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MODERN CHALLENGES TO THE SUCCESSFUL RESOCIALIZATION OF PRISONERS IN BULGARIA

Abstract: The present article examines the key problems, accompanying the process of resocialization of prisoners in Bulgaria-low educational status, lack of vocational training, inadequate or no work experience, lack of habits for systematic work.

Key words: resocialization, prisoners, key problems.

These days there are a large number of research studies and theoretical discussions focused on overcoming the weaknesses of the existent penitentiary institutions. The necessity of adoption a European prison model is being widely discusses across Europe so that these defects are eliminated.

The possibilities for accommodating prisoners in individual cells, guaranteeing good material conditions, significance of the activities for overcoming de-socialization, renouncing the idea of solitary confinement/isolation as a form of imprisonment, strict observation of the prisoner’s right of healthcare, family life protection, protection of prisoner’s personal relationships, etc., are pointed out as main characteristics of the European prison model.

The results from the research studies carried out in a number of EU – member states show that the most important indicator for the role of the

imprisonment sentence is the degree into which the prisoner is resocialized in society after the punishment is over.

A large number of the social workers in the EU penitentiary institutions, Bulgaria including, point out that prevention and resocialization are main tasks in their work along with the application of programmes focused on stimulating these process.

Crime commitment should be seen as a clear indication for a problem with the socialization of the individual, which in particular means damaged connections of this individual with the main socializing institutions under whose influence this individual is, i.e. family, school, society in general. From this point of view, resocialization should be seen as a set of interventions of various nature (pedagogical, psychological, medical, etc.), aiming at overcoming the deficiencies arisen in the previous stages of the entire process of socialization.

In psychology, the term "resocialization" has been introduced by the American social psychologists A. Kennedy and D. Kerber to define the process of the individual's secondary inclusion into the sociocultural environment due to deficiencies in his/her socialization or as a result of a change in his/her sociocultural environment. Anthony Giddens defines resocialization as a "kind of a personality change where the mature individual adopts a behavior different from his/her prior inherent behavior" [1, p.703]. T. Predov looks at resocialization as a prophylactic activity. [2]

T. Minev defines resocialization as a process which assists the secondary inclusion of the individuals into the socium, after they have been temporary excluded due to various reasons: social, moral, personality, legal, etc., According to the same author, within the meaning of resocialization, in accordance with the nature of the social adaptors, provisionally four interrelated elements can be differentiated, i.e. :

- Domestic resocialization can have a crucial importance in each individual case. It suggests providing the social minimum, satisfaction of the basic

physical needs, i.e. shelter, clothing, food, heating, etc., the significance of which does not have to be proven. However, it should not be forgotten that the adequate satisfaction of the basic physical needs calls also for the individual's inclusion into the expected behavioral patterns of social and community interaction.

- Labour resocialization suggests adaptation of the individual's full potential to the need and requirements related with inclusion into a labour activity, acquiring of adequate education, vocational training and acquiring of occupational knowledge, skills and habits; formation of mental and behavioral attitudes for a job commitment, finding a suitable job and observing the labour legislation.
- Civil resocialization is the integration into the conditions of the civil society: undertaking responsibility for the individual's own behavior and relationships; accepting the legal requirements and the requirements of the public order; accepting the requirements of the moral norms; adaptation to traditions and the living conditions, the requirements of the particular civil community, traditions, norms and behavioral norms and rules in each particular place, either city or village, establishing a socio-psychological contact with the surrounding people and individual's active inclusion in relationships [4].

The key problems accompanying the process of resocialization with regard to the prisoners serving their sentence in the Bulgarian penitentiary institutions, according to the results of a research study under the project "Without Borders" and focused on the prisoners' [3] social inclusion implemented by the State-owned enterprise "PRISON SERVICE FUND" in 2014 are as follows:

1. Low Educational Status

Resulting from omissions in early childhood and unsuitable family and school environment, the low educational status dooms the former prisoners to permanent social isolation. Without adequate compensation of this very important link, the prisoners after getting out of prison very soon find themselves again in prison. Their abilities for realization have turned them into criminals. Within this meaning, the most important step immediately after prisoners' accommodation is that conditions are provided for improvement of their educational status.

2. Lack of Vocational Training

This is the second most important deficiency which the prisoners need to compensate for during their stay in prison. The lack of vocational training is a direct result from the prisoners' low educational status. Improvement of their educational status and finding a suitable job is able to give prisoners a real chance for a permanent change in their lifestyle after they get back into society.

3. Inadequate or No Work Experience

The lack of work experience is also a key pre-condition for a difficult resocialization of prisoners. Work habits build awareness about community within the meaning of common goals and challenges, and develop a feeling of responsibility towards the others. Very often, prisoners do not have this attitude and it has to be considered that their continuous isolation from the labour market is an important cause for them feeling marginalized and ignored. The trainings focused on their successful social inclusion should pay a special attention to prisoners who have inadequate or no work experience. This can be achieved by qualification programmes and practical courses.

4. Lack of Habits for Systematic Work

The active implementation of programmes for education and qualification shall create possibilities for acquiring of work experience and development of

work habits during the sentence duration. In practice, prisoners at present do not acquire any skills and training while the experts believe that the lack of work habits and motivation for work among prisoners are the main pre-condition for them getting back to their criminal lifestyle after their sentence is over –“they register at the Labour Office and maintain this registration for 3 months at the most, as long as they are on benefits, afterwards they terminate it”.

Finding a job is pointed out unanimously as a basis for the social adaptation of the leaving prisoners.

In conclusion, it has to be noted that there are no doubts with regard to the importance of the process of resocialization when it comes to prisoners serving their sentence in penitentiary institutions. It is becoming even more topical with the ongoing reforms of the entire penitentiary system in our country where the work of the penitentiary institutions as part of this system has to rest on the modern European and world requirements with regard to prisoners' resocialization.

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