



<https://doi.org/10.31261/IJREL.2022.8.1.09>

**Daria Becker-Pestka**

WSB University, Gdańsk, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1758-5669>

## **E-learning for Prisoners Experience from Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany**

### **Abstract**

In the following article a discussion on the use of e-learning in education of convicts is presented. The topic discussed by the Author is connected with the fact that the use of new media in education at present has become a common solution applied also to educate inmates. E-learning is a current form of education and vocational training. It provides improvement of contemporary culture in education applied at penitentiary institutions to educate convicts. E-learning helps and lets prisoners obtain education and to update education differences. As a method of education, it requires users' autonomy and self-discipline while working with the use of digital platforms. Education must respond to different needs expressed by the evolving knowledge society. It mainly concerns education of people at risk of social exclusion, e.g. convicts. It is related to the need of dealing with and solving problems that pertain to such issues as increasing possibilities of the media in the area of generating, processing and creating information. The aim of the article is also to describe the use of e-learning in European countries such as Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany. These countries were selected for the analysis because they appreciate modern technologies in penitentiary work. They change and develop the solutions. The experience in the use of e-learning in penitentiary work with inmates in Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany is different. The aim of the article is also to show how modern technology can be applied in

working with convicts. E-learning becomes a tool used for preventing exclusion. Development of various technologies makes it possible to support convicts and prison staff members in the process involving correctional activities. Technologies offer a chance to return or to start work, to continue education, to meet the needs of one's family, to have an active life in accordance with the social principles after leaving prison. E-learning provides people who have been isolated in prison with a real chance to acquire qualifications. Hence, social issues, family interests, individual interests, business and modern technological solutions are combined in the same field. Coherent and efficient activities come as a challenge to those who perform them and to the society; however, these activities support the process of social rehabilitation.

**Key words:** education, convicts, e-learning, modern technologies, social re-adaptation

Problems related to educational participation in the Internet has already become of great interest both to scientists and practitioners. Considering the common use of the Internet, this fact is perfectly understandable. In the field of education, some problems have become more and more significant, first of all, in the context of increased application of electronic communication tools in learning.

Implementation of new forms of education has already become a fact in the present reality. People involved in these activities, namely, all the participants of the education process, such as students, teachers, learning adults, express their approval for this fact. The need to acquire knowledge is the reason for which e-learning will become more and more common.

Education of inmates should not differ from education provided in an open environment to similar age groups in the world. At the same time, it is important that the area of education opportunities should be as wide as possible. E-learning becomes an opportunity provided to convicts serving their imprisonment sentences at penitentiary institutions to enable their full participation in social life. Some examples of good practice indicate that the possibilities to use e-learning education forms in order to improve accessibility of education are exploited more and more frequently.

The current century has been driven by advanced innovation and entire globe has been affected by the world wide web and the Internet. At present, the online training has been increasingly available to the less favored groups. The technology has given rise to an impression that information is shared and disseminated, including academic data, online lectures, online interactions, exchange of knowl-

edge with the use of various tools and platforms applied by different users and organizations. Connected by these platforms, we all can actively contribute to innovation, creation and community enlargement in various ways that were previously unimaginable. As it has been already mentioned, education offered by these platforms to everyone fosters collaboration, disseminates arts, culture, science, education, supports government and economy in more than profitable ways. The present paper discusses Internet-mediated communication and quality education for everyone by utilizing knowledge resources to improve the quality of education and learning outcomes in general (Raut, 2020, p. 7).

One of the possibilities is using the Internet for education of convicts. At present, education by e-learning provides an opportunity of transferring knowledge or increasing the level of competences and skills. Considering convicts who are isolated in prison, education is one of the most important elements of penitentiary treatment. The development of the knowledge society and the need for life-long education come as the basic reasons for a necessity of developing methods which will allow people of different age, who are in a difficult situation, with limited or no access to traditional forms of learning, to participate in the process of education.

Extensive evidence shows that the availability of learning opportunities in penitentiary units drastically diminishes the probability of recidivism and it augments the likelihood of positive social re-integration. The effectiveness of these educational programs depends greatly on the methods of instruction offered (Amiri, Woodside, Soares, 2021, pp. 218–226). E-learning provides some new possibilities in this area.

We have to remember, that inmates are destabilized by the confined space and their daily schedules of the prison environment which do not correspond to the distances and rhythms of the outside world in any way. Although convicts do have access to different activities, they all take place in an artificially constructed space-time. Education is a right and, as such, it should not be justified economically or in terms of security and order (De Maeyer, 2019, pp. 811–832).

The article presents how e-learning can be applied to work with convicts, based on the example of several European countries. The topic discussed by the Author is connected with the fact that the use of new media in education at present has become a common solution applied also to educate inmates. The editorial requirements stated for the article do not let the Author provide a detailed analysis of the problem; however, it can attract attention to the discussed issues. Discussed in the article, social issues, family and individual interests, business and modern technological solutions are combined in one field. Considering the value and significance of education in prison for social readaptation, the Author of the article intends to carry out more in-depth research.

## Literature remark

The starting point for this part comes with a statement that e-learning is a model of activities in which information technology is applied to support broadly understood education processes (Hyla, 2005, p. 338).

E-learning educationalists have been searching for knowledge related to the design of electronic environment which would be efficient in terms of learning and friendly to students in the current learning and teaching theories, such as behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, an education theory referred to as instruction design and psychological theories related to development of human emotions and motivation (Szczepaniak-Sobczyk, 2016, p. 111; Bednarek, Lubina 2008, pp. 31–39).

