% of the projects and partnerships supported. Even assuming only half that percentage when it comes to mobility, several hundred grants must have been awarded to Prison Education staff over the entire 2000-2013 period under review. According to the McCoshan report (p.78), three-quarters of the mobility grant recipients in Adult Education used their financial support to visit structured further training courses, European conferences and other similar events.

<sup>58</sup> For example, surveys carried out by the evaluators of “Grundtvig” under “Socrates II” (see above) revealed that over 90% of respondents saw a strengthening of the European “outlook” of the participating individuals/organisations, and three-quarters reported improvements in professional practice (McCoshan et al., p.103).

<sup>59</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en>.

<sup>60</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/themes/learning-in-prisons>.

<sup>61</sup> From time to time, the field enjoys special attention, for example during the “Prison Education Week” from 25-29 January 2016, summarised by Joseph Giordmaina at <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/blog/epale-prison-education-week-summary-dr-joe-giordmaina>.

conducting Adult Learning activities in the Member States, and these may also be related to learning in prison<sup>62</sup>.

### **3.2 European Social Fund (ESF)**

The European Social Fund (ESF), initially established with the founding Treaties in 1957 and consolidated and enlarged in the intervening years by successive Treaty reforms, has become a vital instrument for helping EU Member States to improve employment opportunities and access to the labour market, in particular for disadvantaged persons, to strengthen social inclusion, combat poverty and discrimination in society and to promote education, lifelong learning and in particular vocational training for socially marginalised groups.

In this context, the social and occupational reintegration of prisoners post-release – including as an important element the provision of appropriate high quality education and training opportunities in prison conducive to reducing recidivism – is clearly a highly relevant area for intervention. During the period under review in the present paper, two distinct forms of ESF support, co-funded from national sources, were available:

- funding for concrete measures mainly at the local or regional level, in the framework of each country's ESF operational programmes agreed with the Commission and generally without a transnational dimension;
- funding for innovative, transnational projects under the Community Initiative "EQUAL".

During the ESF Programming Period 2007-2013<sup>63</sup>, over half the Member States used some part of their ESF funds to carry out activities addressing (ex-)prisoners. In response to an enquiry made in connection with the preparation of the "Pathways to Inclusion" conference on European cooperation in Prison Education, 15 of the 21 Member States who responded, indicated that they were already or were planning to use funds for this purpose.<sup>64</sup> As far as education and training are concerned, the funds typically facilitated measures in areas such as basic skills and literacy (often in conjunction with Adult Education centres outside the prison) and vocational training of various kinds, leading wherever possible to a qualification relevant for accessing the labour market, but broader topics are also sometimes included.<sup>65</sup> Train-the-trainer schemes are also funded. In some cases, specific target groups may be addressed,

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<sup>62</sup> An example is the seminar organised by the Italian National Agency / national EPAL support service in Bari in 2018 (<https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/content/beyond-prison-summary-epale-seminar-bari>). EPAL also co-organised the contact seminar in Oulu/Finland in 2016 and cooperated in the contact seminar held in Dublin/Ireland in 2019.

<sup>63</sup> Figures for the Programming Period 2000-2006 are not readily available.

<sup>64</sup> Mercer 2010, Annex 6, p.21. The cooperation between Portugal and Rumania, referred to above, was also funded from this source. It is often asserted that in some Member States, Education and training in prisons (and other aspects of prison services) rely very heavily on ESF funding, but reliable data on the importance of this source relative to national funding is difficult to obtain.

<sup>65</sup> In the present Programming Period 2014-20, an example of this is the "Europe and Me" module in the framework of the Rhineland-Palatinate scheme "Alpha-VHS: Basic skills for all" in Germany, which seeks to improve prisoners' knowledge of the EU and what it means for their lives.

such as juvenile or female prisoners<sup>66</sup>, and the measures may relate either to prisoners in a specific prison or take the form of a more broadly based framework scheme covering several prisons across a whole region.<sup>67</sup>

An example of this is the transition management scheme “INA”<sup>68</sup> (Integration planning for prisoners, Networking within, by and for Prisons, Access to labour markets for ex-prisoners) operating in the largest German state, Northrhine-Westphalia. The scheme, which embraces a range of strategies before and after release to facilitate the vocational reintegration of prisoners, is derived from the earlier “MABIS.NeT”, a highly successful project which proved its capacity to reduce juvenile re-offending in the state from 80% to 30% during the life-span of the project.

This is of special interest in our present context in that it points to the outstanding legacy of the funding provided by the EU (with co-funding from the Member States) through the Community Initiative “EQUAL”<sup>69</sup> during the previous programming period 2000-2006<sup>70</sup>. In eight thematic fields relating to the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy<sup>71</sup>, “EQUAL” focussed on supporting innovative, transnational projects aimed at increasing employability and tackling discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market. Fostering youth employment and reinforcing the social inclusion of marginalised groups in society were important aspects of this strategy. At European level, community platforms, communities of practice and policy fora were created and expert meetings and peer reviews organised. Above all, however, no fewer than 3,300 transnational “Development Partnerships” (DPs) across Europe were funded, in response to calls for proposals issued in 2001 and 2004.

In all, 121 DPs concerned exclusively with (ex-)prisoners were selected for support under “EQUAL”<sup>72</sup>, and they “probably offer the widest and deepest pool of experience in resettlement practices”<sup>73</sup> ever brought together at European level up to that time. €170 million were invested in this process. To underpin the projects and assist in the dissemination and mainstreaming of results, National “EQUAL” Offender Networks (NEONs) were established in various countries, beginning with Germany, the

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<sup>66</sup> An example of this was the “AIM” mentoring project for female prisoners in Warwickshire (UK), designed to assist them in developing employment-related skills and undertaking work experience.

