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DOCTORAL THESIS
SUMMARY

Multidimensional Assessment of Correctional Facility Policies
for Inmate Social Reintegration

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Key words: assessment, social reintegration strategy, employment, NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youths, inmates

Criminality in general and the increase in the rate of repeat offences in particular represent one of the most stringent and topical issues of the contemporary society exposed to new and complex security risks. As a result of the (economic, cultural, industrial, technological etc.) development in society and the positive effects transposed into terms of progress, negative effects are bound to occur, such as the increase in delinquency, the decrease in citizens' personal safety, the decline in the authority of social control institutions and, last but not least, the occurrence of a certain crime subculture.

Concretely, although Romania has prepared, adopted and implemented policies to reduce the underlying causes of crime and repeat offence, their efficacy has not been assessed until now, the only indicator used for this purpose being the statistical one. Statistically, contrary to what may be expected, the rate of repeat offence in Romania has been growing and is well above the European average (Eurostat, 2022).

Pursuant to applicable law, penitentiaries are considered to constitute day centres, and to that end they are accredited for quality assurance in the field of delivery of social services.

Therefore, the inmate's further inclusion opportunities depend on the quality of the social reinsertion services provided in the correctional facility. Using a plastic expression, one might say that the correctional facility lays the foundations of this complex and challenging process in terms of social inclusion public policies adopted. This is the reason why the inmate's preparation for social reintegration starts on the very first day of detention.

If, during the detention period, it is determined that the inmate does not have enough resources to lead an independent life after release, without any risk of repeat offence, the probation department and other institutions with responsibilities in this field take over the case and facilitate the inmate's access to other services and goods, depending on their individual needs (Durnescu, I., 2011).

This doctoral thesis aims to assess the social reintegration policies implemented in the Romanian penitentiaries, in terms of social reintegration impact and efficacy, for young people up to 29 years of age (Legea nr. 172/2017, 2017).

The working **paradigm** was founded on the positivist tradition (Durkheim, E, 2003), the investigating action being guided by the structural-functionalist approach. The analysis covered "the functionality of social reintegration policies in correlation with the

structuralism of actions” of the correctional facility system (Parsons, T, 1967). By developing the model from the Mertonian perspective, the social reintegration policy was evaluated as an element with functional consequences (values) for different reference frameworks (inmates, institution, society). In light of this paradigm, the correctional facility system is assimilated in this document into a “structural context opened to empirical determination, where dynamic phenomena relate to other phenomena, within a more general structure” (Zamfir, E., 1997).

From the perspective of deviance sociology, the structural-functionalist evaluative process of social reintegration was reinforced by the “theories of social control, social learning and differentiated associations”, as the referrals to the risk-requirement-responsiveness interventionist model (Andrews, D; Bonta, J., 2007), can be found throughout the research.

The paradigm perspective of the evaluation, as a process and method, was cumulative in nature.

The purpose of the evaluation was to identify the extent in which the orientation of the social reintegration programs and policies which are implemented into the correctional facility system contribute to the reintegration of offenders and to the increase of safety among citizens. The inmates are the direct beneficiaries of these programs, but in a wider sense we are all beneficiaries as a community and society, because the issue can only be assumed by a holistic approach, thus allowing to make viable decisions.

The reason for choosing this research theme was the need to academically assess the impact of the services supplied by the correctional facility system has on their beneficiaries. Because the social reintegration strategy is nearing the end of its second five-year implementation cycle, I considered it appropriate to evaluate the institutional policies from a multidimensional perspective, thus overcoming the formal boundaries of a daily analysis, in which assessments are limiting.

The novelty of the theme consists in the exhaustive approach of these policies, in creating connections between the vulnerability criteria from the perspective of the key indicators established by the European strategies and the risks of criminality and recidivism; making correlations with the conclusions of the evaluations of other social protection systems and articulating the responsibilities of each.

The operationalization and specialization for the 16 to 29 age group allowed the scientific and relevant substantiation of the conclusions and proposals, so that the "national strategy for the social reintegration of inmates" does not remain just a statement of intent,

but functions as part of these policies aimed at reducing risks and improving the quality of life.

The impact evaluation of prison policies on a scientific basis is being carried out 9 years after the implementation of the strategy (in 2014), the results being tools able to optimize the decision-making act and reorient intervention actions. At the same time, the thesis is intended to be a pretext and an invitation to the development of the evaluative culture of the programs within the organization.

The originality of the thesis consists of the structural-functional approach of the correctional facility system, seen as a system whose functions contribute to maintain society's structural balance (Spencer, H, 1898), framing the reintegration of inmates into a social policy dimension. Emphasizing the concrete side of the social reintegration process by changing the approaches and by highlighting the functional nature of education, qualification and work, this is the recurring theme of the thesis.

Another original element is represented by the inclusion of social economy among the concrete measures that the correctional facility system can capitalize on, with the objective of increasing the inclusion of inmates and former inmates on the labour market, an aspect exemplified by the creation of a project to develop relations between the NAP (National Administration of Penitentiaries) and the business environment.

The subject of the thesis is of general interest, because the inmates are "removed" from the community only for more or less limited/fixed periods of time. After their release, they return among us, and we all need the feeling of security that the correctional facility "has done its job", so that we ourselves do not become potential victims. Personal security, the rejection of deviant behaviour and the trust in national security and public order institutions, all these are indicators of the quality of life in a society.

The evaluation provides a critical and academic perspective on the effects that the social reintegration services (Cojocaru, Ș., 2010) have on inmates, as well as on the positive aspects which can be replicated or on the disorders requiring attention and which may change the decision-making process.

For scientific relevance purposes, this evaluation was carried out at the national level, in 17 correctional facilities, distributed throughout the 8 development regions of Romania. Several evaluative research methods were used, so that the results observe the principles of objectivity, accuracy and transparency of information. Although the results of quantitative and qualitative methods were addressed in separate chapters in order to observe

academic rules, their results interfered during the research, because by accessing one of them, another could become meaningful.

