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The Role of Non-governmental Organizations in Providing Post-penitentiary Assistance in Poland and Germany – History and Present

Abstract: The article presents a historical perspective of the activity of Polish and German solutions in post-penitentiary assistance. Furthermore, it refers to present activities carried out in both countries. The Author presents selected non-governmental organizations engaged in activities for former convicts in both countries, and against this background, proposed the implementation of some German solutions in Poland.

Key words: post-penitentiary assistance, rehabilitation, non-governmental organizations.

Introduction

Post-penitentiary assistance in Poland and Germany is provided by both public institutions and public benefit organizations, including NGOs, which largely support institutional activities, and sometimes also, when state institutions do not have a sufficient assistance offer, they replace them in the process of the social readaptation and reintegration of prisoners. The need for supporting post-penitentiary activities in both countries is justified by the year-on-year growing rates of recidivism. According to a study conducted in Poland (covering a 10-year follow-up period), “the severity of recidivism in people leaving prisons was 84%, and after 5 years from the end of the sentence the recidivism rate stood at 41%. Empirical data also show a significant relationship between the size of prior criminal history

and the severity of recidivism. A study conducted 2.5 years after the end of sanctions showed that the rate of recidivism of people convicted once amounted to approx. 35%, and in multiple-convicted prisoners – approx. 62%” (Niewiadomska, Chwaszcz 2010, p. 11–12). In Germany, there are about 80,000 people released from prisons annually, and about 40,000 from detention centers. Indicators of recidivism are high, especially during the first six months after leaving prison. The reason for this, as B. Maelicke (2012) says, are errors in the structure of the social rehabilitation system as well as overgrowth and low efficiency of penitentiary social rehabilitation. This unfavorable situation is observed also in Poland, similarly to the inadequate care of inmates released after serving their sentence of imprisonment (this concerns approx. 70% of former prisoners), and almost all inmates leaving detention centers. A good solution in this area (indicated by the cited Author) would be to coordinate all the benefits in such a way that convicts were both supported and controlled in freedom. The fact that this is possible is proven by the pilot project carried out in North Rhine-Westphalia, as a result of which the rate of recidivism could be reduced from 90 to 32.8%. In this type of action, both in Germany and in Poland, an important role can be played by organizations operating outside of state structures.

Civic actions taken by Poland for former prisoners and their families

From the beginning of the 19th century, many social actors helped convicts leaving prison, doing so in a diverse range and variety of forms. In Poland, post-penitentiary assistance from NGOs and associations have a long tradition. The first citizens’ initiatives aimed at helping ex-convicts in functioning outside prison walls appeared during the partitions. In 1812, in Warsaw, the “Warsaw Charity Society” was established, which to some extent also covered former prisoners through its assistance, although this was not the main profile of its activity (Kaczyńska 1989, p. 440). The problem of improving prisons and the situation of former prisoners in the Kingdom of Poland was dealt with primarily by Ksawery Potocki, who stressed the need to preserve the moral and physical welfare of prisoners and proposed using all available measures aimed to show the criminal the right path (Potocki 1928, p. 22). Despite the fact that during annexation legal post-penitentiary activities could not be conducted, numerous attempts were made to recognize its organizational framework. During the January Uprising, “Rada Główna Opiekuńcza” [Welfare Council] was set up, whose aim was to help families of insurgents by raising funds for supporting insurgents who were being released from prison (Kieniewicz 1983, p. 533). In 1882, in the Russian annexation, an attempt was made to appoint a patronage society, whose task would be to care for the prisoners while they were serving their sentence and after release from prison.

It was to be called “Towarzystwo Pomocy dla Wychodzących z Zakładów Karnych” [Support Society for People Released from Prisons]. However, the organization was not created due to the lack of acceptance of the invaders (Acts 1882).

