

REFLECTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS OF REHABILITATION – THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL APPROACH

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Summary. Contemporary rehabilitation is evolving dynamically in response to changing social and penitentiary realities. It has shifted from a punitive, isolation-based model toward a supportive approach focused on reintegration, personal development, and strengthening social competences. Modern practices emphasize educational, psychological, and vocational interventions, addressing not only long-term inmates but also those in temporary detention. Despite progress in the Polish system, challenges such as social exclusion and limited post-release support remain. The article highlights the role of rehabilitation—especially work—in preventing recidivism and outlines recommendations to improve its effectiveness in current social conditions.

Keywords: contemporary rehabilitation, social reintegration, penal system, educational interventions.

REFLECȚII ASUPRA PROBLEMELOR CONTEMPORANE ALE REABILITĂRII – ABORDARE TEORETICĂ ȘI PRACTICĂ

Rezumat. Reabilitarea contemporană evoluează dinamic ca răspuns la realitățile sociale și penitenciare în schimbare. Aceasta s-a deplasat de la un model punitiv, bazat pe izolare, către o abordare de sprijin concentrată pe reintegrare, dezvoltare personală și consolidarea competențelor sociale. Practicile moderne pun accent pe intervenții educaționale, psihologice și vocaționale, adresându-se nu doar deținuților pe termen lung, ci și celor aflați în detenție temporară. În ciuda progreselor din sistemul polonez, persistă provocări precum excluziunea socială și sprijinul post-eliberare limitat. Articolul evidențiază rolul reabilitării - în special al muncii - în prevenirea recidivei și conturează recomandări pentru îmbunătățirea eficacității acesteia în condițiile sociale actuale.

Cuvinte cheie: reabilitare contemporană, reintegrare socială, sistem penitenciar, intervenții educaționale.

Situation of Polish prisoners - comparative analysis of selected aspects from 2013 and 2024

The situation of prisoners in penitentiary units is the subject of multifaceted analyses both on the basis of social sciences and as part of public debate and penitentiary policy. Socio-political changes, changing legal conditions, growing awareness of human rights and the development of rehabilitation as a pedagogical sub-discipline influenced the evolution of perception and treatment of persons deprived of liberty. Over the last decade, significant changes have been noticeable in the living conditions of inmates, access to health care, education, professional activation, as well as the forms and quality of rehabilitation interactions. It is justified to make a comparative analysis of selected aspects of the situation of persons deprived of liberty in Poland in the perspective of changes taking place in 2013 and 2024, taking into account the available empirical data and the observed socio-penitentiary trends. The following areas were analyzed: overcrowding of prisons,

availability of rehabilitation and therapeutic programs, recidivism rates, employment of convicts. Particular attention was also paid to infrastructure issues, legislative changes and the activities of the Polish Prison Service for the humanization of punishment. The analysis undertaken serves not only to show the directions of changes taking place in the penitentiary system, but also to indicate problem areas that require further systemic action and scientific reflection. The summary of data from 2013 and 2024 makes it possible to identify progress and barriers limiting the effectiveness of penitentiary interactions in Poland. It is worth noting that data from 2024 indicate that with a population of about 38 million citizens, the number of inmates in prisons reached about 70,000, which is an important reference point in the analysis of the effectiveness and proportionality of the penal system.

Table 1. Structure of the juvenile and adult inmates population in 2013

Date	Total		Temporarily Arrested				Convicted				Punished			
	2012	2013	adolescents		adults		adolescents		adults		adolescents		adults	
			2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
31.03	85 245	86 049	899	747	7 118	6 133	2 207	2 090	74 414	76 432	48	50	559	597
30.06	84 187	84 261	832	637	6 690	5 984	2 137	2 004	73 917	75 011	49	37	562	588
30.09	84 175	83 293	786	637	6 696	6 238	2 080	1 952	74 046	73 833	50	41	517	592
31.12	84 156	78 994	748	611	6 261	5 978	2 071	1 733	74 586	69 862	31	54	459	756

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2013*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2014