The methods, techniques and tools used were mixed and consisted of direct observation, secondary data analysis based on evidence, sociological surveys based on questionnaires with appreciative questions among penitentiary specialists and among young repeat and non-repeat offenders, semi-structured interviews with specialists, Delphi-method questionnaires applied to experts involved directly in working with inmates or former inmates and a presentation of the costs implied for incarceration.

The theoretical-referential framework that guides the thesis is based on correctional facility policies for the social reintegration of inmates and the reduction of the number of repeat offenders, from an evaluative perspective. The objective of this thesis is not to be an initiation or presentation of the correctional facility system, thus substituting the authorized sources, but to frame the factual data on already established paradigms.

The limits of the research were mainly related to the absence of recent bibliographic references that deal with the process of social reintegration of inmates; the restrictions from the pandemic period during which the field research took place; the impossibility of using institutional data for research conclusions due to ethical considerations and the limits of human nature, referring to the low level of education of the inmates, which prolonged the questionnaire filling in time.

The evaluation had a normative-axiological starting point: "the purpose of enforcing the sentence is to shape correct attitudes towards work and towards the rule of law" and to what extent the current policy, as a component of an extended social policy, manages through its actions to contribute to the social inclusion of inmates.

The evaluation was carried out from several points of view: institutional, normative, functional and social. The thesis is divided into 8 chapters, each of which ends with relevant aspects or preliminary conclusions, later supporting the general conclusions.

The first chapter starts with a review of the sociological paradigms of deviance in order to state the theoretical-referential reporting framework of the thesis. The exposition of the theories that explained the aetiology, the trend, the models of intervention and reduction of recidivism, contributed to the establishment of the conceptual scheme, placing, during the research, the studied categories in the context of social policies.

The enumeration of some Romanian studies and researches had the role of identifying some anchor elements, which would facilitate an integrated evaluation of the social reinsertion process.

Starting from the "Quality of Life" paradigm (Precupețu I., 2006), the statistical situations could establish the dynamics of the causality relationship between the quality of life (poverty, lack of education, social exclusion, risking to become a victim) in a region, the economic development and the crime rate, as well as the types of crimes. The lower the occupancy rate in a community, the higher the risk of crime.

Transferring the explanations of the structural-functionalism and cultural theories (Zamfir, E., 1996) of income distribution inequalities in a society, at the micro-systemic level, it can be stated that the correctional facility, through its policy of "serving" the inmates and taking over all their responsibilities in solving problems, it has the opposite effect: it makes inmates depend on the system, cancels their responsibilities and the volitional process of finding legal solutions in solving some situations, incapacitates them and reduces their chances of developing independent life skills that will help them after release. The existing state of affairs correlates with the "burden of freedom". In this context, it is appropriate to emphasize the importance of "empowerment" in the specialist - client relationship, which is a process through which the beneficiaries acquire their independent decision-making and personal problem-solving capabilities, without the need to ask for help from the institutional authorities before trying to do the same on their own (Payne, M., 2011). Empowerment is accompanied by advocacy, an action by which the specialist supports the beneficiaries who present certain limitations in front of some institutions or social actors.

In theory, according to the sociological deviance patterns, they can be associated with crime-preventing measures, considering that mitigating/solving a problem means the reduction of the chances of criminal behaviour, or at least that the criminal behaviour is less intense (Durnescu, I., 2009).

By contextualizing the phenomenon of criminality and recidivism in the Romanian space, its evolution over a decade was analysed and the particularization of the category of young inmates from the perspective of NEET vulnerabilities was performed.

The terminology of "NEET youth" is traditionally used in the context of European social policies and is a relevant indicator for the 15 to 29 age group who, as a result of socio-demographic factors, "are not included in any form of education or do not have a job" (Cace, S., Voicu, M. și colab, 2022).

The delimitation as a reference group in the investigative approach was imposed for several reasons: the studies (Eurostat, 2022) which reflect the fact that very high percentages of this age group meet the vulnerability criteria such as: low level of education, lack of qualification and a job, the environment of origin, the high level of poverty, etc., and the NAP statistics show that from a percentage point of view, more than 28% of the prison population belong to this age category, with worrying increases from one period to another.

The concern for the evaluation of the social reintegration programs and policies of the inmates arose following the finding of the recidivism rate among this segment of the prison population and their passivity towards any involvement in their own recovery process. The interviews with the specialists and their statements, according to which they somehow "lost their professionalism" and no longer find the usefulness of their activities they carry out with these young people (Lambert, E.G., 2005), constituted a landmark in the delimitation of the research subjects and in the approach to the diagnosis of the social reintegration process (Bujdoiu, N., 2001). It is obvious that the correctional facility does not bear the responsibility of recidivism, but, through incarceration, the family and the school - the most important institutions (Pop, L.M., 2002) that lay the elementary foundations of the individual's education and training (Hatos, A., 2006), are replaced by the correctional facility. At this point, there is pressure on the correctional facility, which is assigned the role of "revival" of the inmate, of resetting the set of values, norms and behaviours (prisonobservatory, 2022), to help those in custody to place their lives on other pillars than those on which they had them until the crime was committed (Maculan, A.; Ronco, D.; Vianello, F., 2013).

Arriving in the correctional facility system during the period of formation and maturation, minors and young people do not have time to practice the experience of becoming and growing (Pașca, M., 2005). As a result, from the first day in incarceration, the inmate's preparation for returning to society begins, so that the reintegration process occurs naturally, without emotional or educational prejudices. The purpose of detention is to reduce the risks of recidivism, and the need to stop committing the criminal act.

The fact that such a high percentage of young people became repeat offenders raises issues for reflection on the effectiveness of strategies and programs for the social reintegration of inmates, making it necessary to objectively analyse and rethink the related policies. Taking into account only the statistical data, it appears that the young people referred to (18-29 years old), have already experienced incarceration and have also benefited

from social services, programs and measures carried out in the correctional facility and of the services specific to the post-detention period.

