

Report on e-learning in European prisons - Concepts, organisation, pedagogical approaches in prison education

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1 On this report

Aim of this report is to give an overview on national and regional strategies how e-learning is used and developed for training and education with prisoners in European countries. While we are not able to discuss all national solutions in all detail one might consider important this report nevertheless is at least a first step towards a more extensive documentation of e-Learning in European prisons also covering more countries. So far no such documentation exists. This report is supposed to give basic information on models and strategies. We hope it stimulates interest in e-learning for prisoners in general and in one or the other presented solution in particular. Central to the LICOS project is the idea that European cooperation with respect to e-learning for prisoners will foster developments in the field and will be in favour for training and education for prisoners in general. In this sense we also hope that this report and the information it provides may trigger interest in cooperation. We assume that we always can learn from each other and that in cooperation we are able to reach more than anyone of us can reach just on his/her own. It is of no use to invent the wheel over and over again, we better try to take advantage of already existing experiences and developments and invest our resources in further developments.

The central topics addressed in the national and regional reports are

- Developments with respect to e-learning
- Technical solutions and security
- Education and training taking advantage of e-learning
- Pedagogical concepts and methods
- Involved players and funding

The collection of the information for this report was accumulated via interviews with and documents provided by experts involved in the development and the supply of e-learning in European prisons as well as via questionnaires. The LICOS partnership took advantage of the networks of the partners to include as many countries as possible in this report. Countries covered by this research are: Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain (Catalonia and Fundación Diagramma), Sweden and the United Kingdom. Despite several attempts we however received no response from various countries. We keep trying to receive the required information from more countries also after the end of the LICOS project.

2 General considerations on e-learning for prisoners deduced from the responses of the questioned experts

The importance of training and education for prisoners is acknowledged by the codes and rules regulating imprisonment, its organisation, its purpose and goals in most countries. Not in all countries however prisoners have a legal right on education like they for instance do in Norway. In fact in Norway ICT (Information and Communication Technology) competencies have been named as central goals of education in prison. There are also international conventions and recommendations like the European Prison Rules published by the Council of Europe (2006) which stress that every prisoner should be provided access to educational programmes considering their abilities, needs and aspirations.

In fact the offers and practice on education and training in prisons often remain behind the aims and declarations formulated by law. This is not just due to little effort in this respect carried out by the authorities in charge. There is no doubt that there are many officials and decision makers all over Europe actively struggling to foster and promote developments in the field of training and education in prison. To quite some extent they are dependent on political will. As a matter of fact not all political groups are too fond of the idea of widening and improving training and education for prisoners and proposals in this direction may not pay off very well politically. Potential voters may not agree because they for instance view these kinds of offers as privileges for a group that actually does not deserve them or for what ever reason. We however do know that measures to improve chances of inmates after release, like especially training and education, have the potential to reduce recidivism, to thereby improve security and in the end to also pay off economically.

But even if political will is given in general there are still considerable difficulties to realize a broad, up to date and target group oriented supply of training and education for prisoners.

- **The financial obstacle:** Of course the further development of training and education in prison needs money and personal resources. Parts of the investments only can pay off sometimes in the future. Budgetary considerations in politics however tend to not look very far into the future. Especially during times of considerable budgetary restrictions there is a lot of political will needed for this kind of expenses. Training and education in prison actually have the risk to be especially effected by financial cuts. In many countries European funding has provided financial means to initiate, foster and carry out new developments and innovations in the field in question. Therefore this funding has to be considered highly valuable and central for new developments. It can be assumed that many initiatives and activities in the field would not have taken place without these means. In the end however it is a national responsibility to carry on and mainstream concepts and activities that have proven successful.
- **The target group:** The target group is no homogenous group at all. Apart from being burdened by a multitude of problems a majority can be characterized by low skills and little education. The educational needs and wishes however vary considerably, dependent on the individual prisoner. In recent decades also the number of foreign inmates has been rising in prisons of most European countries confronting the systems, apart from other problems, with persons who are not or hardly able to communicate in the national language, which again restricts the possibilities to involve those clients in valuable measures inside prison, above all measures directed at their preparation for release and for life in freedom respectively. Many of the clients of the correctional systems have to be viewed “losers” of the educational systems. Their experiences in the regular educational systems have been experiences of little achievement and much failure.

Additionally there are inmates with long sentences and ones with short sentences. For the latter of them training and education measures are needed that despite of the short terms can be carried out – short term trainings, modules, opportunities to carry on trainings after release.

Altogether the requirements are very high for a correctional system to be able to include the majority of inmates in training and education that is valuable for their individual further development. Training and education have to stimulate their interest, have to foster active in-

volvement, have to address their individual needs and wishes and in the end have to prepare for the life in freedom after release. A most suitable solution for training and education in prisons would ask for a very broad range of subjects and topics that can be individually tailored and offered and it would consider appropriately that a majority of these clients is hard to address with traditional teaching and learning concepts. Those “ideal” requirements are hard to fulfil in general and it is even harder to fulfil them within a system that is coined by diverse restrictions.

- Conditions of the prison environment for training and education:
 - *Restriction of inmates to the prison facilities and security:* The central feature of imprisonment is the (at least largely) restriction of the inmates to the buildings, rooms and facilities of the prison. Even within this surrounding they are in general not allowed to move freely. There is very little communication and exchange allowed with the outside world. Security requirements actually largely determine life in prison and its administration – measures to avoid escape, to avoid danger or threat for people (outside prison, other prisoners and staff) and their belongings as well as measures to secure order and abiding of law and regulations.

This also means that almost everything that may be needed or valuable for training and education has to be brought to or be available within the restricted system.¹ Apart from the notion that such conditions are in some contradiction to learning per se it is quite clear that even the most ambitious prison administration will only be able to offer a fraction of what is needed in traditional ways.

- *Fluctuation and transfers:* We have already mentioned above the fact that short term sentences can be a challenge to offer training and education because of the little time available. Short term sentences also mean for the prison administration that there is much fluctuation – inmates coming and going every day – which of course adds to the difficulty and asks for personal resources. Fluctuation can also be caused by transfers of inmates to other prisons. Often this means that training and education an inmate has started at one prison can not be continued at the other.
- *Restricted flexibility of prison systems:* The conditions at prisons and for the administration of prisons are not very much in favour of flexibility. Not least security arguments regularly slow down or even hinder innovations and developments. While security requirements can not be denied or ignored there also seem to be good reasons to get the impression that security arguments are sometimes also used to conceal other reservations.