<sup>67</sup> In Germany, various regional initiatives were supported under the overall umbrella of the programme “XENOS – Integration and Diversity” co-funded by the ESF and the Federal Ministry of Work and Social Affairs. In the 2007-2013 period they included, for example, Northrhine-Westphalia’s (NRW) initiative “INA” (see below) and its “macs” programme for reintegrating juvenile prisoners, as well as the “Transit” and “Passage+” projects for young male and female prisoners respectively in Berlin and NRW.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.i-n-a.de/>.

<sup>69</sup> The Community Initiatives were introduced into the ESF in the light of the positive experience with fostering European cooperation under the EU’s education and training programmes. Early Community Initiatives (CI) included “NOW” (focussing on equal opportunities for women), “HORIZON” (addressing inclusion issues of people with disabilities, migrants and disadvantaged groups) and “YOUTHSTART” (which sought to boost employment opportunities for disadvantaged young people in society). These were amalgamated in the 1995-99 programming period to form the “EMPLOYMENT” CI, which ran in parallel to the CI called “ADAPT”. From 2000-2006 the CI “EQUAL” took forward the work of “ADAPT” and “EMPLOYMENT” and three further CI were introduced: “LEADER”, “INTERREG” and “URBAN”. See: <https://cordis.europa.eu/programme/rcn/688/en>.

<sup>70</sup> The projects were generally not finished until 2008.

<sup>71</sup> Employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability, equal opportunities.

<sup>72</sup> This represents 3.6% of the total – a figure interestingly close to the 5% of Prison Education projects within “Grundtvig”.

<sup>73</sup> Mercer 2010, p.2. The following appraisal of the “EQUAL” contribution to the EU’s support for Prison Education, draws heavily on Mercer’s analysis.



Netherlands and the UK, followed soon by other countries such as Italy, Poland and Portugal. Furthermore, a steering group of ten Member States was established, with links to a further 12 countries. A European Mainstreaming event held in Lisbon in 2006 took this process further, and this in turn led to the adoption of a set of policy recommendations at the Policy Forum on “Prevention of re-imprisonment” held in Warsaw in 2007, principal among them being the inclusion of ex-prisoner-related projects in all future ESF Operational Programmes.

Collectively and individually, the “EQUAL” DPs gave rise to a substantial set of **achievements** including the development of successful strategies for reducing the incidence of recidivism (notably among young people who commit crime), improving overall individual case management and post-release arrangements, the enhancement of individual learning opportunities and production of innovative learning platforms and approaches, the introduction of achievement portfolios and improvement of methods for validating competences, increased IT and media competence and more systematic approaches to the further training of trainers and other staff engaged in the many facets of reintegration work. Perhaps most significant of all, however, was the realisation that for release and social reintegration strategies to succeed, no single policy aspect or agency could do it alone and that partnerships between them were therefore the key to success.

Against this background, it is self-evident that education and training were not the sole or even necessarily the predominant focus of the “EQUAL” projects, but they were an important component of many of them. Furthermore, several of the reforms and innovations created under the aegis of “EQUAL” have proven to be of lasting value and continue in some shape or form to this day, having established the basis for mainstreamed provision in the participating countries and beyond. Thus, more than a decade on from the initial Development Partnership, the eLiS (e-Learning im Strafvollzug – eLearning in Prisons) platform<sup>74</sup> for individualised education and training is currently in use at prisons in 11 of the 16 German states and in Austria. Developed partly in conjunction with the German Adult Education Association DVV and coordinated by an institute located at the Technical University in Berlin, the learning platform offers digitally based learning opportunities with associated teacher manuals in basic skills, natural sciences, history, economics and politics, vocational training topics and the acquisition of media competence and soft skills. The necessary security measures, adapted to the specific local situation, have been implemented to avoid misuse, and education staff in prisons not yet using the platform may be given access to certain aspects via the open internet in order to test the system’s potential in their respective prison contexts.

Education and training were also the subject of one of the six key recommendations formulated at the end of the “EQUAL” funding for activities relating to (ex-)prisoners, namely that “All prisoners should have the opportunity to engage in education and training suited to enhancing their employability”, broken down into a set of sub-recommendations as follows:<sup>75</sup>

- The analysis of the individual prisoner’s needs (and aspirations) regarding basic and vocational skills should be improved;

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.elis-public.de/information/ibi.htm>. Access may be granted to certain parts of the platform to members of the public: applications to [elis@ibi.tu-berlin.de](mailto:elis@ibi.tu-berlin.de).

<sup>75</sup> Mercer 2010, p.6. The recommendations were adopted at the Warsaw Policy Forum in 2007.

- Sentences should be served wherever possible in one place, for preference close to the prisoner's home/family;
- Flexible prison training systems should be developed in response to local labour market needs in cooperation with employers;
- Opportunities for employers to visit prisons should be stepped up, to gain their own insight into the training provided and prisoners' suitability for employment;
- More opportunities for relevant work experience should be provided inside and outside prisons;
- Experiments in the use of e-learning in prisons should be expanded;
- New solutions should be embedded in current practices (cost-effectiveness) wherever possible.

Underlying what might be described as the "EQUAL approach" was a strong conviction of the importance of the individualised pathway for each prisoner and the related need to make teaching methods and qualification paths more flexible and learner-centred – a very clear common factor with the "Grundtvig"-supported Projects and Learning Partnerships referred to above. Further findings to emerge from "EQUAL" included:

- the need in several countries to improve the salaries and working conditions of teachers working in prisons;
- the need for learning opportunities in prison to be relevant to the reintegration process and for provision to respond flexibly to changing social and especially labour market needs ("teaching out-of-date skills is useless");
- the need to broaden the focus and concentrate not only on preparing prisoners for release, but equally on preparing the citizens in the community at large for accepting former prisoners in their midst;
- the need for sustained support bridging pre- and post-release – also as regards education and training;
- the need to adopt appropriate strategies to facilitate the reintegration process for female prisoners (an exclusive focus on employment was seen as often not being the key to success);
- the need for more and better cost-benefit analysis regarding the effects of Prison Education.

