

Cultural Activity of Prisoners in Poland and Hungary in the Aspect of Law and Practices

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Abstract

In our study, we began with the premise that education strives to successfully reintegrate prisoners into society. Under the term education, we consider several actions aimed at reintegration, including elementary, secondary and vocational training. What's more, we think any cultural activity can possibly support the right way of life after release. All of these must be based on the cultural self-expression of prisoners. In the study, we attempt to present the possible moments of the cultural life of the prison and the exploitation of prisoners' rights to culture. Within this, we draw attention to community cultural opportunities and their impact on inmates. We declare that cultural activities in prisons are highly important for reintegration as cultural programmes and artistic actions bring prisoners closer to the nature of the free world. We will discuss two countries [regarding the topic] – Poland and Hungary – and show the diversity of the cultural activities available to prisoners. We will also highlight a few examples of these.

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Keywords

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Introduction

The rights of prisoners will inevitably be curtailed during the execution of their imprisonment, but these restrictions must be kept to a minimum. The loss of liberty cannot mean the loss of cultural rights (Vókó, 2010, p. 157). It is crucial that individuals deprived of their liberty – respecting the provisions of international conventions and domestic legislation – are treated as human beings during the entire period of detention and their human dignity should not be violated under any circumstances. Human rights, principles and international requirements must prevail during criminal prosecution in all circumstances, which can be considered as one of the benchmarks of the rule of law.

Nowadays, more and more attention is being paid to the enforcement of criminal sanctions in the process of criminal prosecution. All penalties, sanctions and coercive procedural measures restrict certain fundamental civil rights of citizens, but protection must be provided to prevent any abuse of rights (Vókó, 2010). In the enforcement of custodial sentences, we cannot ignore that prison is a total institution that primarily has a segregating, isolating role (Czenczer, 2008, p. 24). Its essential elements act against the conditions of resocialisation and correction tasks, and its rules regulate the entire lifestyle of prisoners. Isolation also manifests itself in externalities; the separation from the world is physically visible in total institutions (Módos, 1998, p. 28). Moreover, they exclude prisoners from the very social patterns essential for successful integration (Módos, 2001, p. 42). The cultural activities of inmates make it possible to prevent negative forms of behaviour and ensure they spend their free time in an interesting and valuable way. Participation in cultural activities stimulates individuality, creativity and activity. It breaks passivity, forces prisoners to think, redirects energy and directs attention to new goals and tasks. Additionally, offenders have the chance to find their passions, interests and skills that they can utilise after leaving prisons – whether it be in their families, communities or on their own.

Programmes helping reintegrate prisoners into society must be thought through with great sensitivity as the fundamental aim is to prepare them for release from the first moment. The emphasis on post-release integration also means that prison conditions, including prisoners' living and working conditions,

must be as similar to those that are typically present in society as possible so that they can learn about and experience the life situations they may encounter after release. In addition to employment and education, leisure and public education activities offer good opportunities for this, and some self-active organisations can help implement this (Módos, 1998, p. 54).

Our study aims to describe the legal framework (in Poland and Hungary) for providing prisoners with opportunities for cultural activities and show what good examples are known in both countries. The framework of this article does not allow us to present and describe all projects in the field of cultural activation and impact through art implemented in penitentiary units in Hungary and Poland.

Our research questions are the following:

- Why is ensuring the cultural rights of inmates important?
- What is the legal background of inmates' cultural activities in the European Union, Poland and Hungary?
- What are the most popular examples of cultural activities undertaken by convicts in Poland and Hungary?