Realistically in traditional ways prisons are not able to keep pace with developments in the outside world that also should be reflected in training and education for prisoners. Prison workshops for instance hardly can regularly be adapted to the newest developments in a field and teachers at a prison will necessarily be restricted in offering trainings on subjects newly relevant for the labour market for which they have not been trained for.

¹ Conditions in open prison regimes of course are less restricted. It however covers only a small portion of all inmates who are granted open regime conditions.

The obstacles and conditions described above have been largely deduced from the explanations of the questioned experts in the context of e-learning in prison. Of course e-learning is not the miracle cure for difficulties and problems prison administrations are facing with respect to training and education. Practical trainings cannot be substituted by animations and e-learning, personal contacts to trainers and tutors remain irreplaceable², several topics may not be suitable for e-learning (because of complexity or whatever) and in fact there are clients for whom e-learning may not fit. The use of ICT however seems broadly acknowledged as one way to overcome several of the problems mentioned. E-learning can contribute

- to extend the topics and subjects offered in training and education in individual prisons
- to involve more inmates in training and education;
- to be better able to offer training and education that fits the individual needs and wishes of inmates or to adjust it individually. Not least e-learning provides the quality that students can adjust the pace of their work the way it fits them;
- to offer more short term trainings and education (for instance for short term sentences)
- to allow students to carry out research and give them access to materials they otherwise would hardly obtain in prison
- to motivate students. Especially for young students the use of computers by itself may be motivating but e-learning also allows for learning and training that is different from traditional training and education (which for many of them has a negative connotation);
- to create networks that enable students to carry on training and education already started after the transfer to another institution or even after release;
- to enable prisons to be better able to offer training and education that is up to date and reflects the current needs on the labour market.
- to broaden the supply of training and education without the need to increase the staff linearly. This argument of course is a sensitive one, because there is no doubt that trainers, supervisors and tutors are needed in any concept taking advantage of e-learning. Experiences (above all by enterprises) have shown that e-learning just by itself, without adequate tutoring run a high risk of frustration and failure.
- that investments in training and education in prison considerably increase the number of inmates in training and education.

Last but not least ICT competencies are a cultural technique that is increasingly needed in professional as well as in private life. Put it the other way round ICT competencies, even if only acquired in the run of the mere use of the technology, can contribute to avoid that the target group is once again at the rime of society and its development.

E-learning in prisons is not without problems and obstacles that have to be solved. Above all security problems and aspects have to be solved and considered adequately. There is no doubt that deficits with respect to security, which in the end may lead to misuse, have the potential to lastingly damage e-learning in prison. So far fortunately no major misuse has come to the attention of the questioned experts. Realistically however one has to be aware of the fact that there is no 100 per-

² In fact none of the models of e-learning described by the experts is carried out without any personal assistance. Mostly the e-learning models described can be viewed as blended learning, taking advantage of e-learning, teaching/supervision and other materials.

cent security in no sector of the prison system. The topic security will be addressed into some more depth below.

3 E-learning in European prisons

What we mean by e-learning in fact goes beyond generally acknowledged definitions of e-learning and includes many different ways to take advantage of ICT in training and education in prison. The understanding of e-learning includes education via the internet, via networks or standalone computer, web-based applications (WBT), computer-based (CBT) applications and virtual classrooms.

Some kind of e-learning in this sense has been and is used in prisons in many European countries. Stand alone computers and CBTs actually seem to be distributed in many European prisons. In general these solutions however remain quite restricted and do not at all take advantage of most qualities e-learning can provide via central organization, networks, access to learning software and information at central servers or in the net, learning management systems, etc.

In several European countries network solutions for e-learning in prison exist – most of those however not covering all regions and prisons – and in many countries at least projects and pilots in this respect have been or are carried out. While we cannot assume to know about all activities and initiatives on network based and elaborated use of e-learning in European prisons we know about respective activities in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the UK. This means that e-learning in fact is already quite spread in Europe and it is to be expected that this development will continue. In fact there already is a “community” of e-learning and knowledge management focussing on prison education and training in Europe. Independent of the funding background this “particular work area of education and training for inmates and staff in prison is obviously well connected and a remarkable interchange between the projects already exists”.³ This development actually should be very much in favour of the further development and the increase of the use of e-learning in European prisons and of possibly compatible solutions, allowing cross-national exchange.

The particular national or regional systems of e-learning however still differ considerably. Following we provide an overview on some main features of e-learning models practiced in Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK.

3.1 Austria

Apart from some CBT on ICT basics and the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) at some prisons before, e-learning was introduced on a broader basis with the EQUAL round one project “Telfi” (Telelernen für HaftinsassInnen – E-learning for prisoners) which was carried out in the years 2002 to 2005 in 6 Austrian prisons. Within the project a central server structure, a “prison education server” was installed, including features to fulfil the security requirements (firewall, encryption, etc) as well as a learning management system (LMS). The LMS based on the Open Source LMS ILIAS was adapted to the specific requirements of the prison system in cooperation with the transnational partner project “elis” (e-Learning im Strafvollzug – e-learning in the penitentiary system), carried out in Bremen/Germany. The prison education server from the very beginning on was

³ Report on Working Group A5 at the European conference “Pathways to inclusion”, Budapest, February 2010

equipped and designed to be accessed by all 28 Austrian prisons. During the run of the project the six prisons involved were equipped and the needed technical structure for the server connection was installed there. The workstations at the prisons were connected with the central server via a router using the general internet however restricting the access to only the “Telfi-Server”. In general internet access is forbidden and was not granted during the Telfi-project. Administrators however would have had the possibility to open internet access at the router. The administrators prepared the access of the individual students to the server and they then entered with individual IDs and passwords.

Telfi offered trainings on ICT-Basics, on German as a second language, on English, on stock keeping connected with fork lift truck driving, on office administration, on theoretical basics on the work with metal and with wood as well as on basic competencies like literacy and calculating. All learning software and also additional software was installed and is still available via the server. For some of the software regular licenses have been bought. Other software is freeware or shareware, and some software also has been developed within the project. Most software is for regular web based training, for some software, only available as CBT a solution was developed to use it via the server.