In order to pull together the work carried out by the "EQUAL" Development Projects, and to promote the dissemination and mainstreaming of their results, some 40 organisations from 14 Member States joined together to form the **Ex-Offender Community of Practice ("ExOCOP")** which was funded by the ESF<sup>76</sup> as a European Learning Network and ran from 2009-2012. Co-ordinated by Jürgen Hillmer and his team of colleagues at the Ministry of Justice in the German state of Bremen and with a strong link to the University of Bremen, ExOCOP carried out 20 Workshops and five Seminars (clustering the outcomes of the Workshops) on the whole spectrum of key

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<sup>76</sup> Pursuant to the Restricted Call for Proposals VP/2008/18 – "Learning for change: Setting up Learning Networks under the ESF 2007-13".



issues relating to strategies for reducing re-offending, centred around the Education, Training and Employment (ETE) triangle. This culminated in the “Berlin Declaration on the Rehabilitation of (Ex-)Offenders”, adopted at the final Policy Forum of ExOCOP on 18-19 June 2012.<sup>77</sup>

ExOCOP addressed five main aspects of rehabilitation strategy: Entrance (diagnostics, sentence planning etc.), ETE (see below), Aftercare (preparation for release, resettlement, links with the community), Special groups of prisoners (juveniles, women and migrants) and Networking (with a focus on working with employers).

The specific “ETE” strand of ExOCOP’s work dealt with twelve basic issues:

Prison as a positive learning environment	Characteristics and categories of prisoners	Specific subject areas	Guidance, validation, learner plans etc.
Vocational training and the labour market	E-learning and distance learning	Teacher training	Release-transition-reintegration
Cost-effectiveness	Effects of European funding	Evaluation, indicators etc.	Public opinion

Four workshops on specific topics were conducted<sup>78</sup>, dealing with Vocational training in prison, Art in prison, E-learning in prison and Staff training respectively. The results fed in turn into the overarching Seminar on Education, Training and Employment held in Madrid from 23-24 September 2010. Workshops and Seminar adopted significant recommendations at both a practical and policy level.<sup>79</sup>

Noting with regret the absence of a common European policy for the reintegration of (ex-) prisoners, the Berlin Policy Forum called in its “Declaration” for closer cooperation between the Member States and the European Commission which “would directly influence the way common standards and policies are promoted and implemented at national level.”<sup>80</sup>

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.exocop.eu/>. Attention is drawn not only to the Declaration itself, but also to the set of three publications containing the “Lessons Learned” in the course of the network’s activities.

<sup>78</sup> In the framework of the Budapest “Pathways to Inclusion” conference in February 2010 (see section 4.1 below).

<sup>79</sup> An overview of these is contained in: ExOCOP : *Lessons Learned No.3: The Seminar Reports*. Bremen 2012, pp.20-26.

<sup>80</sup> ExOCOP : *The Berlin Declaration on the Reintegration of Offenders and Ex-Offenders*. Policy Forum Berlin, 18-19 June 2012. Bremen 2012, p.7. In order to follow up this call for a common European policy initiative in this area, the author of the present paper set out at the Forum a proposal for a future policy dialogue with related programme funding at EU level, based on the Open Method of Coordination as in the field of education policy (see section 2 above) but relating in this case to detention standards and reintegration and with a particular emphasis on education and training. Such a process would comprise the setting of common objectives, exchange of experience (conferences, working groups, study visits), peer review, research and analysis, regular reporting and a set of agreed indicators and benchmarks to monitor the progress made, relating to aspects such as the level of investment in Prison Education and reductions in the rate of re-offending. It could be called PAROLE, an acronym for the “Programme of Action for the Rehabilitation of Offenders through Learning and Employment”.

### 3.3 Other EU programmes

While the programmes in education, training and social affairs referred to above were the principal EU funding instruments for Prison Education during the period with which we are concerned, the support provided through other programmes should also be mentioned, notably in the areas of Youth, Research and, logically, Justice.<sup>81</sup>

#### **Youth**

Later subsumed within the “Erasmus+” programme from 2014 on, the EU’s programmes to support European cooperation and mobility for young people (“Youth” up to 2006, “Youth in Action-YiA” from 2007-2013) shared the emphasis of the Adult Education programme “Grundtvig” in addressing disadvantaged groups in society. In this context a number of projects were supported which focused at least partially on non-formal and informal learning opportunities for juvenile (ex-)prisoners. In all, eight such projects are listed in the relevant project database (one from Youth, seven from YiA), though the extent of their educational dimension is not always apparent from the project descriptions.

#### **Research**

Over successive generations of the EU’s programme for research and technological development, which is now called “Horizon 2020” and formerly went through seven multiannual Framework Programmes spanning the period 1984-2013, social sciences have gradually taken on greater importance. Under the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006), one of the priority thematic areas was entitled “Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society”, and among the major research initiatives supported was the Estonian-coordinated project “Towards a Lifelong Learning Society: the contribution of the education system”. The work of the project’s Irish partner, Dublin City University, focused on access to education and this research, subsequently published by the author, Paul Downes, under the title *Access to Education in Europe: A framework and agenda for system change*<sup>82</sup>, contained two chapters dealing with education in the context of prisons. The main purpose of this research was to examine a number of structural indicators relating:

- at “macro-exo” level to aspects such as the existence and efficacy of national strategies for Prison Education, the provision of distance learning opportunities in prison or the extent to which prison officers’ ambivalence towards education has been overcome;
- and at “micro-meso” level to ‘normality’ of provision and the extent to which individual learning plans and assessment approaches have been implemented and professional development facilitated, but also to organisational issues such as space allocation for education, building links with external education institutions, success in overcoming practical problems or taking education into account in decisions on prisoner transfer.

