

# **Prisoner Resettlement in Europe**

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Prisoner Resettlement in Europe published by the British Routledge Publishing House 2019 is a composite monumental publication with a total of over 500 pages including twenty individual country reports.

It delivers a clear and broad overview over different European systems of early release and after care. The country reports are followed by six recapitulating, comparative analytical essays related to some selected issues for which "time-conscious" readers will be especially grateful. The editors have succeeded masterly to coerce the authors of the country reports to the use of a standardized, exceptionally well-chosen, informative corset of titles. Like the first, introductory chapter "What is in the name?" for example reveals a lot about the basic attitude of the respective criminal justice system regarding the resettlement of offenders. Some speak of "resettlement", others of "rehabilitation", or "resocialization", or "reintegration" or "program", or "concept" or only of "ideology".

Frequently the choice of words reveals a great deal in respect of the ideas and intentions behind a project, so the publishers did really well not to neglect this vocabulary aspect in a multilingual Europe. The introductory chapters are followed by descriptions of the concept of resettlement, beginning with preparation for release inside prisons and post release services and aftercare. The role of public probation services and halfway houses are described as well as the role of private probation and social services and the cooperation of the various bodies involved in the release and resettlement process, down to the role of the offender himself. These chapters are followed by three more: one dealing with the specific concepts for special groups, one with next challenges and one with positive experiences and developments gathered in practice.

The summarizing and analyzing reports (about 160 pages) on specific subjects are enlightening. Who supports the offender in the attempt to resettle, when does this work begin and how, where and what is influenced, controlled? Resettlement is not an end in itself. It should serve the offender and the society alike striving for desistance and fighting crime. Resettlement is prevention oriented; meaning it must be subordinate to an effective risk management and public protection. A rigid criminal justice system, which does not provide for any forms of early release, hardly leaves room for a structured and guided resettlement. Duenkel and Weber describe various concepts of early or conditional release. There are many good reasons for the principle of a gradual release process becoming well established throughout Europe. In the analyzing essays the authors refer to several recommendations of the Council of Europe, which clearly promote the concept of early release in combination with a clear resettlement program as this can also be used to reduce prison overcrowding. The country reports show that communication and the coordinated interaction of the various players, starting from prison

and detention over probation services, private organizations, the police, and the municipalities, play a crucial role in the achievement of good resettlement in the sense of an effective desistance. One chapter is dedicated to women's resettlement. Women are a minority within prison population and consequently also in the process of resettlement. Female offenders should be considered a particularly vulnerable group and have different needs than men do, not only in prisons but also for their resettlement.

The Concluding Remarks state that while the concept of early release and resettlement of offenders is widely spread and acknowledged throughout Europe, the intended smooth transition from prison back into society proves to be more difficult in practice. Large groups of offenders are systematically excluded or have only limited possibilities to access aftercare services because, they serve only short-term sentences, or spend all or most of their sentence in pre-trial detention or remand or they are foreign nationals and will be expelled or they are not eligible for resettlement due to rigid restrictions for specific groups offenders like sex offenders. In an otherwise well-developed transition management supporting the desistance of convicted offenders these substantial groups remain "lost in transition" left to manage the problems that had led to their criminal behavior by themselves.

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