The Telfi concept is a blended learning solution. Depending on the subject of the courses instructors/teachers instructed two to three times a week (half a day). During remaining time participants worked on their own with the software and additional materials (scripts, books, etc.) on tasks that have been assigned to them. During the periods of self studying tutors were available to assist several times a day. Additionally the trainers could be contacted via a moderated forum on the learning platform and the instructors also responded this way. Communication between participants via the platform was strictly forbidden and not possible via the LMS. The trainers were teachers of external organizations, the tutors were prison staff who had declared their interest in supporting e-learning in prison and had participated in a specific training provided by the Telfi-project.

In Telfi an emphasis has been put on cooperative learning. The groups (6 to 10 participants) were assisted to build up a good cooperation. Once a week they had a session with a psychologist who primarily focused on the group cohesion and on group dynamics. This way the courses tried to take advantage of the different levels of the participants. “Weaker” participants were assisted by colleagues and the latter could strengthen their abilities, knowledge and also their social skills this way (Peer-tutoring).

In general courses have been and are carried out in classrooms equipped with computers connected to the servers. In two prison workshops (woodwork and iron smiths) at the juvenile section of the prison Wien-Josefstadt also study rooms have been installed. There the trainees can use computers and software to work on theoretical basics of the profession carried out in the workshop. The instructors of the workshop also instruct and give advice in these matters. The studying is organized according to a circle. In turn two or three trainees work at the study room.

In Wien-Josefstadt also „learning islands“ are offered. These „learning islands“ are little, moveable desks equipped with a PC, monitor, keyboard and mouse. The PCs are only equipped with system software and learning software selected according to the individual need/demand. These „learning islands“ were provided to prisoners to study at their cells.

Already during the Telfi-project some more prisons installed the needed structure to access the central server. In the years following the project e-learning and the central server however were used very little. It is mainly the ECDL that was and still is offered at a few prisons. In 2008 and 2009 the central server was built up newly however based on the developments within Telfi. Currently there are activities on the way to newly activate e-learning in prison. In general internet access is still forbidden strictly but it can be opened for instance to allow students to take the ECDL online exams. Internet access however only is granted under supervision.

3.2 Belgium

Developments with respect to e-learning for prisoners differ in the French speaking and in the Dutch speaking part. There is a federal structure for justice agenda while there is a regional structure for competencies like social welfare, education and work. The prison administration, acting on the federal level, is in favour and already invested in e-learning in prison. For the realization of e-learning in prisons the prison administration however needs the cooperation of the regions. This cooperation has been secured for some while with the Flemish region and there is a protocol between the federal government and the government of the Flemish community, which declares that the community has the obligation to provide all services and means necessary to carry out training and education in prisons. The federal prison administration on the other hand is responsible to provide the infrastructure necessary to provide education and training in prisons. With the French community this cooperation was only built up recently, at least partly due to a less favourable economic situation but also due to a more complicated structure of responsibilities. Currently there are activities on the way to also introduce e-learning in the French region. The prison administration in fact being responsible for all regions continues to strengthen the cooperation with respect to e-learning also in prisons of the French community.

Initially also in the prisons in the Flemish community in Belgium all e-learning was locally based. Since there was no structure to support e-learning offers it was described as a good but modest beginning, very much dependent on the initiative of the individual prisons, often using old computers. In 2009 a central server structure was completed at the central prison administration allowing 17 prisons in the Flemish community and on principle about 6.000 prisoners to access the learning software there. In fact the server structure is also already ready to also be connected to the prisons in the French community. The central infrastructure (a Moodle implementation) can be easily switched to French or Dutch language by the user himself. There are two servers. On the one hand a domain controller with a Windows server which secures that controlled access to the domain can be given to students. On the other hand a Debian Linux server with a server module on which a MSQl-Database is installed for the management of the system. For the connection with the central server the system uses separate VLANs which are protected also with a local firewall installed in every prison. Central to the planning was to elaborate a uniform structure for all prisons. In fact they even have the same types of computers at all prisons.

For content and learning management the open source LMS “Moodle” is used, which has been adapted. Above all the Moodle has been adapted to the SCORM-standards other services, like the employment services, use to be able to take advantage of their learning software. In fact the employment offices have agreed to give all their learning software packages to the prison system so that these can be used via the central server. In this way about 150 courses can be made available

via the server, including all different kind of topics like instructions to write CVs, ICT, vocational training topics, etc. With this agreement no additional software is needed. The students themselves may however bring own software for PCs they can rent for work on their cells, which is installed by the local ICT-staff if it is original, if there is a license and after a check. Up to now all developments with respect to e-learning in prison in Belgium have been carried out by national and regional financial means.

The regional responsibilities with respect to education and employment and the mentioned protocol respectively provide that education and training in the prisons of the Flemish community are actually organized by prison external staff. In fact the prison administration has no budget for training and education since this is the responsibility of the regions. In every prison there is someone of this external staff – they are staff of institutions that offer further education in the regions – who is in charge of the coordination of all matters concerning education and training there. They select the topics of the trainings, they elaborate the concepts, do the testing and the selection of the participants, they organize the trainers and they also coordinate with the prison staff and the employment services. This is also true for all courses that take advantage of e-learning. Then they also manage the access of students to the server and they for instance also tell the prison administration what software to get from the employment services and to install at the server. There is a close cooperation of the coordinators with the prisons but as a matter of fact the prison administrations are not involved in the development and in the realization of training and education measures in the prisons.

There are no general standards or concepts in which way e-learning is used in courses offered at prisons of the Dutch community. This is up to the coordinators and of course up to the trainers. In practice it can be assumed that there will be courses largely concentrating on e-learning and others in which e-learning is merely used as an additional source or accompanying supply. The courses take place in classrooms, where they have six to ten computers for inmates and one or two for teachers. As a rule there is always staff present at the classes and it is also part of their responsibility to control e-learning sessions. The students can create an account themselves but before it can be actually used the teacher has to confirm it. Access to the open internet is strictly forbidden with the exemption that some prisons for instance allow access to local libraries. Up to now access to the internet is also not allowed for the online exams the ECDL asks for, which has been described as problematic. Also communication between participants is not allowed. The Moodle platform actually would provide this feature but it has been disabled. Trainers however can be contacted by the students and vice versa via the LMS. The importance of this opportunity has been stressed especially since in this way prisoners also can continue trainings even if they are transferred to another institution. E-learning is considered very helpful and a progress in this respect, which also may help to convince more people of the qualities of e-learning in prisons.