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<sup>81</sup> It has not been possible to conduct an exhaustive search across all potentially relevant EU programmes. The number of projects, if any, is likely to be extremely small. Areas which might merit a search include Culture (support for prison arts?) and the EU’s Neighbourhood policy instruments.

<sup>82</sup> London: Springer, 2014. For the overall project see <http://III2010.tlu.ee/>.

The indicators as such are contextualised by a broader consideration of challenges concerning the access to education in prison and the present state of Prison Education, the author concluding that it is “evident from a number of national reports that Prison Education is completely lacking in strategic focus and intervention at national level in some countries”. In many instances, furthermore, Prison Education was found to be subordinated to the mere acquisition of skills for employment to the detriment of other goals such as active citizenship, social cohesion and personal fulfilment. An urgent need to remove barriers to digital literacy was also identified. Downes pleads for a conception of lifelong learning espousing more than mere economic advancement, and a rights-based attitude towards Prison Education, delivered with methodologies built on the Adult Learning philosophy of a student-centred approach, as called for in the EU’s policy in this field and with a variety of initial assessment approaches being used to identify a prisoner’s individual learning difficulties, strengths and needs and systematic attention given to the professional development of prison teachers and peer supports for education.<sup>83</sup>

## **Justice**

The European Organisation of Prison and Correctional Services (EuroPris)<sup>84</sup> is a non-political, non-governmental organisation formally founded under Dutch law in 2011 on the basis of an initiative launched during the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009 and brought forward by the European countries of the International Roundtable for Correctional Excellence. Membership is open to national prison and correctional administrations in Council of Europe countries. The organisation exists to intensify co-operation among these services, thereby advancing professionalism in the corrections field and helping to promote ethical and rights-based imprisonment, improve the lives of prisoners and their families, enhance public safety and security and reduce the rate of re-offending across Europe.

To this end specific goals of Europris are to advance the operational capabilities and professionalism of prison and correctional practitioners across Europe; to act as an ‘expert group’ on prison matters within Europe; to contribute to and support the development of European prison-related policy and legislation (within the framework of standards established by the European Union and the Council of Europe); to provide advice for policy-makers on prison-related matters; to cooperate and exchange information with other organisations working in the prisons and criminal justice arena, both in Europe and beyond, with a view to developing best practice in the field; and to advance these aims wherever possible by engaging in collaborative, funded initiatives. A number of Expert Groups have been established, including one devoted to “Education in Prisons”<sup>85</sup> with representation from EPEA.

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<sup>83</sup> In his insightful review of Downes’ work, on which much of this summary is based, Cormac Behan (University of Sheffield), concludes that “Downes has done a superb job nudging the door open by developing a framework and agenda for change. It is now time for action.” See Cormac Behan: “Making the Case for Prison Education in a Lifelong Learning Society”. Book review of: Paul Downes: *Access to Education in Europe: A Framework and Agenda for System Change*, in: *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry*, Vol. 3 No. 1, June 2016.

<sup>84</sup> [www.euopris.org](http://www.euopris.org).

<sup>85</sup> [https://www.euopris.org/expert\\_groups/education-in-prison/](https://www.euopris.org/expert_groups/education-in-prison/).

Support from the EU's "Criminal Justice" programme<sup>86</sup> was of invaluable assistance during the launch and initiation phase of Europris, and the organisation continues to receive an operating grant under the successor programme "Justice". The present overview of EU support for Prison Education would thus be incomplete without a reference to this dimension of the EU's role. Apart from this, the "Criminal Justice" programme (and its predecessors such as AGIS<sup>87</sup>) also awarded grants for specific projects, but while a few of these may have had a marginal link with Prison Education<sup>88</sup>, this was not a central focal point of support.<sup>89</sup>

#### **4. Specific EU Initiatives in Prison Education**

In all the contexts discussed in the preceding sections of this paper, Prison Education has not been the sole recipient of EU support, but rather one of many fields addressed. During the period with which we are concerned, the European Commission did, however, undertake a number of initiatives specifically designed to promote the further development of Prison Education, and to help intensify European cooperation in this field.

##### **4.1 European Conference "*Pathways to Inclusion – Strengthening European Cooperation in Prison Education*"**

On 22-24 February 2010, the European Commission<sup>90</sup> – with considerable assistance from the ExOCOP Learning Network referred to above and also leading figures in EPEA – organised a major European conference designed to promote stronger European cooperation in the field of Prison Education and the reintegration of prisoners. Co-hosted by the Hungarian Prison Service, the event involved 218 participants from over 30 European countries, including all EU Member States. The primary purpose of the conference was to draw attention to the projects and partnerships funded by "Grundtvig" and "Leonardo da Vinci" (see section 3.1 above), but results from the Community Initiative "EQUAL" (see section 3.2 above) were also highlighted.

The conference brought together for the first time on such a large scale 'practitioners' and 'policy-makers' in Prison Education from across Europe. All the 'stakeholders' with

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<sup>86</sup> Council Decision of 12 February 2007 establishing for the period 2007 to 2013, as part of the General Programme on Fundamental Rights and Justice, the Specific Programme Criminal Justice (OJ L58 of 24.2.2007, pp. 13–18).

<sup>87</sup> Council Decision of 22 July 2002 establishing a framework programme on police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters (AGIS) (2002/630/JHA). OJ L203 of 1 August 2002, p.5ff..

<sup>88</sup> An example of such a partially relevant project is "Justice Involving Volunteers in Europe" (JIVE), coordinated in Portugal, which ran from 2014-16.

<sup>89</sup> This impression was confirmed by the relevant department of the Commission in response to a direct enquiry in the context of preparing the present paper. Furthermore, according to the ex-post evaluation of the Criminal Justice programme (van Nierop 2015), although improving detention conditions in the EU was one of the programme priorities in 2011-12 and 2013 and led to the selection of 8 and 18 projects respectively (in the latter case the highest number of projects selected in any field), educational staff / teachers were the group least frequently targeted by projects (among 25 such target groups identified). Unfortunately, a list of the projects supported was not appended to the report.

