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Social readaptation of former convicts Discussions around the project implemented in Lubuskie Province*

Abstract: The article focuses on activities supporting the functioning of former convicts in the social space. Referring to the assumptions of creative resocialization, it was recognized that the process of readaptation initiated in the course of isolation must be continued after leaving the prison and as such, it should include: independent development of former convicts, building relationships with their social environment, their professional, cultural and educational activity, responsibility and self-determination. The indicated procedural guidelines suggest individualization of social rehabilitation as well as cooperation of many specialists and institutions.

Having taken all of the above into account, the effectiveness of the project: "Coordination of the process of social and professional readaptation of individuals leaving penitentiary institutions in the Lubuskie Province" was discussed. The aim of the study was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project as expressed in the narratives of guardians of convicts who had left penitentiary institutions and had been enrolled in the project. The main research question was formulated in the following manner: What are the strengths and

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* The project entitled "Koordynacja procesu readaptacji społecznej i zawodowej osób opuszczających jednostki penitencjarne w województwie lubuskim" (*Coordination of the process of social and professional readaptation of persons leaving penitentiary institutions in Lubuskie Voivodship*) co-financed by the EU from the European Social Fund under the Regional Operational Programme – Lubuskie 2020. Priority Axis 7. Social balance, Measure 7.3 Active inclusion programmes implemented by other entities. RPLB.07.03.00-08-0007/18-00

weaknesses of the project in terms of positive readaptation of prisoners after leaving their penitentiary institution? The study used a method of individual interviews with 18 randomly selected guardians of former convicts.

As a result of the analysis, it was recognized that the project had filled in the empty space between institutions with intensified social, soft and professional support. It also was recognized as an alternative to the insofar relatively poor practice of supporting former prisoners' personal development, self-image and retraining potential.

Key words: social readaptation, readaptation project, creative resocialization, social support for former convicts.

Introduction

Post-penitentiary support is understood in the literature on the subject as a continuation of the rehabilitation phase which the convicts start while still in prison and is treated as an effective means of their social readaptation (cf. Paweła 1997; Dziejczak 2009; Sobczyszyn 2009; Kieszkowska 2009). This support is most often seen as material and psychological support provided by the state and society to people who, after leaving prison, “find themselves in a difficult life situation and cannot meet their needs by their own efforts” (Dziejczak 2009, p. 91; Kuć 2009), as well as, in justified cases, to the families of the convicts and to the victims of the crime. Thus, the process of social readaptation, already initiated in the course of serving prison sentence by the convict (cf. Ambrozik 2007, s. 190) is primarily aimed at preventing a return to crime. Work with a convict in this area is focused on arousing motivation for cooperation, responsibility for himself and his actions in the context of social principles, including those regulated by law. In the process of effective social readaptation, the convict's past is extremely important. It needs to be known and understood in order to appropriately select the actions undertaken for its implementation, because, as Kazimierz Pospiszyl emphasizes, the variety of forms and methods of rehabilitation work makes it possible to individualize actions that determine effectiveness (Pospiszyl 1998, p. 182). In the case of convicts, it is particularly important to work on oneself, re-evaluate the past and strengthen/build up positive potential. Marek Konopczyński draws particular attention to this, stressing that “the strategic objective of social rehabilitation is to obtain identity transformation; in every person, irrespective of his life experience, there are potentials; the methodical forms enabling the process of effective social rehabilitation are creating methods; persons with a social rehabilitation past become socially accepted people through internal development and creating a “new” identity (through the process of social destigmatization) (Konopczyński 2014, p. 179–180). Going further, he notes that rehabilitation work should be based on factors protecting and modifying negative influences resulting from unfavorable life circumstances. This will be achieved when actions will be based on building and strengthening internal mechanisms

for coping with difficulties, as well as when they will take into account external resources inherent in the environment (Konopczyński 1996, p. 8).

Taking into account the above mentioned determinants of effective social readaptation of convicts, this article discusses the effectiveness of one of the projects addressed to them. The project was implemented in Lubuskie Province in 2018–2020. The aim of the article is to show – on the basis of research conducted among guardians appointed as part of the project for persons leaving prisons and detention centers – the effectiveness and legitimacy of the assistance and support provided to former prisoners, in the perspective of the challenges of a changing world, and here the development of societies, socio-cultural changes and the labor and employment market, as well as opportunities for social adaptation of convicts.

Readaptation of former convicts in view of changes and social activities

It is not easy to return to a new reality after leaving prison. There are many factors, such as the lack of social trust, the changing labor market and low or outdated professional qualifications of the convict, or additional barriers to readaptation that lie on the side of the convict or in their family environment (e.g. they are not expected and cannot count on the help of their relatives) (cf. Górka-Strzałkowska 2009, p. 131), hindering proper readaptation. Henryk Machel's research shows that among the most frequent reasons for convicts' returning to criminality after leaving the penitentiary facility are social conditions, i.e.: difficulties in finding paid work or inability to take it, insufficient material conditions hindering their existence, conflict with their families, lack of housing or any accommodation, reluctance on the part of the social environment, being outside any social control (cf. Machel, 2003, p. 298). Thus, among the factors hindering social readaptation of significance are external factors (outside the prison) and, as Sobczyszyn stresses, internal factors (inherent within the individual) and penitentiary factors (inherent within the prison). The internal factors hindering adaptation to life by former convicts include the characteristics of the convict typical of a sociopath (e.g. lack of higher feelings) and the lack of ability to learn social skills, build correct interpersonal relations (Sobczyszyn 2009, p. 130; see also Szymanowska 2006, pp. 188–194). These factors also include addictions and mental disability, lack of ability to cope with stress and learned helplessness syndrome, lack of knowledge and skills to navigate the modern labor market (including lack of vocational education and being used to work), as well as poor mental or physical condition (Mańka, Ornacka 2010, p. 84). The latter is often reinforced by factors inherent in the prison environment and the impact of these factors increases in proportion to the length of the sentence (cf. Machel 2007, p. 158).

