


## THE WAY OF ENFORCING THE CULTURAL RIGHTS OF PRISONERS IN THE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN PRISONS: THE ASPECTS OF CREATIVITY

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Received 13 April 2021; accepted 17 November 2021

**Abstract.** Education in Polish and Hungarian penitentiaries aims at the successful social reintegration of prisoners. Penitentiary institutions support prisoners by education of primary, secondary, and vocational training. Forms of learning within prisons prepare prisoners for release and integration into the labour market. This study aims to review the most important concepts and possible interpretations of criminal pedagogy and the cultural life of prisons. We present the main cultural rights of prisoners (learning opportunities, community cultural opportunities) and their impact on prisoners, as well as highlighting the aspects that make prison a total institution. We present the goals of cultural life in prison and the current training process covering key areas. We state that cultural activities in prison are essential parts of reintegration, bringing prisoners closer to the cultural nature of the outside world. With this article, comparatively on the two countries, we would like to draw attention to the diversity and feasibility of cultural transmission for prisoners.

**Keywords:** cultural events in prisons, cultural rights of prisoners, education, Hungarian prisons, Polish prisons, reintegration.

### Introduction

During the process of criminal prosecution, human rights, principles, and international requirements must prevail in all circumstances, which can be considered as one of the criteria of the rule of law. Nowadays, more and more attention is being paid to the implementation of criminal sanctions in the process of criminal prosecution. All penalties, sanctions, and coercive procedural measures restrict certain fundamental civil rights, but protection must be provided to prevent any abuse of rights (cf. Vókó, 2010). It is important that persons deprived of their liberty, in compliance with the provisions of international conventions and

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domestic legislation, be treated as human beings during the entire period of detention, and their human dignity should not be violated under any circumstances.

The rights of prisoners will inevitably be curtailed during the execution of a custodial sentence, but these restrictions must be kept to a minimum. Namely, the loss of liberty cannot mean the loss of cultural rights (Vókó, 2010, p. 157).

In the execution of a custodial sentence, we cannot ignore the fact that the prison is a total institution with a primarily isolating role (Kapa-Czenczer, 2008, p. 24). Its essential elements act against the conditions of resocialization and correction tasks, and its rules regulate the entire lifestyle of prisoners. Programs helping reintegrate prisoners into society need to be thought through with a high degree of sensitivity since the fundamental goal is to prepare them for release from the first moment. The focus on post-release integration also means that the conditions in prisons, including the living and working conditions of prisoners, must be as close as possible to the conditions normally prevailing in society so that they can learn about and experience the life situations in which they may find themselves in after release. In particular, parallel to employment and education, leisure and public education activities offer good opportunities for this, and some self-active organizations can help implement this (Módos, 1998, p. 54).

A very important issue at the international level is to provide prisoners with opportunities for community culture. In this connection, we highlight three important documents.

The Recommendation No. R (89) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Education in Prison (RCM1) stipulates that prisoners should be given access to culture, which consists of school education, vocational training, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education, and library use (European Commission, 2015). Item 9 states that vocational training must be aimed at the improvement of the individual in the broadest sense and must take account of labor market trends (European Commission, 2015).

The new set of rules on the Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the European Prison Rules (RCM2) adopted by the of the Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers (2006) on 11 January, 2006, includes several recommendations made by the RCM1 on prison education as well, which affects our topic (Juhász, 2006, p. 2). Item 27.6 of RCM2 stipulates that

“[...] cultural activities and pastimes should also be offered to prisoners and that, as far as possible, those concerned should be involved in the organizational activity” (Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2006).

Item 28.1 of the recommendation mentioned states that

“[...] all penitentiary institutions should strive to ensure that all prisoners have the opportunity to participate in educational programs that are as comprehensive as possible and that meet their individual needs and aspirations” (Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2006).