After the defeat of the January Uprising, in the Polish territories under Russian annexation, there was a growth of clandestine activity aimed at assisting political prisoners. It was then that the organization “Patronat Opieki nad Więźniami” [Patronage of Care for Prisoners] – a secret society of women was founded in Włocławek at the initiative of Izabela Zbiegniewska. Another organization was “Ministerstwo Polskiej Biedy” [Ministry of Polish Poverty], an informal organization of lawyers, dealing with legal and financial aid for repressed insurgents (Góra 1989, p. 28). On the other hand, in the Austrian annexation, in 1881, “Galicyjskie Stowarzyszenie Opieki nad Uwolnionymi Więźniami” [Galician Association for the Care of Released Prisoners] was created. However, assistance was provided only to those former convicts, who during their imprisonment behaved impeccably. The Association cared for people recommended by the prison administration and Chaplain (Statute 1881).

In the early 20th century, there were many welfare societies being set up for prisoners and people being released from prison, called patronages. The first such organization was founded in 1776 in Philadelphia (Krzemiński 2008, p. 183). In Poland, the first “Patronage of Care for Protection” was established in 1909 in Warsaw. It was to assist former political and criminal prisoners: it provided medical care, created workshops, libraries and organized teaching. After three years, branches of the organization operated already in all cities where there were prisons (Pawlak 1997, p. 47). In the 1920s there were already five independent societies of the “Patronage” functioning: two in Warsaw and one in Vilnius, Navahrudak and Bydgoszcz. The Society appointed prison probation officers, who cared for the conditions of prisoners and allowed them contacts with people from the outside (Pędowski 1993, p. 14). In 1923, the “Patronage” changed its name to “Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami Uwolnionymi z Więzień i ich Rodzinami” [Society for the Care of Prisoners Released from Prison and Their Families]. The principle was professed that being in prison alone will not cause a convict to be a better person once free. Therefore, ex-prisoners were taught about the benefit of education, to thereby be able to prevent their social exclusion, they were granted loans and grants, medical assistance and assistance in returning home (Zbyszewska 1983, p. 281 et seq.). If the family of the convicted person had extremely severe living conditions, it was granted help in the care and upbringing of children who were placed in educational institutions or shelters – in Radość, Okęcie, in Vilnius and Lviv as well as in Kraków’s “Pogotowie Opiekuńcze dla Chłopców” [Emergency Shelter for Boys] (Pawlak 1995, p. 112). Cooperation was also conducted with shelters, asylums and hostels. The Society employed so-called correspondents who took care of the steady flow of funds and engaged in philanthropy (Zbyszewska 1983, p. 281 et seq.).

During the occupation, the tasks of the Society were changed. In the face of the tragic conditions in prisons, where Poles were detained, the goal was to rescue and help the families of those arrested. Committees were appointed with the society, whose members were mainly lawyers representing both the left and right. Among the active members of the organization, attorney Helena Wiewiórska and attorney Karol Pędowski, chairperson of the legal committee, should be mentioned. Political views were pushed to the background, the main task was to save the lives of those arrested by the occupying forces (Krzemiński 2008, p. 185): “By all possible means, mainly the whereabouts of the detainee was determined. It was not easy, because the Germans generally covered their tracks. After you determine which prison or camp the arrested person is in, there was a campaign launched to supply the prisoner with clothes, underwear, jumpers and other articles necessary to maintain hygiene. They were also sent food parcels. Moreover, families of the arrested were provided with counsel and support. It was a job without fanfare. Quiet, but very effective. There was no “heroism” here, but genuine Samaritan help” (Krzemiński 2008, p. 185–186).

Today, the continuance of the “Patronage” from the beginning of the 20th century was carried on by Stowarzyszenie Penitencjarne “Patronat” [Patronage Penitentiary Association], which was revived after the political changes. The activity of the patronage was suspended during the communist times. The founder and longtime president of the reactivated organization is Teodor Szymanowski. In his view, measures of post-penitentiary impact should focus not only on supervision but also on real assistance provided by non-governmental organizations and social assistance institutions (Szymanowski 2010, p. 331). The Association “Patronage”, with a century-old tradition in providing support to convicts leaving prison and their families, is characterized by the fact that it modifies its operations so that it corresponds to the current needs of individuals and society. Krystyna Ostrowska (2013, p. 317) refers to the objectives of the “Patronage” in a changed reality as follows: “Today, in contrast to the beginnings of the Patronage, the interwar period and World War II period, it is not just another population to which we address our activities, but our objectives and tasks are greatly extended. They are not limited only to provide help and emotional, informational, psychological, and moral or material support, but include measures included in the concepts of vocational rehabilitation, reintegration, social rehabilitation, escaping homelessness or unemployment”. Today, the organization runs two shelters for men – in Warsaw and Białystok. Former prisoners can stay there for up to two years, but subject to compliance with regulations, especially with regard to the prohibition of consuming alcoholic beverages and using drugs. Points of post-penitentiary aid are also run in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Olsztyn and Zielona Góra. In the latter two cities mainly trainings are conducted as well as psycho-pedagogical counseling, mediations and legal advice. Convicts staying in penal institutions are provided assistance in establishing written correspondence with relatives. “Patronage” points in Warsaw