Trainers and tutors are hired from outside prison but also prison staff is sometimes involved as trainers. The latter do this apart from their regular duties and also get paid extra. In general trainings are concluded with general valid certificates.

The cooperation with the employment offices at the prisons of the Flemish community with respect to the educational and training measures has to be highlighted once more. On the one hand this cooperation enables and fosters the chance of students to continue programmes after release. On the

other hand the cooperation with the employment services also provides that inmates get better visible to them which again enhances their chances of job placements after release.

There are considerations to extend the use of e-learning and to maybe even reduce some of the very strict regulations, one for instance being that teachers or staff do not have to be present in the classroom all the time. For the nearest future however no changes are planned. The sensitive approach followed in Belgium is to continue developments step by step. At first experiences with the rather new model have to be collected and evaluated, more relevant people have to be convinced about the qualities of e-learning in prison.

3.3 Finland

Education for prisoners in Finland has to correspond to the general educational system. All education for prisoners is provided by external educational institutions. So far no general or central structure for the use of e-learning in prisons exists and there are also no learning platforms used. All prisons however have stand alone computers that can be used by inmates, however without internet access. Inmates can learn how to use a computer, word processing, calculations, etc. Some prisons also offer ICT training, but also here they are not allowed to use the internet. To nevertheless also include the internet in the trainings some schools offer demos.

Inmates studying at universities can receive e-mails and materials to print via their study advisors. This makes them very much dependent but they are not allowed to have access to staff computers.

In seven open institutions there is a pilot project running which grants internet access under supervision to inmates for their preparation for release and for studies. The pilot was reported to be very well received by the prison staff. A transfer of the pilot to closed prisons however is not possible because of legal barriers. Finish law does not allow records on who visited which websites. This however would be a security provision which is required. There is some hope that this law might be changed.

3.4 Germany

In Germany already in the 1990ies first projects were carried out on e-learning in prison. It in fact seems that Germany is one of the most active countries in this respect, although the activities are not the same all over the country. The federal state Bremen has to be stressed in this respect, Berlin and Northrhine Westfalia. A major part of the e-learning structure existing in Germany today is based on developments within projects funded by the EQUAL-program like elis, Babe, Zubilis and Member. Here the European funding without doubt was very important for the developments. Today the existing e-learning structures, supplies and further developments in and for German prisons of course have to be largely financed by means of the federal states.

It can be assumed that locally e-learning via CBTs is used in a majority of the German prisons. Here we however focus on network solutions.

Particularly remarkable is the cooperation of by now 11 German federal states. The federal states involved all share and take advantage of the central e-learning structure developed within the elis project. The central server now is situated, serviced and administrated in Berlin It can be accessed by prisons of these federal states. 50 prisons have been reported to be connected to the "elis-

server”⁴, which offers some hundred learning software packages for about 160 different courses. These courses cover a wide range of topics from basic education and social skills, to ICT-topics and vocational training subjects as well as advanced studies.

The central elis learning platform comprises a central web server farm and a central terminal server farm. Like anywhere else in the prison context security provisions are very central to the elis structure. For the connections the internet (via ADSL) is used in a tunnelled way, which does not allow access to the open internet (VPN-Gateway, VPN-Client). There are firewalls installed locally in every prison and also at the central server. Specific software (IPCop) at the central server farm takes care of the encryption. The platform however allows to also open access to other web addresses. There is a whitelist of such addresses and access to other addresses can be applied for, which can be granted after checking. The elis learning platform uses the open source LMS ILIAS which has been adapted (modified and extended)⁵ to meet the requirements of e-learning in prison. Administrators prepare the access of individual students to the server and they then enter with individual IDs and passwords. A log-file keeps track of all uses and accesses.

Communication of students via the ILIAS platform is regulated: The security officer can assign one out of three different *messaging* allowances to students: a) messaging with all other classmates, b) messaging with teachers only, and c) no communication at all. ILIAS in general also provides the opportunity to use *chats* and *mail* communication facilities, but these features are disabled. There is also a moderated forum available within courses, i.e. all postings of students are first checked by the teacher before they are published to the forum and become visible for the other students. Open internet access is forbidden in general, ECDL-online exams are however often permitted.

As said before there is a considerable amount of learning software available via the elis server. The software is selected by a team after evaluation procedures. The software available includes software regularly purchased, freeware and shareware, own developments of partners (partly within European funded projects) but also software sponsored by enterprises. Purchases are organized centrally. The elis partnership actually takes advantage of three sources of e-learning materials via the central server – CBT, WBT and learning sites provided in the internet (whitelist). A big part of the software used is actually CBT that is run via the terminal server (Citrix solution).

The way e-learning is used at the prisons differs considerably and is largely dependent on the trainers. Mostly it can be assumed e-learning is used as an additional source within courses. There are no generally valid or acknowledged standards, but as a rule e-learning is used in the context of blended learning, taking advantage of diverse materials and instructions. Just e-learning without any assistance and other sources is not used. As a rule e-learning is carried out in classes equipped with computers that are connected to the server in groups of 6 to 12 students. Apart from instructions, tutoring and supervision the teachers are also expected to contribute to organizational security.

Trainers at the prisons are prison staff, staff of external educational institutions as well as staff of schools (for instance vocational schools).

In many ways comparable to the elis network is the e-learning structure created in Northrhine Westfalia within the project Zubilis. There 6 prisons are connected to the central server structure giving

⁴ There are about 190 prisons all over Germany

⁵ Initially in cooperation with the Austrian partner project Telfi

access to about 100 courses. For the connections they however use (rather costly) separate steady connections (leased lines) and the workstations are actually “thin clients” where in fact all procedures are carried out via the server. An advantage of the thin clients is the fact that almost all maintenance can be done centrally. Northrhine Westfalia also uses the ILIAS LMS, while there however mainly WBTs are used. Specific to Zubilis and Northrhine Westfalia is a close cooperation with vocational schools. This cooperation provided a bridge to the outside world and they also developed specific learning materials.