On the treatment of prisoners, the principles include recommendations on the various programs to be provided to prisoners. Item 6 of the document stipulates that all prisoners have the right to participate in cultural activities and education aimed at personal development. The education of prisoners should be similar to that of similar age groups in the

outside world, and the broadest access should be given to them (European Commission, 2015). The culture provided in this way has different arenas, which can be classified in several ways. The Council of Europe's (1998) classification, to which prison activities may be linked, distinguishes three categories. The first group is the group of pieces of training, here the educational activities aimed at completing school studies should be highlighted. The second group includes life-related programs aimed at health education, overcoming integration difficulties, self-expression (*e.g.* through the arts), and useful leisure (*e.g.* sports). The third group includes the reduction of prison harms, here we should mention the maintenance of family relationships, community activities, the provision of intellectual activity, and conflict management (di Blasio & Ujkéry, 2011, p. 13; Council of Europe, 1998).

## 1. Cultural rights of prisoners

A summary definition of prisoners' cultural rights is employment, which also includes

“[...] a set of employment, education, vocational training, therapeutic employment and other reintegration programs provided to a convicted person within the penitentiary organization” (Wolters Kluwer, 2014).

The use of any form of organized employment can reduce the negative effects of imprisonment and, in addition to maintaining physical and mental health, also ensure the acquisition of basic and professional knowledge that can be used in society (Kőszegi, 2010, p. 55). Meaningful activity is part of the normal way of life in society while forcing inmates to idle can lead to depression, restlessness, and aggression (Lőrincz & Nagy, 1997, p. 86).

Act CCXL, 2013 (here in after: Penitentiary Code, PC) does not specifically provide for the cultural rights of prisoners (Wolters Kluwer, 2013). However, in this legislation, we find in several places various rights granted to prisoners that fall into this category. Within the rights of prisoners, the rights to education and the rights to culture are separated. The PC stipulates as a right of the prisoners arising from the fact of enforcement that prisoners have the right to self-education, order press products to maintain and improve their physical and mental condition, furthermore, have the right to culture and sport opportunities in the penitentiary institutions, and they have the right to study (Wolters Kluwer, 2013).

Cultural and leisure activities include, among other things, sports, library use, participation in various vocational and self-education circles, festive commemorations programs, intellectual competitions. Providing opportunities for self-organization by participating in various clubs and circles is useful because it contributes to reducing the so-called “hotel function” through challenging tasks, the strengthening of responsibility and self-esteem, and the creation of real decision-making situations (Ruzsonyi, 2006, p. 29). It also includes the provision of opportunities for self-education, the organization of professional circles, the operation of self-education circles, and the provision of library use.

Rule 28, article 5 of the European Prison Rules stipulates that

“[...] every institution shall have a library for all prisoners, containing a sufficient stock of books and other information media from a variety of sources, both recreational and educational. Wherever possible, the prison library should be organized with the help of public libraries” (Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, 2006).

The library should be considered an open facility to all prisoners, and its use should be considered a significant rehabilitation activity (Vókó, 2010).

In a broader sense, the cultural rights of the prisoners include the right to freely choose, express, and exercise their religious or conscientious beliefs. For prisoners, at the time and in the manner specified in the rules of procedure of the institute, the exercise of their statutory rights related to the practice of their religion should be ensured (Wolters Kluwer, 2014).

In this connection, the Penal Enforcement Code provides that

“[...] prisoners must be allowed to religious ceremonies following the requirements of the religious community”. The penitentiary institute promotes the social, charitable, caring activities of religious communities and their services provided to prepare prisoners for release (Wolters Kluwer, 2013).

Mission staff and pastors carry out a variety of activities among prisoners. Regulation 8/2017 (VI. 13.) on Prison Pastoral Service and Prison Mission Activity IM stipulates that the use of the prison pastoral service is the exclusive right of the prisoner and the ones detained on other grounds (Wolters Kluwer, 2017). According to the received churches, the prison pastoral service is divided into separate branches of service with the same legal status, which operates according to the internal rules of the given established church, respecting the independence of other religious communities (Wolters Kluwer, 2017).