and Gdańsk also offer material assistance in kind and food – among other things, they organize parcels for Christmas and Easter (Ostrowska 2013, p. 317).

Currently in Poland there are approx. 700 non-profit organization providing readaptation support to former prisoners (Woźniakowska 2006, p. 10–12). In addition to “Patronage”, the following actively help former prisoners:

- “Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Osobom Wychodzącym na Wolność »Emaus«” in Gdańsk [Association for Assistance to People Leaving Prison] and “Fundacja Pomocy Wzajemnej »Barka«” in Poznań [Mutual Aid Foundation], forming communities, where convicts leaving prison and people affected by homelessness go, e.g. the evicted or leaving psychiatric hospitals. Institutions operating under the aegis of “Barka” are mainly small organic farms called “communes of life and work”.
- “Katolickie Stowarzyszenie Pomocy Rodzinie im. św. Brata Alberta” in Płock [St. Albert Catholic Association of Family Assistance], bringing together former prisoners and the homeless, offering them free accommodation and food. The charges can work in the auxiliary household run by the Association. Addicts receive therapeutic help, and the unemployed obtain support to search for employment. The Association helps charges in applying for a pension.
- “Towarzystwo Opieki nad Więźniami” in Wrocław [Society for the Care of Prisoners] provides emergency assistance to former prisoners through the organization of vocational training, family mediation and occasional campaigns, e.g. during Christmas and Easter.
- “Stowarzyszenie Resocjalizacji, Rehabilitacji i Pomocy Społecznej im H.Ch. Kofoeda” in Siedlce [H.Ch. Kofoed Association of Social Rehabilitation and Social Assistance] conducts activation, educational, prevention and assistance classes based on the assumptions of the Danish programme “Help for Self-Help”. Probation, education and care and assistance efforts are made. The Association’s activity is addressed to former prisoners and persons on parole, performing probation measures and alternative sentences, the unemployed and people with addicts and coming from the pathological environments.
- Partnership “Czarna Owca” in Wołów [Black Sheep Partnership] conducts activation measures of convicts, seeking to include them in the labor market. The Partnership consists of: Prison in Wołów, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Przyrody “Pro Natura” [Pro Natura Society of Friends of Nature], Inicjatywa Samorządowa “Razem” [“Together” Local Government Initiative], District Inspectorate of Prisons in Wrocław and the United Nations Programme for Development.
- Fundacja “Sławek” in Warsaw [“Sławek” Foundation] provides assistance to people leaving prison, correctional facilities and shelters for minors, and those who are in a difficult family situation and living conditions. Support is provided also for the families of prisoners. The Foundation is engaged in

mediation between convicts and their victims, and in implementing a number of support and assistance projects. Two projects are particularly interesting and effective: “Świadectwa” [Testimonies], whose main objective is to provide convicts information about effective readaptation paths through positively adapted former prisoners, and “Anioł Stróż” [Guardian Angel] consisting in assisting people leaving on passes.

In reference to the activities undertaken in Poland for people leaving prison, it should be emphasized that it is wrong that the government and local government almost completely cede them to NGOs. This view is shared by, among others, Krystyna Ostrowska (2013, p. 321), who writes: “This in effect leads to a situation in which persons acting non-profit become supplicants, in a long queue to government and local government offices for aid for their activities, and not vice versa, where the offices performing their constitutional duty seek assistance for citizens, organized in associations that offer their work selflessly”. The Author stresses that the idea of voluntary and community organizations consists in providing selfless help to society and the state, and not relieve the state and local governments of their constitutional duties.