<sup>90</sup> Lead department was the Directorate-General (DG) for Education and Culture, acting in collaboration with the DGs for Employment & Social Affairs and Justice.

a major interest in Prison Education were involved: representatives of EU-supported projects; senior national officials (Ministries of Justice, Education and Labour) responsible for Prison Education; directors-general of national prison services from several countries; prison governors; representatives of the Council of Europe and European / international NGOs; National Agencies for the “Lifelong Learning Programme”; national managing authorities responsible for expenditure under the ESF; various European Commission departments; leading individual experts and researchers. The conference was linked to the European Year for combating Poverty and Social Exclusion and was part of the 10<sup>th</sup>. anniversary celebrations of the “Grundtvig” Programme. Substantial documentation was produced ahead of the conference, consisting of overarching and theme-specific issues papers, project analyses and catalogues<sup>91</sup>, and the conference was accompanied by a mobile exhibition of prison art organised by Per Thrane of EPEA. The visuals used at the Conference were based on prisoners’ artwork kindly provided by the Irish Prison Education Service.

During the event, and in addition to plenary speeches, panel discussions and networking and dissemination meetings of project representatives, two series of Working Groups were conducted, one on specific aspects of Prison Education<sup>92</sup>:

Adult basic education	Arts and cultural creativity*	Vocational training*	E-learning platforms and distance learning*
Guidance and counselling, Validation of competences, Individual learning plans		Prison as a positive learning environment (prison régime, roles of governors and officers)	
Release-transition-reintegration: the role of education & training	Initial and in-service teacher training*	Research needs in Prison Education	

and the other on Education and training in the context of specific groups of prisoners:

Long-sentence prisoners	Short-sentence prisoners	Female prisoners
Juvenile and remand prisoners	Foreign prisoners and those from ethnic minority backgrounds	Prisoners with special needs / mental health problems

The three days of intensive discussions led to both broad and in-depth exchange of knowledge and experience in the respective areas. Important recent research results, such as those demonstrating the highly positive cost-benefit relationship in the Prison Education context, were brought to the attention of a wider audience, and significant progress was made on various fronts, notably with regard to the emergence of an electronic platform usable in several countries, building on the results of projects such as PIPELINE, e-LiS and LICOS mentioned above. Furthermore, the Conference gave rise to a wide range of recommendations designed to improve Prison Education in Europe and promote intensified European cooperation in the field.<sup>93</sup> These recommendations form a major pillar of the key principles, priorities and needs for Prison Education emerging from the various components of EU’s support for the field during the period reviewed in the present paper, set out in the concluding section 5 below.

<sup>91</sup> See list of cited literature below. The intention is to make these documents available again in the near future, on the EPEA website: [www.epea.org](http://www.epea.org).

<sup>92</sup> Those marked with an asterisk were also Workshops in the context of ExOCOP (cf.supra).

<sup>93</sup> See Hawley 2010-Report.

The impetus generated by the “Pathways to Inclusion” conference was carried forward by the Commission by means of three further initiatives in the ensuing period, all of which resulted directly from the discussions in Budapest. The first was the commissioning of a more in-depth review of research literature on Prison Education, the second a more thorough appraisal of the state of Prison Education in the Member States, and the third a comprehensive document drawing together the results from the Conference and the two ensuing studies. These initiatives are briefly described in the following sections 4.2 - 4.4 below.

## **4.2 Review of research and evaluation on Prison Education**

In order to draw together the pool of knowledge available on key issues in the area of Prison Education even more comprehensively than had been possible in the framework of the “Pathways to Inclusion” Conference, the European Commission’s Directorate General for Education and Culture entrusted GHK Consulting with a more thorough review of available research. The review was published in 2011 under the title *Prison Education and training in Europe - a review and commentary of existing literature, analysis and evaluation* <sup>94</sup>.

The findings from the literature were grouped under four main topics:

- **Prison as a positive environment for learning:** this included a consideration of the literature on various models of provision and fundamental issues relating to prison as a learning environment. Barriers to learning were identified, approaches to motivating prisoners for learning examined and curricular aspects discussed. Particular attention was given to literature findings on the role of the prison officer and prison educator and the potential of the new technologies for learning in prison;
- **Prison Education and training for employability:** under this heading, literature on the implications for the delivery of education and training with a view to maximising prisoners’ chances of stable employment on release (both as employees and as self-employed persons) was reviewed, and the role of prison work also considered. Findings regarding the vital necessity for forging links with the outside world were highlighted. The relative usefulness of different types of skills as the key to employment was considered and the importance of individualised learning plans in optimising the chances of success underscored;
- **Prison Education in specific subject areas:** literature on two main subject areas was reviewed, namely Basic Skills and Arts and Cultural Activities<sup>95</sup>:
  - Regarding **Basic Skills**, the literature survey revealed a strong emphasis on the need to address a broad range of ‘literacies’ – creative, behavioural, financial, health-related etc. – instead of merely the traditional “three R’s”<sup>96</sup>. Methodologies and modes of delivery were a focal point and the need for close links with the pedagogical work on Basic Skills in the outside community was underlined;
  - Regarding **Arts and Cultural Activities**, the multiplicity of positive impacts emerged strongly from the literature, such creative forms of learning being

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<sup>94</sup> Hawley 2011-Research Review.

<sup>95</sup> ICT was also identified as a key area, but as the literature on this was already under review by ExOCOP et al., it was not considered in detail in this study.

