

## LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME



### Learning Partnership GRUNDTVIG

#### FREE – IT – Foster Re-integration and Enhance Employability through Inmates Training



#### PROJECT MEETING n. 2 - MALTA, 13-16 January 2014

Report: meeting n.2

Place: Malta

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

People involved:

PARTNER	NATIONALITY	NAME
Penitenciarul Ploiești	RO	Stan Constantin Iulian Zotescu
Education Unit, Cork Prison	IE	Catherine Coakley
Åsane videregående skole, avd. Fossane	NO	Geir Arne Hundvebakke Arild Nydegger Øvre-Eide
European Prison Education Association – Malta Branch	MT	Anthony Vella Joseph Giordmaina Anita Beatrix Nagy
Vollzugsdirektion	AT	Marit Carolin Weißen
Centre d'Iniciatives per a la Reinserció (CIRE)	ES	Gerard Estalella
Center za izobraževanje in kulturo Trebnje	SL	Milena Hvastija Barbara Jerovsek
Knowl - Social Enterprise for Risk Groups Education and Lifelong Learning	EL	Sophia Protopapa
Rideout (Creative Arts for Rehabilitation)	UK	Chris Johnston
Cooperativa Sociale "Il Cerchio ONLUS"	IT	Gianni Trevisan Annalisa Chiaranda
Consulmarc Sviluppo srl	IT	Laura Franceschi Marina Lucchetta

## Meeting Development

1<sup>st</sup> DAY 14 JANUARY 2014

### MORNING SESSION:

The President of the European Prison Education Association – Malta Branch, Dr Anthony Vella, opened the meeting and welcomed the participants. He augured that the participants enjoy the visit, the country and have a successful project meeting.

Dr Joseph Giordmaina explained the process of the meeting and provided all the necessary information regarding the agenda and the logistics of the meeting.

The theme of the meeting was:

**“HOW TO ESTABLISH POSITIVE RELATIONS WITH CONVICTS, AS A PRE-CONDITION TO TRAINING.”**

1. Dr Anthony Vella made a PowerPoint Presentation on the concept of ‘*best practices*’.

The presentation addressed several points including:

A ‘definition’ and understanding of what we may take ‘best practices’ to mean.

Putting the learner at the centre of our efforts.

Work within an integrated re-entry programme.

The requirements of innovative learning methods.

Past EU projects in which EPEA – Malta Branch was involved:-

- 1.DEVELOPING TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR QUALIFIED TEACHERS TO TEACH IN PRISONS
- 2.The BRIDGE PROJECT
- 3.The CLAP Project
- 4.My ComPASS
- 5.WILL to DREAM Project

2. The participants were divided into two groups in order to discuss issues involved in establishing a very good relationship with prison inmates.

Here below, the main issues discussed during the working groups, as well as their main conclusions, are presented:

### ***WORKSHOP A: Where do your inmates come from? – Knowing your ‘students’ (Coordinated by Mr. Anthony Vella – EPEA Malta Branch)***

The aim of Workshop A was to discuss and debate different aspects of the process leading a teacher / trainer to better know his / her students, as a key aspect in a teaching - learning relationship.

#### ***Topics covered***

The topics covered during the workshop approached different key elements which can contribute to help teachers in getting a better knowledge of their students.

- **Knowing students as a precondition to training:** Getting to know the group of learners is paramount to a successful teaching and learning relationship
- **Students Background:** The variety of backgrounds of a group of learners is endless
- **Students experiences, skills and knowledge in the training process:** Every learner will bring with him a vast array of experiences, skills and knowledge which can be used as a teaching tool in itself. These influence how new ideas are received, how new skills are acquired and how the experience of others are interpreted
- **Focus on the teacher / instructor / trainer:** By examining his/her feelings regarding sensitive and difficult issues (eg. racism, discrimination, sexism, prejudice) an instructor is forced to confront issues that may cause him/her to resist embracing a classroom environment
- **Unpredictability of students’ reaction to teaching:** The same variety means that there may be no common background, and it is therefore difficult to predict how a teacher’s efforts and strategies will be received

#### ***Discussion***

During the workshop, based on the discussion on the mentioned statements, partners reached an agreement on some key conclusions on two key aspects:

