Thesis

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The effects of prison education on convict reintegration rates and recidivism

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1. Introduction

A cursory overview of the topic

At the end of the first half of 2016, there were around 18196\(^1\) prisoners in Hungary, in various prison systems. This shows a slight increase to the previous year, which may be explained by the growth in the number of policing custody and detention sentence cases, in addition to the overall, very slight, increase in the number of convicted prisoners (it is reflected also in the breakdown of inmates by the sentence severity). This might mean more crime, due to socio-economic reasons, but since that is not the topic of my thesis, I would gloss this over. (Although it is a very interesting topic, and would be splendid to explore in detail, in the future.)

Crime is not only a cause of suffering to victims and their families but also a manifestation of the extreme marginalisation from mainstream society that affects some individuals. In this sense, the prison population of a country, or rather, the ratio of prisoners, could be used to indicate the health of said society. Luckily, there is a downward trend in most OECD countries, particularly among youth. This could mean that the society is getting healthier, or that the deterrent part of the societal need of imprisonment is working well.

\[ \text{Table 1: OECD Society at Glance 2016, Downwards trends in crimes between 2008-2013} \]

\(^{1}\) BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics

Table 1: OECD Society at Glance 2016, Downwards trends in crimes between 2008-2013
Crime also generates high costs to society in the form of imprisonment, where these costs are normally justified by reference to a combination of three societal "needs": to inflict retribution, to deter others from behaving in a similar way, and to prevent re-offending.

Successful rehabilitation and reintegration after a lengthy prison sentence is very hard to achieve. Not only do prison societies operate under different rules and norms, the offenders’ tarnished ethical records do not help either. It makes it harder for them to get a decent job, if any, not to mention the view society holds over those who’ve been imprisoned. A survey done by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in 2015 found that 76% of former inmates said finding work after being released was difficult or nearly impossible. Nearly two thirds of the respondents were unemployed or underemployed five years after being released from prison.\(^2\) Keep in mind, the study was conducted in the US, where the culture is a bit different, the prison system is a bit different, and the laws altogether are different, so it does not hold much weight in Europe in general, much less in Hungary, it is interesting more than anything else.

Anyhow, it certainly shows a problem with how our prison systems work. Someone makes a mistake, commits a crime, however small, gets imprisoned, serves their sentence, gets out and then can’t get a job, can’t get their life back, and possibly requires living assistance, unemployed benefits and the likes, making them a further burden on social welfare. The lightest prison sentence can easily mean a life sentence. It would stand to reason to help prisoners reintegrate and rehabilitate, to reduce the financial drain they inflict, and to allow them to turn a profit again, for the state through their taxes and whatnot. This can be achieved through various rehabilitation programs, like the one operating in Hungary\(^3\). Within the framework of a tailor-made development program, individual job opportunities, labor market and information services, job search counseling, development of key skills, job-search techniques, vocational training, and social administration, assisting conversations will be available to prisoners in the program. In addition, 1000 people can benefit from human services, helping to improve their labor market chances and the readmission of the released family member.

Financed by the European Union, the program helps around 4 thousand inmates.

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Another way to reduce the costs of sustaining large prison population, is to reduce the size of the population itself. The Hungarian government wanted to restore capital punishment (i.e. execution), which go against the rules and laws of the European Union. It might be grim, and/or unhuman, but it would indeed reduce the prison population, especially since there are around 350 prisoners serving true life sentences. These are inmates, who will never be released, and continue to syphon resources from the government.