<sup>96</sup> Reading, Writing and Arithmetic.



seen as a means of both coming to terms with life in prison and as a contributory factor to improved employability post-release, as a gateway to further learning, as an instrument for both personal and educational development, and as a means of maintaining family links and developing parental skills. Despite these benefits, however, the literature also revealed an urgent need to overcome the scepticism which arts and cultural activities were still seen as encountering on the part of prison authorities in various countries;

- ***Effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and public value of Prison Education and training:*** the survey revealed a glaring scarcity of literature on this key aspect of the field, and also pointed up a particularly strong geographical limitation, thorough research having only been carried out in a very few countries. Furthermore, the research so far generally failed to address the relative merits, in cost-benefit terms, of different types of Prison Education provision (or the mix of various approaches). Several studies identified in the survey concluded that there was indeed a positive cost-benefit relationship in terms of avoiding higher economic cost by providing high quality education and training in prison. The need was also identified to consider the 'cost-benefit' ratio on the basis of a more refined model, taking into account the costs and benefits not only to the state but to the other stakeholders involved.

In addition to highlighting the key messages to emerge from the existing literature, the author and supporting expert panel made a set of recommendations for further research and the review was accompanied by an extensive 46-page bibliography.

#### **4.3 Survey on Prison Education in Europe**

In addition to the above-mentioned literature review, the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission also requested GHK, which was supported in this work by an expert panel consisting of Torfinn Langelid and the then present and immediate past-presidents of EPEA, Anita Wilson and Ann Costelloe, to conduct an appraisal of the current situation and evolving trends in Prison Education in Europe. Published in July 2012, the Final Report<sup>97</sup> was based mainly on an online survey of over 30 national coordinators of Prison Education, complemented by interviews with stakeholders at national, European and international European level including the Council of Europe, EPEA, ExOCOP, and the International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO) and further underpinned by a small-scale literature survey. An expert discussion took place at the EPEA Conference in Manchester in October 2011. The modest funding available meant that this could not aspire to being more than a first step towards mapping Prison Education in Europe and the need for further work was underlined.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, the Survey played a useful role in drawing attention to some key aspects of – and in particular deficits in – current provision.

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<sup>97</sup> Hawley et al. 2012-Survey.

<sup>98</sup> If it were ever to be implemented, the PAROLE initiative referred to in section 3.2 above. Provided that the necessary funds could be made available on an ongoing basis, this function could, however, also be assumed for example by Europris or EPEA.

Against the background of an introductory section highlighting salient features of the prison population in Europe, the mapping was structured around five detailed aspects:

- Responsibility for, supervision and governance of Prison Education
- Budget and finance
- Provision and organisation of Prison Education
- The prisoner learners
- Teachers and trainers in Prison Education.

National trends were identified and a set of Conclusions and Recommendations formulated on the basis of the findings. The Final Report was enriched by a Catalogue of Good Practice, drawn up with the assistance of EPEA and referring to both national developments and European cooperation projects, and by four detailed case studies enabling more in-depth analysis of specific reforms: Intensive training for skilled workers in Austria, the Strategic Plan of Assistance and Services for Prisoners in Flanders/Belgium, EU-funded projects supporting organisational change in Rumania and The Learning Centre in Sweden.

The Survey noted an increase in the attention given to Prison Education in many parts of Europe, trends in specific countries including an increasing importance of education relative to prison work (though only in four countries), a generally increasing emphasis on vocational training and on linking with training providers outside, increasing attention given to ICT issues and (in the context of the increasing incidence of foreign prisoners) the learning of languages, increasingly frequent experimentation with pre-release schemes to enable participation in education and training courses and in some countries the creation of new governance structures with a bearing on Prison Education. Above all, a general consensus was encountered with regard to:

- the need for compliance with the relevant international conventions and European provisions, notably the Council of Europe's European Prison Rules and Recommendation, regarding the legal right to education in prison;
- the fact that education and training contribute strongly to successful re-integration and reduced levels of recidivism;
- the view that as a basic principle and wherever possible, all types and levels of education should be available – just as 'outside' – for all prisoners.

However, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" and despite these apparently encouraging findings, the Survey pinpointed considerable deficiencies with regard to the present situation of Prison Education in Europe. These related to both the provision of learning opportunities and the extent to which prisoners avail themselves of the opportunities provided.

Thus in overall terms, the authors of the report concluded that the present situation was characterised by a "high degree of inequality of opportunity to access general and vocational education and training programmes across and within countries". General education was found to be on offer at all prisons in only half the countries surveyed, and in only one third of all countries when it came to vocational training (compared with



two-thirds as regards non-formal learning). There was also a strong over-emphasis on basic skills and training to the detriment of other aspects of learning.

Similarly, participation in education and training, though tending to increase in most countries, was still at a very low level: A full-time participation rate of 0-25% of prisoners in education and training was reported in most countries, and even part-time participation exceeded 50% in only four of the countries surveyed.

The reasons for these disappointing participation rates are well researched and were strongly underscored by the Survey, notably the increased diversity in the prison population, the high proportion of prisoners with low education, literacy and numeracy levels, the institutional and situational barriers to learning in prison, prisoners' prior negative experience of education and a frequent lack of incentives relative to other prison activities.

When it comes to the importance attached to Prison Education by the relevant authorities, therefore, there is clearly – as with Adult Education in general – a clear divide between rhetoric and reality. And this is borne out by a final finding from the Survey, namely the widespread perception of inadequate funding for Prison Education and the equally widely expressed concern about negative funding trends in the foreseeable future.

#### **4.4 Summary report on Prison Education in Europe**

Following the Budapest Conference and the two follow-up studies described above, there was for some time a hope that the European Commission would undertake a formal policy initiative on Prison Education, for example in the form of a draft Resolution to be adopted by the Council and European Parliament or, failing this, that it would issue a major Staff Working Paper on the field, setting out the Commission's own thinking on the key issues and ways ahead in this field. These aspirations have not materialised so far, but the gap was at least partially filled by the commissioning from GHK of one further piece of work, drawing together the results and insights derived from EU involvement in the field thus far. This "Summary Report" was published in May 2013 and entitled *Prison Education and training in Europe – current state-of-play and challenges*<sup>99</sup>.