Finally, studies via the Open University Hagen have to be mentioned, which are granted to selected inmates by some prisons in Germany. By now this distance learning is carried out mainly via online communication. Of course in general the access granted is no open access to the internet but inmates still can communicate with other students via the platform of the university.

3.5 Netherlands

Prisons for adults

The situation with respect to e-learning in Dutch prisons seems to be very much coined by reservations of relevant decision makers and not least of the politics. Above all it is the security aspect which seems to be the reason for that but also the financial restrictions of recent years. EU-funding has not been used for developments with respect to e-learning in prison so far. E-learning is restricted to actually computer aided learning via CDs at individual workstations. Even this is still very much restricted and in fact only a few percent of the prisoners can take advantage of this. There are no networks and any use of the internet is forbidden.

Trainings taking advantage of CBTs are above all ICT-related subjects like the ECDL. In those courses the internet is simulated. For the ECDL exams at some prisons PCs can be used that can be connected to the internet. Then the students always work under supervision. Also offered via CBTs are safety certificates for painters and window cleaners. Cisco has given some of the e-learning software they developed for their own staff to a prison for juveniles. This software is used for ICT-trainings. In general there seems to be some more e-learning in prisons for juveniles than in general prisons.

CBTs take place in classrooms or computer labs and the students largely work on their own with the software. There are some smaller projects which provide lectures taking advantage of e-learning and regular assistance. In general the software is purchased by the prisons on the market. At every prison there is someone of the staff in charge of education and training, who in the end is also responsible for e-learning. The teachers working in the prisons are however employed by external institutions.

There is an increasing awareness that e-learning could provide many opportunities for training and education in prison and there are efforts carried out for developments in this respect.

Prisons for juveniles (Breda)

There are two types of institutions detaining juveniles in the Netherlands. On the one hand institutions based on civil law, which aim at “child protection” and which are in the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth and Family. On the other hand there are institutions based on penal law, which are part of the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice. The latter in general are much stricter. Al-

though e-learning is used frequently in juvenile institutions it nevertheless seems quite restricted also there.

Schooling, courses and vocational training for juveniles are the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Welfare. Education and training in the institutions are provided by regional schools which are supervised by the inspectorate of the Ministry.

There is no central server but most schools have internal educational networks. Some institutions like for instance in Breda have a server structure for the school network, others however only have stand-alone PCs. Depending on the technical structure the software is installed on the PCs, on the central server or it is used via CD-ROMs. So far no learning platforms have been introduced and used in juvenile institutions. In general the developments with respect to the use of e-learning differ considerably between the individual schools. It is up to the schools and the trainers, who are staff of the prison schools, to what extent e-learning is used, in what way (methodologically) and what software is used. Breda for instance works with MS Windows, Word, and Excel, but also with learning software on mathematics, on CAD/CAM and with the ECDL. Teachers often also work with software provided with books. Increasingly publishers however do not provide the software on CDs any more but give access to it via the internet, which however and unfortunately is hardly allowed in the prisons.

The security precautions with respect to e-learning include above all:

- Educational networks are separated from any other networks
- The use of software on the server is only allowed with supervision
- Access to the open internet is only allowed on a few stand alone computers and only with supervision. At a maximum only two students are allowed in the internet at the same time
- No learning platform are used and no communication among students is allowed via the networks
- A lot of software would be available but is not allowed due to security reasons

3.6 Norway

Norway traditionally tries to involve prisoners in education and training. About one third of all (about 4.000) prisoners is doing schoolwork. Since several years the Norwegian prison system undertakes efforts to introduce and widen the use of e-learning in prisons. The use of digital tools (internet is described as a digital tool) is an integrated part of the competence aim in the Norwegian subject curriculum. There are and have been some regional projects trying to take advantage of e-learning like in trainings for chiefs, on ICT or in cooperation with the university on law. The efforts in this respect so far were all financed by national means, although Norway also participated in the European project cooperation "PIPELINE".

A central aim in recent years has been to introduce a uniform national e-learning structure for all Norwegian prisons. There has been use of e-learning in low security prisons for some years. For this a learning platform is used that is provided by an external institution via the open internet and prisoners having access to this platform actually have access to the whole internet. It is called "It's learning" and it offers diverse learning materials and allows to follow the regular school outside. This LMS also allows to import own courses and content can be developed within this system.

70 to 80 percent of the inmates in Norway are however in high security prisons and therefore the Governor of Hordaland being responsible for prison education in recent years concentrated on the development of an e-learning solution that also can be used there. In close cooperation between the correctional services and the education authorities a central server structure was installed by 2009. A central feature to this system is a domain controller which allows controlling all internet access and traffic. The new network that serves all prisons in Norway is called IFI – “Internet for inmates”. Characteristic for this model is that it exclusively uses learning materials provided in the open internet. This however does not at all mean that prisoners have open access to the internet.

Aim of this national e-learning solution is to allow prisoners access to all sites relevant for educational reasons. The solution is based on an internet divided in categories. An international company is responsible for putting web sites in categories. For example: the CNN web site would be in the news category and the Google web site would be in the category of search engines. There are more than one hundred categories. Among them there are categories dedicated to education, sports, travel but also to porn, arms and drugs. The internet and the websites respectively prisoners in high security have access to are restricted to categories that are considered safe. Web sites that are not categorized are blocked. In addition to the allowed categories there is a communication filter that blocks attempts to send messages out. To make this filter fully effective, all plug-ins are blocked. This makes the internet less interactive and in fact this e-learning solution is sometimes also called a *newspaper solution* – users can read but in general they can not write.

In order to make the internet more useful exceptions are made to the strict communication filter. To allow interaction with pedagogical web sites scripts can be turned on and plug-ins or other features that block the interactivity can be opened. The interactivity allowed however is restricted to communication with a web site and not with people outside the prison wall. This kind of interactivity is considered safe.

So far this system does not use an LMS and there are no ways to communicate via the system – not with the trainers and not with other students.

