

## **Report on the: 6<sup>th</sup> European Conference of Directors and Co-ordinators of Prison Education**

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The conference was conducted in Prague, Czech Republic at the Corinthia Panorama Hotel from Thursday 21 September to Sunday 24 September 2006. The official language of the conference was English.



### **European Prison Education Association (EPEA)**

The European Prison Education Association (EPEA) is an organisation made up of prison educators, administrators, governors, researchers and other professionals whose interests lie in promoting and developing education and related activities in prisons throughout Europe in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe. The EPEA has a strong focus on ensuring that the Council of Europe Conventions and Rules (revised European prison rules, convention on human rights, access and right of education) rules 28.1 to 28.7 inclusive, pertaining to education, are adopted by all European prison jurisdictions. The revised rules were adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006.

The EPEA is an official Non Government Organisation recognized by the Council of Europe.

The organization conducts international conferences biennially to support those people involved in the provision of education and training to prisoners in Europe to share ideas and research that leads to the effective provision of education to prisoners. The next EPEA international conference, *Learning For Liberation*, is to be conducted in Dublin, Ireland from 13 to 17 June 2007.

On alternate years to the biennial conferences EPEA also brings together Directors/Coordinators of prison education to share ideas, experience and research to guide the provision of prisoner education in the various European countries. These conferences influence the direction, development and the implementation of sound prison education and training into the European countries. The Director/coordinators of prison education conferences have

been conducted since 1994. Poland was the host for that conference. The last conference was conducted in England in 2004.

Attendance at the Director/coordinators conference is by invitation and is usually restricted to two participants from each country. The restriction on numbers is to contain the number of delegates to a small working group and is normally limited to a maximum of 40 to 60 people. This year as well as inviting education Directors/coordinators from the European countries the organizing committee extended an invitation to Australia and the United States of America.

From the USA, Carolyn Eggleston, Ph.D, Associate Dean for Administration and Graduate programs, and co-director of the Centre for the study of Correctional Education at California State University, San Bernardino, USA and President, Correctional Education Association was invited and attended.

From Australia, Ron Cox, Manager, AEVET, Queensland Corrective Services and Director of the Australasian Corrections Education Association (ACEA) was invited and attended. My attendance at the conference was supported by the ACEA and Queensland Corrective Services.

### **Countries/Organisations represented**

Australia	Council of Europe	Cyprus	The Czech Republic
Denmark	England	Estonia	Finland
Ireland	Latvia	Malta	The Netherlands
Norway	Romania	Scotland	Sweden
UNESCO	USA	Wales	

### **Agenda**

The agenda for the conference is Attachment A

### **Education and Training Innovations, and Research**

Prior to the conference, all countries that were sending delegates were invited to provide a maximum two page summary identifying the approach to education and training in prisons in that country. Participants were also asked to outline any new education and training in prisons innovations and research that has been conducted. The document was to include links to any relevant research and innovations.

Outlines that were provided are included as Attachment B. The outline for education and training in Australia, including Queensland is also included in the attachment.

As well as the provision of the outlines, four countries were also invited to present information on the provision of education and training in their country. Australia, Holland, Romania and the USA were invited and provided a presentation.



### **Conference Proceedings**

The conference was officially opened by Mr Zdenek Kreuzzier, 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Director General of the Prison Services of the Czech Republic.

An update on the Council of Europe Convention and Rules was provided by Mr Roman Huna, Council of Europe Representative.

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation Rec(2006)2 on 11 January 2006. Section 28 of the European Prison Rules, which deals with education, and the rights for prisoners to access education whilst in prison was endorsed by the EPEA and the UNESCO representative. The EPEA was represented when the education rules were drafted.

A copy of the rules dealing with education are attached, Attachment C.

Mr Kevin Warner, Ireland and Chairperson of Council Select Committee on prison Education also endorsed the European education prison rules.

Mr Martin Vana, Head Teacher of the Vocational Training Centre of the Prison Services of the Czech Republic and Mr Milan Hospodka, Head of Detention and Imprisonment Department, provided a comprehensive overview of the Czech Republic education system.

A relatively large effort is placed on the provision of vocational skills which leads to employment post-release. Vocational training identified through the prison visits included Horticulture, Electrical/electronics, book binding, Computer Aided Drafting (CAD), Numerical controlled (NC) machining and Metal working. Apprenticeship courses in metalworking is also provided at Rynovice Prison. Employment within the prisons also takes a high priority and a rate of 60% long term employment rate was quoted for Rynovice prison.

Prisoners in a secure male prison, Rynovice, who had trained in CAD competed in a national CAD competition. The prison authorities were quite proud that the prisoners performed well against the other non-prisoner competitors.