By its very nature, the Summary Report steers away from providing new elements in the analysis, but it performs a very useful function in drawing together the rationale for and key outcomes of the EU's contribution to Prison Education in the preceding years and providing the starting point for possible further action in the future.

Against the background of the Council conclusions of February 2013 *Investing in education and training – a response to Rethinking Education*<sup>100</sup>, which invited the Member States "to ensure [...] that equal opportunities for access to quality education are provided" and to "reduce the number of low-skilled adults by [...] offering tailored

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<sup>99</sup> Hawley et al. 2013-Summary Report.

<sup>100</sup> Council Conclusions on investing in education and training - a response to Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes and the 2013 Annual Growth Survey. 3221st EDUCATION, YOUTH, CULTURE and SPORT Council meeting, Brussels, 15 February 2013.

learning opportunities to individual learners",<sup>101</sup> the Report aims to support Member States in addressing the learning needs of people in prisons. It restates the rationale for providing education and training in prisons (in terms of the human rights aspect, reducing the social and economic cost resulting from re-offending and contributing to improved employability), assesses the contribution of the European Union to the Prison Education field, identifies key features of the current state of play in different Member States, references essential literature on the theme, highlights pre-requisites for effective education and training provision in prisons and identifies some priority themes for further research as follows:

#### **Areas for further research**

- What works and why? Using a multi-agency, multi-faceted approach to understanding the role of education within the overall rehabilitation effort
- In relation to the cost-effectiveness of Prison Education, understanding the benefits of lifelong learning for prisoners
- How new technologies can be used in a way that is compatible with security
- Understanding the specific needs of sub-groups of prisoners to ensure education and training meets their needs
- Understanding the benefits of facilitating the visual and performing arts in prisons
- Evaluations to assess the quality of existing measures used to identify what constitutes 'good' or 'best' practice

## **5. The legacy: key messages and concluding remarks**

What, then, is the lasting legacy from the first two decades of EU involvement in supporting Prison Education, and in particular the period 2000-2013, as set out in the present paper?

At an operational level, the GHK experts responsible for analysing the contribution of the EU's education and training programmes up to 2011 identified a broad range of benefits<sup>102</sup>:

*"EU funding has helped to facilitate the sharing and transfer of practices and has helped to create sustainable partnerships and networks to ensure this process of mutual learning continues in the long-term. Practitioners and learners alike have [...] benefited from the creation of tools and materials for use in Prison Education and training. EU funding has led to a range of benefits at individual, organisational, national and transnational levels, individuals taking part in the projects have benefited and learned from participating in transnational working and some have created lasting relationships with their peers in other countries. Thus, these projects promote intercultural awareness and understanding across Europe. Organisations have benefited from a chance to pilot new activities, develop new tools or to change their ways of working in line with tried and tested practices, as a result of mutual learning. There have also been some impacts at the level of policy, where EU projects have provided the evidence required to inform such change."*

<sup>101</sup> Hawley et al. 2013-Summary Report, p.17f..

<sup>102</sup> Hawley 2012-Analysis, pp.26-27.

And this is confirmed in the comprehensive Summary Report from 2013:<sup>103</sup>:

*“More and more countries see the need to explore solutions to the various challenges of Prison Education and professional development through European cooperation. In spite of the differences between countries, learning from the experience of others is important for successful policy and practical development. EU funding has provided support for the development of innovative, experimental activities in the field of Prison Education and has helped to facilitate mutual learning across borders. Funding from EU programmes has helped to support the development of Prison Education and training systems across Europe”.*

At the level of substance and strategy, too, the EU-supported activities gave rise to a whole range of key messages for Prison Education, commanding a high degree of consensus across the participating Prison Education community. These are summarised in the box entitled “Key messages resulting from EU support for Prison Education” below.<sup>104</sup>

Professional organisations, and in particular EPEA, were and remain instrumental in bringing the Prison Education community together at European level and laying the foundations for European cooperation in the field. However, in the period under review in the present paper, the support provided by the European Union played an essential catalytic role by giving organisations, prison educators and policy-makers across Europe the opportunity to come together in operational projects and partnerships, durable networks and mutual learning activities, thereby enabling that cooperation to start fulfilling its true potential.

The door was now open for further developments to follow during the next funding period 2014-2020, notably under “Erasmus+”, and it is to be hoped that the sequel to this present paper will be written when the time comes. But for now, that is another story...

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<sup>103</sup> Hawley et al 2013-Summary Report, p.14.

<sup>104</sup> The formulation of these key messages, resulting from the 2010 conference “Pathways to Inclusion” (section 4.1 above) but drawing also on insights derived from many projects, analyses and collaborative events conducted during the period under review, is that of the author of the present paper and is not taken from an official document.