The second chapter focuses on the social reintegration policies and is intended to evaluate the axes that support this process: education-qualification-work, in parallel with other national social policies that focus on the protection of vulnerable groups, from the perspective of existing strategic indicators at the European level. In the context of the evaluation, we defined the stand of the beneficiaries in relation to these indicators and the impact on the social integration process. The evaluation primarily evaluates the impact that a policy or strategy has on the beneficiary or the issue, and the references at the end of the chapter regarding part of the social and financial costs of delinquency and detention are intended to facilitate transparency and to diagnose the efficiency of the services of social reintegration when leaving the correctional facility system.

The statistics indicate, in percentages, the causal relationship between the level of education and employment. Without education and qualification, the individuals concerned can only access a low-paid job or perform "undocumented work". Without sufficient income, they cannot provide for their basic needs: housing, food, heat, health services, etc. In case they have families and children, their needs increase and they are unable to cover them. Against the background of the poor quality of life, violence and criminality are increasing, as the only option by which income could be increased, without too much effort.

The transformation of the vulnerability criteria of NEET youths "no education, no training, no employment" into positive statements, outlines the objectives of the correctional facility system, in order to reduce the risk of recidivism, thus becoming priorities. This is also the reason why I dedicated a chapter to these activities, evaluating and analysing to what extent the existing deficit in these segments can be compensated. The evaluation took into account the fact that the correctional facility system is closely dependent on other institutions and its environment, its part being to stimulate and form values in this sense.

From the statistical data provided by the NAP, it appears that 26.33% of the inmates are NEET youths, a category that constitutes the target group of this thesis. Depending on the identified needs, they are included in specialized compensation actions, throughout the execution of the sentence.

Statistically (as of 01.03.2022), the distribution of inmates according to the level of education, which is a predictor for accessing a job, was as follows: 3.49% completed higher education; 0.64% completed post-secondary education; 8.62% graduated from high school

(grades 9-12); 10.44% had a qualification in a trade (92.1% of them being in the 30-60 age bracket, so only 7.9% of inmates under 30 had a qualification); 62.66% did not have a job before being arrested, while only 22% worked in different fields of activity; 59.68% did not graduate from high school, being in the 1st to 8th grades segment (of the 13,151 inmates in this situation, 4,323 are below 30, representing 72.57% of young inmates); and 6.74% were illiterate (ANP, 2022).

From the studies carried out, it results that in the year 2022, of the total number of inmates attending training courses, 18.7% were minors and young people up to 21 years of age, representing 375 of the total number of 2005 enrolled inmates. The same study shows that annually, regardless of the number of inmates, the participation percentage is around 9%.

In order to stimulate the participation of inmates in education and qualification courses, the law provided for a diversified range of incentives for them, however without any visible effects.

In the second part of the chapter, another component of re-education was addressed, which consists in carrying out lucrative activities.

The very first articles of the law on the execution of sentences emphasize the need to "form a correct attitude towards work". In other words, the role of detention is first to prevent crime, then through the training/qualification of inmates, to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to obtain a job, the formation of work discipline, all of which contribute to mitigating the causes that favour recidivism (H.G. nr. 157/2016, 2016).

Thus, work is also seen as a context helping the individual create a set of experiences through which he is able to face future situations (Buzducea, D., 2017).

One of the recidivism prevention solutions promoted through articulated social policies refers to increasing the employment rate (Ilie, S și Preoteasa, AM, 2018). This implies qualification in the occupations required on the labour market, the creation of new jobs and the provision of the necessary support for the activation of personal potential (Ionescu, I., 2017).

The Activity Report of the NAP for the year 2021 highlighted that 186 inmates were qualified/trained in a trade, or 0.7% of the average number of inmates (ANP, 2023). Percentage-wise, it is the equivalent of "one drop in an ocean", and in 2022 the total number of inmates who were qualified was 644 (2.8%) of the prison population. The prospect of increasing employment opportunities after release remains low, although it is a strategic indicator of the system's performance. In order to compensate for the reduced offer of

courses by NAE (the National Agency for Employment), projects for the development of certain skills in certain trades (apprenticeships) took place in the correctional facilities, in which 644 inmates (2.8%) of the prison population were involved. At first glance, it is only at this point that we can talk about social reintegration and an increase in chances of accessing a job after release. Although the percentage is negligible, this initiative must be assessed as positive, because it is the point where the correctional facility exercises its concrete formative role: it forms an attitude towards work and the skills through which the beneficiary may ensure his autonomy.

For qualifications also, non-attendance and drop-out rates are high. The cited causes are multiple: the inmates' lack of interest in the prospect of employment and their dismissive attitude towards work (often considering that it is humiliating to work); the failure to meet the requirements for enrolling in courses (one of the requirements being to have completed at least 8 grades); the lack of lecturers or their availability to conduct courses with inmates; the lack of adequate spaces or necessary materials. Moreover, some of the inmates claimed that “they didn’t go through all this trouble in jail to become diggers” (Dobrică, P., 2010) – an affirmation which strengthens the idea that in the correctional facility hierarchy, work is the equivalent of a lost dignity and position earned among the other inmates.

The attitude of rejecting lucrative activities is an internalized behaviour, although it is one of the predictable indicators of social reintegration. School as a training-educational process, qualification and placement/occupation are valued as tools through which the individual can develop protection mechanisms against delinquency.

As a result of the reform of the justice system in 2013, work during the execution of the sentence is no longer mandatory, but constitutes a right, from which the inmate may or may not benefit. Being a right that they can access or not, specialists show that statistically, more than 50% of inmates who could work while incarcerated refuse, understanding that legally, they have the right to perform this activity or not, without suffering consequences.

Some of the young inmates invoke the fact that they did not work during their detention, although they wanted to.