Table 2. Structure of the juvenile and adult inmates population in 2024

Date	Total		Temporarily Arrested				Convicted				Punished			
	2023	2024	adolescents		adults		adolescents		adults		adolescents		adults	
			2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024	2023	2024
31.03	78 113	74 042	432	430	7 939	7 858	652	606	68 045	63 953	13	34	1 032	1 161
30.06	77 934	72 242	431	405	7 974	7 850	614	593	67 951	62 301	22	23	942	1 070
30.09	76 204	70 316	429	432	8 242	7 635	618	506	66 068	60 656	12	18	835	1 069
31.12	73 822	69 137	416	392	8 014	7 193	595	508	63 741	59 961	20	19	1 036	1 064

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2024*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2024

As it results from the data analysis (Table 1, Table 2) a decrease in the number of prisoners by 9,857 between 2013 (78,994 inmates) and 2024 (69,137 inmates) indicates a significant reduction in the prison population in Poland. The reduction of the detention rate from about 221 to 195 per 100,000 inhabitants suggests changes in criminal and penitentiary policy, which can be interpreted as, for example, increasing the use of alternative forms of punishment, such as: electronic surveillance, community service or conditional suspension of imprisonment, modification of the practice of sentencing by courts, with greater emphasis on freedom measures, and more effective use of the institution of conditional early release. Reducing the number of inmates may bring benefits both from the point of view of humanization of the penal system and rationalization of the

costs of its functioning. It also promotes the improvement of prison conditions, limiting the phenomenon of overcrowding of penitentiary units, which amounts to 91.27%, although on a global scale this number is not alarming, it still remains at the upper limit of the capacity of these facilities [1]. Unfortunately, this does not allow for effective rehabilitation interactions. The changes should lead to a greater transformation of the punishment enforcement model, in which isolation ceases to be the dominant instrument of penal response, and the role of measures supporting social reintegration and counteracting return to crime is growing.

Education carried out in conditions of penitentiary isolation is one of the key forms of rehabilitation interactions, the aim of which is to support the process of social reintegration and counteract the return to crime. Educational programs conducted in prisons include both formal education (at various levels) and non-formal education - vocational courses or competence training, aimed at equipping persons deprived of their liberty with knowledge and skills conducive to social adaptation after finishing their sentence.

Table 3. Prison schools and school wards in Polish penitentiary institutions in the 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 school years

Specification	Number of schools		Number of branches	
	in the school year		in the school year	
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2011-2012	2012-2013
Total	51	63	150	190
primary schools	3	2	4	4
junior high school	9	10	18	23
basic vocational schools	18	18	88	55
vocational technician	8	9	15	18
post-secondary schools	3	3	7	6
general high schools	10	21	18	42
qualifying vocational courses	x	x	x	42

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2013*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2014

The analysis of data from Tables 3 and 4 on education functioning at prisons in Poland reveals significant changes in the structure and educational objectives of rehabilitation interventions. In 2013, the educational offer included a wider range of institutions, including primary schools, junior high schools, primary vocational schools and general secondary schools, which suggested a differentiated approach to the educational needs of the prison population. The comparison from 2024 shows a clear focus on general education (mainly high school) and a significant increase in the role of qualifying vocational courses (from 42 to 160 branches in 2024). Such a tendency indicates a shift in emphasis from classical formal education to short-term forms of training, aimed at gaining

practical professional qualifications facilitating the social and professional reintegration of inmates.

**Table 4. Prison schools and school wards in penitentiary institutions
in the school years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025**

Specification	Number of schools in the school year		Number of branches in the school year	
	2023-2024	2024/2025	2023-2024	2024/2025
Total	22	22	196	202
primary schools	6	5	6	5
junior high school	X	X	X	X
basic vocational schools*	X	X	X	X
vocational technician	X	X	X	X
post-secondary schools	0	0	0	0
general high schools	16	17	35	37
qualifying vocational courses	X	X	155	160

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2024*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2024