### **Key messages resulting from EU support for Prison Education**

- Prison systems emphasising reprisal rather than rehabilitation, are out-of-phase with democratic ideals: “People should be sent to prison as punishment, not for punishment!”
- Prisoners – including those with special learning needs – have a right to education just like any other citizen. This principle should be implemented in all countries.
- “No-one is only a prisoner”. Education and training can help to develop the prisoner’s full personality and greatly enhance his or her self-esteem.
- Prison Education should consequently espouse a holistic approach embracing basic and general education, social and personal skills, artistic and cultural creativity as well as practical and vocational training.
- Vocational training should be relevant to modern employment needs and strike a balance between generic skills and adaptation to local / regional labour market requirements.
- Prison Education should be seen as an integral part of education and training in the country at large, and as similar as possible to education and training ‘outside’.
- Prisoners are a heterogeneous group. A learner-centred approach to Prison Education should be adopted, with flexible course provision, a focus on learning outcomes, acknowledgment and validation of prior non-formal and informal learning, and effective guidance and counselling.
- Links between the prison and the outside world, during a prisoner’s sentence as well as post-release, should be acknowledged as a key factor in determining the success of rehabilitation strategy, also as regards education and training.
- Effective reintegration depends crucially on multi-faceted cross-agency cooperation, which should therefore be strongly supported: “Education and training cannot do it on their own”.
- New technologies offer exciting new ways of broadening and individualising learning opportunities in prison. Their use should be expanded and optimised, supported by the necessary further training of educational and other prison staff.
- Every effort should be made to improve the learning environment in prison, notably by sensitising governors and officers to the importance of education and training and taking education and training needs into account in the transfer of prisoners.
- Teaching staff engaged in Prison Education should be provided with the necessary initial and further training required to assist them in assuming the role of learning facilitator and to equip them for the specific challenges – social, psychological and pedagogical – of working in this field.
- Further efforts should be undertaken to demonstrate the economic – as well as social – benefits of investing more in Prison Education, as part of an integrated package of measures to reduce the rate of re-offending.
- Research on Prison Education (within educational research as well as research on detention and reintegration issues) should be greatly expanded, to address more aspects and cover more countries. Cost-benefit analysis should be one of the priorities.
- In many countries the funding of (better: “investment in”) Prison Education should be significantly enhanced as a proportion of budgets in both education and justice.
- Transnational sharing of innovation and experience should be intensified in both practice and policy, through sustainable partnerships and networks and improved dissemination and mainstreaming of project results.
- EU funding is vital in underpinning this process and should be greatly increased in order to achieve an ongoing strengthening of European cooperation in Prison Education.

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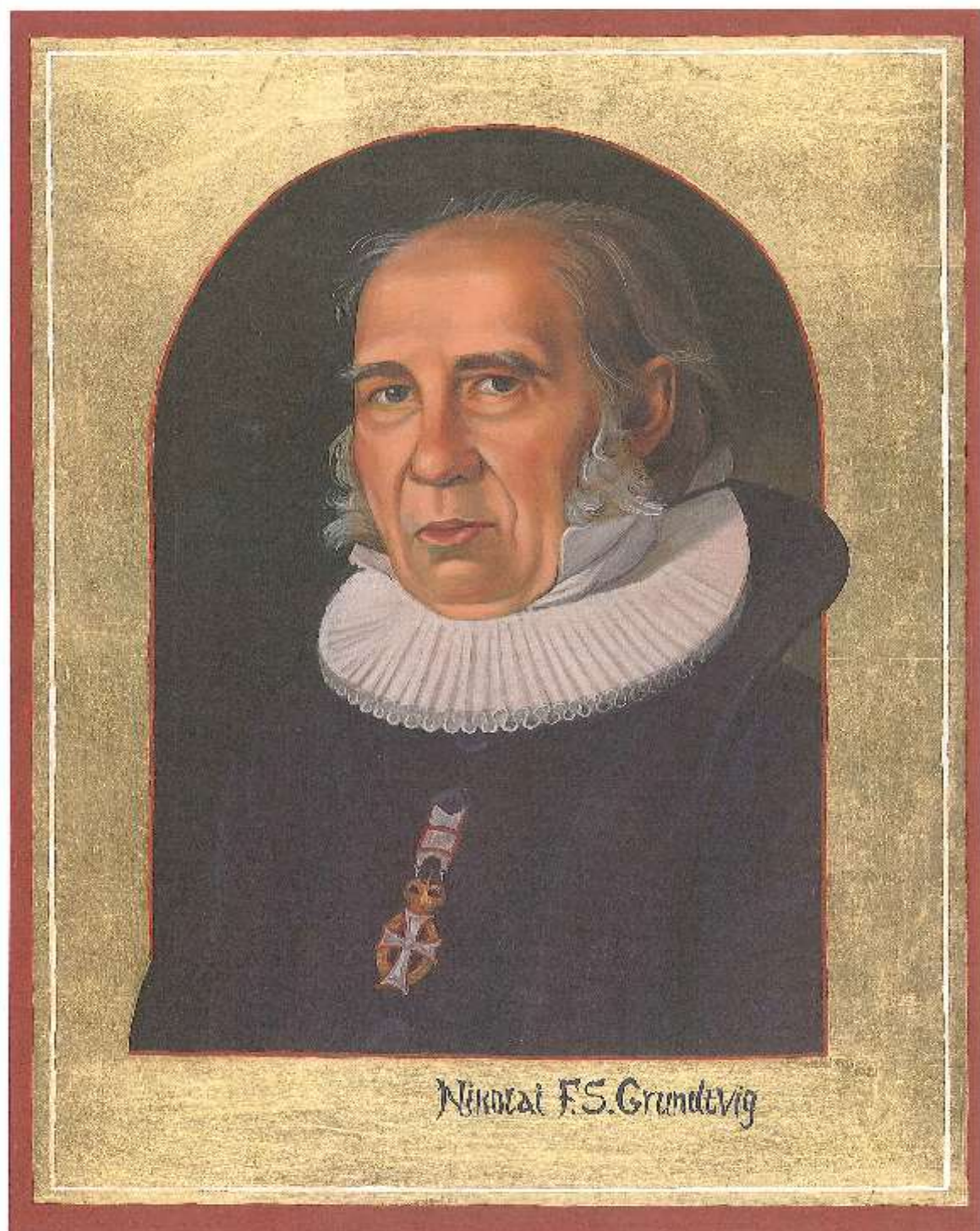
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**Note:**

It is intended to make many of these publications more permanently available through the website of EPEA ([www.epea.org](http://www.epea.org)) in due course.





Icon painting of N.F.S. Grundtvig, the « father of adult education », by Sava Kostadinov (Bulgaria), ex-prisoner, now icon painter and restorer, whose life was changed by participating in a “Grundtvig” project

*Presented by the artist to the European Commission on the occasion of the Conference on Prison Education « Pathways to Inclusion », Budapest, February 2010*