Other countries, have different methods to achieve reintegration. A perfect, and successful example would be the Finnish open-prisons. They operate without locks, or guards, the prisoners do their own shopping, can attend university in the nearby town, get paid for their work, grow plants and such. Nobody ever escapes, because they know that they would get caught, and then get sent back to a regular prison. They can spend weekends with their family, and altogether feel like human beings. It is the last step on a long road to rehabilitation, and it is the most humane and successful program in the world, with almost no recidivism.\footnote{\url{https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-04-15/finlands-open-prisons-inmates-have-keys} Retrieved: 2017.04.30.}

Granted, one of the best ways to reduce recidivism, and promote reintegration, is through education. Educating the inmates, to provide them with better skills and job opportunities, allows them to keep their mind sharp and spend their sentences usefully, not just being bored. In the meantime, educating the masses, and breaking the stigma, is easier when the prison produces skilled labor workers. Not to mention, a successful prison education system would fix, or at least alleviate the shortage of skilled workers on the market.
It is possible to attend education while in prison. Currently, there are 1929 inmates getting a training and education (notice the almost 100% employment rate).

As we can see, there are several thousand people serving year long prison sentences. These years could be used productively, teaching the inmates useful skills, maybe even allow them to get degrees, (not necessarily freely) in order to promote their reintegration.

The main question is, what kind of difficulties an ex-convict faces? Can education they receive in prison make it easier to get a decent job?
2. Literature Review

To better grasp the problem of crime and punishment (besides being an awfully long book) and rehabilitation, we should take a look on existing theories, from the classic thinkers and sociologists.

Let’s start with Emile Durkheim, the classic-est, the father of modern sociology. Durkheim believed that a certain amount of crime and deviance could be seen as positive for society. It’s necessary to generate social change - innovation only comes about if old ideas are challenged. It helps to clarify the boundaries of acceptable behavior following social reactions to deviance. It also creates social integration as it bonds society together against criminals. These are the positive aspects of crime, however, Durkheim believed that crime and deviance also acts as a threat to society. This is because the norms and values that ‘unite’ society are being challenged, thus threatening consensus, social order and stability. (Durkheim, 1897)

According to Durkheim, crime and deviance happens due to anomie (normlessness), he believed that this could occur during periods of rapid social change (e.g. revolutions) when people become unsure of what societies norms and values are. Naturally, Durkheim did not believe that anomie is the only reason of crime and deviance, but let’s not get into that.

Durkheim believed, that in modern societies, there is consensus on what is considered normal, on the society’s norms and values, which resulted in social order and stability. This happened because society’s institutions successfully implemented social control. Durkheim viewed this as a positive thing, unlike interactionist and Marxists, as it creates social cohesion. Durkheim believes social control is achieved by various agencies of social control socializing individuals into socially agreed norms and values (regulation) and by integrating individuals into social groups. For example, schools bond individuals together into school communities and classes. They instill core norms & values through citizenship programs. Religion binds people together during times of happiness e.g. weddings and sadness e.g. funerals. Religion regulates behavior by setting down certain moral standards.
The same thing could be true of prisons, socializing, or rather, re-socializing people into norms accepted in prisons and prison communities, provides a common enemy (i.e. the guards and society in general) and so on. While Durkheim’s work sparked several theories and subsequent research, for example, control theories, and it can’t be denied that Durkheim made a major contribution to the study of crime (among other things), there are certain problems with this functionalist approach. For starters, it does not say what the “right” amount of crime is, and why some people commit crimes, while others don’t. (Durkheim, É. 1978; DiCristina, B., 2016)

This leads us to Robert Merton, and his structural strain theory. Merton argued that capitalist societies suffer from anomie - a strain/conflict between the goals set by society and the legitimate (law abiding) means of achieving them. Merton claimed that this strain was a product of an unequal social class structure that blocked many people’s attempts to reach the goals set by society through the legitimate opportunity structure. Merton identified five different responses to anomie. Perhaps the most significant though was innovation. He used this concept to explain material crimes amongst the working class. Merton argued that some members of the working class reject the approved means (e.g. working hard in a job) and innovate and turn to illegal means to obtain the cultural goals they still desire e.g. a nice car. (Merton, R. K., 1938)

Keep in mind, this is a different kind of anomie than with Durkheim, but we kind of face similar problems with it, namely, how can we measure it? It does not explain why someone would choose one response over another, nor does it account for crimes that are not for economic gain.
So, by now we have two different, pretty solid theories on why crime and deviance happens, what purpose does it serve and so on.
It’s time to talk about prisons in general. Everyone knows what a prison is, or what purpose does it serve, correction, confinement, incarceration and other synonyms. It’s important to talk about recidivism (reoffending), and what happens to the individuals’ norms and values while in prison.