It can be assumed that e-learning has become a contemporary form of education and professional training. It creates a modern model of education which proves to be perfectly efficient for penitentiary institutions. It is education which is focused on autonomy and self-discipline of people who use digital platforms.

In the light of literature, e-learning offers a lot of benefits to various groups of people, such as teachers (or employers), who intend to offer good training to their employees with low cost and high quality. The development of e-learning has been based on one of the Internet purposes mainly, access to information. The potential determined by its advantages has dramatically increased the number of e-learning users, especially regarding an increase in qualification, changes of occupations or development of business entities. E-learning:

- improves education of teachers and learners, recipients of education services,
- contributes to a decrease in education costs,
- allows participants of the education process to become independent from timetables and other activities,
- reduces time spent in business trips and delegations,
- reduces boundaries and restrictions,
- positively affects business and economy because it makes it possible to optimise costs and to improve competitive advantage,
- allows people to manage educational materials and information efficiently, contributing to the implementation of knowledge management,
- clearly presents resources which are at the disposal of teams, organisations and individual staff members in the fields of skills and competences, which can be translated into efficient human resources management,
- simplifies understanding the economic value of training and professional development of humans,

- provides mechanisms of distance training and work by broadening and adding more flexibility to communication channels,
- strongly determines organisational culture; during the implementation of e-learning the most significant problem is the change in organisational culture (Dina, Onete, Albastroiu, 2018, p. 145–150; Hammad, Hariadi, Purnomo, Jabari, Kurniawan 2018, p. 48–50; Hyla, 2005, p. 29).

People who implement distance learning intuitively adjust their methods to the specific character of work forms, to recipients, to the characteristics of the delivered content and to their own sense of method efficiency (Bednarek, Lubina, 2008, p. 167).

Blended learning is a perfect solution in the conditions of prison isolation. Blended learning comes as a response to the demand for new solutions in the field of education activities. Blended learning combines elements which complement and interpenetrate each other. The concept of blended learning is based on the combination of traditional and distance learning. It offers learners a chance to eliminate limitations related to the time and place of learning. Furthermore, blended learning is dedicated to life-long learning which allows learners to continue their development and to use tools that provide possibilities of acquiring new skills, social competences and qualifications (Smulska, 2016, pp. 7–8).

## **The use of e-learning in the education of inmates on the example of selected countries**

E-learning in the process of educating persons serving their sentences of imprisonment seems to be a very modern and effective method of work; however, considering specific conditions of convicts who are educated with the use of this method, it might also seem highly controversial. There is no doubt that using e-learning in education of convicts comes an opportunity for providing equal chances in education. It also provides education which can be adjusted to convicts' needs. It also seems that e-learning in education of convicts is inevitable, considering the vast advancement in technology, the necessity to prepare convicts for living outside prison, for finding their places on the open labour market and for continuing their life-long learning.

In some European countries, systemic solutions are applied in the field of e-learning for convicts; however, these solutions do not refer to all the regions and penitentiary units. E-learning initiatives in prisons are consistent with the

guidelines of the European Union which refer to inclusion and smart and sustainable growth (European Union, 2020, p. 8–13). In this sense, in European countries different solutions have been developed for the implementation of e-learning. There have been pilot projects and programs implemented in numerous countries. However, it cannot be assumed that all the applied solutions are known. E-learning is applied in education of convicts in such countries as Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany. It may indicate dissemination and understanding of the value carried by this form of education for convicts. It can be expected that there will be further development in the discussed field. Furthermore, it is also possible to observe a specific community which has been already developed around the problems of knowledge management, education and training in prison in Europe.

The main barriers are related to security issues, access, maintenance of technological equipment and motivation of adults to participate in life-long learning activities. The potential of e-learning is related to an increase in learning opportunities, diversification of resources and potential for customization and collaborative work. Lockitt (2011, p. 8) points to the problems that determine the process of education and training in penitentiary institutions. The most important difficulties indicated by the aforementioned author concern, *inter alia*, such issues as:

- inefficient use of new technology,
- fear of technology and change,
- lack of effective leadership and decision making policies,
- widely understood problems with staff members e.g. their awareness of the potential offered by technology,
- short-term sentences of prisoners which do not allow them to complete education process,
- problems with the programs connected especially with continuation of education after leaving prison and possibilities of the curricula,
- insufficient interactive multimedia learning materials,
- limited access to technology,
- problems connected with the lack of interactive/continuous support (SKYPE/MSN etc.),
- negative public perception of the use of modern technologies in working with inmates,
- deficits of the inmates in terms of education and their too low motivation.

Due to the above-mentioned issues, e-learning will be an important contribution to promoting inclusion through the development of digital competences, understood as knowledge, attitude and an ability of an individual to properly use modern digital tools and an ability to identify, access, integrate, evaluate, analyze, summarize, create and to communicate with the use of digital resources.

The framework of the study does not allow the Author to present all the solutions used in the European countries which attempt or implement e-learning in penitentiary institutions. Therefore, the description has been limited to several selected countries, namely: Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany. These countries have been selected because they appreciate and develop modern technologies in working with inmates, and at the same time, their experience in the use of e-learning in penitentiary work with inmates is different. In addition, compared to countries such as Norway or Sweden, other countries are somewhat repressive and apply stricter rules. The penitentiary systems of the Scandinavian countries, including Norway, are classified and perceived as the most humanitarian in the world. The system is based on the need for help, not punishment, and is considered to be the best in terms of social rehabilitation forms. Germany, on the other hand, is the country that started working on the implementation of e-learning very early, and it is worth emphasizing German experience in this area. Against this background, the situation in Poland looks interesting with some attempts to use e-learning, but it is still an underdeveloped area. At the same time, all the solutions applied in the above-mentioned countries face many problems, ranging from the aspects of applied technical solutions, through the coordination of cooperation with external entities and development of a coherent education structure, to limitations related to security issues. The existing problems imply questions about the effectiveness of penitentiary interactions implemented in this way, as well as pose challenges to the personnel of penitentiary units and the entire system. Portugal has interesting experience with the use of e-learning, but it is a vast material for another article planned for the future. These are solutions that are constantly being improved and modified. This scientific paper deals with the issues of e-learning in Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany.