Legal background of the inmates' cultural rights in the European Union

At the international level, the issue of providing prisoners with access to public education is in the spotlight. Four important documents are highlighted in this context:

1. The Recommendation R/89/12 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Prison Education (CPME) provides that "prisoners should have access to education, which consists of school education, vocational training, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library use" (Point 1). Point 9 states that "vocational training should aim at the broad development of the individual and should take account of labour market trends" (Council of Europe, 1990);
2. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe's Recommendation R/89/12/1 on Prison Education (BMü) provides that prisoners should have access to education (Council of Europe, 1990). This consists of school education, vocational training, creative and cultural activities, social and physical education, sports and library use. Point 9 states that vocational training should be aimed at the development of the individual in the broadest sense and must take account of labour market trends (Council of Europe 1990);

3. The new set of European Prison Rules, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 11th January 2006 under Rec (2006) 2, also incorporates a number of recommendations of the Council of Europe, including Recommendation R (89) 12 on prison education, which is also relevant to our topic (Juhász, 2006, p. 2). Item 27.6 of Recommendation R/06/2 of the Committee of Ministers of the European Union on the European Prison Rules provides that “cultural activities and pastimes should also be offered to prisoners and that, as far as possible, those concerned should be involved in the organisational activity” (Committee of Ministers of the European Union, 2006). Item 28.1 of the recommendation states that all penitentiary institutions should strive to ensure that all prisoners have the opportunity to participate in educational programmes that are as comprehensive as possible and that meet their individual needs and aspirations (Committee of Ministers of the European Union, 2006);
4. The Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners contain recommendations on the various programmes 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 (Council of Europe, 1990). The Council of Europe’s final report (1990) on prison education states that the education of prisoners should be similar to that of similar age groups in the outside world and should be as widely accessible as possible (Council of Europe, 1990). The culture provided in this way has different arenas, which can be classified in several ways.

The Council of Europe classification, published in 1998, distinguishes three categories to which prison activities may be linked. 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 programmes 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, p. 4).

Cultural rights of inmates in Hungary | Theoretical and legal background

Meaningful activity is part of a normal life in society, while forcing inmates to do nothing can lead to anxiety, depression and aggression (Lőrincz & Nagy, 1997, p. 86). Any form of organised employment can mitigate 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). The term *reintegration*, already established in Hungary, gives a good sense of the purpose of the penal system (i.e., the preparation of persons released from prison for life in society). It is important to note that a large proportion of the prison population is culturally disadvantaged (Kovács, 2022). If they had one before, prisoners must fall back into their learning culture (Mohácsi, 2022). A special project helps with this – the EFOP 1.3.3-2016-00001 priority project ‘Reintegration of detainees’, realised in Hungary. The purpose is to aid prisoners, and the project helps the social and labour market reintegration of those serving legally imposed prison sentences and those arrested, as well as reducing their risk of recidivism. Part of this large-scale programme includes the provision of community programmes for structured leisure time (Sinkó, 2022).

A summary definition of prisoners’ cultural rights is employment, which also includes a set of employment, education, vocational training, therapeutic employment and other reintegration programmes provided to a convicted person within the penitentiary organisation (16/2014. (XII. 19.) | IM regulation Paragraph 2). Act CCXL 2013 (hereinafter: The Penitentiary Code) stipulates that reintegration activities to promote the reintegration of prisoners are provided through employment, occupational therapy, primary and secondary education, higher education, vocational training, apprenticeships and other reintegration programmes (Act CCXL 2013 | Paragraph 83 (3)).

In the Penitentiary Code, we find – in several places – various rights granted to prisoners that fall into the category of cultural rights. Within the rights of prisoners, the rights to education and the rights to culture are separated. According to the Penitentiary Code, prisoners have the right to maintain and improve their physical and mental well-being. The law stipulates the following rights arising from the fact of enforcement: pursuing self-education; ordering press products; using the cultural and sporting facilities of the penitentiary institution; exercising their right to education; commencing or continuing their studies at primary, secondary and higher education levels; studying and taking examinations in preparation for examinations (Act CCXL 2013 | Paragraph 122 e).

Cultural and leisure activities include, among other things, the provision of opportunities for self-education, the organisation of professional circles, the operation of self-education circles and the provision of library use. Providing opportunities for self-organisation by participating in various clubs and circles is useful because it helps reduce 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). The European Prison Rules (Rule 28) 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 organised with the help of public libraries” (Committee of Ministers of the European Union, 2006, p. 12). The prison library should be an open facility to all prisoners, and its use should be considered a significant rehabilitation activity (Vókó, 2010).