In The Prison Community (1940) Donald Clemmer created the term “prisonization”, and defined it as the process by which the psyches and behaviors of convicts were molded by the social and structural hallmarks of prison life. Prisonization
largely confounded the social ideal underlying the penitentiary concept: it not only thwarted attempts to rehabilitate convicts but also inspired behavior that was contrary to accepted standards of social conduct. (Brown, J., 2002) Prisonization involves the formation of an informal inmate code and develops from both individual characteristics of inmates and from institutional features of the prison. According to Clemmer, the fact that convicts assume these norms and values, in order to fit in with prison society and make their lives less troublesome inside, they subsequently make it harder for themselves to reintegrate into society at the end of their sentence, entering a cycle of imprisonment and release. Prisonization as the inculcation of a convict culture was defined by identification with primary groups in prison, the use of prison slang and argot, the adoption of specified rituals and a hostility to prison authority in contrast to inmate solidarity and was asserted by Clemmer to create individuals who were acculturated into a criminal and deviant way of life that stymied all attempts to reform their behavior. His study, conducted on 2400 convicts over three years, is referenced often throughout criminology and clinical sociology, however, several European sociologists have shown that inmates were often fragmented and the links they have with society are often stronger than those forged in prison, particularly through the action of work on time perception. In other words, prisoners are molded by the prison community while serving their sentence, which makes it harder for them to successfully reintegrate into society, which in turn, leads to recidivism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recidivism for inmates serving final sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011.06.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First time offender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recidivist, particular recidivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiply recidivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics – Recidivism for inmates serving final sentence
As is seen above, there is an around 50% recidivism rate in Hungary, which means that up to 50% of released prisoners will return to prison within 3-5 years. This is not all that surprising, after their norms been molded by years in prison.

Simply, modern prisons break people. It is an industry like any other, and wants to make regular customers. Prisons, in general, are not interested in rehabilitation, like most every industry, it is interested in profit.

As mentioned at the start of this paper, there are around 18000 convicts currently in the prison system in Hungary. However, according to a study commissioned by the European Council in 2015, the SPACE I survey, Hungarian prisons are overcrowded by 142%. The same survey also took into account how much does a prisoner costs/day. It ranges from 6 Euro/day in Georgia, to 480 Euro/day in San Marino. In Hungary, it costs ~30 Euros/day/inmate. In 2015, the average length of imprisonment, in Hungary, was twelve months. That means, a prisoner costs, on average, 11 thousand Euros. (That is, around 3 and a half million Hungarian Forints/prison sentence) Since around 50% of inmates are recidivist, this is money basically down the drain. Basically, for around half of criminals, the prison’s failing not only in its deterrence purpose, but its rehabilitation one too.

So, what should change? What’s different in countries, where the recidivist rate is lower, where the rehabilitation is more successful?

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5 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) 2015
3. Methodology

In order to answer my research questions, first, I grouped the countries with similar GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita. I have excluded countries not in Europe, since the demographic, religious and/or cultural make-up of a country in Africa or India is going to be vastly different, and can’t really compare them. After controlling with these variables, I selected 9 countries. 7 of these are pretty similar in regards to the stuff mentioned above, and I included two more countries, Norway (which has one of the lowest recidivism, 20%, of the world) and Russia, to have a country on the other end of the spectrum (high incarceration rates, high recidivist rates).

The plan was to find countries that are similar in their demographic make-up, GDP PPP per capita, to ensure their citizens enjoy the same standard of living (relatively), and hold these variables constant, which would mean that any change in recidivism is due to the prison conditions, costs of an average prisoner, education and rehabilitation services they might receive. I chose to ignore cultural differences, since there is no objective way to measure that, and I would feel it dishonest, doing it behind a computer without actually experiencing the culture first-hand.