All prisons and work stations there are connected to a national centre and the server structure there. From this centre, the correctional service controls the internet traffic, users and computers. When a computer enters the IFI domain (network) strong policies are locking the computer down to restrict unauthorized access to the internet. The centre logs who has been surfing, what a prisoner has been viewing, what time he visited each web site and on what computer he sat when he visited that web site. Even though the centre carries out the logging, it is the local security officer at the local prison who reads the logs. The local prison officers know the prisoners and in fact know best who needs special security attention. Categories and individual interactive web pages are opened by the central administration on request of teachers.

E-Learning happens in class-rooms where the workstations are. The topics for which e-learning is used can actually be on anything, dependent on the materials available on the internet, which have been categorized or opened individually after application. There are no standardized concepts in which way e-learning is used and to what extent. This is up to the individual trainers, who are staff of external schools. There are no internal teachers at the Norwegian prison system. There are no direct connections of the schools responsible for education and training in prison with other external

providers of help and assistance. The schools however assist prisoners to continue trainings after release.

By the end of 2009 25 Norwegian prisons have been connected to the new IFI-server. The remaining 27 Norwegian prisons are planned to be connected by the end of 2010. For the future different technical and platform solutions are investigated that would allow more interactivity.

3.7 Spain

Catalonia

In Catalonia diverse educational and training fields take advantage of e-learning and e-learning seems quite widespread in prisons. There are several educational actors involved in the Catalanian prison system. This seems to be in favour of many diverse ways and activities taking advantage of e-learning in prison. There is however no central server structure for e-learning in prisons. On the one hand most prisons use local networks and on the other hand the prisons cooperate with external institutions taking advantage of their platforms and the educational offers provided this way. The platforms used are mostly based on Moodle. In general e-learning in Catalanian prisons is above all used as an additional means to support the trainings and the trainers who are prison staff and also external staff. General, formal education in prisons is the responsibility of the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya. For this purpose there are at all prisons educational centres which also provide computer class rooms. In fact there are two kinds of computer rooms – rooms above all designed and installed to support self training and exercises and rooms dedicated especially to activities related to educational programs. At these classrooms 10 to 20 computers are available which are connected to internal (local) nets. Partially the PCs also have access to the internet. Regularly the Department of Education cooperates with external institutions to offer general education inside prison and the partners provide e-learning opportunities via their platforms like the “Institut Obert de Catalunya” (IOC) or the Universities. General (formal) education includes:

- Initial and basic education
- Secondary education for adult learners (certificates on compulsory education). Besides in regular class room lessons secondary certificates can also be obtained via e-learning through the IOC
- Preparation for entrance tests for professional trainings or universities
- Trainings towards competences for the information society (ICT)
- Higher education aiming at degrees of Universities - Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)

All other educational and training activities carried out in Catalanian prisons are the responsibility of the Department of Justice which again cooperates with external institutions. E-learning is also used in socio-educational programs aiming at the improvement of social competencies:

- ICT in socio cultural activities and media workshops (radio streaming, digital magazines, etc.)
- Workshops introducing the use of ICT in artistic expression
- Intercultural education

For the acquisition and the accreditation of ICT competencies two standards are regularly offered in Catalonian prisons: the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence) and the ACTIC (Accreditation of competences ICT, Generalitat de Catalunya).

Central for the additional educational offers taking advantage of e-learning are the so called ICT Points and the “Cyberaules”. Since 2001 ICT Points have been installed by and by in prisons in Catalonia. These computer rooms are integrated in the “ICT Points net”, the Catalonian network to promote access to ICT and the Internet. At the ICT Points there are on an average 9 computers which are connected in internal (local) networks and which allow controlled access to the internet (firewalls and web filters). The ICT Points allow direct activities in the net (blogs, radio, digital magazines, etc.). The activities offered there include ECDL, socio cultural activities and media workshops, ICT workshops of expression as well as diverse support for educational programs.

“Cyberaules” are computer rooms that have been installed in several Catalonian prisons. In these rooms 10 to 15 computers can be used which are connected in internal nets (Terminal Linux Server Project structure – LTSP). Specific to the Cyberaules is that only recycled computers are used as well as only an open source operating system and software are used (Linux UBUNTU). The internal nets take advantage of locally installed Moodle platforms and also a Wikipedia is offered in the local nets. The Cyberaules are however not connected to the internet. Activities carried out at the Cyberaules include initial ICT trainings, trainings for ACTIC, socio educational activities and inter-cultural activities. At the Cyberaules also peer-teaching is promoted.

Responsible for access to e-learning platforms and for the control of devices is the Secretary’s Office of Penitentiary Services/Department of Justice. The security precautions with respect to e-learning in Catalonian prisons are above all organizational:

- Only controlled access to classrooms with internet access
- Always staff present (more flexibility in rooms without internet access)
- Access to PCs with user names and passwords
- Internet access controlled through firewalls, navigation filters and content filters

Where Moodle is installed locally communication among students and teachers is allowed. The Platforms of the IOC and of the universities also allow communication, but the communication among students can be restricted.

Fundación Diagrama – e-learning with juveniles in detention

Fundación Diagrama runs various centres, projects, programmes and activities to attend to minors and young people in exclusion or in social conflict in Spain. As part of these activities it manages re-educational centres and programmes for carrying out judicial measures with juveniles. Education is compulsory for juveniles in custody therefore these establishments focus above all on education. The educational offers are in fact part of the contract of Fundación Diagrama with the justice authorities of the autonomous regions, which are also responsible for the finances. For each year Fundación Diagrama submits a plan of activities which has to be approved by the authorities.

Following e-learning opportunities can be used at the establishments managed by Fundación Diagrama:

- Since 2007 the online training tool „Campus Juvenil“ – developed by Fundación Diagrama - is also used for juveniles in custody in the establishments managed by Fundación Diagrama

- Online training taking advantage of the platform of „Red Araña”
- Internal training platform for the professionals of Fundación Diagrama

The development of the online training projects has been funded by the ESF and the autonomous regions, where the programs were developed. The ESF still supports the development of new content for the platform.

The classrooms at the detention centres are equipped with several computers connected to Local Area Networks (LAN) with internet access. All computers at the educational centres of the prisons are connected to the central server located at the centre of the Foundation in Murcia through the internet or thorough VPN-Networks. In most establishments internet access is allowed under supervision of staff. In this way most students do not only have access to the “Campus Juvenil” but also to all kind of relevant materials in the net.