Thus, it can be seen that the return to proper social functioning of a convict depends on many factors, both external and internal, and requires great motivation and determination, purposefulness and sense of return in order to succeed in the form of effective adaptation. Edyta Pindel stresses that a convict, in order to function properly in the social space, “must make a quadruple effort. Part with their past, modify the present, create a future and start a new life on this foundation. This effort is not linked to a single decision and one action taken, nor is it carried out in a vacuum” (Pindel 2009, pp. 101–102), but conditioned by numerous factors.

Karaszewska and Silecka note that the return of the convict to society is gradual, and that this process begins already in prison. However, “even if we assume the optimal situation that penitentiary influence measures, especially work, study and cultural and educational activities, will be carried out in isolation, they will need to be continued in the specific environment to which the individual will return and function in order to fully readapt the convict” (Karaszewska, Silecka 2009, p. 151). And here lies a huge challenge for both social workers and governmental and non-governmental entities working with former convicts. This makes them all the more important as the threats, particularly external, that are present in the social environment are the greatest and the quickest to contribute to the return of the convict to a penitentiary facility. Social, governmental and non-governmental services have a leading role in the process of social readaptation, and numerous programs addressed to former convicts, the scope of assistance and material, psychological, educational and other support should foster positive social adaptation. However, their actions will be ineffective if social participation is not taken into account in the process of readaptation, including: social reaction to former prisoners, openness of the society to their admission, awareness and socio-cultural potential of the society in order to avoid negative consequences, i.e. stigmatization, social stigmatization, segregation, isolation, hostile behavior, total rejection (Konopczyński 2006, p. 13), in favor of factors supporting the process of destigmatization and positive deviation (Konopczyński 2010, p. 141).

Unfortunately, according to the research, former prisoners, apart from fears of homelessness, lack of employment opportunities, and the possibility of rebuilding ties with their relatives, are afraid of not being accepted by the social environment and of building a new relationship within it (Kacprzak, Kudlińska 2014, pp. 67–68; cf. Szczepańska-Szczepaniak 2015, pp. 141–142). The lack of activities related to preparing society for accepting convicts, reinforced by the consequences of prison isolation, stigmatization, lack of social trust, contribute to the emergence of, among others, “difficulties in finding gainful employment; insufficient material conditions hampering livelihoods; family dependency; escalation of conflicts with the family; lack of housing or any accommodation; reluctance on the part of the social environment; excessive alcohol consumption; being out of any social control; return to a social criminal environment” (Machel 2003, p. 298).

In view of the multiplicity of problems experienced by convicts, the readaptation process initiated during their isolation should continue after they have left prison and should include: self-development of the individual, building relationships with the social environment, responsibility and self-determination, taking into account the possibilities and limitations of the convict. These areas of work require the individualization of re-socialization measures and the cooperation of many specialists and institutions in order to best “create, compose from many elements” (Pospiszyl 1998, p. 183) rehabilitation programs.

However, the concerns of ex-prisoners concerning positive readaptation (cf. Kacprzak, Kudlińska 2014; Szczepańska-Szczepaniak 2015) are confirmed by reports of the Supreme Audit Office (NIK) on readaptation activities of persons leaving the prison. It follows that, although numerous readaptation programs are being implemented, their effectiveness is low. The discrepancies between the expectations of the recipients and the activities of the institutions organizing the process were highlighted, as well as an apparent lack of cooperation and agreement between the institutions and specialists in order to undertake joint, complementary and simultaneous actions addressed to the recipients. The NIK report (2019) points to a number of necessary systemic changes to improve the social readaptation of people leaving the penitentiary. The main criticism is the lack of a comprehensive and coordinated support system, selective approach to the issue, low effectiveness of readaptation. An audit of readaptation activities in the years 2015–2018 carried out in Social Welfare Centers (SWC) in Poland showed that these institutions did not carry out tasks within the framework of long-term, comprehensive assistance enabling readaptation in the society of people with difficulties in adapting to life after leaving prisons. They only effectively provided emergency aid to meet basic living needs (Pomoc społeczna 2019, p. 8). Problems with providing effective assistance have their source both in the lack of professional preparation of SWC employees to work with former prisoners (from soft competences to professional diagnosis and providing e.g. information support). Furthermore, the audit revealed that people who would need support after release are not diagnosed. This was reflected, among other things, in the support plans drawn up, the imprecision of the objectives set out to achieve them, the indicators of their achievement and specified actions, which made it impossible to mobilize the SWC users “to make a real effort to change the difficult life situation” (Pomoc społeczna 2019, pp. 64–65). In addition, the weakness of the plans stemmed from the lack of cooperation between professionals working for those leaving the penitentiary. “The centers did not really cooperate with prisons in this regard, and few examples of this cooperation consisted solely of obtaining information needed to calculate financial benefits. The centers have sporadically received information about the needs of people who are to leave the penitentiary institutions, and it should be stressed that undertaking and conducting cooperation for the benefit of former detainees is not only the responsibility of the SWC, but also of prisons