The cultural rights of the prisoners include – in a broader sense – the right to freely choose, express and exercise their religious or conscientious beliefs. In the penitentiary, the prisoner may maintain contact a religious person, a member of a religious association who performs religious rites professionally or a person commissioned by a religious legal person or religious association without being subject to control. The establishment of such contact may be initiated by any party (16/2014. (XII. 19.) | IM regulation Paragraph 110 (2)). In this connection, the Penitentiary Code provides that “prisoners must be allowed to religious ceremonies following the requirements of the religious community” (Act CCXL 2013 | Paragraph 126 (4)). The penitentiary institute promotes the social, charitable and caring activities of religious communities and their services provided to prepare prisoners for release. Prison services’ role is crucial in strengthening religious morals; they assist in caring for prisoners and released persons and their families. They build communities, settle family relationships with prisoners and solve personal and social problems (Lőrincz & Nagy, 1997, p. 254; Teleki, 2010, p. 33). Prison pastors offer inmates the opportunity to shape themselves through these activities. According to Bízik (2002), the goal is not to “dissolve tensions”, “become more manageable” or “have a safety valve”; these are merely lucky returns, not goals (Bízik, 2002, p. 97). Pastors and mission staff carry out a variety of activities among prisoners. The 8/2017 (VI. 13.) IM Regulation on Prison Pastoral Service and Prison Mission Activity stipulates that the use of the prison pastoral service is the exclusive right of the prisoner and the ones detained on other grounds (8/2017 (VI. 13.) | IM Regulation Paragraph 3 (2)). A legal ecclesiastical person carries out

the prison pastoral service on the basis of the needs of prisoners and other legal detainees. To ensure the continuous provision of the prison chaplain service, the penitentiary organisation shall provide at least one full-time prison chaplain per penitentiary institution as a law enforcement administrative employee (8/2017 (VI. 13.) | IM Regulation Paragraph 3 (1) and Paragraph 4 (1)).

Cultural rights of inmates in Poland | Theoretical and legal background

In light of literature and law, modern thinking about social rehabilitation has recently been dominated by a new approach that emphasises displaying the advantage of consultative and therapeutic methods applied in the social rehabilitation procedures over repressive methods. In the present model of interaction, more and more often, it is possible to observe tendencies toward interactions based mainly on the principle of appealing to the potential of an individual and developing their capabilities rather than only focusing on decreasing deficiencies that frequently become sources of behavioural disorders which, in turn, may often initiate and direct a criminal path that an individual may follow. Jaworska indicates many benefits and functions of art in prison, such as cathartic and compensatory – understood as an influence helping to regain mental balance. This function is based, first of all, on the possibilities offered by art to satisfy needs. An important element of the work of art is vicariously satisfying desires related to suppressed destructive impulses, including self-destructive ones. In prison life, art creates conditions for the projection and discharge of one's own anxieties and complexes, as well as the search for the meaning of life (Jaworska, 2017).

It should be emphasised that cultural and educational activities have been developed in the field of Polish penitentiary work since the early 1990s. Their implementation is regulated by legislation, including the Act on the Executive Penal Code. In light of Polish law, interaction with inmates must take place with due respect to their rights and under the condition that they fulfil all the required duties such as work, learning, sports, maintaining contact with their families and the world outside of prison, and using therapeutic measures, including cultural and educational activities – listening to the radio, watching television and reading books and newspapers. Moreover, each penitentiary unit is equipped with a library where convicts can borrow books and newspapers. Additionally, they can use audio-visual equipment in their communal areas or cells. However, convicts must not break the rules established at their penitentiary units while using such facilities. Convicts may also be allowed to form teams to participate in

cultural, educational, social and sports activities. For this reason, it is also possible to initiate contact and cooperation with relevant associations, organisations or institutions (Act of 6th June 1997 | Art. 67, 135, 102, 135, 136).