Prison services also assist in caring for prisoners and released persons and their families, strengthening religious morals, building communities, settling family relationships with prisoners, and solving personal and social problems (Lórinicz & Nagy, 1997, p. 254; Teleki, 2010, p. 33). Prison pastors offer inmates the opportunity to shape themselves through these activities. According to Bízik (2002, p. 97), the goal is not to “dissolve tensions”, to “become more manageable” or to “have a safety valve” these are merely lucky returns, not goals. In order to operate the prison pastoral service, the ecclesiastical legal person performing it and the penitentiary organization cooperate. The terms of cooperation may be set out in an agreement between the ecclesiastical legal entity and the national commander of the penitentiary (Wolters Kluwer, 2017).

The right to contact the outside world is also an important cultural right, playing a key role in the prisoners’ chances of resocialization. Depending on the conditions of the penitentiary, care should be taken to ensure that the prisoners are informed about world events and the political, social, economic, and cultural life of the country. For this purpose, the cells should be equipped with radio and television if possible, but the prisoners can also use their own television and radio sets (Vókó, 2013).

## **2. Right to contact the outside world**

The primary purpose of a custodial sentence is to punish the offender by depriving him of his liberty. However, according to the generally accepted view today, the deprivation of personal freedom should not be accompanied by the complete loss of external (family, friendship, social) relations. To reintegrate successfully into society, it is essential to ensure various forms of contact, as well as to maintain and nurture relations. Three functions of contact with the outside world can be highlighted in the prison environment. On the one hand, it is an

essential element of normalization and contributes to facilitating the reintegration of prisoners. Secondly, it is a precondition for the exercise of several fundamental rights (such as the right to correspondence, family life, and the right to express one's opinion). Third, if there is a lack of keeping contact with the outside world, it will constitute a violation of the prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment laid down in Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Juhász, 2017).

### 3. Artistic expression

Supporting creative activities is a key issue within the prison, as support programs can help reduce the stressful and traumatic effects of deprivation of liberty. The two main forms of this in Hungary are art therapy sessions and prison acting. Art therapy sessions, through identification with the arts and the development of creativity, as well as active participation in it, allow disconnection from the closed medium. This finding is based on the fact that artwork develops adaptability, improves the physical and mental condition, eliminates sources of aggression and frustration, helps build better relationships with prison staff, and strengthens self-esteem (Nagy, 2012, p. 81). In Hungary, such a practice was the *Art Therapy in Prisons* (in Hungarian: *Művészetterápia a börtönben*) competition in Szeged Strict and Medium Regime Prison (Hungary) in 2012, which, with the help of art therapy methods, sought to reduce the negative effects and contribute to counterbalancing the internal "overturned" order caused by imprisonment (Nagy, 2012, p. 80).

Acting makes prisoners more confident and cooperative, improves their speaking skills, increases their creativity, but also has a beneficial effect on discipline and concentration. There is a literary and acting department in every Hungarian prison. Primarily law-abiding and well-behaved detainees who apply voluntarily can take part in rehearsals in their spare time after working in prison. Groups perform in front of other inmates and occasionally (e.g. at reparation programs, at Christmas, at Easter, or on Mother's Day) with a show. Their actions are even used several times to raise donations and to support those in need from the amount received in this way.

### 4. Practice in Hungary

In order to support social reintegration as effectively as possible, we also need to interpret other concepts and actions related to the concept of reintegration more broadly. Thus, in prisons, we also define the learning processes of prisoners on a broader horizon, so in addition to the formal and non-formal forms of learning, we also list all the possibilities of informal learning.