It is difficult to find any research studies in this area, so the available sources have been used. Studies of this kind are not conducted in Poland. The reality is changing and the use and implementation of e-learning is a complex and complicated process. It is difficult to capture its dynamics and at the same time to show changes. It is difficult to find empirical data and comparisons. It is also difficult to obtain any data on people who participate in education programs involving e-learning in prisons. Responding to the Author's request, the prison service authorities have replied that such data have not been collected. The studies prepared by the institutions of the European Union contribute the most. The European Union places emphasis on the right and access to education for everyone. The conditions and the reality in which the process of educating prisoners is changing are also undergoing numerous changes. At the same time, an intensive process of dynamic

development in modern technologies is taking place. Due to the specific character of prison conditions and all the related restrictions, it is undoubtedly difficult to implement all the available solutions. They must be adapted to the specificity of punishment, that is namely serving a sentence in isolation. It is also difficult to capture the changes that are taking place in the discussed field. Possibly, this is one of the reasons why the topic is rarely discussed in research.

A model of e-learning in prison applied in Sweden seems to be an exceptional one on the European scale but, in fact, it mainly refers to distance learning with the use of a central ICT network and the possibilities it offers. In 2000, the prison and probation administration has recognized a need for a new start of the structures and provisions with respect to adult education in penitentiary institutions. These transformations were completed at the end of 2007. Together with external experts, a solution was developed, step by step installing organizational and technical structures for distance learning. They covered all Sweden and made courses on various subjects and levels convenient to all prisoners. All the solutions were developed with the use of the national funds. The new solutions also included the fact that all teachers became members of the prison staff. At each penitentiary unit a Learning Center was established (Hammerschick, 2016, p. 18–20).

The prison system offers education compliant with the general educational system, including grades and certifications. At each Learning Center, there are fully qualified special subject teachers employed. All courses are available at all penitentiary units and to all prisoners respectively. This is possible by using different learning modes. Teachers work with learners both on premises and with the use of distance education. The process of training is provided according to the individual prisoners' needs. Inmates study at their own pace, they can start at any time of the year and they all have their own individual personal study plans. Teachers and learners keep in touch by phone and by computer. All lessons and distance learning are carried out at the Learning Centers at the particular penitentiary units. There are also computer workstations for the distance learning provided. The Swedish model of education in prison is based on the individual approach to the needs of every student. In fact, it can be concluded that it is a rather blended learning solution. In this approach teachers are available via virtual classrooms, tutoring and counselling locally. In this model various materials are provided by teachers. In the future, it is however expected that learning software will be increasingly used (Hammerschick, 2016, pp. 18–20).

Norway traditionally tries to involve prisoners in participation in the process of education and training. At present, about thirty percent of all prisoners do their schoolwork. The task which is implemented by Norwegian penitentiary system requires efforts made to introduce and to widen the use of e-learning in prisons.



The use of digital tools is an integrated part of the competence aim in the Norwegian course curriculum. There have been some regional projects trying to benefit from e-learning, applying it for training dedicated to chiefs. So far, the initiatives in this respect have been all covered by the national funds, although Norway has also participated in the European project cooperation “PIPELINE”. In recent years, the most important aim of the program mentioned above has been to implement a uniform national e-learning structure in all Norwegian penitentiary units. E-learning has been used at low security prisons for some years. For this purpose, a learning platform is used. It is supplied by an external structure via the open Internet. Inmates who are provided with an access to this platform can actually use the content of the entire Internet. The platform offers various learning materials and allows users to continue attending regular schools outside. Most convicts in the Norwegian penitentiary system are however placed in prisons of high security. Hence, this situation contributed to the fact that the prison authorities had focused their efforts on the development of an e-learning solution that could be also used there. Therefore, in close collaboration between the correctional services and education authorities, a central server structure was installed in 2009. The most important feature of this system is a domain controller which lets supervisors control all the Internet access and traffic. The new network that serves all prisons in Norway is called IFI. It means Internet for Inmates. Another specific feature of this model is the fact that it particularly uses learning materials supplied in the open Internet. Such a solution does not mean that prisoners have got an open access to all the websites. The purpose of this national e-learning solution is to let inmates gain access to all the Internet sections relevant to their education. E-learning takes place in classrooms with computer workstations. The range of courses for which e-learning is applied can be very broad, including any topics, determined by the contents which can be found on the websites on the Internet, which have been categorized or opened individually against submitted applications. It cannot be concluded that there are some standardized concepts and a range related directly to the possibilities and ways of using e-learning. These issues depend on individual tutors employed by external school institutions. There are no direct links between education and training schools in prison and other external structures and actors. However, school institutions are oriented towards supporting prisoners in continuing their training after their release from prison (Hammerschick, 2016, pp. 13–15).