German solutions for post-penitentiary aid

As in Poland, there are many non-governmental organizations functioning also in Germany, which support the state in post-penitentiary care. This trend is also visible in other European countries and around the world. For example, in the recognized as the most effective Danish post-penitentiary system, NGOs conduct effective and multifaceted activities against social exclusion of former prisoners. Among other things, career counseling, a mentoring system and information activities aimed at identifying and securing jobs are being conducted within the projects “High Five” and “Rehabilitation Project”. Danish NGOs also greatly take care about strengthening ties with the families of inmates (Nowak 2015, p. 55–79).

Referring to post-penitentiary aid in Germany it should be emphasized that the story refers mainly to activities within the framework of private initiatives and independent organizations. At the end of the 18th century, the German prison system began a slow transformation. It was started to introduce religious and moral corrective strategies and offer care for people leaving prison and their families. As a result of the debates on the reform of the prison system, concepts were created which aimed at raising former convicts into full members of the society in which they had to function after release. In the mid-19th century, many individuals and clergy established in Germany so-called “Gefängnisvereine” (prison associations), whose main objective was to restore convicts to society in a better moral condition than before imprisonment. However, as noted by Schauz (2008, p. 377), for many people involved in such activities, discourse itself on moral im-

provement was often more important than specific assistance. It was only in the days of the German Empire, when organizations providing aid to people leaving prison to a greater extent consolidated with other charities, that the activities of “Gefängnisvereine” could become more effective (Schauz 2008, p. 377).

In the early 20th century, in 1925, an aid organization was established called “Deutscher Reichsverband für Gerichtshilfe, Gefangenen- und Entlassenenfürsorge”, which was recognized as the official representative of private initiatives for prisoners and ex-prisoners. The organization published its own magazine “Monatsblätter des Deutschen Reichsverband für Gerichtshilfe, Gefangenen- und Entlassenenfürsorge”. In 1927, church organizations were established, which were the result of combined efforts of the evangelical and catholic church for former prisoners. They were: “Reichsverband für Gerichtshilfe, Gefangenen- und Entlassenenfürsorge”, “Evangelische Konferenz für Straffälligenpflege” and „Katholische Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft für Gerichtshilfe, Gefangenen- und Entlassenenfürsorge”. The latter organization was founded at the initiative of women and operated under the leadership of Agnes Neuhaus and several prison chaplains. Their work had a religious-charity base. An important role here was played by prison chaplains, seeking to ensure that the provision of assistance to prisoners and former prisoners was stressed on its religious dimension. This sometimes led to a conflict of interest, as exemplified by the controversy of Catholic chaplains and the headquarters of “Caritas”, which concerned the division of powers. Chaplains accused local “Caritas” centers lack of experience and did not agree to their more serious involvement in helping people at risk of returning to crime (Wollasch 1991). The situation changed in 1930, when two new organizations were established. One of them was the association “Arbeitsgemeinschaft für jüdische Gefährdeten-Fürsorge”, the second – an organization of a secular character under the name “Fachgruppe für soziale Gerichtshilfe und Straffälligenfürsorge des Fünften Wohlfahrtsverbandes”, which focused organizations providing assistance independent of religious organizations. However, as Schauz assesses (2008, p. 346), it was a small change in the development of private care for people leaving prison. Moreover, when in 1930 the union “Arbeiterwohlfahrt” wanted to join aid organizations, it almost led to the collapse of the combined forces of care for persons at risk of returning to crime. This proves the existence of ideological conflicts within the structures of welfare of the Weimar Republic. Traditional forces represented by church organizations opposed to the so-called politicization of care for inmates and prophesied the collapse of this kind of activity, which followed after the rise to power of the National Socialists (Schauz 2008, p. 349). To sum up this part of the history of post-penitentiary aid in Germany, it should be emphasized that during the times of the Empire the pastoral approach prevailed, aimed at the moral improvement of former convicts. Lots of attention was paid to the educational aspects of aid, and the methods of disciplining used, similar to those used during imprisonment. Many pupils did not accept these rules and often left the

places of assistance (Schauz 2008, p. 387). In the days of the Weimar Republic, the idea of the welfare state was expanded and then the approach to charges of aid organizations changed. Material aid and support in searching for a job was taken over by labor offices and social welfare. In addition to state institutions, new organizations of private aid were created. Competition in this area of activity contributed to the greater professionalization of aid. However, aid and support were still focused on bringing former prisoners to moral improvement – other forms of aid had a much lower significance (Schauz 2008, p. 388).