and remand centers” (Pomoc społeczna 2019, p. 8). The problem revealed by NIK therefore lies not only in the inadequate preparation of SWC staff to work with former prisoners, but also in the lack of cooperation by professional staff from prisons or remand centers with institutions or organizations working for prisoners. In addition, NIK pointed out that there was also virtually no cooperation with the probation service, and if there was, it concerned information from probation officers on entitlement to social assistance benefits, but there was no cooperation in “implementing plans to help people who had adaptation problems after their release” (Pomoc społeczna 2019).

To sum up, the most frequent support given to former prisoners was: “one-off financial assistance, free meals or information on places that provide meals to those in need [...] Less psychological assistance, job-search assistance, treatment, therapy, legal advice was provided” (Pomoc społeczna, p. 12). Therefore, it is obvious that precisely those areas which are most neglected in terms of providing support should become an area of intensive activity on the part of professionals, acting as a coherent system, and not a group of scattered people performing their tasks without the awareness that only tasks performed jointly (e.g. social worker, psychologist, therapist, probation officer, career counselor), can bring positive effects.

Professional and social activation is particularly important in view of the changing world and the challenges it poses for people leaving prisons or remand centers. Especially taking into account that the most numerous group of recipients of the SWC benefits are people aged 30–50 years. It is therefore right to, among others, “link the provision of financial assistance to the undertaking of vocational training, therapy and job search” (Pomoc społeczna, pp. 46–50), as well as the provision of housing that would give permanent residence. Meanwhile, “persons released from penitentiary institutions who did not have a place of residence and were homeless were usually directed to direct access hostels” (Pomoc społeczna, pp. 54–57). Providing these conditions allows these people to feel that they are valuable, can control their own lives, build their new identity, feel more needed, rebuild their self-esteem, responsibility for themselves and their “new” life. Moreover, it becomes an opportunity for people leaving the prison not only to secure material and financial resources at the start, or to find a job and support in the family, but above all to prevent stigmatization. The shortcomings identified in the activities of professionals and institutions “may constitute a significant obstacle to social reintegration and readaptation” (Pomoc społeczna, p. 22). Therefore, the convicts are rightly concerned about whether they will be able to cope after leaving the penitentiary. They expect and need help in organizing life in freedom, they want to live according to the rules, not go back to prison or be stigmatized in public space. However, this requires cooperation and joint development of individual support plans for people leaving prisons and remand centers. These expectations are met by numerous NGOs raising funds for readaptation and social

reintegration. Their effectiveness is the subject of interest and discussion among researchers who investigate their effectiveness in the context of the possibility of adapting theoretical assumptions in practice and verification of practice for the creation of new theoretical assumptions in the field of re-socialization. The following part of the article focuses on one of the programs implemented under the ESF, taking into account the personal experience of specialists involved in working with people leaving the penitentiary.

Methodological assumptions of research

The previous part of the article shown that the main problems for people leaving prisons are: poverty, housing and professional exclusion and at the same time emotional and educational deficits. Moreover, there are also factors such as withdrawal, indifference and lack of motivation to take steps towards economic independence, which results in a multiplication of social exclusion. These factors are further reinforced by the lack of cooperation between professionals who should provide support in the process of social and vocational readaptation. In order to minimize these effects in Lubuskie Province, the project “Coordination of the process of social and professional readaptation of persons leaving penitentiary institutions in Lubuskie Province” was carried in the period from 02.11.2018 to 30.04.2020 (financed by the ESF), aimed at filling the missing links between institutions and intensifying social, soft and professional support. This project was also an alternative to the negligible practice of therapeutic support, work on the personal development of former prisoners, their image, retraining, etc. Moreover, it was supposed to fill in the gap related to the housing market and create supported apartments, ensuring mainly the reduction of the scale of masculinization of homelessness (as research shows that women leaving penitentiary institutions most often return to their families, which is rare among men) and equalization of opportunities to effectively return to society. Therefore, the value of the project in this respect should be emphasized, because in Poland, there are incidental institutions in which the convicts can learn again, in natural conditions, to be independent and thrifty. The idea of supported apartments is to fill in this gap, as convicts can stay there after leaving the institution for one month, and in justified conditions up to 3 months. During this time, the convicts will be able to take an active part in the support planned for them in the IAP, including courses and job search.

Thus, the presented project was strongly oriented towards social inclusion. It included comprehensive activities in the field of education, employment, social assistance for people leaving penitentiary institutions leading to the improvement of their qualifications or obtaining employment, in accordance with the idea of active social inclusion and promotion of: equal opportunities, active participation, increasing chances for employment by fighting poverty and any discrimination.

The participants of the project were people from the Lubuskie Province representing one of the two groups:

- I. people who leave prison/remand centers and other detention institutions in connection with serving a sentence or people who have left prison up to 365 days from the date of recruitment and are at risk of being excluded – 320 people,
- II. people from the nearest vicinity of the above mentioned group – 145 people.

