

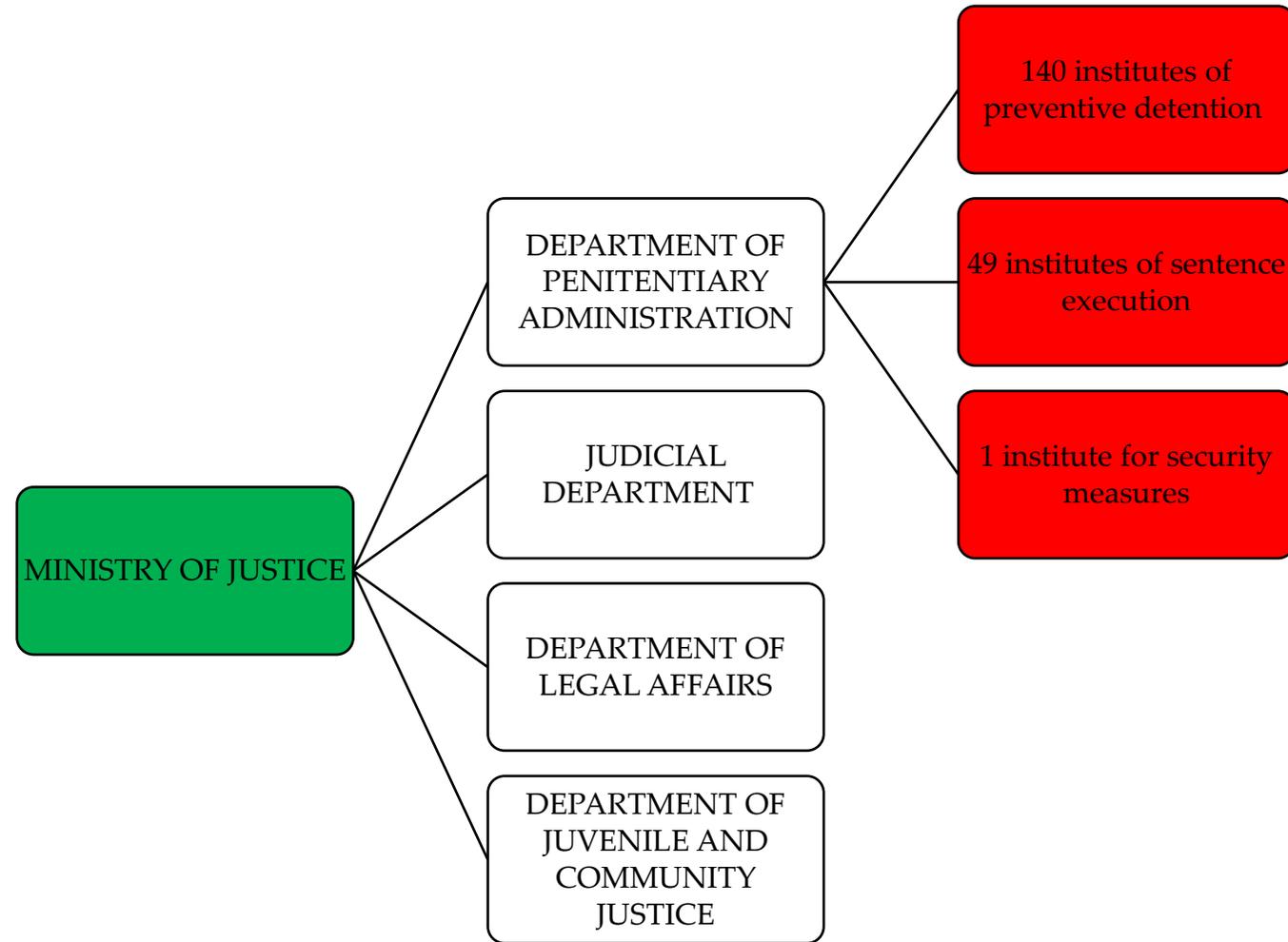
Prison Service in Times of COVID-19:
Impact on Training and Teaching