After the National Socialists came to power, the discussion on aid for former convicts was closed. There was also no question about their humane treatment, and next to prisons concentration camps were also created (Schwind, Blau 1988, p. 16). After the Second World War, post-penitentiary assistance in divided Germany was granted on different terms. In East Germany, the restoration of former prisoners to society was mainly dealt with by state institutions. Unofficially, churches and people who cooperated with them also got involved in aid activities. Former prisoners were provided pastoral care and practical support wherever there were gaps in state aid – this concerned mainly the area of education and employment (Kunz 2003, p. 32). On the other hand, in West Germany, there was social assistance that was independent from the state, supporting it in its activities for former prisoners. It involved both church organizations and private secular initiatives, whose role at the time was considerable, since the convicts leaving prison could rely only partly on state aid (Kunz 2003, p. 38). Independent social assistance was highly professionalised, and it was financed by private sponsors, who contributed resources to help convicts leaving prison and going into the free world. This type of aid is booming in Germany even today. Next is the concept of “independent social assistance” (“Freie Wohlfahrtspflege”), relating to the activities of non-governmental non-profit organizations (Balon, Hesse 2010, p. 7).

Modern German non-governmental organizations providing assistance to former prisoners are institutions or associations whose activities aim towards close cooperation with the authorities and the courts. Financing non-profit organizations has its roots mainly in membership fees or funding from donations (Ger. *Spenden*). Some organizations also receive court or state subsidies, e.g. in the case of running nursing homes. Support of this kind is granted also to run social housing. Non-profit organizations already at the stage of imprisonment prepare inmates for release, mediate in finding a job and housing, teach proper money management, provide financial support and material assistance, conduct counseling, addiction therapy and social skills training, help the convicted with proper organization of free time and conduct mediation in perpetrator-victim communication (Seitz, Kiel et al. 2001).

Independent social welfare “Freie Wohlfahrtspflege” in Germany brings together, among others, the following organizations:

- “Arbeiterwohlfahrt Bundesverband e. V.” (AWO)¹, operating in all provinces and having 362,000 members, 75,000 volunteers and 197,000 employees. Within the organization more than 14,000 institutions and services operate. The readaptation support offer includes services in the field of social care and counseling, the society runs competence-workshop centers².
- “Deutscher Caritasverband e. V.” (DCV) – provides organized assistance within the framework of the activities of approx. 25,000 services and facilities³. It offers persons at risk of recidivism and their families readaptation and reintegration help, thus supporting the implementation of the state’s obligations in the field of social welfare. “Caritas” conducts mediations between victims and offenders and performs a wide range of educational activities, thereby promoting viable ways to combat crime trends⁴.
- “Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland e.V.” (DW) – an organization bringing together 22 Lutheran churches, 9 free churches with their accompanying facilities, and 81 associations. Diakonia sees itself as a spokesperson for convicts and actively supports prisoners, former prisoners and people at risk of crime⁵. Actions and prevention projects are initiated in the field of protection of social rights, financial planning, debt reduction, coping with personal problems, substance abuse problems or conflicts in relationships. It also supports its charges in finding housing and employment⁶. For example, Diakonia in Bielefeld provides support to families of prisoners. The offer of assistance may also be used by relatives or other persons associated with the family affected by the problem of imprisonment. Diakonia helps organize holiday and weekend meetings, offering for parents and children educational counseling, assistance in family matters, provides information materials and organizes training, including in the field of financial management and overcoming personal crises⁷.
- “Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland e. V.” (ZWStdJ) – an independent social welfare organization, which includes 17 national associations and 7 independent municipalities, a total of about 100 Jewish communities. It has offices in Berlin, Saxony and Mecklenburg. The national center and

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¹ http://www.awo-informationsservice.org/uploads/media/Leitlinien_Straffaelligenhilfe_14-01-14_QM.pdf [access: 3.03.2016].