The main objective of the project was to promote social inclusion and to fight against poverty and any discrimination by increasing the adaptability of people leaving Prisons/Remand Centers and other penitentiary institutions in connection with serving a sentence and people who left prison up to 365 days from the date of recruitment (320 people) according to the diagnosed areas of exclusion, called participants of the project, and people from their immediate environment (145 people).

The specific objectives referred to: providing support in the field of psychological, social, economic and professional readaptation in order to strengthen correct re-socialization oriented at becoming independent, adopting socially desirable life attitude, acquiring skills, qualifications and searching for and taking up employment, and as a result progress in social and professional integration and to support the environment of former inmates and strengthen the process of their active integration, as a complementarity of support and obtaining synergy effect of intervention.

The stages of activities in the project and the assumed effects included:

1. Recruitment of former prisoners.
2. Carrying out individual diagnoses taking into account:
 - a) identification of professional deficits (diagnosis of the possessed skills and professional experience, needs in the social and professional development and expectations, identification of the areas that need to be supplemented by participation in free courses and consultancy). The result: completion of professional courses and obtaining a certificate to take up employment;
 - b) identification of social and economic deficits (diagnosis of family environment, social relations in the environment of origin/return, problem areas e.g. debt, housing, alimony, parental rights). Effects: provision of a residence in a foster home for the duration of the project or material assistance at the place of residence with the family in specific areas, clothing, hygiene measures, small services to improve the image, such as hairdresser, legal consultation in family and living matters;
 - c) identification of personality deficits, addiction problems, strengths and weaknesses in the context of social functioning (prognosis and recommendations for participation in therapy sessions). Results: participation in different areas of socio-cultural life.

As a result of the diagnosis, persons received an individual scope of support developed under the Individual Adaptation Path (IAP), which can be modified depending on the change in the needs of a person undergoing readaptation. Among

the forms of support, the following were proposed: a) workshops in the field of individual and professional counseling; active job searching and obtaining employment – activation training; workshops in the field of active job searching and obtaining employment organized by a career counselor; b) professional trainings, participation in qualification courses; c) financial and material support; d) accommodation in a foster home; e) activation trainings.

Taking into account the above assumptions and objectives of the project, it was assumed that the subject of the research is the presented project, and the aim of the research was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the project in the perspective of individual narratives reflected in the experiences of the persons who are the guardians of former convicts participating in the project. The main research question was as follows: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the project in terms of positive readmission of former convicts?

In the research, a method consistent with the adopted quality paradigm was used, which was an individual interview with randomly selected 18 guardians of former convicts. The research was conducted in the last quarter of the project implementation (January–February 2020), in places indicated by them.

It is worth adding that the qualitative research was complemented by quantitative research using the survey method with the survey technique. In accordance with the methodological guidelines for the technique, a tool was constructed – a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions relating to the quantitative evaluation of the project activities. It is worth adding that prisoners participating in the project were examined with a similar tool. The results of these studies are a very valuable source of knowledge relating to readaptation activities from the perspective of both guardians and prisoners. Detailed results from the research will be published in the next article, while in this one, only the comments will present the percentage data to emphasize the essence of the categories identified during the interviews.

Effectiveness of readaptation activities in the individual perspective of guardians of persons undergoing readaptation

The interview with the guardians of the project participants focused on three leading areas of personal interpretations relating to the project: positive experiences in working with the prisoner and the effects, barriers and impediments to the proper implementation of the project, as well as good practices worth promoting and disseminating in the work for positive socio-professional readaptation of people leaving the penitentiary. The analysis of the research results was presented according to the delimited areas of experience of the guardians. Three main experience categories emerged from the analysis of the narrations, described by the respondents through subcategories, which for the sake of clarity are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Experiences of guardians involved in a prisoner readaptation project

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
Positive experiences and effects		
<p>Professionals' actions strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cooperation with other guardians "Good cooperation with other guardians." (A2) "Working with a team of people who take care of the participants (guardians) is a guarantee of success" (A12) <p>Forms of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working individually or with a small group "an advantage is the individual or small group of clients, up to a maximum of 8 clients at a time, and a permanent readaptation guardian gives good results" (A6) 	<p>Aptitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - motivation to change "I've seen many of the former convicts want to change their lives, have new opportunities, a new start, better prospects." (A1) - interest in and involvement in the project "The positive effect is to have a good influence on the person looking for a new way of life." (A12) <p>Learned social skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of communication skills "I was glad to see the changes in the client's interviewing skills, better self-control, stability and less distrust" (A7) - individual and motivating interviews with prisoners to work on themselves "Strengthening the convicts' constructive behavior, their efforts, positive change was something that drove the desire for change" (A2) 	<p>Socio-emotional competences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ease of networking "An advantage in this work was the ease of establishing relationships and building a good atmosphere of cooperation" (A17) - speaking to the prisoner by name ("equal treatment") "It's important to speak to each other by name, it changes the way these people react to instructions, changes the nature of the relationship." (A1) - smile and be kind, show interest in the prisoner "Treating these people as equals and not as criminals, my smile, interest in their affairs (how the child/partner/parent feels) facilitated cooperation". (A1) - communicative, social, interpersonal competences "As a former probation officer, I have good skills in establishing social relationships, conducting conversations, maintaining relationships and contact, which is conducive to working in the project" (A15)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comprehensive offer for prisoners participating in the project "attractive vocational training, diversity in the choice of courses, training promotes good change" (A6) <p>Substantive design concept</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - financial support "Financial support in various areas was carried out in a satisfactory way, and this made it easier to function, to go on a course, to the office (e.g. he had something to wear)" (A4) - content and scope of training "I regard as an asset a wide range of professional training, furthering and improving professional qualifications" (A4) 		

