

Avlona Special Correctional Institution for Young Offenders

From 11 to 14 March 2018, teachers from Halden Prison
Visited Avlona Correctional Institution for Young Offenders in Greece
and participated in “job-shadowing”



11th of March

March 11, we met the school Deputy Director and our contact person Ioannis Papadimitriou and the school Director Petros Damianos in Athens to plan the next 3 days in the best possible way.



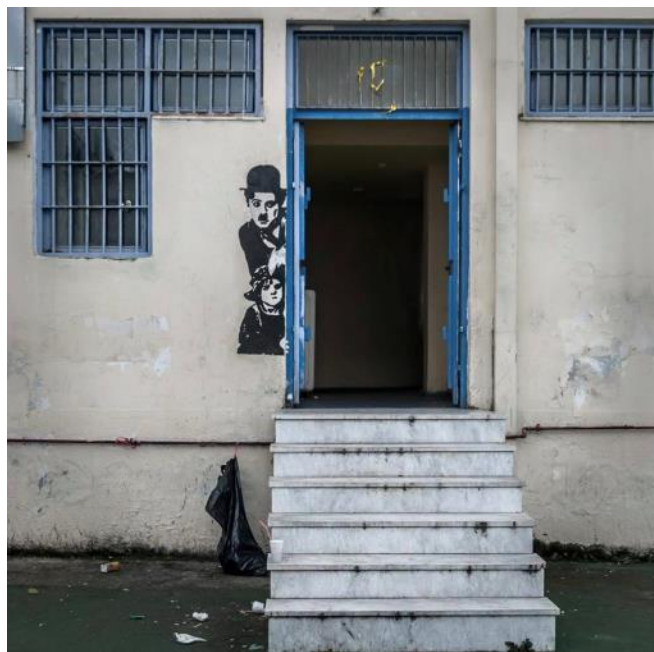
12th of March:



(Avlona Special Correctional Institution for Young Offenders)

March 12th we travelled from Athens at 0800 to meet the management of Avlona Special Correctional Institution for Young Offenders at 0900. A security check was made and we were followed to the school area of the 2nd Gymnasium and Lyceum in Attica, Greece.

Then, Ioannis and Petros had a presentation of the school's history and purpose. They told us how the school in prison was divided into two different school units, primary and secondary schools (Gymnasium and Lyceum) from the Ministry of Education. The school was well-established in Avlona and the collaboration between the two school units was good. The students in the primary school stated that they hoped to progress to the secondary school unit after completing primary education. Petros and Nikos (unit directors) had been there for twenty years and they had influence in decision making and lobbying for change because of their history in the prison. The school's influence was also increased by its many links to the community. The school worked hard to publicise its work with inmates, through the website, newspaper and cultural events and activities. Nikos characterized the school as an institution inside an institution.



The Secondary School's (Gymnasium and Lyceum) curricula provided all the courses of the three Gymnasium classes as well as the full Lyceum school programme. Also, the 3rd grade students took exams to access the University. Educational difficulties inside was multicultural population of students, poor attendance of some students due to: - drug use before imprisonment, - long term absence from school, - psychological instability before and after a trial, - psychological instability before and after a few-day leave, – low self-esteem. The school also emphasized on getting projects like successful student scores in exams-national level, web site development, school newspaper, theatrical activities, cultural activities, communication – cooperation with other schools, sports activities etc.

At the end of the presentation we participated in a student presentation in the yard. They arranged a dance show where we as guests were invited to dance together with students and teachers. This created good contact between us Norwegian, the teachers in Avlona and the inmates. The whole presentation was practiced by teachers and students in advance and there was a good atmosphere where we for a moment forgot that we were in a prison. It also seemed as the students had been looking forward to the performance and to have guests from Norway.

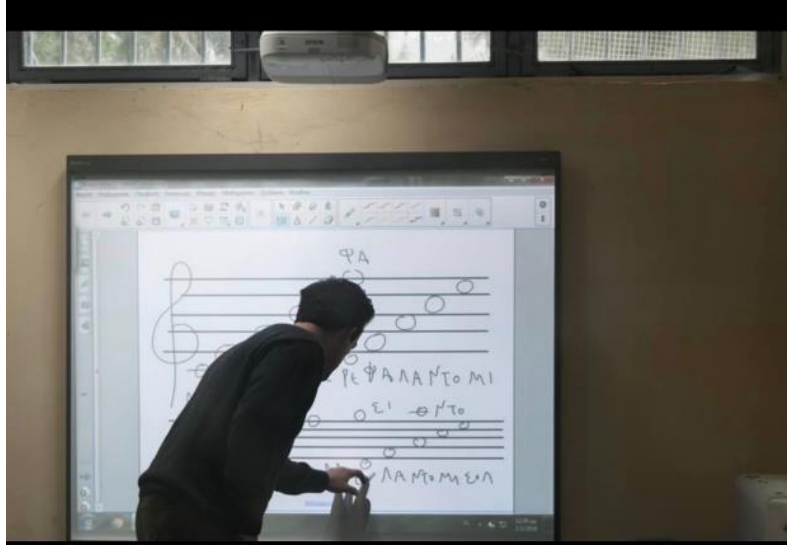


13th of March:

March 13th we met in the prison at 0900 and were divided into groups of two. Each group followed different classes throughout the day to experience subjects and teaching practices to the goals we were presented the day before.

It was very exciting to get an insight into how important art subjects, music and dance were to the students. Ioannis told us how experience in implementation of educational approaches has shown that prison education should include a rich variety of cultural activities. Therefore, a lot of energy was spent on them. The student's participation in these projects enabled them not only to adapt to the school's environment and cooperate with each other, but also helped them in both, psychological and educational aspect.

In art they had projects like theatre, wall painting, mosaic construction, dance, music, online magazine presentation, handcrafts, solar clock construction, collage, paint-drawing etc. We even got to experience how the whole timetable was stopped and where everyone (including ourselves) were taking part in the drawing class for an hour. This was usually done twice a week according to the teachers. This breakdown was explained as more important in a therapeutic focus than in an educational focus.



14th March:

March 14th we met in the prison at 0900 and went into the groups we had been divided into the day before. Each group followed different classes throughout the day to experience subjects and teaching practices to the goals we were presented on Monday.

After the first part of the lesson we were introduced to the primary school and their deputy director Nikos. The primary school was the first one to be founded in a Greek prison. The school operates two shifts: one group of students attend in the first shift and another group in the second. The school had three teachers and a director. Literacy was the key goal of the school and forms the bulk of teaching, alongside computer skills and physical education. In common with the secondary unit at Avlona, the primary school was characterized by the idealism and humanist attitude of the director and teaching staff.

Nikos states that the Avlona school in prison context generated great trust between teachers and inmates. A high level of interpersonal contact with students was required to maintain a secure and safe environment. Problems were resolved between the teachers and students, and calling in the guards to deal with any situation, would always be a last resort. There were very few incidents of violence/fighting within the school according to Nikos and Ioannis. Nikos estimated approximately five incidents in the last eighteen years.

After the classes had finished, we went to a restaurant in Avlona centre to have dinner with the teachers from Avlona.





One of the students gave us a world from the prison before we left: «**Όλα θα είναι εντάξει στο τέλος. Και αν όλα δεν είναι εντάξει, δεν είναι το τέλος**» (Everything will be ok in the end. And if everything is not ok, it's not the end).



To our host: Many thanks for good organization and hospitality.