The analysis of the research data indicates that the inmates incarcerated in restrictive regimes (maximum security or closed) are the ones who formulate the most requests to “go out to work”. Their requests are largely justified by the fact that the very phrase "going out" means that this way they can spend more time outside the rooms, without having an intrinsic motivation towards the work itself, with social value content. At the same

time, by performing a job, there are premises that their incarceration regime is changed to a lighter one, in a shorter time.

When they reach the semi-open or open regimes, where freedom of movement is increased, the interest in work decreases in direct proportion. They consider working, waking up in the morning, following a schedule and being disciplined about it degrading, and they cite the fact that they have never done this before. In this case, we can speak about a correctional facility “*subculture of not working*”, including models, values and interests which are specific to this environment.

Out of the total number of inmates, 59.68% did not complete secondary school, being in the 1st to 8th grade segment (of the 13,151 inmates in this situation, 4,323 are under 30 years old, representing 72.57% of the young inmates) and 6.74% are illiterate.

The statistical assessment reveals the low interest of young people towards school and qualification, an aspect which is a prerequisite for accessing a satisfactory job and increasing the chances of employment.

In order to stimulate the participation of inmates to any type of activity which may work for the reduction of the risk of committing new crime (education, qualification, work), the legislators (H.G. nr. 157/2016, 2016) included a series of incentives: from providing a series of credits used for rewards, until reducing some of the incarceration time.

From the decennial assessment of inmates' involvement in work, I will present some of the main aspects:

In contrast to the period between 2000 and 2009, when at least 50% of the inmates worked (a period in which the legislation stipulated the obligation and the attitude towards work of the inmates was different), it can be appreciated that currently the proportion of inmates involved in work is extremely low.

The assessment also found that the penitentiaries located in the Transylvania area have the highest number of inmates involved in work and the highest incomes, unlike the regions of Moldova and Dobrogea, which is at the opposite end (thus correlating with the “regional development and criminal typologies” model (Petre, R.T., 2018).

In 2020, there was a percentage decrease of 22.48% of inmates involved in work and a budget deficit of 42.8% of planned income, as a result of the safety measures necessary to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

From the analysed decade, it results that the number of inmates who expressed their interest in work is relatively constant, no matter how large the prison population was.

In most cases, those who have shown this interest, regardless of the type of work, are first offenders. Their desire to return home and make time pass faster were motivating factors.

For repeat offenders, work is not attractive. They are adapted to the correctional facility environment, they know the written and unwritten rules, some of them call the correctional facility "home".

Those who did not work before being incarcerated and have no work discipline are not interested in working in the correctional facility, thinking that "the state has the obligation to support them".

The inmates' lack of qualification makes them get jobs in fields otherwise unattractive for free citizens: sanitation, waste sorting, unskilled construction work, animal control, etc., fields considered by the inmates to be "below their dignity".

Those with families or with a decent social status before being incarcerated are more motivated to work and return to the environment of origin than those who had nothing to lose by incarceration.

The lack of enforcement of punitive measures for those who refuse to work or take qualification classes strengthens the "one can also live like this" type of mentality.

Another factor which leads to the refusal of work is the lack of work discipline, in the sense that most of them are not used to waking up in the morning and follow a formal 8-hour per day schedule ("habit as a second nature").

The limitation of certain jobs (meal distribution, medical quarters, etc.) that can bring secondary benefits such as contact with inmates from other categories, the possibility of "trafficking" rare or prohibited goods/objects, access to resources, influence peddling, is another factor that causes inmates to refuse other jobs.

The conviction of the inmates is that the state must pay the price of their freedom and that they have to exploit budgetary resources, without taking the blame for having broken the law.

"Specialisation/improvement" of the M.O. when committing new crime is more attractive than work, because they hope to achieve rapid easy gain after release, so that they do not have to work "for nothing" in order to have a good life.

In conclusion, while incarcerated, inmates have the status of "beneficiaries" of the services, without being forced or constrained to find a job or to earn their living. Inter-institutional approaches (example: drawing up or procuring identity documents, specialized medical assistance, etc.) are also taken over by social workers or other categories of staff, as

young people lack the context of experimenting and consolidating independent life skills, the same as their free peers.

A vicious, multi-causal circle appears: without completed studies or qualifications, without the prospect of a decent job or developed skills and abilities, without work-related education (discipline), stigmatized by society, sometimes without family or its support, the former inmates believe that their only chance would be to return to the environment where they started their criminal career and where they easily obtained some material benefits.

These are just some of the considerations regarding work and the need for specialists to approach this topic, as a factor of change and social reintegration of inmates, after being released. Goals such as changing the inmates' attitude towards work, their qualification and involvement in activities should constitute imperatives that help achieve the purpose of the execution of the sentence: the prevention of crime.

Without pretending to be an evaluation, the next sub-chapter brings to the forefront a few reference points regarding the economic and social costs of criminality, detention and recidivism.

The statistical data of the NAP for the year 2020 indicates that 27.05% of the inmates were first offenders with a criminal record and 37.75% were repeat offenders. However, only 35.2% of the inmates were convicted for the first time, for the remaining 64.8% funds had already been spent, including for social reintegration during and after detention.

Although they probably constitute a temporary solution, non-material social services provided (educational programs, counselling, therapy, schooling, qualification, mediation efforts with other institutions or obtaining documents, etc.) offer passive support to the inmates, without really involving them in the rehabilitation process. The globalization of social reintegration services without the sustained intervention on those categories with an increased risk of exclusion, marginalisation or recidivism after release, may create the false illusion of strategic functionality.

As a whole, society is willing to provide support to vulnerable categories, creating different aid instruments, but on the principle of reciprocity, it is expected that the inmates do something in return. They should at least try to help themselves, in accordance with the psycho-pedagogical principle "*You shall not receive food, but the tools with which you can get food*", to create the premises of an independent life.

At the end of the chapter, it was proposed to reconsider the social economy segment whose social benefits are not valued to their potential, as a viable alternative to the reintegration of inmates.