The limitation of the number of types of schools (lack of junior high schools, basic vocational schools and post-secondary schools in the data from 2024) can be interpreted in the context of educational reforms (2017, junior high schools were abolished) and the changing needs of the labor market, which encourage the strengthening of the importance of vocational and competence training in penitentiary interactions. From the perspective of rehabilitation effectiveness, the shift of educational priorities from a wide spectrum of formal education to purposeful, practical forms of vocational education is consistent with contemporary trends in penitentiary policy. It is worth noting the relatively stable number of inmates taking up education in prison schools and outside the structure of penitentiary units. In the 2012/2013 school year, the number of people deprived of liberty participating in organized education was 4,026, while in the 2024/2025 school year, 4,722 participants were recorded. These data indicate that there have been no significant changes in the interest in formal general education among inmates over the decade. A much more dynamic increase was recorded in the area of participation in qualifying vocational courses – from 1,022 people in the 2012/2013 school year to 3,870 in 2024/2025. This may indicate the growing importance of education aimed at quickly acquiring specific professional competences and increasing the chances of social reintegration and taking up employment after serving a sentence. Qualifying vocational courses as a shorter, more flexible form and adapted to the realities of the labor market turn out to be particularly attractive for the prison population, especially in the context of striving for re-adaptation and improving socio-occupational status after leaving prison.

Work among inmates is another important factor relating to the resocialization process. *Work treated as a means of influencing the inmate should be socially useful, voluntary, consistent with the inmates' capabilities, and, what is very important, emphasizing the inmate's subjectivity* [2, p.413]. Employment of persons deprived of

liberty is one of the key pillars of the penitentiary system, performing both educational and readaptive functions. The comparative analysis of statistical data from 2013 and 2024 allows for the identification of significant quantitative changes in the field of professional activation of inmates in Poland.

Table 5. Employment of inmates in Polish penitentiary institutions in 2013

Date	Number of inmates			Number of employed				Commonness of employed convicted and punished
	Total	temporarily arrested	convicted punished	TOTAL	for a fee		free of charge	
					temporarily arrested	convicted punished	convicted punished	
31.01.2013	85 772	6 937	78 835	8 863	16	8 847	14 075	29,1%
28.02.2013	86 303	6 869	79 434	8 920	16	8 904	14 181	29,1%
31.03.2013	86 049	6 880	79 169	8 960	17	8 943	14 385	29,5%
30.04.2013	85 702	6 722	78 980	9 146	18	9 128	14 948	30,5%
31.05.2013	84 893	6 686	78 207	9 302	16	9 286	15 137	31,2%
30.06.2013	84 261	6 621	77 640	9 337	18	9 319	15 452	31,9%
31.07.2013	84 123	6 575	77 548	9 556	16	9 540	15 603	32,4%
31.08.2013	83 610	6 767	76 843	9 848	19	9 829	15 292	32,7%
30.09.2013	83 293	6 875	76 418	9 275	17	9 258	16 084	33,2%
31.10.2013	83 295	6 927	76 368	8 951	18	8 933	15 946	32,6%
30.11.2013	80 482	6 922	73 560	9 087	15	9 072	15 519	33,4%
31.12.2013	78 994	6 589	72 405	8 968	19	8 949	14 879	32,9%
On average in 2013	83 898	6 781	77 117	9 184	17	9 167	15 125	31,5%
On average in 2012	84 339	7 588	76 811	9 426	26	9 400	13 958	30,4%

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2013*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2014

Table 6. Employment of inmates in Polish penitentiary institutions in 2024

Date	Number of inmates			Number of employed			Commonness of employed convicted and punished	
	Total	temporarily arrested	convicted punished	TOTAL	for a fee			free of charge
temporarily arrested					convicted punished	convicted punished		
31.01.2024	74 548	8 345	66 203	21 019	3	21 016	19 304	60,9%
29.02.2024	74 417	8 259	66 158	20 285	2	20 283	18 828	59,1%
31.03.2024	74 042	8 288	65 754	19 600	2	19 598	18 533	58,0%
30.04.2024	73 670	8 201	65 469	19 285	2	19 283	18 181	57,2%
31.05.2024	72 900	8 255	64 645	19 061	2	19 059	17 435	56.5%
30.06.2024	72 242	8 255	63 987	18 664	3	18 661	17 289	56.2%
31.07.2024	71 771	8 166	63 605	18 443	3	18 440	16 884	55.5%
31.08.2024	70 927	8 160	62 767	18 466	3	18 463	16 294	55.4%
30.09.2024	70 316	8 067	62 249	18 506	3	18 503	15 710	55.0%
31.10.2024	70 418	8 075	62 343	18 524	6	18 518	15 476	54.5%
30.11.2024	69 682	7 931	61 751	18 344	4	18 340	14 975	54.0%
31.12.2024	69 137	7 585	61 552	17 325	5	17 320	15 145	52.7%
On average in 2024	72 006	8 132	63 874	18 960	3	18 957	17 005	56.3%
On average in 2023	76 284	8 484	67 800	20 874	7	20 868	20 908	61.6%