² <https://www.awo.org/wir-ueber-uns/zahlen-und-fakten/> [access: 3.03.2016].

³ <http://www.caritas.de/glossare/einrichtungen-und-dienste> (access: 4.03.2016).

⁴ <http://www.caritas.de/diecaritas/deutscher Caritasverband/verbandszentrale/arbeitsbereiche/straffaelligenhilfe/straffaelligenhilfe> [access: 4.03.2016].

⁵ http://www.diakonie-in-niedersachsen.de/pages/ueber_uns/diakonie/gebaerdensprache/index.html[access: 5.03.2016].

⁶ <http://www.dw-osl.de/unsere-einrichtungen/straffaelligenhilfe/anlaufstelle-fuer-straffaellige.html> [access: 5.03.2016].

⁷ <http://www.diakonie-fuer-bielefeld.de/straffaellige/familienhilfe-haft.html> [access: 5.03.2016].

integration center “Kibuz” operates in Potsdam. ZWST facilities includes the opened in 1993 Jewish sanatorium facility Eden Park and recreation and educational center “Max Willner Home” in Bad Sobernheim. One of the main objectives of ZWST is the long-term integration of all generations of immigrants of the Jewish community and German society, including people affected by crime⁸.

- “Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband – Gesamtverband e.V.” (DPWV) – is one of the six leading associations of independent welfare in Germany, bringing together more than 10,000 independent entities, facilities and groups in the social welfare and health sector (currently there are 15 national and more than 280 county associations). DPWV represents and supports its member organizations in the implementation of their goals, aimed at solving legal, social and economic problems of people at risk of social exclusion, including former prisoners and their families⁹. DPWV offers help to people at risk of returning to crime – it runs counseling points, mediations between the perpetrator and the victim, provides housing assistance and mediates in finding socially useful jobs. The organization acquires and supports volunteers willing to work with former prisoners and conducts therapy for sex offenders. For the families of prisoners, and especially for children and adolescents, it organizes social skills training and aggression replacement training¹⁰.
- “Deutsches Rotes Kreuz e.V.” (DRK) – “German Red Cross”, an organization working for peaceful coexistence and the dignity of all human beings, saving lives and health as well as providing services in the field of social welfare¹¹. In its activities, it focuses on securing the basic functioning of former prisoners – it offers them social housing or helps to look for other forms of housing and employment. Ex-convicts can also use such forms as addiction therapy, assistance in getting out of debt, supply of clothing and furniture as well as support in other difficult situations¹².
- “Freie Hilfe Berlin e.V. -Gefährdeten-und Straffälligenhilfe” with the branch “Freie Hilfe-soziale Dienstleistungen GmbH”¹³. This is an organization that reaches a wide range of counseling and care for people who are at risk of returning to the path of crime. It also provides services for the homeless, those at risk of homelessness and people sentenced to a financial penalty. It offers, among others, supervised housing, debt repayment, training against

⁸ <http://zwst.org/de/zwst-ueber-uns/selbstdarstellung/> [access: 7.03.2016].

⁹ <http://www.der-paritaetische.de/verband/wir-ueber-uns/> [access: 7.03.2016].

¹⁰ http://www.paritaet-nrw.org/content/angebote_fuer_mitglieder/fachberatung/straffaelligenhilfe/index_ges.html [access: 17.03.2016].

¹¹ <http://www.drk.de/ueber-uns/auftrag/leitlinien.html> [access: 8.03.2016].

¹² http://drk-wohlfahrt.de/uploads/tx_ffpublication/deutsches-rotes-kreuz-wohlfahrtspflege-2008.05.pdf [access: 8.03.2016].

¹³ www.freihilfe-berlin.de [access: 6.03.2016].

violence, addiction therapy, assistance in obtaining housing, education and work, mediates in contacts with institutions and offices, provides support in crisis situations, as well as teaches to maintain social contacts.

