

## FEFI Video-Conference, 24 September 2015

### Introduction by Alan Smith

0. Opening words
  - Thanks to Iris for kind introduction
  - Particularly pleased to be back in contact with the Grundtvig Programme
  - Thanks to Univ. of Mainz for the invitation to escape from retirement for a day or two to share in this important and exciting event
  - Especially as it's being organised by ZWW which has a super track record in continuing education for adults and promoting cooperation between university and other "players" in the adult learning field
  - Commend the Centre for the idea to hold the final conference in the form of a video-conference, thereby linking up all the partners once again together with interested audiences from the participating countries and beyond.
  - It's a very brave decision, based on unswerving confidence in the technical capacity of everyone around Europe to deliver. Let's keep our fingers crossed that all goes well!
  
1. Important timing of the video-conference:
  - Challenging time for issues such as prison education in Europe which are not at the centre of public concern (austerity policies following the financial crisis, even greater emphasis on public security due to international situation, increasing competition for public funds due to emergent needs such as refugee crisis)
  - Time of crisis for European cooperation in prison education (sharp decline in projects since start of *Erasmus+*)
  
2. Hence the importance of projects like FEFI:
  - not just for their intrinsic value
  - but also in re-confirming innovative potential of working together across national boundaries
  - in providing stimulus and example for others to follow
  - and in helping to make the case for investment in this socially vital field
  
3. The background to FEFI: general comments on situation in prison education:
  - Obvious importance of effective rehabilitation (let alone respect of human rights...)
  - Education (in all its forms) proven to be an essential contributor to reintegration
  - Yet under-rated and under-funded (just like adult education in general, but in the prison context even more)
  - and thus still characterised by extremely varying levels and quality of provision across Europe
  - Challenges: over-occupancy, diversifying rising prison populations, generally lower than average skills levels

- Much consensus on the key principles of effective prison education, confirmed by the landmark European Conference on Prison Education and follow-up reviews of research findings and developments in national systems
  - But this stock-taking effort also revealed many needs for further work
  - Not least as regards addressing the needs of specific categories of prisoners more effectively
  - Women inmates are an important example of this
4. FEFI itself:
- AS not an expert on education for female inmates
  - But impressed by the project's clear potential for improving prison ed in general
  - Project representatives will tell the story, but:
  - the broad partnership between highly qualified organisations
  - and the methodological seriousness in approaching the problems
  - have produced potentially transferable results which will surely be of immense value
  - not only within the project partnership
  - but potentially also to those responsible for this aspect of prison education in other countries
  - In doing so, the project has both confirmed received knowledge through empirical findings
  - and in some respects challenged accepted notions and stereotyped ideas
  - That will make it all more valuable
5. The video-conference
- Dissemination of findings is a vital aspect of successful European projects
  - Therefore those responsible for the project to be commended on choosing this open format for the first demonstration of project results, with informed audiences of hopefully active participants who will take up the results and weave them into a first discussion of their relevance for the national debate
  - Here in MZ we have a select group of colleagues from organisations representing a number of different facets of prison education, both on the policy side and practitioners, and both from various parts of Germany and from Austria and Switzerland. I'm sure the audiences in all the other centres will be just as interested to hear what the project has managed to achieve. Welcome to you all!
6. The need for strict timekeeping
- Given the breadth of the project's many outcomes, it will be quite a challenge to get through the presentations in the space of just two hours
  - So each of the presentations will need to be brief and to the point
  - and the Moderator will need to be fairly ruthless in his time-keeping
  - in order to make sure all partners are given an equal opportunity to present
  - Having had the privilege of a pre-run through the presentations, Moderator can assure you that you will be fascinated by what the partners in the project have to say
  - But it's my first experience of moderating such a VC, so be gentle with me if things go wrong...

7. Comments on any technical aspects which need to be mentioned
- We have tested the technical infrastructure and communications beforehand
  - and it seemed to be going OK, so let's plunge in and hope for the best
  - One general thing to remind everyone of: Please press your "MUTE" button when it's not your country's turn to speak, as otherwise it will be very difficult for the audiences in the different locations to hear the speakers.