The psycho-corrective value of cultural and educational activities results from several factors, including:

- they serve as the basic means of organising free time and meeting the psychological needs of convicts in isolation, simultaneously fostering active relaxation;
- organisation of cultural and educational activities provides an opportunity to – in a specific way – switch roles: convicts stop being passive recipients of an offer provided by their penitentiary units as they can become initiators and creators of some particular projects;
- as a result of developing positive interest and habits in convicts, some considerable possibilities appear in the field of personal development;
- they help to minimise tension, impulsiveness and mitigate aggression;
- they are factors that foster counteracting standardisation. Imprisonment is strictly related to limitation of one's individuality. Therefore, all types of creative activities are oriented towards developing imagination and displaying an individual personality as a counterbalance to uniform functioning in prison. It becomes even more important because cultural and educational activities can be organised in close cooperation with institutions, organisations, associations and people from outside the penitentiary unit (Niewiadomska, 2016).

Among the most popular forms of convicts' artistic expression, the following are listed: artwork, literature, music, drama, film and dance. Artwork usually includes painting, drawing, graphic art, sculpture, relief and applied art. Literature includes poetry, short stories, diaries, novels and fairytales for children. Music performances include songs and playing instruments – there are prison music bands in some penitentiary units. Drama clubs have also become a method of artistic expression for prisoners. Film is the least popular medium of artistic expression; however, convicts have been effectively encouraged to help make films in various correctional units by acting and directing. Dancing is another form of artistic expression rarely used by convicts, considering the lack of specialist staff who could successfully develop convicts' interest in this form of art. However, there are various dance genres observed among those who enjoy this form of artistic expression: hip-hop, folk dance and musical dance (Jaworska, 2016).

In 2021, 4,327 convicts participated in cultural and educational activities organised in penitentiary units, and there were 8,956 permits issued for them to participate in such activities. There were 139 libraries in detention centres and penitentiary units. The total number of books at penitentiary libraries was 1,364,098, and 849,272 copies were borrowed (Ministry of Justice, Central Authorities of Prison Service, 2022).

Examples of good practice of cultural and educational activities undertaken by convicts in Hungary

Social reintegration – so that it is successful – requires certain activities for prisoners. One such activity is cultural self-expression. That is why it is worth observing how some prisoners react to cultural and artistic programmes and what activities they engage in this area. Creative activities and their support are significant in prison because culture and art can help reduce the harm caused by imprisonment. At the same time, through such activities, prisoners can get closer to the reality of society.

Most prisons implement cultural programmes due to their beneficial impact on inmates. In Hungary, the positive examples presented in the study come from prisons in which our relational capital was sufficient to organise cultural programmes. Positive experiences include prisoners' participation in art therapy sessions and their performance in prison theatre. Art therapy exerts its positive effect because it helps to identify with the arts and develop creativity. It also enables a temporary separation from the closed environment of the prison because art tools and the work itself increase a person's adaptability, improve physical condition, strengthen mental status and, at the same time, reduce aggression and frustration. Participating in artistic activities aids in establishing a good relationship with prison staff and boosting self-esteem (Nagy, 2012, p. 81).

As an example, we mention that in Hungary, the programme entitled *Art Therapy in Prison* (in Szeged Strict and Medium Prison) reduced the negative influences of prison and contributed to the restoration of the internal "overturned" order caused by the prison sentence (Nagy, 2012, p. 80). According to experience, stage play makes the participating prisoners more cooperative and confident. This activity also improves their speaking skills and increases their creativity. Theatre activities also showed a beneficial effect on discipline and concentration. In some Hungarian prisons, well-behaved prisoners can participate in literary and drama programmes – they do it voluntarily. Acting groups perform their talents in front of their fellow prisoners and sometimes a civilian audience. Acting also can

function as a source of income – in this case, the whole amount of money received is for supporting those in need. In Hungary, to support social reintegration, the penitentiary institutions also try to improve the quality of the penal practice with other activities. Many programmes organised in prisons are for adult learning purposes. Thus, all cultural processes that take place alongside the formal and non-formal forms of learning are for the reintegration of prisoners.