- “Bayerischer Landesverband für Gefangenenfürsorge und Bewährungshilfe e.V.” (BayLGB) – BayLGB, an organization operating in Bavaria, which is nationally the only organization implementing social assistance tasks, including legal assistance, addressed only to prisoners, ex-prisoners and persons on parole¹⁴.
- “Evangelische Straffälligenhilfe München” based in Munich – an organization that offers convicts reintegration assistance in the following areas¹⁵: support during preparation for release, assistance in finding housing, searching for a job and mediation, support in dealing with government authorities, advice on paying off debts. The special offer is the possibility to benefit from therapy conducted by a licensed psychologist.
- “Verein Gefangenen-Nichtsesshaftenhilfe Darmstadt e.V.” (GND) – an association operating in Darmstadt, assisting the prisoners who, after leaving prison, do not have a permanent place of residence. It has two buildings with 9 and 10 flats in Darmstadt and Griesheim. They serve to accommodate men and women over 18 years old, burdened with economic problems and who do not have the funds to rent or buy a flat. Members of the association help residents in managing financial capital. The range of assistance includes the offer of comprehensive psychosocial therapy, which is carried out by specialists in the field of social work and social pedagogy. For each former prisoner an individual care plan is developed, focused on empowerment, which is the basis for further cooperation. The idea is that after leaving the house supervised by the Association, the charge is able to meet their obligations without outside assistance¹⁶.
- “Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Straffälligenhilfe” (BAG-S) – a specialized organization at the federal level, representing the interests of people at risk of crime. It was founded in 1990 and has its headquarters in Bonn. It is a combination of a body of independent social assistance and the “Fachverband für Soziale Arbeit, Strafrecht und Kriminalpolitik” (DBH) e. V. (“Association of Social Work, Criminal Law and Criminal Policy”). BAG-S is engaged in social and criminal policy, and advises institutions and member associations working to prevent convicts from returning to crime. It organizes symposiums and issues a guide-book three times a year, which contains press reports, statistics and information about the activities and projects undertaken for former convicts. The organization promotes in society social rehabilitation work and re-

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¹⁴ www.baylgb.de/ [access: 9.03.2016].

¹⁵ <http://www.ehrenamt-im-strafvollzug.de/muenchen.htm> [access: 9.03.2016].

¹⁶ <http://gnd-ev.de/wordpress/> [access: 9.03.2016].

integration of ex-prisoners with the environment. For this purpose, it conducts institutional and increased counseling as well as media information activity. It also organizes press conferences on current topics related to its statutory activity. Bag-S represents the interests of former convicts in government offices, with legislators, political parties and cooperating with organizations carrying out similar tasks. It operates actively in specialized working groups, working out a common position and developing a proposal for reforms¹⁷.

The above review of non-governmental organizations shows that German associations focus not only on working with the former prisoner but also with their family¹⁸. Furthermore, as Badelt evaluates (1997, pp. 7–9), non-governmental organizations in Germany are structures that are much less formal in comparison with state institutions. They are less bureaucratic, which increases the dynamics of their actions and enables deeper involvement in bringing assistance. Organizations of the third sector promote the entrepreneurial approach, emphasizing creativity and innovation. Members of various associations and foundations are usually people who are very active and committed to their work and – in comparison with the state administration – a more engaged and creative.

To sum up, in Germany, the tasks of the state in the provision of care to those in need, including former prisoners, are increasingly being ceded to public benefit organizations, and it is not only a fashionable phenomenon but, according to Weitemeyer (2014 s.43), also necessary.

Conclusions

The approach of Polish and German non-governmental organizations to help former prisoners in positive social readaptation is generally similar. However, both countries can implement effective welfare and support projects implemented by their neighbor. German solutions, which largely prevent recidivism, and which can be transposed to Polish territory, are mainly about comprehensive coverage with support of not only former prisoners but also their families. This approach is warranted by the results of Polish research conducted by Beata Maria Nowak (2014, p. 35), in light of which the families of those convicted face a number of unsolved problems (e.g. unemployment, poverty, addiction), which leads to socio-cultural backwardness and the formation of a pathogenic environment. These families cannot get out of the crisis, because their members have difficulty in the independent solving of problems and looking for help and support. This situation requires the implementation of external assistance activities. As pointed out by

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¹⁷ Portrait der BAG-S. <http://www.bag-s.de/ueber-bag-s/portrait/> [access: 9.03.2016].