Technical security precautions actually seem to be of minor importance:

- Some establishments use a content filter and blacklists
- Only some establishments use VPN-Networks
- Security precautions are above all „organizational“:
 - No access to the computers without supervision
 - Only the tutors have the passwords and they enter the e-learning campus for the students
 - Continuous supervision of internet access
 - The servers are kept in an isolated space

Campus Juvenil uses a Moodle platform. All communication tools are however disabled and forums, chats and other ways of communication via the platform are not allowed. There is however no need for these communication tools, because the teachers are available in the classes all the time. All trainers and teachers are employees of the establishments (Fundación Diagrama).

All workshops using e-learning are part of the (compulsory) educational programs. For each inmate an individual plan is developed and approved by the court. Students have access to all programs mentioned in their individual plan. The trainings and e-learning are done in classes with 4 to 6 juveniles. E-learning is viewed as an additional means to support the development of skills of the students. The e-learning provisions are used for individualised work with the content, for assessment, for simulation tasks, for tests with guiding questions, for games and for dictionaries. E-learning is part of a blended learning solution which also includes group work, instructions and presentations in classes. The extent to which e-learning is included in a training course depends on the content of the training. Mostly e-learning is used for training on social skills and on motivation.

Workshops taking advantage of e-learning for instance focus on the following topics:

- Job search and apartment search
- Road education
- Communication skills
- Managing conflicts and solving problems as well as decision making

All software used is evaluated before its introduction. The learning software and materials are provided in a SCORM standard format which secures that they can be easily integrated in other platforms.

The trainings taking advantage of e-learning are above all short term offers which do not aim at official certificates. Fundación Diagrama however regularly issues “unofficial” certificates expressing the content that has been covered by the trainings. An additional advantage of the network of Fundación Diagrama is the fact that students can continue their work on training programs after release at day centres of the foundation.

Campus Juvenil also offers supporting materials for the educators. Educators can also access the platform from outside via the internet.

3.8 Sweden⁶

The Swedish model of “e-learning” in prison appears to be quite unique in Europe. In fact it is not “e-learning” in the common sense that is realized there. It is actually above all distance education taking advantage of a central ICT-network and the opportunities this provides to make individually suitable adult education available to a majority of inmates all over Sweden.

In 2000 the prison and probation administration came to the conclusion that there was a need for a new start of the structures and provisions with respect to adult education in prisons. Up to then prison education was provided by external teachers and trainers and the system did not appear to fulfill the expectations. There are 55 prisons from south to north in Sweden and inmates are often transferred between different prisons. The size of the prisons differs considerably and of course the number of trainers available at the individual prisons in no way allowed to offer courses addressing individual needs.

In cooperation with external experts a solution was developed above all installing step by step an organizational and a technical structure for distance learning covering all Sweden and making available courses on different subject and levels to all inmates. All developments were carried out exclusively with national financial means. Part of these new developments was also that all teachers are now prison staff. In each of the 6 Swedish regions now a principal is in charge of all educational matters in the prisons of the individual region and there as well is a national coordination. At each prison a Learning Center was established. By the end of 2007 these developments have been concluded. Legal provisions now provide that the prison system by itself is allowed to offer education according to the general educational system, to grade and to certify.

At each Learning Center there are – depending on the size of the institution – one to six fully qualified special subject teachers employed. A couple of teachers is not much when it comes to provide education for thousands of inmates, but together the teachers all over the country (about 120) make an important resource which improves the opportunities for the inmates to study subjects they want or need. All courses (nearly 140 by now - Swedish for immigrants, basic and upper secondary adult education, etc.) are available from all prisons and for all prisoners respectively. This is made possible by using different learning modes. Every teacher works with both students locally and in distance education. For subjects a teacher is not teaching he/she takes over the role of a tutor or a coach at his/her Learning Center, while the teaching is carried out by a colleague in distance at some other prison/Learning Center. In this way students are actually supported in the learning process by two teachers.

⁶ Apart from the expert interview this part also includes information from a paper provided by Lena Axelsson

There are no classes, no lessons and no terms. The education is all individualised. If there is one single inmate somewhere in the country, wanting to study for instance French, this can be supplied - He does not have to wait until there is a group of more students and a course is organized for all of them. The inmates study at their own pace; they can start at any time of the year and they all have their own individual study plan. If an inmate has started some course and is then transferred to another prison, he continues with the same teacher until the course is finished and the grade is taken. For the teachers this can mean that the student may have started as a local student and ends up as a distance learner. When a student becomes a distance learner, teacher and student keep in touch by phone and by computer. Central for the communication is the special intranet for inmates, called Net Center. Via this network teachers open a *virtual forum (class room)* which they use to write to inmates, send materials, and encourage them in their learning process. According to the security requirements only one to one forums are allowed. This means that in each forum only *one* teacher and *one* learner can “meet”. Inmates cannot get in contact with anybody else but their own teacher, but they are free to write to them, ask questions, send tasks etc. whenever it is suitable for them during their sessions at the Learning Center.

Beside the teachers there are two career counsellors employed, stationed at the head office. They also support the inmates/students through the Net Center via an individual forum and in the same way the teachers do. This complements phone calls and is considered a great improvement. The inmates get more independent – they do not have to wait for their turn at the phone and nobody hears what they are discussing with their counsellor.

The server structure used for the distance learning with the inmates is located centrally (at the head quarters) and it is fully separated from the ICT-System of the prison administration. Access to the server is given via a tunnelled connection using the internet (Cisco solution – ADSL). The LMS “Net Center” was developed by a private enterprise and selected according to the security requirements. All software for the trainings and also the personal files of the students are located at the Net Center. Students as a rule can not enter the open internet but they can be granted access for instance to do the ECDL online exams or in connection with higher education by the principal. This however is rarely granted, since students have to be supervised during all times (“each second”) they have access to the open internet.

All lessons and distance learning is carried out at the Learning Centers of the prisons. There are also the computer work stations for the distance learning. At the Learning Centers there are besides the teachers at all times inmates working on diverse subjects and there students are allowed to communicate. In fact exchange between local students is considered valuable, taking advantage of their diverse knowledge and experiences. Students do not work in the virtual classrooms and the Net Center all the time. In fact the (online-) contacts with the teachers vary dependent on the student and the subject. Advanced students used to learn may only need online contact with the teacher every other week, while others may need instructions and guidance several times a day. All students however have individual schedules with respect to their working hours at the Learning Centers. Education in general takes place during regular working hours. Some inmates study full time others follow their education besides other activities, mainly work.