Source: *Annual Statistical Information for 2024*, Ministry of Justice,
Central Board of the Prison Service, Warsaw 2024

The comparison of the data shows a clear increase in the employment rate among persons deprived of their liberty – from 31% in 2013 to an average of 56% in 2024. At the same time, a significant increase in the number of inmates performing paid work was recorded, which proves the deliberate modification of the penitentiary policy, aimed at the development of forms of market employment. This change is the result of, among others, programs implemented after 2016 to increase the employment of prisoners, including the construction of production halls at penitentiary units, expanding cooperation with external contractors and the introduction of instruments supporting paid employment (e.g. co-financing of salaries by the Fund for the Professional Activation of Convicts and the Development of Prison Labor Facilities). Unfortunately, there have been many allegations recently against the model based on production halls. One of them is the instrumentalization of prisoners' work – reducing it primarily to economic benefits, both for penitentiary institutions and external contractors. Work in halls often takes the form of monotonous, repetitive manual activities that do not develop significant professional competences. As a result, there may be a formal activation, which does not translate into a real increase in the prisoners' chances of employment after leaving the penitentiary unit. In this case, it seems important to recommend the employment of prisoners outside the walls of penitentiary units - this is an important element of a modern approach to rehabilitation and social reintegration [2, p. 383]. Outside work not only strengthens the professional competences of inmates, but also promotes their readaptation through contact with the open environment, developing independence and building employee identity. However, the implementation of such solutions requires meeting certain legal, organizational and social conditions. This is one of the forms of preventing the phenomenon of so-called recidivism. The persistently high rate of return of persons previously punished to penitentiary units is a worrying phenomenon, proving the limited effectiveness of current rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Statistical data on return to prisons allow to assess the effectiveness of penitentiary policies and to identify trends in penitentiary recidivism. In **2013**, the total number of inmates returning to prisons amounted to 38,453 **people**, while in **2024** this number fell to **37,718 people**. A reduction of **735 people** (about 1.9%) over a decade indicates a small but significant improvement in counteracting the repetition of crimes. It is disturbing that the number of returns to prisons of women from (from 323 to 838) is increasing, which indicates changes in the socio-demographic structure of recidivism. Potential causes of penitentiary recidivism are, for example, insufficient effectiveness of rehabilitation programs - despite a certain decrease in the number of recidivists, the number of people returning to prison is still high, which may indicate the need for further development of specialized rehabilitation programs. Another reason is insufficient social and professional integration after dismissal, which is associated with the lack of effective post-penitentiary support mechanisms. The next are socio-economic factors - social stigma,

barriers to the labor market and low social integration are conducive to returning to criminal activity and re-entering prisons.

A comparison of data from 2013 and 2024 indicates moderate changes in penitentiary recidivism. Reducing the total number of recidivists, especially in the multiple category, suggests positive directions in rehabilitation and prevention activities. At the same time, further challenges relate primarily to the high number of primary recidivists and the significant increase in the participation of women, which requires detailed qualitative research and adequate penitentiary and post-penitentiary policies. In the long term, it will be necessary to deepen reintegration strategies, intensify interinstitutional cooperation and develop the social support system, which may contribute to further reducing the rates of penitentiary recidivism.

Barriers to effective rehabilitation of inmates in prisons

By organizing the above reflections, it is possible to propose a specific decalogue of barriers, the removal of which should be sought not only by prisons, but also by all other institutions dealing with the rehabilitation impact in any aspect:

1. Overcrowding of prisons - difficulties in managing prisons

Overcrowding generates huge challenges related to logistics and administration of facilities, leading to the need to reorganize accommodation, limited supervision of inmates, as well as difficult planning of rehabilitation activities. Too many inmates prevent an individual approach to rehabilitation. The success of penitentiary management requires both optimization of the decision-making process and skilful management of human resources. Effective rehabilitation, limiting the negative effects of prison isolation and supporting social reintegration are only possible if the penitentiary staff is properly selected, trained and supported by a flexible and integrated organizational approach [3].