¹⁸ <http://www.caritas.de/hilfeundberatung/ratgeber/haft/papa-im-gefaengnis/dein-papa-ist-ja-gar-nicht-auf-montage> [access: 4.03.2016].

the Author, both institutions and public benefit organizations, including NGOs, should adopt such a model of working simultaneously with convicts and their families that takes into account “stabilizing (social assistance, counseling, therapy) and development actions (activating personal and group potentials), leading both entities (the convict and the family) to the post-crisis self-creation of social identity” (Nowak 2014, p. 35).

Also the method of organizing various forms of housing for former prisoners at risk of homelessness could be transferred from German experience. Some German associations specialize in precisely this area. For example, the association “Die Brücke” builds information bridges and mediates between homeless ex-prisoners and institutions and persons offering them viable housing assistance. This organization issues the brochure “Wo? Wann? Wer?”, where those interested can find lots of information about the possibilities of finding housing¹⁹.

In the activities in the field of crime prevention²⁰, the German state is supported by non-governmental institutions and local communities. The German post-penitentiary policy presupposes that crime can be prevented with good effect only when all parties – government institutions, NGOs and local communities – are interested in achieving the final objective and seek to develop a common strategy. In Germany, prevention is the responsibility of municipalities and the federal states. In each of the federal states there are regional prevention councils formed “Landespräventionsraten”. For example, “Landesprävention Niedersachsen” (Crime Prevention Council of the State of Lower Saxony) bringing together more than 250 institutions and organizations focused on crime prevention, consists of municipalities, NGOs, local community bodies as well as academic institutions and other entities²¹. The equivalent of German prevention councils in Poland are Field Councils operating in provincial cities, which, unfortunately, are ineffective in their actions. Hence, it could be considered to create structures which, like the Prevention Councils in Germany, would realize their tasks at the level of counties and municipalities, in full integration with the local community.

Some of the activities of the German non-governmental organizations aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency are also interesting. Noteworthy are e.g. social skills training for adolescents diagnosed with criminal tendencies conducted by “Caritas” of Frankfurt (Oder). Persons aged from 14 to 21 years old can participate in them, who have entered the path of crime, are waiting for a court proceeding or have served a sentence of imprisonment. During the training the crime

¹⁹ <http://www.obdachlosenhilfe-die-bruecke.de/> [access: 15.03.2016]

²⁰ “Crime prevention is understood as cooperation of many individuals and institutions, which aims to stop crime and increase the sense of safety of the citizens” – Beccaria Standards for ensuring quality in crime prevention projects. Prevention Council of the State of Lower Saxony

²¹ Beccaria Standards for ensuring quality in crime prevention projects. Prevention Council of the State of Lower Saxony, <http://www.beccaria-standards.net/Media/Beccaria-Standards-polnisch.pdf> [access: 19.03.2016].

path is analyzed and life priorities are formulated – with the help of therapists young people construct their new concepts of life, in accordance with the norms and rules of social functioning²².

Inspiration can also be the initiative led by “Evangelisches Johanneswerk”, activities for former prisoners addicted to gambling, which is becoming a growing social problem both in Germany and in Poland. Johanneswerk as the first non-governmental organization that has introduced counseling and therapy for poker addicts. Those who find themselves in the clutches of this kind of addiction are offered drug treatment and psychotherapy, and not only therapists and doctors but also social workers and nursing staff are involved in this assistance²³.

The presented review of activities of non-governmental organizations in Poland and Germany shows that private initiatives providing assistance to former prisoners played and continues to play a huge role in restoring citizens to society. It should be stressed that there are often associations which replace the state in its caring role and the fact that social projects are characterized by a greater effectiveness than those organized by state institutions, and their significance for achieving social well-being and strengthening the sense of safety of citizens is immense.

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²² http://www.caritas-brandenburg.de/aspe_shared/form/download.asp?nr=378740&form_ty-p=115&ag_id=2898&action=load [access: 19.03.2016].

²³ Abhängigkeit, <http://johanneswerk.de/de/fachthemen/abhaengigkeit.html> [access: 19.03.2016].

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