- 1) **MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING:**
  - In most cases, teachers working in prisons are seen differently from prison officers. This happens both when teachers are directly employed by the prison and when they are external professionals (e.g. coming from a training institution outside the prison);
  - Teachers should have the possibility to take part in meetings with the prison staff, both to be informed about what goes on in prisons when they are not there and to plan the activities together with the prison staff. This happens, e.g. in Norway.
  - Since prisons are specific training environments, it is advisable that trainers are prepared before they start working in prisons;
  - Initial assessment of inmates should not be an interrogation, but rather a conversation, otherwise they will most probably put themselves in a “defence mode”, and keep useful / meaningful information for themselves. This could also have a negative impact on their supportiveness to the learning process;
  - Prisoners allocation to different training courses should be the educators’ responsibility. This assignment should not be given to people who have no experience in training (e.g. as it happens in the UK, where this function is performed by “Allocation officers”);
  - Teachers should look after the self-respect as professionals: this statement also relates to how much a trainer feels confident to disclose about his/her private life;
  - There is no “one size fits all” in prison education: teachers approaches, behaviours, strategies also depend on their culture, customs and habits.
- 2) **FOCUS ON INMATES:**
  - Teachers should build on the strengths of inmates and not on their weaknesses.
  - In order to better identify inmates skills and competencies, it would be advisable for trainers to use specific diagnostic tools;
  - It is important that inmates are well informed about learning opportunities and possibilities, with the support of professional teachers working in the education system. This process of information should be continuous;
  - Since inmates individual situations can widely differ from one another, it is crucial to design individual learning paths.

#### ***Identifying Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for teachers***

In order to better know their students, trainers in prisons should develop certain knowledge, skills and attitudes: the debate held during the workshop could contribute to identify some of them.

### **Knowledge**

The teacher needs to know well the environment that he/she is working in, since prisons are specific training environments which differ from schools, training institutes, etc.

As an examples, teaching activities in prisons are affected by very specific elements, such as institutional rules which are sometimes very rigid, logistic constraints, the limitations deriving from the length of the sentence, the mindset of the inmates (e.g. some of them have a criminal mindset).

### **Skills**

The teacher should have:

- good communication skills, to identify case by case the best way to address to / approach inmates and the most effective strategies to convey training contents to them;
- good planning skills, to design training activities and adapt them to the individual situations of each inmate;
- good team working skills, to promote co-operation with the different professionals working in prisons, including prison officers, pedagogues, administrative staff etc.

### **Attitudes**

Teachers should be ready to adapt their behaviours, approaches and strategies to the differences that they will have to face when working in prisons: these differences can relate, for example, to inmates background, mindset and personality, skills and competencies.

### ***WORKSHOP B: Communicating with inmates – establishing a positive relationship (Coordinated by Ms.Sophia Protopapa– KNOWL)***

The aim of Workshop B was to explore good communication skills with inmates in order to establish an environment of trust in which inmates are motivated to communicate their thoughts and desires, as well as create a plan of what they would like to do once they are released.

### ***Topics covered***

The topics covered during the workshop which approached positive change, first of the teachers and then of learners, were the following:

- **Stereotypes:** Becoming aware of and managing stereotypes that either the teacher or the learner might have for themselves, each other and other people involved.
- **Behavioural change:** It is important to support behavioural change by helping the learner to envision outcomes – both intellectually and emotionally; clarifying and reinforcing why the change is important to the learner; establishing the learner's personal responsibility; clarifying they have choice (within their limits); establishing how the learner will know they are making progress; assessing commitment to change; encouraging support and express belief in their ability to achieve what they have committed to.
- **Setting & managing expectations:** From the beginning of the learning process, both teacher and learner should set expectations so that they are able to manage them and achieve the most effective outcomes. Examples of expectations include those for each meeting, responsibilities towards each other, third parties and limits, duration of meetings and confidentiality, assessment of the relationship, receiving feedback, openness and trust, measuring progress, celebrating achievements.
- **Storytelling and personal narrative:** The importance of asking the learner tell their story was stressed so that situation analysis and reality check can be feasible. Personal stories help people bring their lives into focus. Sometimes this focus is directed at the whole of the learner's life, on other occasions it is more narrowly directed at specific goals. The story develops in a chronological order from past to present to future.
- **Positive Psychology:** Positive psychology was then discussed and the ways in which it can provide a meaningful framework for learning needed to help the teacher adopt a new positive way of thinking. Also, positive psychology focuses on talents and strengths which were the focus of this approach.
- **Talents&Strengths:** Talents were discussed as the basis of strengths. Ways of identifying strengths were presented and they were very interesting since strengths are an integral part of our human identity, constituting our intrinsic and inherent qualities that define us as individuals. Also, strengths families were presented and examples of how strengths should be used moderately.