Practice shows that the nature of informal learning allows for several non-school-based ways to absorb new knowledge, and therefore, we consider it appropriate to approach learning support methods in our practice to support prisoners' reintegration such as meditation, a film club, or a photo exhibition. We consider all three methods to be adult education methods that support the education of prisoners, and we expect their application to be effective in supporting the reintegration of those involved (Molnár, 2017). From 2013 onwards, we have had continuously planned and implemented group sessions to support the informal

learning of prisoners. Usually, after consultation with the prison commanders, licensing, and contracting with the institutes, effective action begins, which is initiated through an assessment of the needs of the inmates. At the target locations, the staff assesses the needs of those involved for meditation classes, film clubs, and photo exhibitions, and then we tailor the cultural programs to the needs of the prisoners.

We consider it important to talk about the fact that each of the group sessions mentioned above creates a special psychic state of man, a state in which the process of the action takes place in a kind of self-rewarding way. Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) psychological research has shown that under appropriate conditions, our actions are organized into a process full of experience, in which a particularly good feeling overwhelms the actor: in addition to a conscious focus on the action, a driving force emerges that prompts the actor to perform the action itself, providing a reinforcing and rewarding experience. Csikszentmihalyi (2008) calls such a state an experience of flow, which suggests that a person in a changed, positive state of consciousness, whatever they do, act for their actions while they are sufficiently distant from the effects of the environment. Adult learning processes in prison under such conditions are expected to have a supportive effect on reintegration.

## 5. Film club

On the occasion of the film clubs we hold, prisoners view works that are content-wise to convey the values of social rules, family, and other social relationships, and to encourage them to take steps leading to problem-solving and conflict management. The process of watching the movies is subject to rules, about which we contract with the participants at the beginning of the programs. We also agree that the film club is a series of cultural programs for ten occasions each, within which framework, we view films on a community basis; watching movies is not only the means of spending time and is not only entertainment but also an opportunity to process the content of movies; the works are viewed with individual reception, and they are discussed in groups.

Participants typically participate in the programs with an interest; during the post-film discussions, in accordance with the contract, they communicate with a close focus on the topic, which usually results in a positive group atmosphere. The content of films usually encourages prisoners that, in addition to analyzing the story of the films, they tell their own life stories. In the formation of opinions about films and their own way of life, prisoners often mention the possibility of change, the need for self-help and mutual help. In connection with the recognition and acceptance of social norms, they express their attachment to the family, human relationships, communities, while appreciating the goals of life, which can be reached by tolerance, positive thinking, health, financial independence, perseverance to overcome difficult situations, harmony with the environment, serenity and changing (Molnár, 2015).

## 6. Meditation

In sessions that support the acquisition and application of the basics of meditation, we focus on recognizing individual problems. Prisoners volunteer in an occasional five- to ten-session series to learn about the effects of relaxation and meditation as part of an adult learning

process and to try out the practical elements of this method. We organized group sessions based on meditation techniques within the prison in 2013 for the first time.

We used a form of meditation that is based on the cognitive awareness of the practitioners. During the exercise, the participants, with the help of a leader, move from their usual state of waking state to a state of consciousness that touches the limit of falling asleep, into which they reach through conscious concentration. In this relaxed state of rest, following the leader's word, the participants perform simple thought tasks, imagining a state (life situation, future) in which they live and act in a way that is acceptable to themselves and others. With this self-improvement activity, they get used to the idea of a moral way of life and the feelings that come with it. Meditation learned in this way in prison is based on José Silva's method of meditation (Silva & Miele, 2018).

At the end of the sessions, most of the participants usually state that they have found a solution to their everyday problems as a result of the sessions; they have generally become calmer, more balanced, some have lost their sleep disturbances, and many have improved their fight against aggression (Molnár, 2017).

## **7. Photo exhibition**

In the prisons, we present photo exhibitions of twenty five self-themed, self-made images. The pictures are traveling exhibitions in Hungary, which are taken to the penitentiary institutions by the organization. The aim of the opening and the subsequent conversations with the people living in the institute, as well as the exhibitions that can be seen in prisons for weeks and months, is to contribute to the cultural interest of prisoners through the means of art, strengthen the viewers' cognitive skills, and grow the positive visual experiences of those living in prisons.