Norway has been a partner country in PIPELINE – Partnerships in Prison Education: Learning in Networked Environments. The project has been developed to help to improve prison education in Europe by making ICT available to learners and teachers in correctional education. It has also sought to reduce the likelihood of

recidivism by bridging the gap between life inside and outside of prison. PIPELINE targets both male and female inmates, as well as prison educators (Microsoft Word – Case Study Norway.doc (epea.org). Norway has also participated in the Project to Accelerate the Development of Distance Learning Environments (P.A.D.D.L.E). The above-mentioned program has been set out to analyze the use and methods of distance and e-learning in the collaborating countries, and whether these can widen the range of education and training available to prisoners. In Norway, the project Learning Infrastructure for Correctional Services – European Transfer (LICOS) has been also implemented. It aims to develop a European e-learning framework for prison education considering pedagogical, organizational, political and technical approaches as well as strong security requirements. Norway has also been a partner in the Virtual European Prison School. The most important task of the program is to increase the participation of convicts in the lifelong learning process. The point is to guarantee reintegration with the society after being released. The program aims at meeting the identified needs in the provision of education and training in penitentiary facilities and to provide strategic policy statements (Monteiro, Barros, Leite, 2015, p. 1038–1046).

Prisoners staying in Norwegian penitentiary units have worse education than the average population. The process of education in prison is to be the same as education provided outside. The rehabilitation effect of education must result in employment gained by prisoners, and thus ensure their successful return to society. Education is also seen as one of the most important ways to master life after leaving the penitentiary unit. It is also a significant factor to prevent crime (Tønseth, Bergsland 2021, p. 1–13).

In Poland, the Prison Service has been making attempts at the implementation of e-learning for over a decade, using modern technological solutions. Using education platforms in the Internet has allowed convicts to attend training sessions and to complete courses without leaving their penitentiary units. In Poland, there are not any separate legal regulations referring to e-learning dedicated to prisoners. Education provided at penitentiary units takes place in accordance with the education law, in the same way as at all public schools. Each penitentiary unit is independently responsible for providing convicts with an access to this form of education.

Working with the e-learning system takes a dual path and it is dedicated to two different groups: prisoners and prison staff members. E-learning at penitentiary units in Poland was started in 2009. At two detention centers located in the capital city of Poland a pilot project, *The Checkered Notebook*, was initiated. In 2010, e-learning was implemented at penitentiary units in other regions: totally 35 penitentiary units in Poland.

In 2011, units from other regions joined the e-learning program. Ultimately, over 35 penitentiary units throughout Poland implemented e-learning, including units based in Gdańsk, Koszalin, Szczecin, Wrocław, Olsztyn, Bydgoszcz.

In the years 2012–2014, e-learning for inmates was carried out as part of cooperation between OISW in Warsaw and the University of Euro-regional Economy named after Alcide de Gasperi in Józefów, and since 2015, thanks to cooperation with the Stanisław Konarski in Warsaw, the Secondary School for Adults No. 3 and the Institute of Continuing Education have been run in the capital city.

Education was provided via an Internet education platform developed by external entities – schools which run education courses. Each penitentiary unit participating in the project provided a room located at its premises. The room had to be equipped with computer workstations suitable for education. Courses took place systematically, in accordance with the course schedules sent to the penitentiary units by the schools. Apart from the courses implemented via the platform, convicts solved tests and passed their examinations. In the first phases of the project, during the classes, a project coordinator from the school, or a teacher, was present in the room. Learners were given logins and passwords necessary to use the platform and to access some particular modules, as planned for a particular school year. Documents sent by the schools provided a formal basis for learners to uphold their education at different levels and in different structures of education. Convicts passed their secondary school final examinations under the general regulations, in front of the commission, at their penitentiary units.

Frequently, e-learning was as an alternative for people with short-time sentences who wished to continue their education in prison but they could not start their courses at a prison school because they were going to leave the penitentiary unit very soon (Trela, 2016).

Penitentiary units where prisoners benefited from distance learning, met all the criteria required at schools for adults. The implemented curricula were the same, prison schools used the same certificate and course record templates as schools outside prison. Convicts improved their knowledge, using the most advanced tools (Szłęczak-Kawa, 2011 pp. 10–11; Krakowska, 2011, p. 14).

At present, due to security reasons the typical form of e-learning is not used at penitentiary units. School activities carried out with the development of methods and techniques of distance learning consist in preparing teaching materials which are delivered to students to their living spaces and in organizing individual support for students by their teachers.

Changes in the Finnish criminal justice system occurred 70 years ago. Now this country invests a lot of money in new technological solutions, the aim of which

is to offer inmates the possibilities to rejoin the society. Education for convicts in Finland must be compliant with the general education system. Education dedicated to prisoners is implemented by external education institutions. In prison, it is possible to use e-learning. All penitentiary units are equipped with computers which are available to prisoners, however, without any access to the Internet. Prisoners have possibilities to learn how to use a computer, word processing and calculations. Some penitentiary units offer ICT training but also in this case prisoners are not allowed to access the Internet. Prisoners who study at universities can get some e-mails and printable educational resources from their tutors. At seven open-regime penitentiary units a project has been initiated in which the access to the Internet has been provided to prisoners under supervision to prepare them for being released from prison and for further studies. The project has been positively received by the prison staff members (Hammerschick, 2016, p. 10; Puolakka 2021).

Digital communication and learning in Finnish prisons were based on the belief that prison life should be as close to life outside the prison as possible. Access to the Internet is vital in the process of being prepared for life, considering such areas as Internet banking, video calling and education. It is also tested in various ways in penitentiary institutions throughout the country. An example is the prison in Turku, where inmates can use laptops and computers in libraries. They can also access previously approved websites. A lot of those websites are of educational nature. One of the courses that can be used by inmates is an artificial intelligence course prepared by the University of Helsinki (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2020).