The third chapter describes the research design, conceptual scheme and research methodology: evaluative, quantitative and qualitative, to ensure triangulation in order to verify and validate the data. The design of the research highlights the multidimensional approach to the evaluation, the operationalisation of the concepts that were the basis of the work tools, the sampling techniques as well as the limits or difficulties encountered during data collection and data management.

Contextualizing the dynamics of the factors that influence criminality and those that could have an impact on them, assumed knowledge from several perspectives: individual (inmate) - institution (specialists) - social participants (experts). The novelty of the theme is the very type of evaluation of prison policies - a multidimensional evaluation of the impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries.

The design of the quantitative and qualitative research that I suggested facilitates the implementation of the theoretical elements from the first part of the thesis and strengthens the conclusions resulting from the secondary analysis of the data, having the role of supplementing the information and validating the contents.

The investigative approach was carried out on several levels: quantitatively - through the sociological survey among specialists and first or repeat offenders among young inmates and qualitatively - using the Delphi method among the experts involved in the process of social reintegration of inmates and former inmates and the semi-structured interview, with specialists from correctional facilities. The research was carried out at the national level, in 17 correctional facilities, equally distributed throughout the 8 development regions of Romania.

The period in which the research took place is the one included in the range of pandemic restrictions caused by Covid, so that, on the one hand, the interaction with the inmates could only be done in very small groups. On the other hand, the staggered work schedule or "working from home" and the availability of specialists or partners during that period made it difficult to contact them. These are just some of the aspects that required careful management during the research.

The fourth chapter is divided into two large interdependent sub-chapters: the first one addresses the evaluation of the prison system from an institutional and functional perspective, the convergence between the purpose of reintegration policies and the established objectives and the second sub-chapter deals with the impact of concrete prison policies and programs on the beneficiaries.

Nine years after the implementation of the Strategy, empirical knowledge indicates that the situation to be solved by the decision-maker is similar to the previous one, and that the social problem persists at the same intensity. The problem of released inmates remains the same: low education, lack of qualification impacting occupation, lack of social skills, anger management issues, dysfunctional relationships with the support environment, social issues related to replacement (Briciu, C., 2016), lack of ID, material deprivation, poor health and addictions (Preoteasa, AM; Cace, S; Duminičă, G, 2009). Indeed, these are not factors that can be solved or that are exclusively under the jurisdiction of the correctional facility system, but the formation of minimal skills through which the beneficiaries look for legal solutions to solve them, could be a starting point. Education for work through the formation of skills and positive attitudes towards this activity should be initiated while incarcerated, not afterwards.

In this context, the actions of the strategic social reintegration Plan involving the "correctional facility" must be concrete and realistic. Social reintegration results depend on the way the institution sets its objectives, the understanding it has of its own activity and the way in which results are evaluated or presented. As a reference in the formulation of these objectives, this is the very purpose of the execution of the sentence.

The formulation of the relevant indicators constitutes another component through which the impact that the delivery of the services had on the beneficiaries can be assessed. The significant weight of the quantitative indicators in the Strategy is not always sufficient to conclude whether the results are right or wrong, from the perspective of the legal goal.

Thus, after nine years of implementation, this could be the right time to make the transition from the "implementation assessment", (Cojocaru, Ș., 2010) which is limited to the existence of supporting documents and to the quantification of actions or beneficiaries, to the "**impact assessment**", aiming at the medium and long-term effects the regarding changes in the beneficiaries' condition and status.

The quality of the services provided and the functionality of the prison policy for the social reintegration of inmates can be ensured by developing a culture of **evaluating** the programs and the strategy implemented, based on performance indicators.

Another aspect which draws the attention is related to institutional bureaucracy (Zamfir, C; Vlăsceanu, L., 1998) – an activity specific to the state apparatus, detrimental to the interventions and the supply of services to their beneficiaries (Guvernul României, 2020). According to sociological laws, “the amount of work increases in order to fully occupy the time assigned in order to achieve the objective (Parkinson, C.N., 1957)”, and the multiplication of activities, documents and staff does not ensure the proportionality towards the amount of work in the institution (Mărginean, I., 2004). “Preserving the level of bureaucracy” (ANP, 2019) is one of the issues for which the institution started an internal investigation in 2019. Thus, 63% of the specialists say that, without bureaucracy, they would feel useful towards the beneficiaries and 48% say that they would be satisfied at work. Let me remind here that at the European level, Romania ranks last in the fields of e-government and digitization of central and local public administrations. (Marin, M și colab, 2019)

The complex procedures specific to the state apparatus constitute another subject that raises difficulties. 26% of the respondents included in the research estimate that they limit their interventions, and 36% state that they have the feeling of futility in solving the case study.

In the second part of the chapter, the knowledge of the inmates' needs was analysed. Concretely, this analysis substantiates certain approaches that are carried out with inmates in a correctional facility and directs the prioritization of interventions.

Until this moment, the *analysis of the inmates' needs* at the micro-institutional level (correctional facility) or at the macro level could not be realized. There are statistical situations related to socio-professional data, but they are insufficient in arguing the elaboration and development of a certain type of approach. From the discussions with the specialists, the answers to the question “*why a certain program is running instead of another one*” were among the most diverse: Because I have to do it, it's in the job description - 20%; Because it's in the Offer - 17%; Because I like the program and it's going well - 11%; Because the inmates have a need that can be compensated by being included in this program - 5%. The fact that only 5% of the specialists appreciate that through what they do, the needs of the inmates are compensated, constitutes an alarm signal about the need for the existence of these programs.

Although during the last decade there is more and more talk about the assessment of the inmates' needs and of the risk of recidivism and several work instruments were elaborated, the penal system still uses “irrelevant data” (Durnescu, I., 2000) to elaborate a

Recovery Intervention Plan, as well as to assess the risk to society posed by the individual in question.

The next investigative step was to evaluate the Educational Offer, the needs to which it answers and the most efficient approaches (Rachieru, A., 2010).