Exhibitions are usually opened in a ceremonial setting for detainees and staff. After the openings, the prisoners talk to the author about the origin of the images and the message of the exhibitions. Occasionally, to expand this cultural program, it is also possible to have a one-hour in-depth discussion with the author with smaller groups of detainees (usually ten people) in the cultural department of the institute (*e.g.* the library) where they can ask further questions, exchange views with the photographer not only about the choice of subject but also about the technical features of photography. We are currently making five exhibitions, a series of 125 images, available to prisons.

## **8. Practice in Poland**

As in Hungary, undertaken in this field, various activities allow prisoners to become active and creative. They positively affect prisoners' mental balance and self-esteem. They also allow prisoners to see numerous advantages resulting from both creative activities and contact with people and entities from outside prison. In both countries, the penitentiary provides the personal and material means of cultural transmission not only from in-prison sources, but also outside the prison walls. Based on our practical experience, prisoners are offered a chance to enjoy the sense of autonomy and some independence in their actions.

Defined by Marek Konopczyński, the notion of creative social rehabilitation deserves some special attention. This concept differs from the current attitude towards social rehabilitation (Konopczyński, 2008). Its basic assumption is reorganization of aims and aspirations presented by young people who show symptoms of social maladjustment. It particularly refers to transforming destructive strategies, based on fixed cognitive and operational schemes followed by those young people and to providing them with new social competencies and skills (Konopczyński, 2008, p. 309).

The aim of penitentiary social rehabilitation is, first of all, the development of prisoners' creative activities or, more precisely, further activation of the potential, which is often displayed by numerous prisoners in an entirely spontaneous way in the conditions of prison isolation.

As in the Hungarian prisons, the implementation of cultural and educational projects at Polish penitentiary units (PUs) is based on a number of legal regulations which impose the obligation of implementing such activities in prison on penitentiary administration.

PUs provide prisoners with conditions for the proper ways of spending their free time.

The scope of participation in cultural, educational, and sports events depends to some extent on prisoners themselves.

Correctional treatment programs omit other elements of artistic education, such as knowledge about art, possibilities to experience high art. Understandably, the imprisonment isolation punishment, and the environment of penitentiary institutions make it impossible or significantly difficult for prisoners to experience high art. Moreover, most prisoners are not really interested in developing their aesthetic sensitivity and knowledge. Activation of these fields would mean a necessity to fill in some considerable gaps in other fields of prisoners' education. The most important task of social rehabilitation through art at a penitentiary institution is not a comprehensible development of prisoners' personalities, understood in a lofty way. It is, first of all, an opportunity to neutralize the negative aspects of staying in prison isolation (Jaworska, 2017, p. 118).

Participation in activities involving artistic creation includes all the advantages of education through art. Among various forms of creative activities, such as writing, painting, sculpturing, handcraft, music, dancing, film, or theatre, the highest significance is usually attributed to play acting. The concept of creative social rehabilitation is related to this particular field (Konopczyński, 2007).

The most common forms of artistic expression at Polish PUs include the following:

- arts and crafts – painting, drawing, sculpturing, graphics, bas-relief, applied art;
- literature – writing poems, short stories, diaries, books, fairy-tales;
- music – singing, playing musical instruments;
- theatre – play-acting at various drama groups;
- film – prisoners can assume the roles of both actors and film directors; at Polish penitentiary institutions this form is not very common;
- dancing – various forms of dance – hip hop, folk dance, musical dance. Similarly to film, this form of artistic expression is less common at Polish penitentiary institutions.

It is caused by the lack of specialist staff.

Advantages resulting from animation include, among others, changing attitudes, increasing knowledge, increasing a sense of self-efficacy, forming a need of transformation and



development, activating strengths and potential of an individual and a group (Jaworska, 2017, pp. 119–120).