In Germany, the first projects on e-learning in prison were carried out as early as in the 1990s. In fact, it seems that Germany is one of the most active countries in this area. The solutions and forms of the applied activities are not the same all over the country. A major section of the e-learning framework which currently exists in Germany is based on solutions developed within projects funded by the EQUAL-program like Elis, Babe, Zubilis and Member. Obviously, e-learning structures, supplies and further solutions developed in and for German prisons have to be largely financed by the means provided by the federal states. It can be assumed that e-learning via CBTs is used locally in the majority of German prisons. At this point, however, the attention is focused on network solutions. All the federal states involved share and take advantage of the central e-learning structure improved within the Elis project. The prisons which have been connected to the system offer learning software packages for many different courses. These programs cover a wide selection of topics, from basic education and social skills to ICT-topics and vocational training courses as well as advanced studies (Hammerschick, 2016, p. 10–12).

German Adult Education Association (DVV) provides a flexible and long-proven supplement and an extension for web-based basic prison education. This website was launched in 2004 and since then it has been expanded and further developed. The online portal [www.ich-will-lernen.de](http://www.ich-will-lernen.de) has been available to inmates and tutors in correctional facilities as an attractive and modern way of training from 2007. It offers a wide range of software features, including attractive graphics and various original exercises. In addition to the actual learning areas, entertainment is also offered, such as games, various reading texts and daily news which are regularly updated (Eichen, 2016, p. 71–80).

E-learning is mostly used as an additional source within courses. There are not any generally valid or acknowledged standards but, as a rule, e-learning is used in the context of blended learning, taking advantage of various materials and instructions. 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 learners. Apart from instructions, tutoring and supervision, teachers are also expected to contribute to organizational security. Tutors working at penitentiary institutions are prison staff members, staff members of external educational institutions as well as school staff members. Some prisoners may also study. In such a case, distance learning is carried out mainly via online communication. Generally, the access granted does not provide an open access to the Internet but convicts can still communicate with other students via the platform of the university (Hammerschick, 2016, pp. 10–12).

To sum up, the Swedish model of e-learning in prison seems to be an exceptional one on the European scale but, in fact, it is based on relatively simple solutions. In Norway, the penitentiary system makes efforts to introduce and to widen the use of e-learning in prisons. The use of digital tools is an integrated part of the competence aim in the Norwegian course curriculum. In Poland, the Prison Service has been implementing e-learning for over a decade, using modern technological solutions and the situation in this area is still changing. Prisoners in Finland may use e-learning and they can learn how to use new technologies and to study without any control of their teachers. In this country the situation is going towards bigger openness in access to e-learning for convicts. In Germany, the activities aimed to implement e-learning in prisons were arranged as early as in the 1990s. Germany is one of the most active countries in this respect, but the activities are not the same all over this country and they are still undergoing changes and development.

Over the years, the European Union has strengthened measures that address the need of finding answers to the challenges posed by the information society, which in turn underscores the importance of the focus on innovation of adult education,

especially for those who have found themselves in the situation of social exclusion (Moreira, Monteiro, Machado, 2017, pp. 37–51). It also refers to prisoners.

It has also changed the attitude to prison as a penitentiary unit. In recent years prison has tended to be seen as a place not of punishment but a place of isolation from the society for people who broke the law. The aim of prison isolation is correcting such people, that is namely: preparing them for their reintegration into society as responsible individuals who will avoid recidivism (Oikonomou, Malamos, Lisitsa, Liakos, Kolokotronis, 2020, pp. 250–255).

Teaching people sentenced to prison isolation is not an easy task (Becker-Pestka, 2017, pp. 123–135; Becker-Pestka, 2019, pp. 98–105). Using e-learning may come as a greater challenge. It involves numerous problems and obstacles which must be overcome. Security is one of the main problems. So far, there have not been any cases of major security abuse reported; however, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that perfect security cannot be provided in any sector of the prison system.

E-learning does not seem to be a good solution for prison education, considering the security aspect, which is the priority in working with prisoners and in tasks implemented by the penitentiary system. Application of e-learning in prison education is the main concern of the participants of the education process and of the particular penitentiary units where prison education has been implemented in that form. The participants – prisoners make comments referring to the quality of their classes and to the lack of real contact with their tutors.

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that introduction of electronic means of mass communication has resulted in a breakthrough in knowledge and information transfer. Dynamic development of technologies has resulted in constant replacement of simple teaching aids with modern solutions. They have been constantly improved to provide optimization of educational activities and processes. Taking place in education, digital revolution provides new opportunities. Education must face challenges and threats which are related to computerization and automation. Digital media and dynamic development of technologies provide possibilities to develop and to improve the concept of education. Hence, people are forced to adjust to the new reality and to acquire skills allowing them to process the reality and information about it. It has to be mentioned that technology information has been increased dramatically over the last years and it has contributed to the growth in technology delivered instruction as an important learning and teaching method.

At present, new media come as an important factor in the process of learning community formation. Education – especially education of adults – is very often based on various forms of distance learning. Having become a component

of modern social communication, it considerably determines education processes also in the penitentiary system.

## Validation

E-learning is a modern form of education and professional development which creates modern culture of education that has already proved to work out perfectly in the prison system. This is education oriented towards digital platform users' independent work. It is focused on users' self-discipline. Modern technologies come as a chance for people who have been digitally and socially excluded. IT tools contribute to a decrease in negative consequences of social isolation and they provide access to knowledge to those who cannot participate in the process of education outside the place where they are. For convicts, it is motivation to change for better and it is also a significant factor which prevents recidivism.