## **Prison visits**

Included in the conference agenda delegates were taken on a comprehensive tour of three of the Czech Republic prisons. All prisons visited were within a 1.5 hour drive from Prague. Delegates were divided into three groups, based on their preference, and one prison was visited by all delegates. Prisons visited were Svetla Nad Sazavou, a women's prison commissioned in 2000, Rynovice a high security men's prison commissioned in 1968 and Vsehrdy a juvenile Prison commissioned in 1958.

Details of the three prisons visited, see Attachment D.



## **Workshops**

A number of workshops were conducted and included post-release employment of ex-prisoners, dealing with cultural and language differences and methods of training teachers to work in the prisons.

A great deal of interest was shown in how to get ex-prisoners back into the workforce. Scotland, England and Sweden were particularly interested in the post release employment assistance programs that are being provided in Victoria and Queensland. England currently has a Green paper for discussion which is focusing on the reduction of re-offending through skills and employment.

### **Norwegian White Paper – “*Another Spring*”**

Torfin Langelid presented a report on the provision of education and training in the Norwegian Corrective Services. The report outlines the history of prison education and training in Norwegian Corrective Services and how this education and training may be improved. A short version of the report is available. Please contact Ron Cox.

## **A Green Paper – *Reducing Offending Through Skills and Employment***

Jane Bateman, Head of Offender Skills and Employment Programme presented an overview of the Green Paper, released on 15 December 2005. Consultation ran until 31 May 2006. Following the consultation the “Next Step” is to be launched on 13 December 2006. The focus of the paper is that through the attainment of workskills and employment post-release, re-offending will be reduced. To access the report contact Ron Cox

## **Research – Norwegian Prisons – *Inmates educational background and education intentions***

Professr Terje Manger, University of Bergin, Norway presented his research on his survey of prisoners in Norwegian prisons. From his survey sent to all 2946 inmates over 18 years of age in Norwegian prisons 69.8% (1937 prisoners) responded.

From the data collected Terje discussed in his presentation addressed questions such as:

*Has the prison population’s educational background changed in the last decades?*

*Educational levels educational wishes among prison inmates who have a legal right to upper secondary education and those that have no such right. Why inmates do not start education in prison.*

*Why do inmates start education in prison.*

*Motivational categories*

*Etc.*

Contact Ron Cox for access to the questionnaire and report.

## ***Pipeline project – Partnerships in Prison Education: Learning in Networked Environments (PIPELINE)***

The project coordinator, Andreas Lund, University of Oslo, Norway provided an overview of the project.

The project is providing prisoners with online newsletters, magazines etc via the internet and providing learning activities across prisons. It was stated that the online magazine has been developed for and by prisoners.

The risks associated with the project were analysed and as Andreas stated that as all risks cannot be eliminated it was necessary to establish what the level of acceptable risks were.

Measures put in place to minimize the risks included:

Use of firewalls – local and central

Establishment of Virtual Private Networks (VPN)

URL filtering/white lists restricting internet access.

Selected access to the internet

Etc.

Due to the need for prison educators to have a good understanding and experience with the use of this technology training workshops for prison educators are to be conducted in 2007. The Norway prisons are currently preparing documents for the use of networked computers for prisoners.

### ***Teaching via the Internet – the Swedish way***

Bengt Wallin from the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, Head Office explained that the development of a process for teaching across the internet resulted from the fact that the movement of many prisoners across the centres prevented them from continuing and completing studies.

The purpose of the virtual classroom is therefore to allow a prisoner to continue his/her studies regardless of where they are located in the prison system.

The system operates through firewalls that creates two subnets, one for the teacher which allows unlimited access and one for the student which only allows one address. The student is only able to access/communicate with the teacher who controls what the student can access.

A teacher is the only one that can initiate a prisoner's internet access. This occurs when the teacher logs on. This then unlocks the system and allow the student to have controlled access. No communication can occur between students, all communication occurs via the teacher.

### **Some observations**

- European countries have or are in the process of implementing the education rules from the European prison Rules with special emphasis on the belief that all prisoners have the right to education.
- Strong support is evident in European countries for the value of, and the provision of education and in particular vocational education
- Recidivism rates for European countries are much higher than those in Australia eg England 70+% compared with >40% in Australia
- Imprisonment rates per 100,000 population are slightly higher in Australia, 156/100,000 than in Europe but no where near as high as the USA and Russia which exceed 600/100,000.
- Problems related to the delivery of education and training are similar through out the world.
- Australia is performing well in relation to European countries in programs offered in education, training and post release employment assistance and the quality of those programs.
- Research being conducted in Europe is relevant and useful in the Australian context and vice versa.
- EPEA and their members, as is the case with Australian prison educators, are committed to overcoming the problems associated with accessing controlled internet/intranet access for prisoners who require this access to undertake external education.

The conference host, the Prison service of the Czech Republic in association with APEA is to provide full documentation of the conference proceedings in the near future. Once available this information will be available from:

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