The programs offered by the prison are developed by officers or employees of penitentiary institutions and they include the following elements (The Prison and Probation Administration, 2016):

1. A theoretical model which comes as a substantiation explaining how the particular program will affect factors associated with criminal behaviour;
2. Identified risk factors, the change of which will result in decreasing recidivism;
3. Scope of aims;
4. Methods;
5. A description of the program sessions with the information and auxiliary materials indispensable for their implementation;
6. Recruitment rules for prisoner enrolment;
7. A definition of intensity, sequence, and duration of the program;
8. A place where the program is to be implemented;
9. The staff and base required for the implementation of the program;
10. A detailed cost estimate and an indication of the fund source for the program;
11. Indication of tasks which are going to be implemented by the particular organizational sections of the PUs for the proper implementation of the entire program;
12. A method for the assessment of the program outcomes.

Economic, social, and cultural rights include the human right to education, the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, clothing, and housing, the right to physical and mental health, the right to social security, the right to a healthy environment and, of course, the right to work.

Polish system enables prisoners to use information technology (IT) and Internet. From August, 2014 prisoners have the opportunity to contact their relatives via *Skype* in all PUs in Poland. Maintaining family ties is a fundamental right of persons deprived of their liberty and communication via Internet help prepare prisoners for proper functioning after their release. All this enables more active participation in family life. It has been emphasized the Polish system prepares prisoners to use IT and Internet. As part of the rehabilitation program favoring the re-adaptation of persons deprived of liberty *Project "Liberty"* (in Polish: *Projekt "Wolność"*), the prisoners took part in the ABC workshop of IT education. The IT part of the program aims to prevent convicts from being excluded from computer use. The program was created on the basis of the *Lighthouse 2020* project financed by the European Union under the European Regional Development Fund, Operational program *Digital Poland for 2014–2020* priority axis III: digital competencies of society 3.1 – training activities for the development of digital competences in the field of electronic/digital services: the Internet as a job search tool (Imolin.org, 1997).

In Poland, the most popular forms of artistic expression selected by prisoners, are arts and crafts, literature, music, and theatre. Arts and crafts usually include painting, drawing, sculpturing, graphics, bas-relief, and applied art. Literary works are poems, short stories, diaries, and novels. Music involves singing and playing music instruments. Theatre groups have become a very frequent form of artistic expression chosen by prisoners (Jaworska, 2012, p. 359).

Art created in prison isolation has three dimensions: artistic (it undergoes critics' evaluation), social (it becomes a tool for integration with so-called normal society and a part of general human culture), and subjective (depending on what it gives to its creators and what it contributes to their development and experience). The above-mentioned aspects indicate that creative activities offer a sense of independence in acting, they compensate for numerous deficiencies which result from prison isolation, and they contradict a common opinion that prisoners are people who lack in higher emotions and are able neither to appreciate beauty nor to create it (Jaworska, 2017, pp. 120–122).

At present, prison art exhibitions and contests are organized throughout Poland. The idea of such actions affects prisoners in a highly positive way. It motivates them to intensify efforts in art creation and to express themselves through art. Furthermore, it contributes to a deeper reflection and possible transformation of the current lifestyle which has led them behind prison bars. Among the most recognized and appreciated projects, the following can be listed: *Borderline of Loneliness*, the National Competition of Prison Literary Creation in Siedlce (Poland), Prison Art Competition in Bydgoszcz (Poland), Prison Poetry Competition in Krasnystaw (Poland), National Prison Poetry Competition, or the National Review of Prison Art organized by the PU in Sztum (Poland). The competition in Sztum receives works of art in painting, sculpturing, drawing, bas-relief, handcraft, and literary works of prose and poetry submitted by prisoners.