Practice shows that it is advisable to use all learning support methods that can contribute to finding the best way back to society. That is why we used meditation sessions, film clubs or photo exhibitions as adult learning methods, which all had a supportive effect on the prisoners (Molnár, 2017). We planned and implemented these group sessions to support the informal learning of prisoners by signing a voluntary contract with the prisons after consultation and approval with the principals of the institutes and then assessing the interest of the prisoners to match the content of the group sessions to the needs.

Each meditative group session creates a special psychic status in which the process takes place in a self-rewarding way. Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's psychological research (2008) proved that, among preferential conditions, people's actions become organised as a fully experienced process – while the person is overwhelmed by an extra “well-feeling”. In addition to consciously focusing on the activity, a driving force emerges that makes the individuals act for their action itself – while they get a reinforcing and rewarding experience. As Csíkszentmihályi states, such a state is an experience of *flow* in which a person is in a changed, positive state of mind and whatever they do is being done on the way far from the effects of the environment (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008). During the sessions for meditation (that we did nearly 50 times), we aimed to learn the basics of relaxation and meditation. It was important to recognise individual problems and search for solutions. Ten to 20 prisoners who volunteered took part in a series of sessions consisting of five to ten sessions in which (also as part of the adult learning process) they learned about the positive effects of relaxation and meditation. The prisoners had the opportunity to try some of the techniques and practical elements of this method. We used a form of meditation based on the participants' cognitive awareness – the meditation learned in prison was based on José Silva's meditation method (Silva & Miele, 2018). During the exercise, the participants went from their state of wakefulness to a state of consciousness bordering on falling asleep, which they did with conscious concentration. In such a relaxed state of consciousness, the participants performed simple mental tasks such as imagining a state (life situation, future) where they would live and act in

a way acceptable to themselves and others. With this self-development activity, they get used to the idea of a moral lifestyle and the associated feelings. After the meditation sessions, most participants claimed that they found solutions to their everyday problems thanks to the sessions. In general, the inmates became calmer and more balanced; some lost their sleep disorders, and the effectiveness of their fight against aggression improved for many (Molnár, 2017).

Another example is *film club*, which has “endless” possibilities. When we showed films (nearly 25 times) to the prisoners, we tried to show them works that mediate the values of social rules and human relationships. The films were suitable for encouraging inmates to face and fight problems and conflicts. We did not watch the movies superficially, but deeply – following the rules we discussed with the participants at the beginning of the programmes. For example, everyone needed to participate in a discussion about the content of the film watched. A pleasant group mood developed during the post-film talks, which was an important component of the collaborative activity. The films watched together encouraged the inmates to tell their own life stories (their ‘route’ to prison). In these situations, the necessity of transformation and the significance of mutual aid were frequently brought up among their opinions. On each occasion, attachment to family, the importance of communities, positive life goals, tolerance and perseverance came up (Molnár, 2015). After the film club sessions, we concluded that it was worth regularly holding such programmes because the participants took part in these programmes with full interest. A positive group atmosphere developed during the post-film talks, which was an important component of the collaborative activity.

We presented *photo exhibitions* of 25 pictures in the prisons more than 20 times. The pictures travelled from prison to prison as a travelling exhibition, regularly delivered by the penitentiary organisation. Photo exhibitions began with the opening ceremony and, after that, there were discussions with some people living in the institution – during which we led conversations with the inmates who viewed the pictures. The shows’ objectives include fostering viewers’ cognitive abilities, enhancing convicts’ positive visual experiences and contributing to their cultural interest through the use of art. Occasionally, to expand this cultural programme, it was possible to have an hour-long in-depth discussion with smaller groups of inmates (usually ten people), during which they could ask the author additional questions in the cultural department of the institute (e.g., in the library) – not only about the choice of topic, but also about the technical characteristics of photography too. Currently, we make five exhibitions (125 pictures) available to prisons.