2. Low intrinsic motivation of convicts to change

Some inmates do not see the need to change their behavior or do not believe in the possibility of improving their situation. The reasons for the low intrinsic motivation of convicts should be seen in a number of factors, both individual and environmental. Individual determinants include deficits in self-esteem, lack of faith in the ability to make a change, and insufficient skills to cope with stress and failures. Environmental factors, on the other hand, include negative patterns and group pressure in the prison environment, limited opportunities to achieve one's own goals, and inappropriate conditions of punishment that can strengthen feelings of helplessness and frustration. Low intrinsic motivation results in reduced effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and increases the risk of recidivism. In this context, actions aimed at strengthening internal motivation by individualizing the approach to inmates, developing their social and emotional competences and creating an environment supporting self-development processes are

crucial. Educational, therapeutic and training programs should be designed to arouse genuine interest of convicts, give them a sense of agency and enable them to achieve small successes that can significantly increase their motivation for further change.

3. Insufficient number of specialists (psychologists, counsellors, therapists), inadequate competences of educators

Limited human resources reduce the quality and availability of rehabilitation programs, cause inadequate interpersonal relationships between educators and inmates. The penitentiary staff struggles with chronic stress and excessive burden of duties, which results in occupational burnout, deterioration of the quality of work and staffing difficulties, but most importantly, it is not conducive to their mental health. The introduction of alternative methods of punishment (e.g. electronic surveillance) should be considered.

4. Social stigma after leaving prison

Former convicts often encounter distrust and prejudice, which makes it difficult for them to find a job, housing or rebuild relationships. Social stigma after leaving prison results mainly from established negative stereotypes about convicted persons, which are perceived as a threat to social order and security. These stereotypes lead to situations in which former prisoners face rejection, difficulties in obtaining employment, lack of trust on the part of the local community and problems with access to basic social services such as housing or social assistance. Counteracting stigmatization requires action at both the individual and local community level. It is also important to provide institutional support, providing former convicts with access to employment [2, pp. 413], psychological support and developing social and professional skills that will facilitate their functioning after leaving prison.

5. Lack of support after release

People leaving prison often do not have access to social assistance, counselling, housing or family contact. Lack of support after leaving prison is a significant barrier to the effective social reintegration of former prisoners. Solving this problem requires the implementation of systemic, well-coordinated actions that will provide adequate assistance to former inmates and facilitate their return to society. The solution to this problem may be a proposal to appoint an assistant to a person leaving prison who would support the inmate in adapting to life in the wild [4].

6. Negative impact of the prison subculture

The pressure of the prison environment may perpetuate criminal behavior and hinder participation in rehabilitation activities. The prison subculture, based on a specific system of norms, values and hierarchy, often stands in opposition to the official educational and rehabilitation purposes of prisons. Membership in the prison subculture is usually associated with the need to comply with informal rules, which results in the adoption of

antisocial attitudes, consolidation of criminal identity and denial of the authority of penitentiary staff. This is a strong phenomenon among first-time offenders, juveniles and those who do not have strong social ties in the wild [5]. This makes it difficult to conduct effective educational and therapeutic interactions, and it is also a barrier to establishing relationships based on trust between inmates and staff. Moreover, after leaving prison, people deeply internalized in the prison subculture often have difficulty adapting to the norms of social life, which increases the risk of returning to crime. It is important to organize the penitentiary space in such a way as to limit the possibility of consolidating the prison subculture, e.g. by separating inmates according to the degree of demoralization and supporting positive behavioral patterns.

7. Health problems and addictions

Many convicts suffer from mental disorders or addictions that hinder their functioning and cooperation. The analysis of the quarterly data of the Penitentiary Office of the Central Board of the Prison Service for 2024 allows to draw important conclusions regarding the characteristics of the population of prisoners under therapy in penitentiary institutions and organizational problems related to their treatment. In the analyzed period, a stabilization of the number of people staying in therapeutic wards was observed (3,377 people as at 31 March and 3,310 people at the end of December 2024). The number of women decreased in less than a year from 201 to 179, which may indicate the dynamics of changes in therapeutic needs in the population of inmates. The largest group were prisoners with non-psychotic mental disorders and people with mental retardation (decrease from 1620 to 1567 people). The second largest group were people addicted to alcohol (1187-1140 people), which confirms the importance of drug treatment as an important element of penitentiary interactions. On the other hand, people with sexual preference disorders (approx. 440–450 people) and addicts of psychoactive substances (570-603 people) maintained a relatively stable numerical level, indicating the permanence of these problems in the penitentiary population. A significant organizational problem turns out to be a significant number of prisoners qualified for therapeutic wards, but staying outside them (approx. 850–900 people). Among the main reasons, waiting for transport dominated (more than 660 cases per quarter). This number signals logistical problems and possible deficits in the organization and management of penitentiary transport, which negatively affects the continuity and effectiveness of the therapeutic process. The functioning of an alternative therapeutic system implemented outside specialized departments is noticeable. The number of people undergoing such treatment decreased from 793 to 723 during the year. This group was dominated by prisoners addicted to alcohol (428–357 people) and psychoactive substances (354–365 people). The variable participation of women (77–100 people) is also important, which indicates the potential dynamics of addiction problems in the female prisoner population. A very low share of people with mental disorders and