Other artistic events include *Art Behind Prison Bars* (in Polish: *Sztuka za kratami*). It is a handcraft exhibition displaying items made with the use of various techniques by the prisoners of the PU in Dubliny (Poland). The exhibits are oil paintings, sculptures, bas-reliefs, graphic projects, origami items, and jewel boxes (Hajduk, 2016). Similar events are also organized by other PUs in Poland. Exhibitions are prepared and organized with help provided by local cultural institutions and experts who specialize in that field. These events are reported by local media, which allows them to be better advertised to the public. They also provide an opportunity for prisoners to obtain some funds for the sale of their artworks and to change the way they are perceived. Furthermore, such events come as an important factor that motivates prisoners to improve their life.

There is a music band called *Zero Level* (in Polish: *Poziom Zero*) at the PU in Wronki (Poland), which operates within the framework of a music interest group. Rehearsing and performing allow prisoners to master their skills and to get away from their prison reality. So far, *Zero Level* has performed at the prison, in front of other prisoners, their families, and administrative staff on various occasions. In 2020 correctional officers responsible for culture and education planned to take the band to the National Competition and Review of Prison Art (Prętko, 2020).

The idea of the National Competition of Icon Writing appeared in 2008 at the PU in Włodawa (Poland), during the implementation of a social rehabilitation program entitled *Art Is My Second Life* (in Polish: *Sztuka to moje drugie życie*). The main aim of this competition is to develop prisoners' interest in spiritual, aesthetic and artistic values of the Eastern Orthodox Church tradition, including iconography and emphasis put on the role of culture in human life. Icon writing offers prisoners an opportunity to express themselves, to reflect on the life of saints who are depicted on the icons and on prisoners' own life (Pręciuk, 2020).

The PU in Zabrze (Poland) organizes chess classes under a prisoner activation program. In 2019 the first National Chess Tournament for Prisoners was organized. Twenty penitentiary recidivists participated in it (Jabłońska, 2019).

Another interesting project is the *Prison Smart* program. Its aim is to remove psychic tension, sadness, anger, fear, depression – any psychological condition which can significantly limit the positive results of social rehabilitation. Breathing techniques taught during the course connect with the deepest layers of the human psyche, stimulating a positive pro-social change (Jaworska, 2009, p. 156).

13. Other events include, for example, *Wasting No Time While Imprisoned*, a prison art exhibition. The exhibits are works of art made with the use of various techniques, such as embroidery, recycling, origami, and painting (CAK, 2015). The works of art created by prisoners are their own property (The Prison and Probation Administration, 2016).

An interesting program is implemented at the PU in Wronki. The *Film Discussion Club* (in Polish: *Dyskusyjny Klub Filmowy*) is a project addressed to a group of 10–15 prisoners who wish to participate in the program. The program implementers are students of social rehabilitation pedagogy at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland). The basic aim of the program is to promote access to culture for penitentiary recidivists who serve their sentences in prison isolation (Chojecka & Stachowiak, 2009).

The implemented projects have several common factors:

- the project aim, namely: preventing social marginalization of prisoners through their involvement in creative activities and education through art;
- advantages which result from the project and which affect not only prisoners themselves but also their families and the society;
- stimulation of prisoners' intellectual, creative, and emotional potential and activities;
- wide variety of artistic activity forms and opportunities for prisoners to express themselves in arts and crafts, literature, music, singing, theatre, film, or dancing.

At present, a lot of PUs implement projects in cooperation with external entities and it proves to be beneficial for both parties. Local media also willingly cooperate in this field, providing the society with information about various interesting cultural events initiated and organized by PUs. Furthermore, media participate in the promotion of prisoners' artistic creativeness. Institutions of culture located in the vicinity of PUs host exhibitions of prison painting, sculpture, handcraft, or other creative works. Frequently, in the displayed exhibits, it is possible to observe intended educational and didactic action implemented by correctional officers. It is possible to identify references to prisoners' nationality, religion and culture, where differences are met with understanding and tolerance.

