

# NEWSLETTER



## STEPS: Supporting Ties in the Education of Prisoners

**EU programme:** Erasmus+ KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices Strategic Partnerships for Adult Education

**Project duration:** 01/11/2018 - 31/08/2021 (34 months)

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# Partners' CV

In this section we introduce you with the partners who are working on STEPs project. This edition put the light on EEPEK.



Dr **Dimitris Kolokotronis** is a founding member and Chairman of the Administrative Board of EEPEK since 2014. He holds a PhD in Informatics and teaching methodologies, B.Sc. degree in Physics, MSc degree from the Department of Computer Science of the University of Sheffield (UK), MA degree in Adult Education Studies and MBA degree in School Management. He has been working as an Information Technology teacher in Secondary Education and as a School Advisor of Informatics. He wrote 5 books about Informatics in Education and over 70 papers for scientific journals and International and National conferences' proceedings.



**Costas Stathopoulos** is currently the Secretary General of the Administrative Board of EEPEK. Since 2014, he coordinates the national and European project activities of EEPEK and is the technical manager of EEPEK's e-Learning platform. Mr. Stathopoulos received his B.Sc. and his M.Sc. in Telecommunications and Networks, from the Department of Computer Science of the University of Crete. Between 1993 and 2001, he worked on numerous EU projects, as a research assistant, in the Computer and Telecommunication Networks sector, under the RACE II and ACTS programmes. He participated in a multinational project consortia, co-authored many projects deliverables and research papers, attended, lead, and organized numerous project events and meetings, and represented project consortia in project audits in the EU. He is also a certified Adult Education Instructor.

# Partners' CV

Dimitris Liovas is a founding member and Vice President of the Administrative Board of EEPEK, as well as the head of the Training Committee. He works as the Head of the Center for Informatics & New Technologies of Primary and Secondary Education for the regional unit of Larissa. He holds a BSc in Electrical & Computer Engineering from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, a M.Sc. in Modern learning environments and production of instructive material from University of Thessaly, Department of Primary Education, and aM.Ed in Adult's Learning from the Hellenic Open University. He is also a PhD student, studying the effect of the spell-check tool in orthographic awareness. He has worked in the frameworks of European action Programmes Pegasus and Leonardo Da Vinci (associate research scientist). He has written more than 20 papers for scientific journals, national and International conferences' proceedings (with a peer reviewing system). Over the last 4 years, he has been responsible for organizing, planning and implementing more than 50 distance learning training programs for EEPEK. He has also organized many International Conferences about Educational Innovation, several hundreds of hours of seminars, many European programs, students' festivals and competitions.



# Interactive revival of an inmate's story in Larisa

They “experienced” the imprisonment and the reintegration!

As of the following month, inmates of detention centers in four European countries will have the opportunity to experience themselves the real story of a detainee, since the first of six digital VR stories is now fact! The movie about G.Ch., a former inmate and trainee at the 2nd Second Chance School of Larissa, called “Together Again” is at the refinement stage and will become the first VR movie to be presented at a prison environment.

Thanks to the EU project STEPs (Erasmus+; Project no.2018-1-EL01-KA204-04787), which is implemented by four stakeholders in the fields of education and reintegration, deriving from four European countries, under the coordination of the Scientific Association for the Promotion of Educational Innovation (EEPEK), the users will be able to move around G.Ch.’s world and interact with virtual characteristics or items, by using the specialized equipment. The users will be able to stay with him in the cell, to serve his sentence, to confront past memories and mistakes and to attempt reintegration, starting from the family environment.



The “psychological presence” of the user, meaning the sensation that he/she is truly immersed/present in what his/her eyes see, is a pioneering attempt with multiple exploitation possibilities. First of all, the person having this experience gains digital skills. He/She learns to “build up” a vocabulary of movements and gestures.



Additionally, the person’s experience takes place in real time and in three dimensions, while he/she has the opportunity to interact with the environment, move around and experience dire situations, using also senses other than sight and hearing.



# Interactive revival of an inmate's story in Larisa



Additionally, the user will realise that the mistakes, the stereotypical perceptions and the experiences of an inmate know no borders. Moreover, anyone who wishes to partake in this experience, will have the chance to contact his/her trainer, share his/her feelings and impressions and even narrate or write down his/her own story. What is more important, however, is the chance for empathy and self-reflection of his/her own choices and decisions through this heavily emotional experience.