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
	<p style="text-align: center;">Positive experiences and effects</p> <p>A real change experience - <i>finding work</i> "It is important to motivate them to complete professional courses, which will change their social status and at the same time make them change their way of life, actively search for a job" (A10)</p> <p>- <i>active in the conduct of official business</i> "It has been important to help them to deal with various official matters, writing letters; support in it helps them to see the sense of change and to reduce formal barriers" (A10)</p> <p>- <i>financial stability</i> "financial stability allowed for participation in the project, but not everyone had it." (A13)</p>	<p>Professional competence in re-socialization work - <i>assigning responsibility for the prisoners' conduct and decisions as well as consistency</i> "The experience of working with addicts and convicts has equipped me to work with them by giving responsibility, supporting them in meeting their obligations and being consistent has had a positive effect in this project" (A15)</p> <p>- <i>strengthening of constructive behavior</i> "It's very good to appreciate small changes, good behavior, they are trying to be better"(A9)</p> <p>- <i>positive motivation to change and act</i> "When you show a person what is good, his/her potential, then you can build on it and strengthen the motivation to change" (A11)</p> <p>Personal traits - <i>personal aptitude</i> "Those who work with people have specific social and emotional predispositions, which translates into their work efficiency. If one does not have such predispositions, one falls out of a social professions"(A14)</p> <p>Professional experience - <i>many years of experience working with prisoners/addicts</i> "Many years of experience working with prisoners and addicts helps a lot here, you know the rules of work, methods and how to proceed in different cases" (O2)</p>

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
Barriers and obstacles		
<p>Information strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - little publicity about the project “The biggest problem was insufficiently disseminated information about the project prior to its launching.” (A1) - information flow between coordinator-guardians “Lack of contact in the flow of information from coordinator to trainers hindered effective operation” (A15) - no fixed duty hours for the project coordinator, attorney-at-law “there is no permanent systematic work of the coordinator and the attorney-at-law (permanent on-call duty, telephone contact, joint decisions)” (A2) - package of services and material assistance at the beginning of the project (do not postpone) “All tenders and inquiries were not carried out before the start of the project, e.g. if clothes were needed, the participant could not decide to buy clothes himself, but had to follow the guidelines. If there was a tender, the clothing was ordered from the tenderer, which prolonged the time of transfer of support)” (A1) <p>Forms of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difficulties in organizing group activities “there was a great difficulty in organizing group activities for the participants because they could not work in a group, they preferred individual activities” (A1) 	<p>Motivation and trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the assignment of a guardian caused “reluctance” in taking up tasks within the project “Upon being informed that they will have a guardian in the project, the participants were reluctant to participate. I assume that many people have not joined the project at all because of this informant” (A1) - mistrust of the readaptation guardian “they are reluctant to give honest answers, they do not want to participate in the courses to which we direct them, they are distrustful, as if they do not want to have contact with us, because it only involves supervision” (A10) - disregard for the guardian and the project “lack of responsibility in the action, not coming to the meetings arranged or courses started showed the attitude to the project and the trainers” (A1) “The participants believe that they are entitled to the support. They even demand it. They expect everything from the project while not giving anything or just the minimum” (A7) - concealment of information about oneself “they were distrustful of their guardian (they feared constant supervision). As they tend to conceal information about themselves (a lot of information had to be read between the lines out of what they wanted to say about themselves), it was difficult to adapt actions to their needs” (A1) - avoidance of meetings, started courses “a demanding attitude, lack of punctuality, attending only selected appointments or classes, communication difficulties hindered work with a former prisoner” (A6) 	<p>Tools and working methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no possibility to decide on the form of support for a former prisoner “Lack of possibility for the guardian to decide on the support that a participant should be provided with” (A1) - too much leniency when convicts break the rules “high leniency towards convicts, too many “last chances” of staying in the project and supported apartments, despite the abuse of psychoactive agents and aggressive behavior, prevents effective implementation and good change for those who want to benefit” (A2) <p>Professional ethics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - talking to a convict about other guardians “I learned from project participants that the trainer is talking about other guardians with them” (A15)