By correlating the Educational offer (social services) with data from the annual activity reports (ANP, 2023), the focus on services was highlighted (Cojocaru, Ș., 2010), as the indicators were strictly quantifying the annual participation of inmates to certain activities. When it comes to human nature, the quantitative reports of preparation, training and accountability are insufficient.

The institutional emphasis and the dominance of this type of mirroring of the services delivered by specialists to the beneficiaries created difficulties among them: on the one hand, the specialists, willing to reach their statistical indicators, neglect interventions focused on the problem (which means a small number of beneficiaries over a long period of time) in favour of services with general, mass addressability, whose effects are barely perceptible.

On the other hand, the real intervention needs of the beneficiaries cannot be compensated or mitigated, the physical time allocated by a specialist or the insufficient number of specialists being a disturbing factor.

Official data (ANP, 2021) indicates that one of the institutional objectives is to involve the highest number possible of inmates in social reintegration activities. Theoretically, this aspect is gratifying, as long as the quality of services is ensured. However, as shown by practice and common knowledge, quantity does not always imply quality. Against the background of an acute shortage of staff, it is very difficult to be able to maintain a balance between the two indicators.

By following the evaluative variables resulting from the “Program Theory” (Cojocaru, Ș., 2010), the evaluation (auditing) of the way in which they are managed - human resources + time, with the intervention methods and techniques and the way they are reflected in documents, by correlating with the quantitative indicators and the evaluation of results (long, average and short-term effects), at this very point, the institution might obtain the mirror image of the way in which it is achieving its objective. The formative role of this type of paradigm in evaluation is undeniable, because it generates other variants or solutions in its wake.

The correctional facility system's intention to regulate the processes regarding the provision of services is remarkable, but the prioritization and individualization of

interventions according to the severity of the risks is preferable. This perspective is also supported by the results of evaluations of other types of social policies that focus on groups at risk.

The experience of repeat offenders, the answers they gave and their percentage distribution, constitute important landmarks in changing the institutional vision. Anger management and work (seen by inmates as a form of ergotherapy and a way to acquire/consolidate skills) are the most valued forms of social recovery. This is a point where the specialists' vision agrees with that of the beneficiaries.

In the current socio-economic conditions faced by Romania, the solution is not to improve or optimize social reintegration efforts, but to structurally reconsider the strategy and policy aimed at social reinsertion. Currently (and expectedly for the next 4 years), the administrative capacity and the institutional functionality in providing quality services to all beneficiaries (Pop, L., 1999) is limited first of all by a deficit of human resource. This is an additional reason for directing the efforts proportionally to the severity of the beneficiaries' need.

At the same time, the evaluation of these policies has the role of substantiating further steps that lead to viable interventions, adapted to the needs of the inmates.

The fifth and sixth chapters present the results of the quantitative and qualitative research carried out in the field and their correlation with the existing theoretical-referential framework. Both chapters contain evaluative conclusions on the institutional aspects and the impact of the social reintegration policy. Although the methods used and the target groups are different and for methodological reasons a distinct approach was required, the information and conclusions interfered.

Chapter 5 describes the stages of the sociological investigation and presents the interpretation of the data collected from first offenders and repeat offenders, as well as from specialists working in correctional facilities.

The data were also correlated with the conclusions of the evaluation carried out by the method of secondary analysis of the data from Chapter 3, for the relevance and completion of the overall picture on the impact that the activities carried out in the correctional facility have on the inmates and to what extent they contribute to their social reintegration.

Here are some of the conclusions on this level : The criminogenic needs of the inmates are not always properly identified, the assessment tools needing some adjustments; there is no agreement between the inmates' needs and those the specialists believe that the

inmates have; specialized approaches are not focused on solving their problems; as they are not focused on needs, the effectiveness of interventions decreases and implicitly, the risk of relapse increases; the objectives of the programs are only to a small extent aimed at individualized intervention per person and the criminogenic risks they present; most of the time, the activities carried out in the correctional facility are leisurely (spending time outside the detention rooms to watch films, debates, thematic contests, sports activities) and less recuperative elements, of change in attitude and behaviour; work is perceived as an important component of the educational and social reintegration process, both by inmates and by specialists; schooling is part of the social reintegration process, but it is only useful in situations where inmates have either never been included in the education system (they are illiterate), or they are in the final stage of an education cycle - in the short and long run, it would be better for them to be helped by changing the legislation, and to acquire some form of qualification or learn a trade); for those who have committed violent crimes, it is a necessity to be included in specialized interventions in order to reduce aggression and control impulses, because the risk of committing acts in the same category but more serious than the first is increased.

In the sixth chapter, the qualitative research had the role of completing the conceptual scheme of the investigative approach and the overall picture with appreciative, specific elements about the impact of social reintegration policies but also with perspectives that were taken into account when formulating intervention proposals.

The Delphi method didn't particularly follow the opinion regarding perspective phenomena (Tămaș, 1999), in the consecrated sense of the method, but elements specific to participative research.

The experts were involved in the identification of solutions to problems which they knew best, thus encouraging what specialists are calling "psychological action ownership (...) by empowerment and sharing" (Precupețu I., 2006).

If in the case of inmates, the interpretation of the data was carried out according to the criminal category of first offenders/repeat offenders, in the case of experts, the grouping and presentation of opinions was also carried out according to the development region, in order to identify possible regional characteristics.

Thus, there is a visible difference between the development regions regarding the opportunities of released youths, their motivation and the accumulation of social and cultural

factors (regional particularities) that affect or contribute to increasing the chances of social inclusion.

In the regions with a higher level of development, discrimination is less frequent, social services are more attractive than the standard (institutional) ones, the only problem being the education and availability of the released youth to take steps in favour of his own reinsertion.

Cultural differences are other aspects that can be taken into account in the application of the strategy: if the NE Region is dominated by the culture of alcohol and the dependence on social services, in the Bucharest-Ilfov area the use of drugs and prohibited substances is reported. Thus, the weight of programs to reduce addictive behaviours should be concentrated in these regions.