Ministero della Giustizia



Italian Penitentiary System



Detention: Staff's Objectives

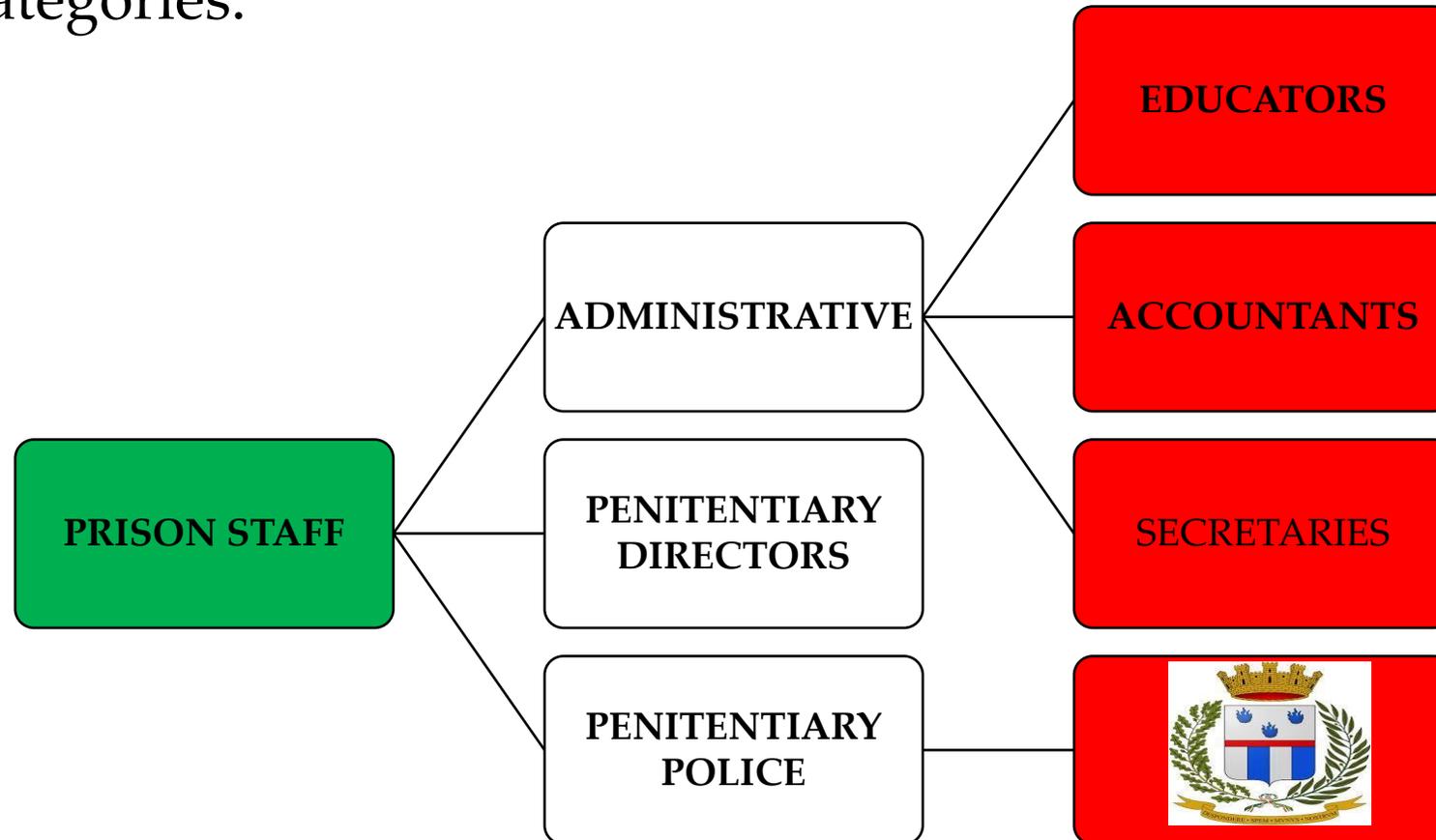


- Rehabilitation and reintegration of the detainee in the society.
- Ensuring the holding of the inmates within detention facilities: detainee's custody - prison staff must ensure that the prisoners do not escape.
- Preserving the physical safety of detainees, thus preventing their deaths or injuries: detainee's protection - prison staff must prevent the detainee's suicide or injuries.