Education of convicts should implement aims defined for adult education. It is a value in itself, regardless of the aims of correctional activities. Education of convicts limits negative results of imprisonment, such as depersonalization, institutionalization and desocialization. In many ways, it may seem normal in an abnormal situation of imprisonment through the focus on prisoners' potential and through encouragement given them to participate in significant activities which bring permanent results. Education in prison can be perceived as efficient social rehabilitation, as an activity which connects prisoners with the society living outside and as an activity which allows them to improve self-esteem, to assess their values, aims and priorities in life. By acquiring necessary personal, social and technical skills, convicts acquire tools that allow them to return permanently and efficiently to the society as contributing citizens, family members and employees (Vryonides, 2016, pp. 69–70).

Experience related to education of inmates indicates that prisoners who study are more motivated because they can foresee a more attractive future for themselves, if they have an academic diploma. Despite this fact, however, their expectations are not very high, because they acknowledge that their rehabilitation will be difficult due to the stigma of being ex-prisoners. The practice also shows that the education process has many weaknesses and limitations mostly due to the lack of facilities, educational and technological resources and support from teachers (Moreira, Monteiro, Machado, 2017, pp. 37–51).

Cooperation of specialists in the field of advanced technologies, business (who might find it as an interesting professional challenge) and people responsible for

the process of preparing prisoners to live in freedom, seems to be well-grounded. Undoubtedly, teachers, correctional officers and prisoners themselves are important partners in this sector because they can indicate some particular needs and problems and they can inspire others to develop and to apply new, more advanced technological tools. The editorial requirements of this paper do not allow the Author to present more in-depth observations on that problem. However, it is obvious that scientific research in this field should be continued in cooperation with the above-mentioned partners and solutions should be adjusted to the needs of prisoners, the labour market, capabilities of penitentiary units, according to technological advancement.

The way e-learning is used at prisons differs considerably and is largely dependent on trainers. Mostly it can be assumed that 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 server groups.

Implementation of e-learning for convicts is a complicated process but it provides them with an opportunity to acquire education and to fill in any education gaps they may have, regardless of the length of the imprisonment sentences they have to serve. In the field of IT, it is possible to assume that along with the development of e-learning at penitentiary units, the demand for IT services will also increase. People who are familiar with the specificity of distance learning and who know how to function in the prison reality will be needed. Such activities foster both development of e-learning and international cooperation. Hence, considering social and economic conditions, they should be developed in the future.

The world has become smaller and borderless, in such a way that interaction and exchange are inevitable and they are part of daily life. In line with the global development of the various sectors of society, digital technologies must also be incorporated into the educational process in prisons in order to promote changes and transformations in its product and process (Moreira, Reis-Monteiro, Machado, 2017, pp. 39–47).

The data presented in the article are collected in Table 1. Strengths and weaknesses of e-learning in education of convicts have been indicated because they show positive and negative features of the solutions that have been applied. They indicate the advantages and specific features typical of e-learning dedicated to inmates in the described countries. They highlight issues that can be changed in the current system and positive aspects of the solutions. They synthesize and organize the collected material in a transparent manner. They also come as its graphic complement.



**Table 1**  
*Evaluation of e-learning solutions in Sweden, Norway, Poland, Finland and Germany*

Country	Strengths of the solutions		Weaknesses of the solutions
	1	2	3
Sweden	The courses are available to all prisoners; The model of e-learning system is compliant with the general educational system; Constant contact between teachers and convicts is provided; The system takes the individual approach to the needs of every convict into account.		Uses relatively simple solutions; it is more like a blended learning system.
Norway	The model is based on close cooperation between the penitentiary institution and education authorities; The developed model allows inmates to access all websites related to their education; The model is still developing The range of courses for which e-learning is applied can be very wide; The model lets prisoners continue education after they leave prisons.		It is impossible to include all the prisoners in the system – e-learning has been used only at low security prisons; most of convicts in the Norwegian penitentiary system serve their sentences in high security prisons; The model uses only learning materials provided in the open Internet; The collaboration between educational institutions and penitentiary units for inmates does not exist
Poland	Penitentiary units where prisoners benefit from distance learning meet all the criteria required at schools for adults; E-learning solutions are dedicated to both prisoners and prison staff members; The implemented curricula are the same, prison schools use the same certificate and course record templates as schools outside prison; Convicts may improve their knowledge using advanced tools.		The typical form of e-learning is not used in penitentiary units; There is no adequate base and human and material resources to implement e-learning in the classic form; There are not any clear rules and safety procedures which allow using e-learning in prisons.
Finland	All penitentiary units are equipped with computers which are available to prisoners; The solutions let equip inmates with the most important computer and online skills.		The access to the Internet is not allowed to all prisoners; It is based on simple solutions.

1	2	3
Germany	A high advanced system has been developing since the early 1990s; The system is refining and changing.	The system is not the same all over this country; E-learning without any materials is not used.

S o u r c e: Author's own study based on the studies of specialist literature

The author of the text has conducted research on the professional activation of inmates. One of the component of the career activation is education. Optimization of prison education is the factor that can significantly affect the more effective acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of qualifications necessary to enter the labor market, fulfilment of the growing requirements stated by employers and the continuation of a coherent process of social readaptation of convicts.

New technologies provide learners with vast possibilities. E-learning allows inmates to take advantage of distance and flexible learning methods which are often applied simultaneously with traditional learning in a form of combined courses. E-learning exploits possibilities provided by the Internet for the requirements of knowledge dissemination. At present, in the conditions of a dynamic technological progress, e-learning is not any longer an experiment, slowly becoming a fact well-approved by all the participants of education processes.