Examples of good practice of cultural and educational activities undertaken by convicts in Poland

Cultural interaction is implemented in most penitentiary units in Poland. The scope of cultural and educational activities depends on the types of penitentiary units where convicts serve their sentences.-

It is possible to observe that in the process of working with convicts in cultural activation, passive forms of activities are abandoned in favour of developing activeness. Good practice in this field includes forms of creative activities such as literary or poetry contests, book clubs, handcraft exhibitions, periodical publications, exhibitions, dictation, club activities, reading and bibliotherapy (Szczygieł, 2002; Korona, 2019; Łuka, 2018). Numerous projects have been implemented in cooperation with entities operating outside prison, such as universities or cultural centres. Inmates have the opportunity to take part in a spectacular spectrum of very different programmes and projects. Due to the huge population of prisoners and the number of penitentiary units, it is not possible to show what each of them does; we try to flash a non-exhaustive list of a few examples (as the table shows).

Table 1: Selected events and projects in the field of convicts' cultural and educational activation at Polish penitentiary units

Event	Penitentiary unit	Short description	Notes
A poetry and music meeting	Penitentiary Unit in Zarębie	During the meeting, the convicts listened to poems presented by their authors and to music.	The atmosphere of the meeting allowed the convicts to get outside the prison walls for a while and to forget about their physical limitations resulting from the isolation. The meeting also stimulated sensitivity that is often buried under a strong person's appearance. The convicts reminded themselves about other people and about the feelings they hide inside.

A vernissage at the Poznań Heritage Centre	Detention Centre in Poznań and External Departments in Koziegłowy and Poznań	Decreasing monotony. Improving skills and competencies.	The exhibits were produced by the convicts under the framework of a social rehabilitation programme in the field of cultural-technical activities.
The Nationwide Dictation for Inmates	Penitentiary Unit in Czerwonony Bór	The dictation contest aimed to develop positive attitudes toward caring for correct spelling and punctuation and disseminate the culture of the Polish language.	Various initiatives to show and discover new opportunities, develop motivation and write a dictation.
A broadcasting centre	Detention Centre in Bydgoszcz	Under their occupational duties, the convicts perform ordered work.	The broadcasting centre contributes to the organisation of everyday prison life. Its tasks include not only rebroadcasting programmes of commercial radio stations, but also developing their own broadcasting pieces – such as announcements, chats, sports programmes, contests and religious services.
A concert for prevention	Penitentiary Unit in Cieszyn	The event conveyed a positive message to the convicts and inspired them to think about their current lifestyle. Based on their own traumatic experience, the person who ran the event concluded that there is always a chance to make a positive change in one's own life and that living by the law is possible and worth trying as hard as possible to do.	The concert was organised in cooperation with the SNAP Foundation – Stop Drug and Alcohol Addiction and Violence and the FILEO Christian Association of Social Rehabilitation Aid.

The projects were dedicated to commemorating historical events such as the January Uprising or the Holocaust Memorial Day	Penitentiary Unit in Zamość	To commemorate those occasions, there were some broadcasts and lectures organised.	There were some field cultural and educational activities organised outside the penitentiary unit.
“Klimek”	Penitentiary Unit in Grudziądz	The aims of the programme include the following: social readaptation of convicts; transformation of the value system and attitudes into those compliant with the commonly accepted social standards; obtaining knowledge about history; developing an attitude based on a belief that further long-life improvement is necessary; realising the value of work, pro-social activation, developing self-discipline and self-control.	The activities under the framework of the programme take place inside and outside the prison walls (e.g., at Grudziądz Museum, at schools or recreation/sports fields).
The Śląsk Chamber Orchestra Project	Detention Centre in Katowice	It came as an opportunity for musicians to popularise classical music and practise before concerts to be performed during the anniversary tour.	The concert was an opportunity for convicts to forget about their unpleasant reality in detention centres.
Art of Freedom – Freedom of Art	Detention Centre in Wronki, students of the Continuing Education Centre	This is an activity undertaken in the field of cultural education.	The project provided convicts with an opportunity to join activities focused on learning about national culture.

