EUROPEAN PRISON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
Steering Committee

A comparative overview of the old and new Recommendations of the Council of Europe on Education in Prison

Rec(89)12	CM Rec(2026)5
	Basic Principles
1. All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities.	1. All prisoners shall have access to education. 2. Education in prison should include a broad and balanced curriculum which is commensurate in level, breadth, quality and qualifications to the education provided for adult learners in the community.
2. Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age-groups in the outside world, and the range of learning opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible.	3. Education in prison should be grounded in the principles and practices of adult education and should be as close as possible to all aspects of adult education provision in the community.
	4. Sentence planning should address each individual's educational needs and strengths while taking into account their interests and aspirations.
4. All those involved in the administration of the prison system and the management of prisons should facilitate and support education as much as possible.	5. The education of prisoners is a public responsibility, irrespective of the provider of education in prison.

	6. Education should be offered as soon as possible after admission to prison and be available throughout detention.
	7. Educational certificates and qualifications acquired by prisoners should not specify that they were delivered in a prison.
5. Education should have no less a status than work within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education	8. Education should have no less a status than work and other activities within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education.

3. Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his or her social, economic and cultural context.	**Access to Education** 9. Access to education should be provided to all prisoners regardless of ethnic origin, nationality, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, economic, social or other status, or physical or mental condition.
	10. Access to education should be provided to all prisoners regardless of length of sentence, remand status, security regime or individual classification.
17. The funds, equipment and teaching staff needed to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education should be made available	**Responsibility for Education** 11. Public authorities are responsible for developing, implementing and resourcing policies and practices that aim to ensure quality education in prison.
16. Measures should be taken to enable prisoners to continue their education after release.	12. Public authorities are responsible for developing measures, and for supporting relevant stakeholders, to facilitate post-release learning.
6. Every effort should be made to encourage the prisoner to participate actively in all aspects of education	13. Every effort should be made to encourage prisoners to participate actively in a range of educational opportunities.

	Provision of Education 14. Prisoners should have access to secondary education in order to attain the relevant national certificate.
9. Vocational education should aim at the wider development of the individual, as well as being sensitive to trends in the labour-market	15. Prisoners should have access to vocational education and training and training in employability skills in order to enhance their employment prospects after release.
	16. Prisoners should have access to higher education, where appropriate, in order to meet their educational needs and achieve their future aspirations.
12. Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves	17. Prisoners should have access to creative arts and other cultural activities in order to develop transferrable skills and enhance their cultural capital.
11. Physical education and sports for prisoners should be emphasised and encouraged.	18. Prisoners should have access to physical education and sports in order to maintain and improve their mental and physical health.
	19. Prisoners should have access to digital literacy learning within a secure technical infrastructure in order to reduce the digital divide experienced by prisoners.
13. Social education should include practical elements that enable the prisoner to manage daily life within the prison, with a view to facilitating his return to society	20. Prisoners should have access to courses in practical life skills in order to better manage life in prison and after release.

	21. Prisoners should have access to health and well-being education in order to better manage life in prison and maintain a healthy lifestyle.
	22. Prisoners should have access to learning opportunities that promote active citizenship in order to understand and enjoy their rights and fulfil their responsibilities as citizens.
8. Special attention should be given to those prisoners with particular difficulties and especially those with reading or writing problems.	**Education Support for Specific Groups** 23. Particular attention should be directed to addressing the specific educational needs of prisoners who require support for their learning, including a. prisoners requiring support in adult literacies, to enable them to better manage life in prison, to enhance their employability and to prepare them for release. b. prisoners identified as being neurodivergent or as experiencing mental health issues, to enable them to better manage life in prison, to enhance their employability and to prepare them for release. c. foreign prisoners, to enable them to improve their communication and comprehension skills, to enable them to better manage life in prison, to enhance their employability and to prepare them for release.

7. Development programmes should be provided to ensure that prison educators adopt appropriate adult education methods	**Co-operation and Collaboration** 24. Education in prison should be delivered by specifically trained and qualified professionals adopting adult education methodologies and practices.
10. Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once a week.	25. Prisoners should have direct access, at least once a week, to a well-stocked library which should include digitally stocked reading, audio and video materials. Access should be provided to community-based libraries where possible.
14. Wherever possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison.	26. Prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside prison wherever possible.
	27. Where education takes place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible.
	28. Regular review and inspection of the provision and quality of prison education should be undertaken using the same review criteria as for adult and further education provision in the community.
	29. Research should be sufficiently funded and undertaken regularly to update the curriculum, infrastructure and methodology in line with contemporary educational research and international developments in this area.

	30. Innovation and best practice should be shared through national and transnational projects, partnerships and networks.

Link to the new Recommendations of the Council of Europe on Education in Prison (English)

Lien vers les nouvelles recommandations du Conseil de l'Europe sur l'éducation en milieu carcéral (Français)

Link to Explanatory Memorandum (English)