physical disabilities outside the wards may indicate a preference for specialized therapeutic units for these categories of convicts.

Data for 2024 indicate a clear stability of the structure of therapeutic needs in penitentiary units in Poland. The main problems are addictions to alcohol and psychoactive substances as well as non-psychotic disorders. Logistics, especially transport, remain an important challenge, which affects the effectiveness of therapeutic interactions. The development of alternative forms of therapy carried out outside specialist wards should also be continued, while ensuring the appropriate quality and continuity of therapeutic interactions.

8. Lack of access to vocational education and training

Limited opportunities to study and gain professional qualifications reduce the chances of employment after getting out of prison. The process of rehabilitation of prisoners in prisons in Poland is based on the assumption of preparing them to function in society after leaving the penitentiary unit. Vocational education and training are key instruments enabling prisoners to acquire the knowledge and practical skills necessary for effective social and professional integration. Nevertheless, despite the awareness of the importance of these activities, there are still serious deficits in the availability of education and training in Polish penitentiaries.

Lack of access or significant restrictions in the participation of inmates in formal education, as well as in specialized vocational courses, may [6, p. 289] result from insufficient educational infrastructure and staff limitations of penitentiary institutions. In addition, a significant problem remains the mismatch of educational offers to the current needs of the labor market, which leads to a situation in which even participation in available forms of education does not translate into an increase in the employability of former prisoners.

The consequence of this state of affairs is to maintain the phenomenon of social exclusion of people after leaving prison. Lack of adequate vocational training makes it difficult for former prisoners to obtain stable employment, which significantly increases the risk of returning to crime. Thus, limited access to vocational education and training directly contributes to the increase in penitentiary recidivism rates, weakening the effectiveness of the entire rehabilitation system.

The conclusions drawn from the conducted analyzes clearly indicate the need for systemic changes, including an increase in financial outlays on penitentiary education, improvement of didactic infrastructure, as well as better integration of the training offer with the current needs of the labor market. In addition, the development of cooperation between penitentiary units and labor market institutions, the vocational education sector and social organizations is of key importance, which would allow to more effectively

counteract the phenomenon of socio-occupational marginalization of people leaving prisons.

9. Employment as a barrier to rehabilitation – between forced labour and the lack of transfer of competences

The conditions of employment of detainees, including the level of remuneration, which significantly deviates from the standards in force on the free labor market, are also criticized. Inmates are often employed at rates lower than the national minimum wage (although they are formally guaranteed a minimum hourly rate), which may lead to a situation of de facto economic exploitation. Although employment is formally voluntary, inmates often take up work for material reasons, without a real possibility to choose the type of occupation.

The employment system based on mass production does not sufficiently take into account the individual predispositions, qualifications and professional potential of convicts. There are no mechanisms of competence diagnosis and real planning of professional paths in the course of serving a sentence, which leads to a situation in which the work performed in a penitentiary is not related to the possibilities of the inmate on the labor market after release.

The implementation of the program for the construction of production halls is associated with specific macroeconomic goals – limiting the costs of maintaining convicts and obtaining funds for the functioning of prisons. Such a strategy may weaken the rehabilitation function of work if employment becomes an end in itself, detached from the wider educational, educational and social context.

Although the development of production halls and the increase in the level of employment of inmates can be interpreted as a manifestation of the modernization of the penitentiary system, critical reflection indicates the need to deepen the function of rehabilitation work. It is necessary to move away from the model of low-paid and unskilled work, in favor of an individualized, competent approach to professional activation, supported by real education, career counseling and monitoring the fate of former convicts on the labor market.