Central to the Swedish model of education in prison is the individual approach to the needs of every student. It in fact is a blended learning solution, taking advantage of subject teachers via virtual

class rooms, tutoring and counselling locally and diverse materials (books, scripts, etc.) provided by the teachers. Learning software is also used but it is of minor importance so far. For the future it however is expected that learning software will be increasingly used. There already is learning software available via the central server but there is divers learning software (CDs) that can not yet be run via the server. Then it is used on stand alone PCs at the Learning Centers.

In this model realized at Swedish prisons the prison teachers are also very well connected. They have contacts via phone and electronically but there are also regular meetings.

So far the model described above is restricted to general and school education. On a daily average about 1.400 Swedish inmates participate in these educational measures all over the country. Vocational training is not yet included in this system. Since 2009 the principals are also responsible for vocational training in prison and there are plans to also take advantage of e-learning in this field, above all to improve the chances for continuity of trainings.

3.9 United Kingdom

E-learning in prison has been a topic in the correctional system of the UK for several years. Supporters of initiatives stressed that the restricted access to ICT extremely limits the learning opportunities and creates barriers to success. ICT is integral to education and learning today and a widening of ICT provisions for prisoners is considered a way to contribute to maximise access to education and learning for prisoners. This again is considered to enhance the chances of offenders to find employment and in the end to avoid re-offending.

There have been several pilot projects and prison led initiatives on e-learning for prisoners. The number of attempts has been described as indicators for both, the potential and need, but also for some of the barriers and difficulties.

We here present short descriptions of the models that were still running or discussed in 2009⁷.

- **Polaris:** A Ministry of Justice pilot project, Polaris, has been developed in 7 London prisons. Each of the prisons has a Polaris room with a number of computers which have limited access to a number of websites that have been 'whitelisted'. The sites, which are accessible through this system, have been security checked and unacceptable links have been removed. Prisoners who wish to use Polaris are risk assessed and have access for timed sessions, under supervision. The future of this project is uncertain, although it is hoped POLARIS will continue in some form.
- **Learndirect:** Some 27 or more prisons have computers through which prisoners can access 'Learndirect' courses, which mainly cover areas such as literacy and numeracy up to level 2. The Learndirect ESF (European Social Fund) funded pilot project involving 20 prisons ran from January 2005 to December 2006 and provided access to a portfolio of over 400 Learndirect courses as well as online tests and examinations. It engaged 2.820 learners in over 12.000 courses. The evaluation concluded that 'e-learning is an engaging and attractive way to deliver education to offenders in both custody and the community'.

⁷ The information on these models has been published in: Prisoners' education trust (February 2009). A learning matters briefing "Prisoners, ICT and Learning", extended by some information acquired in experts interviews and in a paper provided by Lorraine Muffet (Meganexus).

- **OU (Open University) courses through Moodle:** Moodle is the platform used by the OU to make its courses available for online study. Many OU courses involve online seminars, access to online resources and electronic submission of assignments. The OU is exploring how to enable entire OU courses to be available offline on prison learning intranets, such as that provided by HMP Whitemoor, to enable prisoners to study a wider range of courses without being given web access.
- **Other models:** There are other models being operated in prisons. Cisco Systems already provide online courses and assessment for students in their Networking Academy, with supervised online access for exams. They also propose a ‘virtual prison’ model in which a particular computer has wireless internet access limited to that computer. In this model, prisoners from different prisons could be booked in to learn simultaneously in a ‘second life’ environment, represented by a virtual identity. Another pilot project is underway at HMP Lowdham Grange in which 20 prisoners have in-cell access to a closed ICT system which they can use for learning purposes whilst locked down. The system enables them to use some limited Open University courses and other learning materials are also available through the system. DVDs can be loaded onto the server. Prisoners apply to take part and have access for a limited period, through their own username and password.

The following pilot called “Virtual Campus” was well evaluated and according to the latest information there are definite plans by the government to make more funding available for the Virtual Campus. The aim is to make the Virtual Campus accessible for prisoners all over the UK.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) were running Virtual Campus (provided by Meganexus) as a pilot project and as part of the ‘Next Steps’ strategy, in which offender learning and skills provision increasingly focussed on employment and reducing re-offending. The system was piloted in some prisons across the West Midlands and the East of England and has been described a considerable success.

In this project, an online ‘virtual campus’ was made available in prisons for use by individual prisoners under supervision. The Virtual Campus offers learners the chance to access tools which assist them on their journey to integrate more easily into society and better prepare them for the labour market. It enables access to a range of information sources and some websites which have been security checked and stripped of hyperlinks. It includes some interactive processes and the features include: CV building, course-, workshop- and job search, access to interactive resources on housing, money, family and relationships etc. and it allows giving access to study accredited courses (for instance Open University or Learndirect) online in a secure environment.

Each prison has its own URL, with some content specific to the prison and its region. Recommended candidates for access are security checked and are given a personal logon. When learners complete their registration on the Virtual Campus, the system automatically flags any job opportunities, courses, workshops and resources that maybe of interest to the learner/job-seeker so they immediately feel engaged. They however also can search for any of these opportunities on their own.

Virtual Campus caters for learners of all abilities. The automatic CV builder for instance has several options. One of these focuses on clients with low literacy levels – the job seeker fills in a series of

tick boxes and a CV is created automatically and instantly saved to an *eportfolio* of work which learners can then take with them from prison to prison or onto probation, the community and beyond.

A unique referral feature means that the Virtual Campus is a seamless *through the gate* system. Anytime an offender transfers to a different prison or is released, his/her profile and course work, saved to his/her *eportfolio*, goes with him/her. This means that learners can carry on course work and build on previous documents (CVs and assignments etc) already created, rather than starting from scratch every time they are transferred or go out into the community.

Learners are able to communicate with advisors and tutors through the *secure relay messaging* functionality. This allows offenders to have the support they need to succeed. For prison and probation staff, the Management Information System (MIS) provides the right information to the right people at the right time. It cuts out duplication and ensures valuable data is stored together in one place.