- **Strengths based coaching:** The coordinator presented a strengths based coaching model which could be used by teachers to guide learners through strengths identification, past successes, positive future visualization, goal setting and action planning, measuring achievement. The aim of this model is positive change.

### **Discussion**

During the workshop, participants discussed how the principles of positive psychology can be used by teachers and put into practice with inmates. The coordinator shared information and knowledge about talents and strengths as well as strengths coaching and participants shared their experience with prison education and examples of how theory could be used in practice. Many fruitful comments were shared relating to all the topics of the workshop. What was stressed was the fact that change is about adopting new attitudes and this should begin from the teachers.

### **Identifying Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes for teachers**

In order to help learners identify and use their talents and strengths to achieve goals, teachers should develop certain knowledge, skills and attitudes in line with positive psychology and strengths spotting.

- **Knowledge** The teacher needs to adopt a positive approach based on knowledge of the principles of positive psychology, talents and strengths as well as the stages of positive reflection into the past, visualisation into the future, goal setting, action planning and measurement of success.
- **Skills** To effectively guide learners into identify their strengths, teachers need to develop the skills/ability to recognise the learners' talents and strengths and focus on them with the aim to help the learners use them to achieve short and long term goals.
- **Attitudes** Teachers should have an open minded approach and be willing to adapt their own perceptions to avoid stereotyping towards the learners as well as incorporate new ways of working.

## **2nd DAY 15 JANUARY 2014**

### **MORNING SESSION:**

The morning was dedicated to the reporting on the work and issues addressed during the workshops held on the first day of the meeting. Reports of these workshops have already been circulated among the partners.

Gerard Estalella presented a PowerPoint review of a project that was successfully concluded in Catalunya. It involved cookery courses for inmates and planned occasions (party) where a number of senior citizens were entertained to good food prepared by the inmates.

Laura Franceschi led a discussion on how the project should now proceed and what is to be prepared for the next meeting in Cork, Ireland.



## FUTURE ACTIONS:

WHAT	WHO	BY
Send the questionnaire for meeting evaluation to all partners, asking them to fill it in	Consulmarc Sviluppò	20/01/2014
Return the evaluation questionnaire to Consulmarc sviluppò, duly filled in	All Partners	31/01/2014
Inform Cork Penitentiary team about the number of participants / the number of rooms required by each delegation for the meeting in Ireland	All partners	31/01/2014 (Cork Penitentiary ask to do that before, if possible)
Prepare the report of the two workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshop A: "Where do your inmates come from – knowing your 'students'?"</li> <li>- Workshop B: "Communicating with inmates – establishing a positive relationship"</li> </ul>	Consulmarc Sviluppò Workshop A Laura Franceschi  KNOWL Workshop B Sophia Protopapa	31/01/2014
Provide a simple word template to be used for the preparation of the project newsletter	KNOWL	07/02/2014
Write the 1 <sup>st</sup> issue of the project newsletter and send it to all project partners	Consulmarc Sviluppò	15/02/2014
Prepare the report of Malta project Meeting and send it to all partners, using the standard template on which partners agreed during the kick – off meeting,	EPEA – Malta Branch	15/02/2014
Complete the table describing best practices and send it to all project partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Best Practice 1: Austrian experience involving prison officers in training</li> <li>- Best Practice 2: Reincorpora project</li> </ul>	Austrian prison service for best practice 1  CIRE for best practice 2	15/02/2014
Inform Asane School team about the number of participants / the number of rooms required by each delegation for the meeting in Norway	All partners	01/03/2014