Employees of the Penitentiary Administration



The workforce of the penitentiary administration's department is divided into three main categories:



Doctors, teachers, psychologists... are employees of other administrations



The Training System of the Prison Administration

After entering the competition, everyone attends basic training courses.

Then the Administrative Compartment staff moves on to the new careers through "requalification courses", the Penitentiary Police, through internal or external competitions, followed by technical-professional training courses.

All courses take place partly in the classroom and partly *on the job*, in the workplace.

For both sectors there are other forms of updating and deepening with the help of special projects with European funds. Teachers are generally officials from various administrations, specialists, university professors, magistrates, doctors, sometimes commissioned by private training agencies.



Training During COVID-19

With the Decree of the Prime Minister dated March 4, 2020, the Italian Government has issued the first urgent and necessary measures for the containment and management of the epidemiological emergency caused by COVID-19.

With this Decree, schools, universities, vocational courses, and all the other educational activities were suspended. This is the reason why the pandemic has totally reshaped education: the outbreak of coronavirus upended every single aspect of social life and, in particular, every aspect of training.

Furthermore, The Italian Department of Prison Administration has to respond to this global change, and has done the best to improve the training offer in order to provide distance learning courses.

Distance Learning on a (Public) Platform



Significant use of distance learning on a (public) platform.

Even before Covid, the use of platform modules had been experimental through the "reuse" of public platforms for common and transversal content in the public sector.

The General Directorate for Training has implemented the e-learning platform of the Tuscany Region, with a specific agreement, developing courses of specific interest for the Administration, but also for other potential users of the PA, who were not present in the portal catalog, or were not updated .

Microsoft TEAMS *Platform*



Activation of a course for school staff for the didactic use of the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

This has ensured the best use of technology in order to reach staff at their place of employment, or at their homes through the institute of remote working.

This didactic intervention was also carried out towards the teachers of the Administration: thus, live lessons held in a methodologically adequate way can create an environment for the comparison between the participants, and the teachers can carry out work in small groups, start guided discussions, etc.

Blended Modality

In regards to the initial training courses for agents, face-to-face training was not completely abandoned and a blended modality was chosen. That includes in-person classes held in schools, where all health protocols for the prevention of contagion are followed, and a training phase (synchronous or asynchronous) from their respective domiciles. Safety protocols have also been defined for the preparatory training aspects for firearm use, which in any case, allowed to carry out the exercises and issue the suitability.





Tests

- However, the training parts involving prolonged physical contact (i.e. personal defense) were inevitably reduced, as well as the part of the internship in prisons which was not allowed until the situation normalized.

Naturally, operational testimonies were intensified and only brief and limited visits to prisons were made, with the purpose of becoming familiar with the context.

- The tests (or exams) were held remotely through interviews that replaced written tests



Conclusions

The complexity of the role that the Italian Prison Administration has in our society should not be underestimated. The Italian Prison Administration is entrusted with a diverse set of tasks, and plays an important role in the criminal justice system.

The pandemic emergency has certainly made everything more complex and difficult, even in the field of staff training.

However, the Italian Prison Administration is responsible for the way in which it exercises the powers entrusted to them. This can only happen through serious training and updating of prison staff.

This is in order to protect the fundamental rights of individuals and to prevent serious human rights violations from being committed against detainees that the Italian Prison Administration has the duty to protect and re-educate.



Thank you for your attention.

Dirigente agg. Dott. Vincenzo Ferdinando Maria Abbondante