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
<p>- no possibility to differentiate the activity according to the needs</p> <p>"The guardian in the readaptation process has no way of deciding what support the participant should receive. The project assumes that each of them is to receive the same support. I know from experience that each of the clients need different support and at different times" (O1)</p> <p>- too many clients per guardian</p> <p>"Too many clients per one guardian, resulting in insufficient time being devoted to people in need, the number of cases per one guardian should be reduced" (A1)</p> <p>Working methods</p> <p>- strengthen measures to increase prisoners' self-responsibility</p> <p>"Consistency with the clients should be strengthened, with clearly defined tasks, and responsibility for the choices made should be taught" (A8)</p> <p>- avoid helping out prisoners in everyday life and decisions for actions</p> <p>"Our actions should teach prisoners to take responsibility for themselves and their lives, not strengthen their passiveness and claiming attitudes." (A2)</p> <p>- eliminate the reluctance to make contact with the guardian, delaying implementation</p> <p>"Initially, it was difficult to make contact with the client: they didn't answer the phone, changed the number, were distrustful, didn't want to come to courses, to meetings with therapists. They were convinced that they were under constant control, monitoring, like in prison." (A10)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Barriers and obstacles</p> <p>- unable to meet all expectations</p> <p>"the problem was the inability to meet all participants' expectations so that they could function well" (A11)</p> <p>Socio-emotional skills</p> <p>- lack of group work skills</p> <p>"Group social skills training should be compulsory: without this, the clients will not learn how to function socially, work in a team, etc." (A2)</p> <p>- poor manners</p> <p>"there were some people with poor manners (they interrupted a conversation with a person who was already in the office, entered without knocking and, seeing another person, ignored being told to wait outside for a while)" (A1)</p> <p>Housing and economic stability</p> <p>- unwillingness to live in a direct access hostel at the beginning of the project</p> <p>"Having heard that they had to live temporarily in a direct access hostel caused reluctance and withdrawal from the project" (A14)</p> <p>- reluctance to show housing conditions</p> <p>"they were afraid to show their flats" (A1)</p> <p>- no contact phone and no permanent residence</p> <p>"most of the clients have mobile phones, although inactive due to lack of money" (A6) "the lack of telephone and permanent residence, the impossibility of reaching a project participant in any way made it impossible to establish cooperation and work" (A1)</p> <p>- poverty</p> <p>"the majority of participants had to undertake casual work during the project because of having insufficient money to meet basic needs, which consequently also affected their attendance" (A10).</p>	

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
Barriers and obstacles		
<p>Time and place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the area coverage of the project, difficulty in reaching the prisoners "The project is hampered by the large area coverage of the project, the guardian has the clients over a large area and it takes too much time to reach them" (A4) - short time of the project, a lot of time is spent on addiction therapy for prisoners "Each of the participants should first be referred to addiction specialists and only then they should receive any support, e.g. food, culture" (A1) <p>Cooperation strategies for professionals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low involvement and cooperation of probation teams "the problem was too little involvement of the probation officers the prisoners were referred to. For the first 2 months, those released from prison did not receive information about the project" (A1) - low involvement of professionals, e.g. career counselor "Dodging, not coming to meetings, disregarding the work of professionals is not conducive to a change in prisoners (A17) - lack of an adequate number of addiction therapists "Practically all participants in the project are addicts, and the work on addicts and other aspects of social functioning should be started, so the employment of therapists should be increased" (A16) 	<p>Personal qualities and attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of responsibility for oneself "Many convicts avoided everything but waited for ready-made proposals with no commitment, so as to gain without effort" (A5) - passiveness and demanding attitude "I've had cases where participant thought that it is enough for him to be present to get everything, otherwise he started to be aggressive and threaten that he would resign from the project." (A13) - lying, prevarication "The barrier of lying, prevarication by the participants, the reluctance to anything that could change their current state disturbed their work" (A10) - laziness masked by apparent helplessness and inexperience "The participants are quite precise about their needs. They often cover their laziness (lack of commitment) with helplessness or lack of life experience" (A12) - skepticism in the choice of professional courses, random choice of courses (quick to finish, easy to complete) "They were skeptical about the professional courses. They chose those that would allow them to find a job quickly, although they were not always consistent in it/they started attending a course only to give up in a dozen or so days' time, e.g. started to drink, left the town" (A3) - lack of self-confidence "Lack of self-confidence in their abilities made it more difficult for them to function, they had to be strengthened to be motivated" (A3) 	

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
<p>Attendance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>undertaking casual work by prisoners to meet basic needs at the beginning of the project (absence from classes)</i> - <i>"Lack of finance meant that some people didn't go to project classes because they made a living." (A10)</i> <p>Housing stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the lack of a home for prisoners in the city where there is access to specialists and terminating of contracts by landlords of flats/rooms for prisoners</i> - <i>"Many people who were out of town did not benefit from the project because there was no accommodation for them. Not every participant wanted to start with a direct access hostel. There were instances of terminating the contract for renting an apartment or a room for a participant. Many potential owners did not even want to hear about the rental, hearing who would live there (former prisoners)" (A1)</i> - <i>several unsupervised prisoners in the same supported apartment</i> - <i>"Renting single dwellings in the case of addicted participants or in the case of several prisoners living under the supervision of the landlord is pointless. They need a permanent guardian who will prepare them to function well on their own" (A7)</i> - <i>lack of control in supported flats which is conducive to the development of pathological behavior</i> - <i>"The accumulation of several prisoners in a single unsupervised supported apartment causes pathological behavior not to be eliminated but to develop rapidly" (A2);</i> - <i>"in the case of supported apartments, these should be single or up to two people in order not to generate problems and negative interactions" (A6)</i> 	<p>Barriers and obstacles</p> <p>Addictions and crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>alcohol and drug addiction, aggressive behavior</i> - <i>"many have returned to addiction. They also conceal information on the family, professional, social situation, their addictions or alcohol or drug abuse or harmful use" (A6)</i> - <i>lack of motivation for and no possibility of addiction treatment</i> - <i>"A big problem is the high degree of different types of addictions and dealing with people who are most often under the influence of alcohol. It is not conducive to change or motivation to change" (A4)</i> - <i>return to prison</i> - <i>"Several clients returned to prison for breaking the law." (A11)</i> 	