E-learning in education of convicts comes as an opportunity for providing equal chances in education. It also provides education which can be adjusted to convicts' needs. It also seems that e-learning in education of convicts is inevitable, considering the vast advancement in technology, the necessity to prepare convicts for living outside prison, for finding their places on the open labor market and for continuing their life-long learning.

## Conclusions

- E-learning is a way of teaching with the use of computers and the Internet. It allows inmates to learn and to complete different types of courses and training without leaving their penitentiary units. Inmates may decide when and how often they study. E-learning reduces costs of social exclusion of convicts and offers them a chance to feel more self-conscious.
- The benefits of using e-learning in education of convicts include, first of all, saving time and individualizing the education process. E-learning is a very flexible model of teaching which helps to eliminate territorial and learning bar-

riers and boundaries. New technologies allow prisoners to gain and to develop appropriate skills and competences and they help to promote education in prison. Using e-learning in prisons prevents the phenomenon of digital exclusion. Currently, e-learning helps to limit the expansion of the Coronavirus by keeping prisoners and teachers in their spaces while maintaining the teaching process. The weakness of using e-learning in teaching convicts refers first of all to the security aspect. Ensuring the safety and isolation is the most important task of the penitentiary system. Except for this aspect, the problems also involve high costs related to the implementation of the remote learning system, temporary or permanent problems with the Internet connection, problems with motivation and self-discipline of inmates, limitation of interpersonal contacts in the times of the Coronavirus pandemic which is at the same time an advantage. The ideal solution would be to use blended-learning.

- There are some differences in advancement and implementation of e-learning in education of prisoners in individual countries, however the common thing is that in all of the discussed countries the value and potential of e-learning in the education of convicts are perceived. The activities undertaken indicate a high awareness of the importance of using this tool in educating prisoners and preventing their digital exclusion. In some European countries, systemic solutions are applied in the field of e-learning for convicts; however, these solutions do not refer to all the regions and penitentiary units. There are pilot projects and programs implemented in numerous countries. In all of the countries prison e-learning systems still indicate many weaknesses and limitations that need many changes. Specialists still look for new and best solutions in this area. It is necessary to thoroughly change educational systems in cooperation with new technologies. The digital world has not only become a fact. It also requires a lot of information and interaction. Some countries have developed systemic solutions in this area from which a lot of knowledge can be derived. This allows inmates to avoid standing out from the society based on knowledge and to follow the development of technology as far as possible in the conditions of prison isolation. It is impossible without the systemic support of various entities and institutions and without understanding of the essence of e-learning and its development in the process of educating inmates. Using e-learning in education of convicts is still a challenge for penitentiary systems. In addition to technical issues, there are problems related to the effectiveness of the education process, and thus didactic effectiveness, as well as security issues, which are particularly important in the case of penitentiary systems.
- Using e-learning in education of convicts is also a challenge for universities educating future staff of penitentiary units, IT and business specialists. The point is that these people should be prepared to implement new technologies

in specific conditions that are found in prisons, in mutual cooperation. It also seems necessary to refer to the already existing solutions in other countries and to adapt them to the existing realities. In a digital society, using e-learning in a penitentiary system will have to be a natural process in all countries and it should be widely supported due to many benefits it can bring.

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Daria Becker-Pestka

## **E-learning dla skazanych Doświadczenia ze Szwecji, Norwegii, Polski, Finlandii i Niemiec**

### Streszczenie

W poniższym artykule przedstawiono dyskusję na temat wykorzystania e-learningu w edukacji skazanych. Temat poruszany przez Autorkę wiąże się z faktem, że wykorzystanie nowych mediów w edukacji stało się obecnie powszechnym rozwiązaniem stosowanym także w edukacji osadzonych. E-learning to aktualna forma edukacji i szkolenia zawodowego. Zapewnia doskonalenie współczesnej aktywności w edukacji stosowanej w zakładach penitencjarnych do kształcenia skazanych. E-learning umożliwia osadzonym zdobywanie wykształcenia oraz aktualizowanie różnic edukacyjnych. Jako metoda edukacji wymaga autonomii i samodyscypliny użytkowników podczas pracy z wykorzystaniem platform cyfrowych. Edukacja musi odpowiadać na różne potrzeby wyrażane przez rozwijające się społeczeństwo wiedzy. Dotyczy to głównie edukacji osób zagrożonych wykluczeniem społecznym, m.in. skazanych. Wiąże się to z potrzebą rozwiązywania problemów, które dotyczą m.in. zwiększania możliwości mediów w zakresie generowania, przetwarzania i tworzenia informacji. Celem tekstu jest opis wykorzystania e-learningu w uczeniu się osób osadzonych na przykładzie wybranych państw europejskich takich jak Szwecja, Norwegia, Polska, Finlandia czy Niemcy. Kraje te zostały wybrane, ponieważ doceniają nowoczesne technologie w pracy penitencjarnej. Zmieniają i rozwijają rozwiązania. Doświadczenia w wykorzystaniu e-learningu w pracy penitencjarnej z osadzonymi w Szwecji, Norwegii, Polsce, Finlandii i Niemczech są różne. Celem jest również pokazanie, jak nowoczesna technologia może być wykorzystana w pracy ze skazanymi. E-learning staje się narzędziem przeciwdziałającym wykluczeniu. Rozwój technologii pozwala na wspieranie osadzonych i kadry jednostek penitencjarnych w prowadzonym procesie działań korekcyjnych. Technologie dają szansę na powrót bądź rozpoczęcie pracy, kontynuowanie nauki, zaspokojenie potrzeb rodziny, aktywne życie zgodnie z zasadami życia społecznego po opuszczeniu jednostki. E-learning stwarza realną szansę na zdobycie kwalifikacji osobom pozostającym w warunkach izolacji. Łączą się w jednym obszarze kwestie społeczne, interesy rodziny, jednostki, biznes i nowoczesne rozwiązania technologiczne. Spójne i skuteczne działania są wyzwaniem dla ich realizatorów i społeczeństwa, ale także wspierają proces resocjalizacji.