The separation of first offenders and repeat offenders is advisable, in order to reduce their cross-contamination and to carry out distinct interventions. Repeat offenders are desensitized, specialized in committing certain types of crimes, they easily commit crimes whose seriousness often increases and within the prison hierarchical system they tend to become informal leaders for first offenders, to show their "status", their seniority and the experience in the relationship with "freshmen" inmates, "guiding" them according to their own values.

In full consensus, the experts emphasize the need to make the most of the detention time by involving the inmates in qualification courses and acquiring skills to facilitate their access to a job after release.

Another necessity consists in the work education of the inmates. In addition to the family pattern or the culture of the community of origin, the age and the lack of time in which they would have had time to work, to form skills, to experience the satisfaction of work and the appreciation of personal qualities, those are the arguments brought in favour of this orientation. The experts pointed out that young people don't want to work, or don't know how to work, they don't have a discipline and even if they get hired, they make problems at the workplace, which causes employers to be reluctant in hiring them.

Also, the problem of released youths is rather little known, for example the boomerang effect coming from the lack of information among citizens regarding the risks they expose young people to through marginalization. Informing the community is not enough to reduce the stigmatization and social marginalization of inmates. There must be a collaboration: the correctional facility must also come up with "something" tangible, concrete, to strengthen the information. The involvement of inmates in the well-being of the community through

various voluntary actions such as landscaping, maintenance, rehabilitating schools or asylums and mediating them with an emphasis on the fact that they are non-profit actions (unpaid and without earning days), can contribute to changing the perception towards them.

Another aspect that stood out is related to institutional transparency and real information on the actual situation. The experts involved in the social reintegration process pointed out the need to receive feedback regarding the results of their work, from higher authorities. Not knowing some data and ignoring their opinion when making decisions is demotivating in the long term: "I would like better communication, to know what we have to improve or what are the results of our activity".

From the interviews with the employees, it emerged that at the local level they have a very good collaboration with the partners, many of the delicate situations or problems arising when solving some cases, based on the personal relations that were created and consolidated over time.

The high degree of standardization and formalization in solving special cases is an obstacle in the effectiveness of interventions.

By accumulating the collected information, the conclusion once again is the necessity of decentralizing or customizing the strategy according to the regional specificities, so that the efficiency of the results is increased by conveying responsibilities and decision-making power to the parties.

Thus, the involvement of regional social actors in the development of their own action plans, alongside the "National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction" and that of social reintegration, could be motivating factors to find concrete solutions at the regional level, for this segment of population, depending on the typology of the area. It is common knowledge in the specialized literature that when the competences consist only of the implementation of a plan developed at a higher level, there is a risk of it being distorted or perceived only as an additional attribution (Pop, L., 1999). The more social actors are involved in the process of social reintegration of inmates, the more social control is exerted over criminality and the prospects of their social inclusion increase.

The experts were asked to give suggestions/make proposals that could contribute to increasing inclusion after release, which were centralized in the form of an inventory, which could constitute a point of reference in rethinking or completing the policy of social reintegration of inmates.

The seventh chapter specifies the limits, risks and ethical principles that guided the research, so that the legal and scientific validity of the research is ensured, in accordance with the Code of Ethics in Research, of the RIQL (Research Institute for Quality of Life) and the Romanian Academy.

The final conclusions, proposals, recommendations and prospects for further development of the research were based exclusively on the factual data and on the relevant aspects that emerged from the evaluation of each strategic component, from an innovative perspective.

Although the research focused on prison social reintegration policies, the central theme of the thesis was not the analysis of deviance or criminality in itself, as social problems, nor did it aim to evaluate the contents of programs or manifestos. However, in order for the evaluation to exercise its formative role, first it was necessary to form the overall picture of reality and the objective assessment regarding the institutional distance or proximity to the strategic goal.

Through the permanent appeal to, and the correlation with the other national policies, strategies, social programs and key indicators that focus on concerns for people from special categories, who are vulnerable or with increased risks and needs, my intention was to position the correctional facility policy on the same level, from the point of view of social importance and functionality and the establishment of benchmarks that can reflect institutional progress. Although the beneficiary segment is clearly lower than that of other categories, I can say that the risks they present are inversely proportional to their severity, hence the need for permanent adaptation of the interventions.

The interventions carried out in correctional facilities on human subjects and the measurement of results are at the border of several disciplines (sociology, psychology, pedagogy, economics, law) so that the indicators are a sum of these elements. It is difficult to make the execution goal itself operational, which is rather a social goal. Also, not being a closed system, it is totally dependent on the environment in which it operates, on the external factors that influence it.

The analysis of the secondary data shows that there are "output indicators" such as activities, assessment tools, procedures, etc., but there are no result indicators to translate possible behavioural or institutional changes and impact indicators aimed at the very purpose of the execution of the sentence and the elaboration of the strategy: viable improvements at the level of direct and indirect beneficiaries.

From the researches and evaluations carried out in other fields aimed at improving the quality of life, similar problems were recorded regarding the resistance in establishing impact indicators. By analogy, an eloquent example consists in the impossibility of appreciating the "impact of the absorption of funds", because the indicators within the programs with European funding did not take into account whether the services offered to the beneficiaries had "the expected effect in terms of social inclusion and the increase of the quality of life" (Alexui, M, 2013).

To what extent the correctional facility system manages to cover the needs of individuals through the services offered or what is the real principle according to which it operates, this is the starting point of some dilemmas: focusing on reducing risks in the case of inmates with the highest chances of recidivism (according to the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model, or RNR) or offering the same type of support to all the beneficiaries, thus leading to maintaining or even increasing the intensity of the risks of relapse. Based on the institutional requirements and exclusively quantitative results, a parallel can be drawn with the effectiveness of the "Milk and Croissant" program intended for schoolchildren, whose impact assessment stated: "the waste that is produced as an effect of the undifferentiated granting of this social benefit (...), must be counteracted by other means, and not by changing the philosophy of the program and its universal category vocation" (Arpinte, D.; Cace S.; Preotesi M.; Tomescu C., 2009). Through the transfer of conclusions, ideas, models or proposals from the evaluation of other programs intended to facilitate social inclusion, we intended to outline the direction of social policies in general and the matching to the conclusions formulated in this thesis.