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
<p>Employment of addiction therapists - employment of addiction therapists "An addiction therapist and money for aversion therapy are needed" (A2)</p> <p>Working strategies and interdisciplinary cooperation - meeting of a convict, guardian, psychologist/other specialist at one place and time "Meetings of the teams of specialists working with the former prisoner and the former prisoner himself in order to discuss the details of the activities and their effectiveness should be introduced. This should always be done at a specific, fixed location" (A16) - continuity and coherence of measures "Measures will be effective only if close cooperation of staff with frequent meetings analyzing results is ensured. Planning the continuity and coherence of the measures, preceded by a reliable diagnosis, affects the further path of the client" (A6) - psychologist's presence during the diagnosis "Working with a former prisoner should start with a desirable psychological diagnosis and building support on it." (A15) - the psychologist indicates which convict should be assigned to which guardian "it is the psychologist who should assign the participant to a guardian after the diagnosis. The person responsible for funds spending should have no other tasks" (A1) - increase involvement and cooperation between institutions and organizations working with prisoners, i.e. to fill a system gap "mandatory team meetings should take place to discuss all issues related to participants and paths implementation" (A1)</p>	<p>Access to therapies and therapists - individual and group addiction therapy "it must be made possible for prisoners to participate in individual addiction therapy (almost all prisoners are addicts and they most often do not publicly admit to the problem)" (A3) Discipline and consistency - end support for those who have repeatedly broken contracts and agreements "The project should introduce the removal from the project of participants who have broken the rules notoriously, do not want to stop alcohol/drug abuse and behave aggressively" (A2) Giving simple economic responsibility at the start - refrain from purchasing workwear in favor of vouchers for any kind of clothing "there is no need to spend money on the purchase of workwear for participants attending cat. B driving courses or other ones not requiring the use of such clothing. At the beginning of the project, the detailed offer of professional courses should be known (the possibility to organize courses if only one participant applies)" (A8)</p>	<p>Strategies for working with convicts - proposals to use first names "In many cases, using first name reduces barriers and facilitates cooperation" (A16) - proven strategies for working with convicts "It would be worthwhile to develop common strategies for dealing with specific situations and the behavior of convicts in order to introduce consistency in the actions of staff responsible for the readaptation process" (A13) - disciplinary measures "Transfer of responsibility for behavior and decisions to the convicts. The fulfillment of contracts (one chance, not infinite number, the consequences for the prisoners)" (A2) Strategies of cooperation with specialists - developing a strategy for the flow of information between guardians and specialists "it would be a good idea for the Project's specialists to meet more frequently to develop measures strategies, exchange information, etc." (A7) - meetings of teams (persons working with the prisoner) and ongoing diagnosis "systematically organize team meetings to discuss current issues, difficulties encountered and to set out further action plans" (A6); "Continuous monitoring of participants and their needs" (A12)</p>

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
<p>Diagnosis of prisoners' needs and selection of training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - training relevant to the diagnosed needs "Adapt training offers to the needs and capabilities of the prisoners, look for new ones if the package lacks suitable ones" (A13) - introduction of compulsory group social skills training "The psychological training should include classes on development of social and rehab skills and reduce deficits, and not, as project participants claim, nonconstructive 'bitter regrets'" (A2) - increase the number of classes in career counseling and with the psychologist "increase the involvement of a career counselor who will actually support former convicts in moving around the labor market" (A6) "there should be more classes, e.g. in career counseling and classes with a psychologist, educator" (A3) <p>Additional specialist positions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the introduction of permanent on-call duty of the project coordinator "there is a need for a coordinator who'd be in the office every day, but would also take care of all the necessary things in the field. He/she would be helping both the workers and the inmates, would be our liaison" (A2) - permanent guardian for readaptation in supported apartments "the principle of locating several participants in one place under the close supervision of a guardian and a psychologist should be introduced" (A2) 	<p>Barriers and obstacles</p> <p>Criteria for selecting the guardian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the guardian should be a person experienced in working with prisoners "I believe that persons who have not previously cooperated with the convicts in the place of detention should not be appointed as the guardians in the project" (A14) 	

Organization and implementation	On the part of the prisoner	On the part of the guardian
Barriers and obstacles		
<p>Housing - <i>renting single apartments in the case of prisoners with addictions</i> "the supported apartments should be single or up to two people" (A6)</p> <p>Financial outlay - <i>increase funding for means of urban transport for prisoners</i> "more funds for the participants' monthly bus tickets would be useful (PLN 230 is not enough for 3 monthly tickets)" (A2)</p> <p>- <i>purchase of a photocopier that could be used by the guardians</i> "equipping the office with a photocopier would make our daily lives much easier" (A2)</p> <p>Information strategies - <i>strengthen the information campaign on the project</i> "important factors influencing the implementation of the project are: coordinated information campaign, reaching out to the bodies and institutions that have contact with persons released from penitentiary institutions" (A8)</p>		

Discussion and conclusions

The guardians of the convicts released from penitentiary institutions pointed out a number of issues that are important from the perspective of working with persons undergoing readaptation.