Not only in the Polish penitentiary institutions, but also in the Hungarian prisons, prisoners' cultural activities allow them to break some stereotypes related to prisoners in the social awareness even before they leave the prison walls. Cultural activities also provide prisoners with an opportunity to perform in a new social role. They are factors that prevent external and internal isolation resulting from stigmatization.

Undertaken by prisoners, creative activities come as a chance to create a new person within themselves, to minimize their uncertainty, fear, isolation, and loneliness. They are also a chance to avoid social stigmatization.

A very important problem is to develop sensitivity to art in prisoners, to establish cooperation with external entities, to indicate alternatives for criminal behavior, and to present opportunities for attractive ways of spending free time. Prisoners are isolated and this situation is not conducive for creative activities. It results from the shortage of materials or lack of acceptance shown by other prisoners. However, art proves to be of vast significance as a means of re-education of prisoners. It can show prisoners' sensitivity which is important to relations with other people. There is a common opinion that people who serve imprisonment sentences are bad people. However, as Anetta Jaworska observes, any attempt to show beauty created behind the prison walls contradicts a common opinion that prisoners do not have any higher emotions and they are unable to appreciate or create beauty. This is a very unfair stereotype (Jaworska, 2017). The practice of Poland is not an example to the Hungarian penitentiaries. The impact of presented cultural activities is attributed to the prisoners of Poland penitentiaries and the whole penitentiary system. One of the most important factors is the prison staff who is responsible for preparing and implementation of cultural programs and other activities.

## Conclusions

As a comparison of the two countries on cultural activities, we can assume that in Hungary, the penitentiary allows prisoners various ways of self-expression and inclusion culture. In both countries, offering prisoners the possibility of taking part in cultural and educational projects, is part of the legal regulations. Cultural activities allow them to break among others prejudice before release. Both countries ensure the personal and material sources for culture in two ways: with the support of professionals working inside and outside of the prison.

It is common practice in both countries to provide ample space for creative activities. Creative social reintegration includes a number of benefits associated with artistic creation that support reintegration (Konopczyński, 2007). Comparing the two countries, we can assume that social rehabilitation through art, in the penitentiary institutions includes various artistic activities: among others music, writing, play-acting, film, and dancing. However, there are also weaknesses in this field.

The impact of presented cultural activities is attributed to the prisoners of Poland penitentiaries and the whole penitentiary system. One of the most important factors is the prison staff who is responsible for preparing and implementation of cultural programs and other activities.

According to Hungarian experts, the opportunities for proper employment of prisoners are less than desired. The main reasons for this are the insufficient orientation of the legal regulations, the scarcity of material and financial conditions required for employment, and the low number of specialists required in organizing the programs (Aleku et al., 2006, p. 76).

There is no adequate legal incentive system for prisoners to participate in various reintegration programs. It is a clear statement that in order to meet the cultural needs of prisoners living in both Hungarian and Polish prisons, the organization of the various programs requires an adequate number and composition of staff in the penitentiary institutions. Paragraph 49 of the United Nations Recommendation on Minimum Guidelines for the Humane Treatment

of Arrested Persons and the 1987 European Prison Rules (Recommendation No. R (87) 3) require that the staff should have an adequate number of professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, vocational trainers, and physical educators (United Nations, 1996–2021; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2015). Most penitentiaries do not have the necessary staffing and composition. Practical experience shows that reintegration officers have little time to deal with prisoners individually and in groups due to excessive daily administrative tasks. Thus, to organize various programs to be provided to prisoners, it would be necessary to employ a sufficient number of psychologists, vocational trainers, cultural and sports organizers, and social workers (Aleku et al., 2006, p. 77).

Despite the difficulties that arise, it is indisputable that the penitentiary organization carries out many activities that go beyond the scope of classical justice to achieve the re-socialization of prisoners. The penitentiary reflects the external reality, and the execution of the custodial sentence is organized in such a way that the system, by performing its tasks, gets closer to helping the prisoners reintegrate.

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