Proper Polish Language	Penitentiary Unit in Koszalin	The project aims to familiarise convicts with the current rules of correct writing and develop respect towards the culture of the language.	It should be emphasised that convicts were provided with conditions allowing them to eliminate vulgarisms.
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Source: the author's own elaboration based on *Aktualności*: <https://sw.gov.pl/aktualnosci>, Prison Service (accessed: 10/05/2023); Marczak, 2013

It is not expected that prison art will result in a permanent change of attitudes; however, it may prevent destructive forms of behaviour among convicts in prison isolation by drawing their attention and energy to the implementation of more important tasks. Generally, prison art becomes an element in a convict's CV. Convicts' artwork and performance may not be of a very high artistic value, and the pieces they create may not be defined as real fine art. Nevertheless, because of the circumstances in which they function, this kind of art is genuine and authentic, even if – in most cases – its objective material value is insignificant. This undoubtedly stems from the settings in which prisoners produce their art and their personal experiences, which shape the nature of the works they produce.

Convicts' cultural activities challenge stereotypes of inmates that can already be observed in social awareness during their imprisonment sentences. They allow convicts to prove themselves in a new social role; they become a factor that prevents external and internal isolation caused by stigmatisation. Creative activities undertaken by a convict also become a chance to create a new person and minimise uncertainty, fear, alienation and loneliness. They also provide an opportunity to eliminate social stigmatisation (Jaworska, 2012, p. 357).

Conclusion

Meaningful activity is part of a normal life in society; it is no different in prison. Doing nothing and not using your free time leads to many problems, including demotivation, aggressive behaviour and depression. There is no question that any use of the form of organised activity can mitigate the negative effects of imprisonment and, in addition, it helps maintain physical and mental health. Acculturation can be considered an adult learning process, which greatly supports the reintegration of prisoners into society. Therefore, cultural and artistic activities should be organised in all penitentiaries.

In our study, we presented some positive examples from the practice of Hungary and Poland and how the two countries ensure that prisoners exercise their cultural rights and are active in this area. These examples are very diverse and colourful – they focus on musical activities, orchestra activity, enhancing proper language, commemorating historical events, prison theatre, meditation sessions and art therapy. Every country provides different opportunities for prisoners in the cultural field. The offer depends on the local characteristics, the specialists available, the ongoing initiatives, as well as the type of volunteers willing to give up their free time and energy to plan beneficial programmes for the prisoners. What these cultural activities have in common is that they can help convicts make the most of their leisure time, unwind while participating, experience new things and grow in self-awareness and self-esteem. These programmes reduce the feeling of uncertainty and loneliness and help to create a new person with the feeling of being important. There are many other positive benefits of providing cultural opportunities for inmates, including the right communication between inmates and strengthening their personal and cognitive skills. Experience shows that in both countries, the participants take part in these programmes with full interest; they sign up voluntarily and value every hour spent outside the cell – especially if they gain positive experiences in the process. In the case of group sessions, we can anticipate benefits that go above and beyond this; nearly always, a favourable group atmosphere is created, which is an important component of the collaborative activity.

Prisoners serve their sentences in a stimulus-free environment, which is why art initiatives (photo exhibitions, art *foglalkozások*) are particularly decisive in both countries because these activities can contribute to increasing positive visual experiences. The development of a creative outlook is of decisive importance for prisoners who are receptive to it and can be the engine of the creative energies of both the individual and the community. What is common in these programmes is that creativity can develop and be fulfilled during joyful, creative activities rich in experiences. We agree with Jaworska, who aptly observes that, based on a projection mechanism, convicts project their personalities on their artwork. They simultaneously get some insight into themselves by increasing their self-awareness (Jaworska, 2008). An essential element in all these activities is the formation and maintenance of the appropriate motivation, as well as the development of a creative attitude that continuously builds itself. Last but not least, inmates' cultural activities can result in permanent change of attitudes; they may prevent destructive forms of behaviour among convicts by drawing their attention and energy to the implementation of more important tasks.

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