The digital VR story was presented last weekend in Larisa, Greece by its creators. Members of EEPEK and trainers of the 2nd Second Chance School of Larissa took part in this unprecedented experience and welcomed the results.



Furthermore, they discussed points for improvement and suggestions regarding its pedagogical exploitation, as well as a timeline up until the pilot running with trainees from the 2nd Second Chance School of Larissa, which are incarcerated at the town's detainment facility. It is noteworthy, that also the second story of a detainee in a prison in Rome, Italy, is at the implementation phase. The rest of the four stories will follow by the end of the project.



# Stories to be converted to VR



This first story is one of a descent into hell. Our protagonist was a metal industry worker, first successful within his company, working up the ladder and reaching the highest post in the hierarchy.

Living outside of Tessaaloniki, Greece, with his wife and two children, the couple one day decided to launch their own business - a small restaurant. Poor accounting put them on a difficult start, but they succeed to overcome it.

However, they hit a wall when the metal company collapsed. He lost his job and their only sustainable income. Their life spiraled down, following a succession of bad choices and misfortune.

As they tried to cope with it by working extra hours at the restaurant, their son got sick. Lacking the money necessary to paid for healthcare, he committed burglary.

Two months later, he was arrested by the police and sentenced to 15 years. Working as a cook in the prison to cope with the sentence, he later appealed. His sentence was reduced to 6 years. The story ends on his return to his family.



Our second protagonist did not have an happy childhood. Child of a wealthy brazilian entrepreneur, one would expect a different situation.

However, her mother and her spend many years living in fear of her father violence. She grew up in a family in which anger and violence were the norm.

Her teenage years show her socializing with classic "bad company". Ignoring the warnings, she quickly involved with drug dealings.

Years of prison, therapy, friends, reflexion on herself and new roles models led to many realisations. Since, her life has improved, but the story does not end here: there is still work to do.

# Third Transnational Meeting



The 3rd TM was initially planned to take place in Cyprus. Due to COVID-19, the 3rd TM of the STEPS project was held online on May 18th and was organised by the coordinator of the Project. The participants of the project were Project managers, Researchers, and Technicians from all partner organisations.

The highlights of the 3rd TM are highlighted below:

- Partners identified the contingency plan of the project; for instance, due to the uncertainty caused by COVID-19 the location of the multiplier event can take place online or in an open amphitheater or in a large conference room, so as the participants will have the appropriate safety distance among them
- The leader of each output has set the next important milestones for all partners
- EEPEK, the project coordinator, has announced that the 1st VR scenario will be ready for testing by all partners in June
- The partners received the first glimpse of the VR scenario after EEPEK had shared with the partners a VR video recording
- CIP, as the leader of dissemination, announced the visual improvements in STEPs website - [www.steps.eepek.gr/](http://www.steps.eepek.gr/)

# Acknowledgement from Kerigma

Since the beginning of the project, Kerigma has collected twenty nine testimonies from prisoners and ex-prisoners who in most cases were very forthcoming about their life stories.

By participating in the STEPS experience, most of them welcomed a process of introspection that contributed to the empowerment of their capacity for self reflection - a fundamental ability in the development and strengthening of their emotional intelligence and self-confidence.

During this process of storytelling and story collection, some Portuguese institutions were kind enough to cooperate with Kerigma and act as a bridge between us and their beneficiaries. Those institutions were Confiar P.F. Portugal, an institution that provides assistance to prisoners, former prisoners and their families; O Companheiro, an association which is not for profit whose main objective is to prevent crime; AMI (Porta Amiga Porto), a Portuguese NGO whose objective is to fight against poverty, social exclusion, underdevelopment, hunger and the consequences of war anywhere in the World; Cáritas Arquidiocesana de Braga whose mission is the Integral Human Development and the defense of the Common Good in society; and lastly, the Prison establishment of Santa Cruz do Bispo (Female) as well as Santa Casa da Misericórdia do Porto, an institution of charity and social assistance with philanthropic and public utility purposes.

In this sense, we want to express our gratitude for their efforts and availability. A huge thanks to everyone who was involved in this process!



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