8. The European Analysis

- Before we get into the individual partner presentations: one of the main outputs from the project and at the same time one of the main bases for the other results was a questionnaire-based survey on educational aspects of women in prison in the participating countries.
- Over to **Dr.Sandra Scicluna (Dept of Criminology, Faculty of Well-being at the University of Malta)** for a brief summary of the findings
- **Sandra presents**
- Thanks
- It's important to have a clear view of the participants in the project when we listen to the presentation of the results around Europe
- And the analysis also gives useful pointers, especially as to the needs and priorities as perceived by the inmates themselves.
- So let's move on to the specific country presentations

9. The Presentations

Presentation 1 Cyprus

- For the first presentation we're staying in the south of Europe
- Cyprus has long been known for its commitment to prison education
- And even hosted the EPEA conference in 2009, which I was delighted to attend
- Athena Dimitriou from the Ministry of Justice joins us now from Nicosia (?)
- Athena is an expert in custodial affairs and works in this capacity in the Minister's Office at the Cyprus Ministry of Justice and Social Order, participating in projects, committees and meetings on detention and human rights issues at national, European and international level. Before this, worked in the police force for 20 years and still today somehow manages to find the time for lecturing at the Cyprus police academy.
- Athena will set the scene for the other presentations by recalling some of the main reasons why learning in prisons is so important and identifying some key factors for its modernisation in the future, particularly for female inmates...
- **Athena presents**

Presentation 2 Finland

- One of the features of FEFI is the fact that the partners were drawn from all parts of Europe: N, S, E and W
- For our second presentation of the project's results we go from the Mediterranean to the other end of the continent, to Finland in the north.
- The Finnish partners in the project developed two particularly innovative approaches for women in prison, a cooperation scheme involving former

inmates with present ones (not an easy combination to achieve, but one which was very successful), and the "silent retreat" pilot, about which we are now going to hear more.

- What does that mean exactly? To tell us, we are joined by two colleagues:  
Saku Toiviainen is a psychotherapist and doctor in theology, who works as a pastor in Mikkeli and Helsinki Evangelical Lutheran Church and was pastor in Helsinki Prison for more than a decade)  
Kristina Hristova studied law and business in her native Bulgaria and has entrepreneurial experience in real estate. At present, however, she is serving a prison sentence in Finland. Kristina, I am sure I speak for all of us when I say how delighted I am that you can be here in person to play a full part in today's event. It's a clear acknowledgement of the important principle: "Nothing about us, without us..."
- The interview is shown
- AS brief comment on the interview

### Presentation 3            Germany

- Having been to the S and the N of Europe, we're now moving back to the middle and the presentation on the German contribution to FEFI.
- Alongside the University of Mainz as the coordinator of the project, the German activities were developed in close collaboration with a number of prisons in the region.
- Germany is renowned for the quality of its vocational training system, so it's perhaps no coincidence that the German input to the project focussed on preparing inmates for reengaging with working life upon release.
- To tell us more, here is Josef Schömann, former head of training at RESO and now Expert for European Affairs at BFW, an organisation which has made a name for itself in Germany and beyond in the area of promoting reintegration of socially marginalised groups through appropriate schemes for training and rehabilitation Josef has wide experience of working on European projects and networks, and for 9 years he was responsible for managing the training courses offered at Zweibrücken Prison.
- Josef presents

### Presentation 4            Italy

- Preparing for today's event, I was especially intrigued by the Italian contribution and wondered what could possibly be awaiting us under the title "Flying Women" and how we might manage to accommodate this contribution technically within the video-conference.
- Well, it seems that after all it is just a title, but the activity it refers to is nonetheless exciting, as it refers to highly successful project activity focussing on the real needs and wishes of women inmates, and what can be done to respond to these by those in charge of our prisons if flexibility and imagination are allowed to balance out the usual emphasis on security concerns
- Maria Pia Giuffrida is the President of the organisation called Spondè in Trapani, Sicily, and has been responsible within FEFI for guiding the Flying Women through the prison activities developed in the project... It would be hard to think of anyone better equipped for this task, for Maria Pia worked for some 30 years in the Italian prison administration, latterly as executive director for all 18 prisons in the province of Tuscany. She feels passionate about the

need to re-balance the relative weight of security and education in prison – especially when it comes to female inmates. Maria Pia, over to you...