The negative side effects of the generalization of services on the entire mass of inmates and the increase of their involvement in any type of activities are multiple and affect both the staff and the beneficiaries. The human resource is not used at full capacity and according to the competences for which it was assigned, and the inmates' risks of recidivism are not reduced (POSDRU, 2012).

This principle according to which intensive and sustained intervention must be oriented according to the severity of the risk to be reduced and individualized according to the needs is not applicable to a quantitative requirement. The immediate consequence is reflected even in the correctional facility environment: the increase in the aggressiveness of the inmates (hetero-aggressiveness and self-aggression), the large number of negative events, assault, etc. These situations can, in turn, constitute indicators not only from the perspective of the efficiency of the measures, but also from the perspective of the

predictability of recidivism. Also, the system of crediting and rewarding inmates is an incentive for their participation in activities, but it does not deliver information about the change that has occurred, the attitudinal change towards work or compliance with the norms of social coexistence (POSDRU, 2013).

The ease with which inmates obtain benefits during their incarceration is a source of de-motivation for them to help themselves overcome their condition. Exercising behaviours of dependence or gratification of any minimal effort for years, their skills and abilities to solve their own problems after release are weakened and their motivation to identify related legal means decreases (for example, the motivation to work is not developed). As the experts included in the research pointed out, the fact that they get used to "getting everything for free" in the correctional facility puts them in poorly adaptive situations upon release, because they have to make an effort, to confirm expectations in order to get what they want. Transferring conclusions, the research work titled "An Assessment of the Romanian Social Benefits System Based on Testing the Means" (Pop, L., 1999) highlights "induced behavioural changes" by delivering social services to beneficiaries, which "creates an addiction and a lack of motivation" regarding work.

The identification of some ways of actively involving the inmates in their own process of change, not only based on physical participation on the principle of Pavlovian conditioning (obtaining some rewards), is a necessity. As time moves on, there comes a moment when the inmate is released and the environment where they end up will no longer have the availability of stimulating or rewarding him for things that society considers natural, "normal" (POSDRU, 2013)

The correctional facility policy is, in fact, that which is delivered by each local administration (in this case, the correctional facility) and which reaches the beneficiary (Lipski, 1980). Local structures (correctional facilities) with specific management and administration, with regional practices and typologies, can also radically change the expected results (POSDRU, 2009). By transferring these factual states into the structural-functional register, one may say that individuals, through their institutionalized or internalized actions, are those components that provide functionality to the system.

As noted in the sociological investigation, a strategy and its directions of action cannot always be assimilated and understood by those who perform these actions as they were conceived by the higher echelons, but the people who implement the strategy are the ones who actively create the nature of the system and new institutional patterns (Voicu, B.; Rusu, H.M.; Popa, A.E, 2015). The specialized literature in the field of social services

highlights the fact that the fragmentation between decision and execution creates distortions, customs and routines parallel to the ideological display of a strategy or policy.

In the absence of "relevant" and up-to-date data on the basis of which simple indicators of efficiency and effectiveness can be calculated, the evaluation of the functionality of the social reintegration policy was based on partial information and measurements or indirect data, starting from the details to create the whole, from the particular to the general, to reflect the image. One example is the "Study Regarding the Creation of a Cross-institutional Integrated Mechanism for the reintegration of Former Inmates in Society" (POSDRU, 2012) elaborated 11 years ago – nevertheless, with up-to-date results.

As in the case of other types of programs, the evaluation of the policies in the correctional facility system cannot show that the development and implementation of the planned actions have contributed to the increase in the well-being of the beneficiaries, to the increase in the chances of social reintegration or to the improvement of the quality of life, relevant examples can be found in the study "The Integration of Former Inmates" (Durnescu, I, 2013).

Considering that the correctional facility strategy is a component of a set of strategies aimed at the social inclusion of vulnerable categories, the evaluation of its impact should be an institutional necessity and it should be carried out from the perspective of common European and national indicators, so as to maintain its relevance over a longer period of time and to be a reference point when assessing progress (Briggs, S., 2006).

The constant monitoring and evaluation of the services provided to the beneficiaries under the custody of the correctional facility system is likely to ensure feedback regarding their efficiency, and from a managerial point of view, to constitute a tool for making institutional decisions for development or change.

The collected data and the addition of other variables allow the creation of regional typologies of inmates, so that the interventions are carried out depending on the local specificity, the dominance of the facts, the cultural and social elements, constituting a future direction of research. The development of programs focused on the specificity of the area could contribute to increasing the efficiency of correctional facility activities.

Also, the differences in terms of attitude between first offender and repeat offender inmates belonging to the NEET category towards the committed crimes and in relation to the availability to continue their instructive-educational process and to work, can constitute

arguments in the development of programs with differentiated addressability depending on the penal categories.

A direction favourable to the achievement of strategic objectives consists in capitalizing on the potential of the social economy, through institutional partnership with NGOs or local entities in the field of social economy. In collaboration with those entities, they could establish clusters of creative companies at the level of each correctional facility unit, as they can create local production centres synonymous with the saying "one village - one product", "one correctional facility - one product". Moreover, by creating jobs, training inmates and ensuring continuity/stability after release, crime and poverty are reduced and the chances of social inclusion increase (Parlamentul European, 2022).

Based on the data collected, a map of the dominance of criminogenic actions can be created in collaboration with experts in the field.

As a general conclusion, the assessment carried out from a structural-functionalism perspective highlights the integrated approach to the correctional facility policy and the fact that the "Optimization" seen as an institutional objective cannot be achieved without a knowledge of reality. Preferably, in the light of what has been presented, correctional facility policies should be "re-considered" for the social reintegration of inmates.

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