10. Insufficient cooperation between the prison service and aid institutions (NGOs, OPS, pup)

The effectiveness of the process of rehabilitation and social reintegration of people leaving prison depends to a large extent on the quality and scope of cooperation between the Prison Service and institutions operating in the field of social support, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Social Welfare Centers (OPS) and District Labor Offices (pup). However, the current state of this cooperation indicates numerous deficits and shortcomings that significantly reduce the effectiveness of rehabilitation and post-penitentiary activities.

Empirical analyses and reports on the functioning of the penitentiary system highlight a number of problems in cooperation between the mentioned entities, including the lack of a unified, systemic model of information exchange and coordination of activities. In practice, this cooperation is often incidental, based more on individual initiatives than on formalised mechanisms and procedures. The lack of regular working meetings, insufficient awareness of mutual competences and limited knowledge of penitentiary staff about the available possibilities of institutional support result in fragmented and inconsistent action for prisoners and former prisoners.

Another important factor is the limited availability of specialized support services provided by aid institutions for former prisoners. Due to the burden of administrative and security duties, the Prison Service often does not have sufficient resources to effectively mediate in directing people leaving prisons to appropriate assistance facilities. At the same time, institutions such as NGOs, pup or OPS indicate a lack of systemic support, financial restrictions and procedural problems in the implementation of activities addressed to this particularly difficult group of recipients.

From the point of view of social sciences and penitentiary practice, the main conclusion is the need to create an integrated cooperation model that would include both procedural and organizational aspects as well as specific mechanisms for information exchange and operational support. It is also important to implement cyclical training and educational programs for the staff of aid institutions and the Prison Service, which would allow to increase the effectiveness of activities supporting the social reintegration of former inmates, which could positively reduce the risk of penitentiary recidivism.

Conclusions

In the social space in Poland, there are still voices undermining the legitimacy of rehabilitation activities against persons deprived of their liberty. These opinions are often based on the belief that rehabilitation does not bring the expected results, and the allocation of public funds to it is not justified by real educational effects. This type of narrative, largely perpetuated by the media message, has its source not only in social emotions, but also in the real institutional and functional shortcomings of the penitentiary system. Despite the long tradition of rehabilitation thought in Poland, we are still dealing with low efficiency of the system of educational interactions, which is associated with both limited access to modern forms of education and vocational training, as well as insufficient modernization of prison infrastructure. Rehabilitation processes develop too slowly, and positive changes are still diffuse and do not translate into satisfactory indicators of social reintegration.

In particular, the importance of systemic barriers such as overcrowding of prisons, lack of individualization of interactions, insufficient post-penitentiary support and a limited

number of places in educational and therapeutic programs is emphasized. Despite the existence of many initiatives – e.g. psychological consultations, career counseling, group classes or the possibility of continuing education – access to these activities is sometimes limited, and their quality and diversity often do not meet the real needs of inmates.

The key problem is also insufficient consideration of the subjectivity of convicts in the process of social rehabilitation. There is a lack of modern methods of working with an individual's resources, such as social competence training, emotional management, self-regulatory techniques or psychotherapy. Attention should also be paid to the deficit of interdisciplinary cooperation – the environment of specialists (rehabilitation educators, psychologists, sociologists, criminologists) is not systematically involved in the creation of rehabilitation policies, which significantly weakens their quality and practical adequacy. Another important thread is the low popularity of alternative forms of punishment, such as probation or the environmental model of rehabilitation, which – despite positive examples from abroad – still function marginally in the Polish criminal justice system.

Therefore, the need for systemic reforms in the spirit of the therapeutic and compensatory model is postulated, taking into account the individual needs of convicts, their psychological situation, motivation to change and the importance of education and work as tools of social integration. The criminological and psychological diagnosis of convicts also seems to be important as a condition for effective planning of the process of interactions.

The recommendations proposed in the text – although in some places idealistic – may be a real inspiration for the development of a modern approach to rehabilitation in Poland. Taking into account the humanistic and subjective paradigm, based on dialogue, support and creating alternatives to the criminal environment, may contribute to reducing the risk of recidivism and improving the quality of life of people leaving penitentiary units. Thus, rehabilitation activities gain not only an educational sense, but also a social and economic one.

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