**S ł o w a k l u c z o w e:** edukacja, osadzeni, e-learning, nowoczesne technologie, readaptacja społeczna

Дарья Беккер-Пестка

## **Электронное обучение заключенных. Опыт Швеции, Норвегии, Польши, Финляндии и Германии**

### **А н н о т а ц и я**

В статье представлено обсуждение использования электронного обучения в обучении осужденных. Обсуждаемая автором тема связана с тем, что использование новых медиа в образовании в настоящее время стало распространенным решением, применимым и к обучению заключенных. Электронное обучение является современной формой образования и профессиональной подготовки. Он обеспечивает повышение современной культуры в образовании, применяемой в пенитенциарных учреждениях для образования осужденных. Электронное обучение помогает и позволяет заключенным получать образование и актуализировать различия в образовании. Как метод обучения он требует от пользователей автономии и самодисциплины при работе с использованием цифровых платформ. Образование должно отвечать различным потребностям, выраженным развивающимся обществом знаний. В основном это касается образования людей, которым грозит социальная изоляция, т.е. осужденных. Это связано с необходимостью рассмотрения и решения проблем, связанных с такими вопросами, как расширение возможностей СМИ в области генерирования, обработки и создания информации. Цель текста – описать использование электронного обучения в обучении заключенных на примере нескольких избранных европейских стран, таких как Швеция, Норвегия, Польша, Финляндия и Германия. Эти страны были выбраны потому, что они ценят современные технологии в пенитенциарной работе. Они меняют и развивают решения. Цель также состоит в том, чтобы показать, как можно использовать современные технологии в работе с осужденными. Электронное обучение становится инструментом противодействия изоляции. Развитие технологий позволяет поддерживать заключенных и сотрудников подразделений в процессе проведения исправительных мероприятий. Технологии дают возможность вернуться или начать работать, продолжить образование, удовлетворить потребности семьи, жить активной жизнью в соответствии с принципами социальной жизни после выхода из личности. Электронное обучение предлагает реальный шанс для людей, которые находятся в изоляции, получить квалификацию. Социальные вопросы, интересы семьи, личности, бизнеса и современные технологические решения объединены в одном пространстве. Согласованные и эффективные действия являются вызовом для их исполнителей и общества, но также поддерживают процесс реабилитации.

**К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а:** образование, заключенные, электронное обучение, современные технологии, социальная реадaptация.

Daria Becker-Pestka

## **E-learning para presos. Experiencias de Suecia, Noruega, Polonia, Finlandia y Alemania**

### **R e s u m e n**

En el siguiente artículo se presenta una discusión sobre el uso del e-learning en la educación de los convictos. El tema tratado por el autor está relacionado con el hecho de que el uso de los nuevos medios en la educación en la actualidad se ha convertido en una solución común aplicada también para educar a los reclusos. El e-learning es una forma actual de educación y formación profesional. Provee mejoramiento de la cultura contemporánea en la educación aplicada en las instituciones penitenciarias para formar a los condenados. El e-learning ayuda y permite a los reclusos obtener educación y actualizar las diferencias educativas. Como método de educación, requiere autonomía y autodisciplina de los usuarios en el trabajo con el uso de plataformas digitales. La educación debe responder a las diferentes necesidades expresadas por la sociedad del conocimiento en evolución. Se refiere principalmente a la educación de personas en riesgo de exclusión social, p.e. convictos. Se relaciona con la necesidad de atender y resolver problemas que atañen a temas tales como incrementar las posibilidades de los medios en el área de generación, procesamiento y creación de información. El objetivo del texto es describir el uso del e-learning en el aprendizaje de personas encarceladas siguiendo el ejemplo de varios países europeos seleccionados, como Suecia, Noruega, Polonia, Finlandia y Alemania. Estos países fueron seleccionados porque aprecian las tecnologías modernas en el trabajo penitenciario. Cambian y desarrollan las soluciones. Las experiencias en el uso del e-learning en el trabajo penitenciario con reclusos en Suecia, Noruega, Polonia, Finlandia y Alemania son diferentes. El e-learning se está convirtiendo en una herramienta para contrarrestar la exclusión. El desarrollo de la tecnología permite apoyar a los internos y al personal de la unidad en el proceso de acciones correctivas. Las tecnologías brindan la oportunidad de regresar o comenzar a trabajar, continuar la educación, satisfacer las necesidades de la familia y vivir una vida activa de acuerdo con los principios de la vida social después de dejar al individuo. El aprendizaje electrónico ofrece una oportunidad real para que las personas que están aisladas obtengan calificaciones. Los temas sociales, los intereses de la familia, los individuos, los negocios y las soluciones tecnológicas modernas se unen en un área. Las acciones coherentes y eficaces son un desafío para sus ejecutores y la sociedad, pero también apoyan el proceso de rehabilitación.

**P a l a b r a s c l a v e:** educación, presos, e-learning, tecnologías modernas, readaptación social