Before the results of the research are discussed in detail, it is important to note that when speaking of the three main areas of experience, researchers narrate around the three main links of the project, namely: the organization and implementation of the project, from the perspective of the former prisoner and from the perspective of the guardian.

In relation to the positive experiences in working with prisoners and the effects of the project, taking into account its organizational and implementation assumptions, the respondents highly valued the strategies of cooperation between guardians, the forms of work characteristic of the project and the substantive concept of the project, as a response to the missing link in working with prisoners from the moment when they leave the prison to their full independence and positive social functioning. Taking into account the positive experiences from the perspective of the prisoners, they noticed that their participation in the project activates their positive personal predispositions, which help in positive readaptation, as well as social skills and real experiences of change, visible in actions for their own future and positive functioning in society. Participation in the project enriched the guardians with positive experiences and changes. They found out that they could make use of their own personal traits and professional experience and strengthen them by working with convicts; their professional competences increased, their social-emotional competences strengthened, without which it would not have been possible to work with former convicts.

In the case of the described barriers and difficulties arising during the project and in many cases preventing its full implementation, when it comes to the organization and implementation of the project, the researchers indicated: lack of information strategies, ineffective methods and forms as well as time and place of work (including the possibility of reaching prisoners or the prisoners' access to places where they could get support). In addition, they noted shortcomings or lack of cooperation between and with professionals (guardians and prisoners), as well as factors negatively affecting housing stability and attendance at classes, meetings, workshops. Among the barriers emerging on the part of the prisoner, they most often noticed: alcohol and psychoactive substance addiction, low motivation and lack of trust in persons and institutions, lack or low social and emotional competences, negative personal traits and attitudes towards others, as well as lack of housing and material stability. In relation to the difficulties experienced by guardians, respondents indicated ethical attitudes and a lack of knowledge and

ability to use appropriate tools and methods to facilitate the readaptation process for the prisoners.

A very valuable area of experience, as it provided a basis for the application of new practices to the process of readaptation of former prisoners and for filling the system gaps that appeared in this area, was the indication of good practices and modifications in the current project. In the narrations of the respondents, the scope of modifications in the project and good practices was the strongest in the scope of organization and implementation. In the opinion of the respondents, it is important to develop strategies for interdisciplinary cooperation between specialists working in different institutions and organizations for the benefit of prisoners. In addition, there are indications to strengthen and increase activities, including the employment of specialists – psychologists, addiction therapists, career counselors, interpersonal trainers – for a detailed diagnosis of needs and appropriately selected forms and types of activities (from social training to professional development). There were also proposals to strengthen housing management (supported apartments), financial management and information strategies. In principle, the modifications indicated in this respect were reflected in what is important from the perspective of the prisoners (here they mentioned: access to therapies and therapists, strengthening discipline and consequences; giving simple personal and economic responsibility at the start of the readaptation process) and from the perspective of the guardians (here they mentioned: strategies for working with prisoners, strategies for interdisciplinary cooperation between professionals and criteria for selection of a guardian of a former prisoner).

The interviews show that despite the many activities carried out by the guardians and other specialists, social readaptation is hampered by a number of internal factors inherent in the prisoner namely: addictions, personal qualities, emotional deficits or lack of motivation and ability to learn social skills) cf. Machel 2003; Góra-Strzałkowska 2009; Sobczyszyn 2009; Szymanowska 2006; this is also highly visible in the survey conducted among guardians). In addition, there were also external factors hindering proper readaptation, including – despite the supported apartments set up in the project – housing difficulties related to their network, organization and number of places for convicts, as well as those related to finding paid employment, or economic and material difficulties at the beginning of the readaptation process (cf. Machel 2003; Góra-Strzałkowska 2009; Kacprzak, Kudlińska 2014; Szczepańska-Szczepanik 2015; NIK Report 2019). Another disadvantage was the lack of cooperation between people from different institutions, which does not encourage the creation of comprehensive activities accelerating the process of positive social adaptation (cf. Pospiszyl 1998, Machel 2003, Pomoc społeczna 2019; all guardians point this out in surveys). Among the external factors that would hamper the readaptation process, the respondents did not point out the social factors, which are inherent in the place where prisoners live. It can therefore be seen that local communities have positive attitudes towards convicts or their presence does not give rise to social stigma or stereotyping.

The project has, to some extent, filled in the missing links between the institutions with intensified social, soft and professional support. It was also an alternative to the relatively poor practice of supporting the personal development of former convicts, their image, retraining, etc. The introduction of supported apartments, the idea of which should be modified (apartments shared by fewer people and, in the case of a few convicts, the introduction of a permanent guardian into the apartment), has become a valuable asset. The idea of such apartments should be continued and promoted in other provinces. According to the data, this type of apartments operate incidentally

The process of social readaptation should use specific re-socialization programs, taking into account the needs of the prisoners and the challenges of socio-cultural changes in the modern world and the related changes in the labor market and employment. Elements relating to the development of specific psychological, social and cultural skills are essential in these programs (cf. Ostrowska, 2008, p. 228). However, above all, the need to create a network of institutional, interdisciplinary support for people leaving prisons is becoming more important (cf. Pospiszyl 1998; Bałandynowicz 2006; Miłkowska 2010; Miłkowska, Sobański 2017; and others).

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