- Maria Pia presents

#### Presentation 5 France

- We are now at the half-way mark in the presentations: remark on timing!
- Next, let us hear the "votes of the French jury"
- Sophie Bleuet is Inter-Regional Director for services provided in the prisons of SW France, based in Bordeaux.
- The specificity of the French contribution to FEFI resides in the fact that the project has become to open up one of the things which have so far been taboo in French prisons - mixed activities for men and women inmates. Sophie...

- Sophie presents

#### Presentation 6 Malta

- When it comes to prison education, the island of Malta has consistently batted above its weight on the European stage. This is due in no small part to the efforts of the University of Malta, which for many years now has played a leading role in European projects and activities.
- My fellow countryman Andrew Willis is Visiting professor in the Department of Criminology at the University.
- Alongside some practically oriented courses for female inmates, the Maltese contribution to FEFI consisted primarily in sensitising prison staff and policy-makers to the results achieved by the project, as a lever for improving provision in the future. Rather than describing these activities, Professor Willis will present his academic assessment of the project's outcomes against the background of the still deplorable situation of women inmates in many parts of Europe today.

- Andrew Willis presents

#### Presentation 7 Belgium

- Ever since my schooldays, I have been a fervent believer in the contribution which sport can make to developing the positive qualities which society so badly needs - provided, of course, that instruction is placed in the hands of people who see these aspects of sport as being just as important as developing a healthy body.
- So I was delighted to see that one of the main focal points of the Belgian contribution to FEFI, alongside equally important artistic and creative activities, was on sport and physical education for female inmates.
- To speak about the project's activities in Belgium in these vital areas, I am delighted that we have with us Bert Vermeulen, Flemish partner in FEFI. Bert is a criminologist who worked for the Belgian Service for Criminal Policy before taking up his present position as Director of Hasselt Prison in 2008.

- Bert presents.

#### Presentation 8 Turkey (in Germany)

- For our final presentation this morning, the Turkish contribution to FEFI, we return to the conference location here in Mainz. The Turkish national conference within FEFI will take place at a later date, but we are delighted that

thanks to the present religious holiday it has been possible for Berfu Altay from the Women's prison in Izmir, the FEFI partner in Turkey, to join our gathering here in Germany. We are extremely pleased to have you here! Berfu has been working in Turkish prisons ever since completing her studies as a social worker seven years ago. During that time, she has gained experience in prisons in Istanbul and Ankara as well as Izmir, and been working in prisons of varying types, including the highest security level.

- Before telling us something about the FEFI activities in Turkey, Berfu will say a few more general words about the situation of education and training in Turkish prisons. Berfu, the floor is yours...

- Berfu presents

## 10. Summary and Conclusions

- That completes the round, so thanks to everyone for weaving such a rich tapestry!
- Sorry about the glitches, if any!
- Before we close, I've been asked to try and pull together some of the strands which I see as emerging from what we have heard – and from the project more generally.
- Not easy in such a few minutes, but will do my best.
- The project was ambitious in drawing together partners from the four extremes of Europe: N, S, E and W. That was a challenge, no doubt logistically but also from a content point of view, as it highlighted the considerable differences in the way the issue of education for female prisoners is approached in different parts of Europe.
- But it was also an enrichment, as it generated some much-needed data across a wide spectrum of countries, and threw up a wide variety of experimental measures which form the basis for further development in the future.
- Another way in which the project was ambitious was in encompassing measures aimed at all three key levels of intervention in this area: the governance level (systems, structures and policy), the level of prison staff (not just formal teachers and trainers but also prison officers), and most especially the level of the female inmates themselves.
- But there again, this multi-dimensional approach has been valuable, as it has given rise to findings at all three levels. And it is only in this holistic way that the overall problem can be successfully addressed.
- We have indeed been given a glimpse at an enormously wide range of initiatives in the different centres: from sports and creativity, to vocational training of various kinds and to so on. People differ, and so do their needs.
- Some of the project activities were aimed more towards theory and policy, others at very practical local activities.
- Some were oriented towards fairly traditional learning opportunities in fairly traditional areas of female concern (fashion, housekeeping, and dare I dare say it; caring for children!), others to more innovative approaches stretching even as far as meditation.
- They all had their merits and value in their specific context, and in one way or another they exemplified a number of really fundamental needs and principles in modern thinking on education in the context of prison. the focus on effective release .
- For me, some stood out particularly:
  - o those with a strong focus on helping to make release strategies effective, and to this end on fostering closer cooperation between “inside” and “outside” on all

aspects relevant for reintegration, including ensuring continuity of education and training, cooperation with employers and social services; links with civil society;

