



**Welcome to the June edition of the 2020 EPEA Newsletter!**

"I was so happy when I could at least teach my students again individually although only behind a separating screen. After weeks without direct contact, it was like a release from a nightmare." The emotions of my colleague in a small Swiss prison still touch me weeks later. The Corona Crisis demands everything from us teachers. We would never have dreamed that our everyday life would change so dramatically from one moment to the other. We were challenged, on a technical level, professionally and emotionally. As we learned in the EPEA webinars, the vast majority of teachers was and is banned from prisons. They had and have no possibility to get in contact with "their" students. Teaching lives to a large extent from the direct interaction between the teacher and the students. And all of a sudden all connections were cut off at once. We felt helplessness, concern for the students, almost desperation, unable to contact them anymore.

But all over Europe, teachers were soon looking for ways and means to continue teaching the prisoners. Distance learning in various forms was set up: via Skype or the TV channel of the correctional facility. The inmates were supplied with specific teaching materials developed by the teachers, either by mail or by e-mail, always with the support of the prison management and/or prison staff. Moreover, in some cases, direct dialogue between teachers and students was made possible, which had been unsuccessfully proposed for years.

To the regret of us all, however, our educational mission cannot be fulfilled in large parts of Europe. Many teachers will probably not be able to start teaching until autumn. While in the primary and secondary schools of some European countries lessons are taking place again, in education in the prison system everything is

moving only in small steps - if at all. Unfortunately.

The crisis shows us how important it is to have strong relationships with and within prisons. Where cooperation was already good before and the prison administration itself considers education to be an important component of penitentiary care, solutions in favour of the inmates were possible. Solutions that were realized by the teachers with a great wealth of ideas, but also with a lot of commitment and heart. It also became clear, however, that we as teachers must represent our conviction about the importance of education in the prison system even more and even more clearly in the everyday life of the institution. Finally, it became clear that educational platforms to which inmates can have access at any time and onto which teachers can upload teaching material even from outside the prison walls are an essential requirement. In all these points, the EPEA in particular is challenged. However, digitalisation can never be a substitute for face-to-face teaching, but should complement and enrich it. Because teaching is to a large extent relationship work. And we are strong and competent in this.



**Thomas Wüthrich**  
- EPEA Central Region Representative

[German version on website](#)

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[www.epea.org](http://www.epea.org)

Next webinar June 11 2020 at 20.00 (CEST)  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/914681901>

## Death of Valued ACEA Staff Member

*Dear friends,*

*We were informed about the very sad loss of a dear friend and colleague and former ACEA President Ray Chavez.*

*There has always been a warm friendship between EPEA and her Australasian sister-organisation ACEA, of which Ray was the chair for many years.*

*A few years ago I met Ray when he invited EPEA at their national conference. It was an inspiring meeting, meant to strengthen the ties between dedicated professionals in education in prison worldwide.*

*I cherish my happy memories with him and I am grateful for his valuable footprint in prison education.*

*Annet Bakker*

*Chair EPEA*

The following is by his successor Ron Wilson, who knows Ray much better than we do:

[Full text](#)

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## **Operation ‘Distance Learning’ in the prisons of Turnhout, Merksplas and Wortel, Northeast of Flanders.**



*By: Ana Ferrando, Teacher at CVO Edukempen, and Bieke Deloof, Coordinator Klasbak*

The Covid-19 virus and the related measures have so far kept everyone pretty much at home. In the meantime, we are in a kind of transitional phase where little more is allowed.

In our prisons, inmates were double locked up. Lock down. No visits from family or friends, few opportunities for communication, limited help and services, fewer work opportunities and education on hold. From the 25th of May visits are allowed again.

[Read full text](#)

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## **The pandemic's impact on prison education in Portugal**

*By APEnP President José Pinto*

In Portugal, the Ministry of Education is responsible for Prison Education programmes. Throughout this Covid-19 pandemic, teachers have not been allowed into prisons and their work has shifted to distance learning.

Considering the current (partial) reopening of schools in Portugal (kindergarten and Secondary level), APEnP has decided to ask prison associated schools to produce a report on how Prison Education (PE) was being delivered.

[Read full text](#)

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## **An inmate's love for math leads to new discoveries**

There are many examples of mathematical breakthroughs achieved in prison.

Maybe the most famous is from the French mathematician Andre Weil, who came up with his hugely influential conjectures while in a military prison in Rouen, France.

[Read full story](#)

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## **Prison in the time of the Coronavirus. XVI Antigone report on the conditions of detention. (EN/IT)**

In January 2020 the index of the XVI Report on conditions of detention was ready. We had the largest mass of data and information ever collected by the Antigone Observatory in its twenty-year history: in 2019 our Observers visited 98 penitentiary institutes, in every corner of the country. Practically one visit every three days.

The overall picture was that of a prison where overcrowding was rapidly returning to 2013 levels, when Italy was sentenced by the European Court of Human Rights, of a "sick" prison with one in four prisoners in psychiatric therapy and "Elderly" with a quarter of prisoners over 50 years old.

Then, sudden and frightening, the infection spread from Covid-19 in Italy. The pandemic did not spare penitentiaries. And so, in a few days, everyone's lives were turned upside down, including that of Antigone and his observatory.

[Read full story](#)

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## **COVID-19 measures in Norwegian prisons: Concerned for the mental health of prisoners**

Lise Sannerud, director of the Prison and Probation Service, is aware that the measures impose restrictions on prisoners. She is nevertheless aware that it needs to protect employees and inmates.

Sannerud says there is a great extra effort to make the days easier for the prisoners. **Libraries** should be kept open as far as possible, and **self-training** and DVD rentals should be arranged at the cell.

The prisons must also arrange for prisoners to **work on school assignments and to take academic exams.**

[Read full story](#)

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## Protection concept – Prison Education in the prison of Affoltern, Zurich (EN/GE)

A practical example of daily schedule in a prison school under COVID-19 conditions.

[See full schedule](#)

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## Rep. Ireland: Experience with online meetings

By *Claire M. O'Connell*



The Irish Prison Education Association (IPEA) committee were delighted to host their first webinar in April.

IPEA members and prison education teachers from across the country were invited to take part and connect with each other in these difficult times. As is the case in many other countries, prison education centres in Ireland have been closed since the 12<sup>th</sup> March. The purpose of this particular session was to provide an update to everyone on the efforts that are being made to

continue with education provision for students in Irish prisons for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis.

[Read full story](#)

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## Shakespeare under lock



EPEA Branch Klasbak spoke to actor Andy Van Kerschaver about drama workshops in the prison of Beveren

Klasbak spoke to **Andy Van Kerschaver**. Actor, actor, teacher and a Shakespeare lover with a heart for people in detention. As part of his teacher training for drama, he decided to start an educational project: drama workshops with prisoners. He ventured into a Shakespeare classic; Macbeth. A piece of theater history with murder, ambition, spirituality and fate as the main ingredients. Challenging and daring themes to work on within the prison walls.

[Read full story](#)

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## Upcoming webinar June 11th at 20.00 (CEST)

The webinar will have the theme:

Sharing stories on prison education:

What have you learned lately?

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/914681901>

New webinar calendar will be published on the website

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