

Transforming language disabilities into resources - the RiUscire project

By Vincenzo Picozzi

Demonstrate that it is possible to take advantage of the interlingual and intercultural dimension of the prison context and transforming it into resources, emancipation and re-education. This was the purpose of the transnational conference *Foreign national inmates and prison systems: issues, resources and perspectives* 26-27 May at the Università per Stranieri di Siena in Italy. The conference marked the end of the RiUscire project - winner of the European Language Label. Training courses for foreign detainees, prison staff and teachers working in prisons are of great importance for fostering the coexistence of languages and cultures in prisons.



The conference has been part of the ongoing research aimed at exploring issues related to the teaching and learning of second languages within penitentiary systems, the training of prison workers and teachers, the management of cultural diversity. The macro themes analyzed during the conference were:

- European policies on integration of diversity brought by migrants;
- Management of diversity and of linguistic contacts in marginalized contexts for inmates;
- Measures to counter radicalization leading to violence based on intercultural education.

There have been many attendees to this conference that has seen success - in the two days - of major authority in the sector.

The conference, which took place in two days, was divided into 4 sections for thematic areas:

- Section 1 (May 26) Foreign national detainees and the European penitentiary system;
- Section 2 (May 26) The risk of radicalization in environments with cultural deprivation;
- Section 3 (May 27) Focus on the RiUscire project: Socio-Cultural University Network for Instruction and Retrieval in Prison;
- Section 4 (May 27) Contributions from call for papers.

Section 1, following the greeting of the Rector of the University for Foreigners of Siena Pietro Cataldi and the Vice-President of the Tuscany Region Monica Barni, started with the intervention of the scientific coordinator of RiUscire project, Prof. Antonella Benucci, who presented the project itself. The day began with a first intervention by Frieder Dünkel (Universität Greifswald, Germany) titled "Imprisonment rate and role of foreign inmates (including aspect of treatments)" which enabled us to understand and see specifically the European Foreign detainees. The first section continued with the intervention of the lawyer Dario di Cecca who focused on the presence of foreign detainees in Italy, and then ended with the intervention of Laura Andreini Salerno of Centro Studi Enrico Maria Salerno and with the projection of the shortfilm *Naufragio con spettatore*, which underscored the importance of training and educational activities in prison for a better coexistence and tolerance between detainees and detainees and prisoners.

In the early afternoon section 2 opened, which allowed us to enter more specifically within the prison system itself, for a better comprehension of new difficulties and challenges within it. In this section, Nick Hammond (Co-ordinator Foreign Prison and Probation Expert Group - Europris) spoke about good practices to work with foreign detainees; Massimo Vedovelli (Foreign Universities of Siena), who emphasized migration and multilingualism; Stefano Anastasia (Guarantor of private persons of liberty in the Lazio and Umbria regions); Antonio Fullone (Director of Naples Naples Poggioreale); Ottavio Casarano (CR Padova); Alessandra Bormioli (for DC Director Regina Coeli of Rome); Ida Del Grosso (Female CC Director of Rebibbia of Rome). The second part of this section continued with the speech of Marcelo Aebi (University of Lausanne) on "Foreign inmates and probationers in Europe: Current Situation, Trends and Possible explanations"; Daniela Ermini (Epale Italia Unit) "The importance of educational interventions for adults at risk of social exclusion" and finally Emanuela Del Re (Niccolò Cusano and Roma Tre) "Forms of radicalization among foreign detainees and strategies of prevention".

Section 3 of the following day focused on the project RiUscire. In this regard Prof.ssa Antonella Benucci presented the aim, the research, the methodology and the achievements of the project RiUscire and in addition new possible scenarios for the development of the research in progress. Followed by Marisa Cavalli (Council of Europe), which introduced and analyzed languages and cultures in the service of social inclusion and professional reintegration. With the subsequent interventions of Marilisa Birello (Universitat Autòma de Barcelona) and Vincenzo Picozzi (Otto-Friedrich Universität Bamberg), it was possible to analyze the research more specific - thanks to the RiUscire project - through the analysis of educational activities conducted in Catalonia and in Bavaria. The focus of this section has therefore shifted even more towards language learning in prison through the intervention of Alessandra Bormioli on treatment projects for the inclusion of foreign prisoners;

Giulia Grosso and Ida Ferrari (Università per Stranieri di Siena) presented the L2 courses and the good practices present in jail; And finally the results of the situation in Portugal thanks to the intervention of Manuela Niza Ribeiro (Fundação Fernando Pessoa-Universidade Fernando Pessoa).

In the afternoon, the fourth section begun allowing us to gain a broader vision of what the strengths are, but also the problems of the prison system. Gabriella Da Pra (Comprehensive Institute A.G. Roncalli Rosà) presented the experience of the Italian L2 professionalizing course in the Due Palazzi prison in Padua; Luisa Ravagnani (University of Brescia) described the role of the FNP EXPERT GROUP in the protection of the interests of people recruited abroad; Luisa Cecarini and Lorenzo Sabatini (Sistema Bibliotecario Carcerario Regione Marche) have brought new perspectives of intervention thanks to their contribution to the library system in the Marche Region; Marina Casadellà (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) has presented action-oriented approaches in Catalonia; Paolo Maddonni (Educational Officer Detention Center Porto Azzurro) described and presented new horizons for the life projects of the detainees. The day ended with the intervention of Raymond Siebetchu (University for Foreigners in Siena) on the courses of linguistic-cultural mediation in the penitentiary, analyzing in particular the situation in West Africa. The transnational conference " Foreign national inmates and prison systems: issues, resources and perspectives" ended with a great deal of audience, participants and contents. New ways and new horizons of research and challenge have opened up in the hope that relations between institutions and local realities will become even closer in order to cooperate. The prison system needs to be re-evaluated as a positive function - often being seen unfortunately as a place of social exclusion. Detainees must have a second chance from the community to become a resource for the society itself. Education and vocational courses are therefore the starting point for Europe in order to propose new areas of development on the subject.