- those which managed to develop successful mentoring arrangements between present and former inmates;
  - those which have started to break down the divide between activities for male and female inmates;
  - and those which have demonstrated the value of shifting the emphasis from security towards a greater role for education and training wherever possible.
- It is also interesting to note that the project's activities have reflected a number of current trends, priorities and good practice in adult learning more generally. For indeed, prison education should always be seen not just as an aspect of prison systems, but also – and crucially – as part of the education system of a country. The need to place the learner at the centre rather than adopting a “take it or leave it” attitude to education provision, the importance of validating knowledge and competences acquired by non-formal and informal means, the need for improving counselling and guidance and listening to the learners' needs, the need not just to enhance basic skills but also other personal competences vital to active participation in society, the importance of exploiting the full potential of ICT in relation to education – all these trends and others can be found in the various FEFI activities.
- So what have been the main conclusions to emerge from the project, and what recommendations can be formulated for the future? Or put another way, to what extent has the project contributed to arriving at a set of principles which should be pursued in order for education to be effective in the prison context? The discussions on this are not yet complete, and it is hoped that in particular the national conferences being held today will help to foster the emergence of a consensus view. But as a starting point for this final round of discussions, a set of 7 key principles seems to be emerging:

>> SHOW SLIDE

- **Placing the person at the centre:** Helping female prisoners to express their needs; Recognising competences; Boosting self-awareness and esteem; Engaging with victims
  - **Holistic approach:** Combining Education, training and therapy; Ensuring the continuum inside > post-release (courses and qualifications)
  - **Active involvement of prison staff:** Sensitizing, qualifying, improving communication skills; Transforming officers into motivators and counsellors
  - **Managing prison as a learning institution:** Raising governors' and authorities' awareness of female inmates' needs; Improving provision of learning opportunities
  - **Equal importance of security and education:** Boosting the role of education and training; Addressing over-emphasis on security wherever possible
  - **Transition management as the central focus:** Enabling inmates to re-engage with the world outside; Ensuring continuity of support; Fostering cooperation among agencies and with civil society
  - **Dismantling the „rhetoric-reality divide“:** Ensuring the necessary budget and manpower for creating a positive prison environment and successful release
- Or to put it in the immortal words of JFK: *words „There is only one thing in the long run more expensive than education: no education.“ (John F. Kennedy)*

- FEFI would not lay claim to having discovered these principles on its own. But it is part of the value of projects of this kind that they help to refine, stabilise and further develop received knowledge on their particular theme. The project can therefore lay claim to a rightful place in the tradition of European projects on prison education, and hopefully many more projects will follow in its wake, to test its ideas and experiences in other contexts and explore other innovative avenues with other groups of inmates in other countries.
- That is also the final point which I wanted to make in conclusion, namely that a project is not, or should not be, finished when the curtain comes down on the final event. That is only the beginning of the end or, if it has been a good project, the end of the beginning. Too many projects, when they start, fail to take account of the results and findings from previous projects in the same and adjacent fields. And by the same token, too many projects fail to invest enough effort and resources in actively drawing the results to the attention of those for whom they can be potentially useful.
- My hope is therefore that those responsible for FEFI will do everything you can to disseminate the results and encourage others to take them up and develop them further. This means encouraging replication in other countries, following up some of the many innovative activities by testing them out in other contexts, and urging those in authority to fund the roll-out of the best innovations in national and regional systems. Not just the European education programme Erasmus+ but also and in particular the local and regional activities sponsored by the European Social Fund are important instruments to consider in this regard.
- But the first step is surely to make the results more widely known, and what better place to start than with the European Association for Prison Association EPEA? I am therefore delighted to see that the FEFI project will be presented at the Association's forthcoming biennial conference in Belgium in just a few days' time.

## 11. Thanks and goodbyes

- Has been a pleasure to moderate this video-conference
- Thanks to everyone for making the Moderator's role so enjoyable
- Thanks to everyone who has supported the FEFI project over the past two years
- Particular thanks to those who have come to the national conferences to hear about the results and help them to find their way into improving the situation for female prisoners across Europe
- Special thanks to presenters at this morning's video-conference
- Thanks to the technicians at all the centres and especially in Malta
- It has been a rewarding learning experience for us all!