Considering the timeframe and resources available, I chose to forgo primary data collection, like in-depth interviews, questionnaires and the like. It would actually provide valuable data, considering the inmates’ sentences, how they are treated and give an interesting insight into possible causes of recidivism. Not to mention, that conducting the same questionnaire on the same subgroup spending the same sentences for the same crimes, because it would be possible to filter convicts according to these factors, only in different countries and penal institutions would really allow for some extensive comprehensive, comparative research.

With the required resources available, I chose to do secondary research on already collected statistical data. Thankfully, the Council of Europe publishes extensive penal

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7 https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/svetlana-reiter/russias-dead-end-prison-system
statistics annually, so it was only a matter of extracting the different figures for different countries. I calculated prison population rates, based on the country’s population and prison population, to make it more comparable. As it turns out, Ireland’s and Norway’s demographic makeup and socio-economic factors are similar, but more on this later. After holding socio-economic and demographic factors constant, any differences in recidivism should be caused by differences in the penal system and the different cultures.
4. Findings

Naturally I could not do the GDP PPP per capita calculations myself, since I needed official hard data. After considering using the United Nations’ data, I decided I needed a more officially financial institution, and one that is taken seriously. I used the IMF data, straight from their website, seen below. The numbers are in GDP PPP per capita.\(^8\)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Poland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Seychelles</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Saint Kitts and Nevis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: List of countries by GDP PPP per capita

A few of them are pretty similar to Hungary, in regards to climate and demography too. I extracted official national data that was identified through search results. Studies reporting recidivism rates for geographical regions within a country were reported when no national data were found. Due to the small sample size, this did not make one bit of difference. I excluded the Seychelles, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Malaysia, since they are vastly different in geography, demography and climate.

Table 6: Above listed countries with several different prison statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population (mil)</th>
<th>Prison Population</th>
<th>Prison population rate</th>
<th>Occupancy %</th>
<th>Cost/convict/day</th>
<th>Recidivism rate</th>
<th>Average prison sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>7355</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>16 n.i.</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>4409</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>22.50 n.i.</td>
<td>16 n.i.</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>2813</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>96.8</td>
<td>89.10 n.i.</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>10.35</td>
<td>13977</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>41.52 n.i.</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>72977</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>87.7 n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>10.82</td>
<td>9621</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>28.16 n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian federation</td>
<td>144.1</td>
<td>627702</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>22.51 n.i.</td>
<td>n.i.</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>9.845</td>
<td>18306</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>132.2</td>
<td>26.57</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>5,196</td>
<td>3874</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it turns out, countries don’t go around sharing their recidivism rates. They should consider sharing it, along predetermined guidelines, so other countries could follow their example, if they are doing something well. Anyhow, recidivism data are currently not valid for international comparisons, for several reasons (most of them not being accessible, for one).

A justification for lengthier stays in prison stems from the belief that spending more time in prison reduces recidivism. Extant studies, however, have provided limited evidence for that belief and, indeed, suggest the effect of time served may be minimal. (Mears D. P., Cochran, J. C., Bales, W. D., Bhati, A. S., 2016)\(^9\)

According to oDR, Russia’s reoffending rates are sky-high\(^1\), unfortunately, the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of Norway are so very different, they are not even comparable.

On one hand, The Norwegian economy is a prosperous mixed economy, with a vibrant private sector, a large state sector, and an extensive social safety net. The government controls key areas, such as the vital petroleum sector, through extensive regulation and large-scale state-majority-owned enterprises. The country is richly endowed with natural resources - petroleum, hydropower, fish, forests, and minerals - and is highly dependent on the petroleum sector, which accounts for the largest portion of export revenue and about 30% of government revenue. Norway is the world's third-largest natural gas exporter; and seventh largest oil exporter, making one of its largest offshore oil finds in 2011. Norway opted to stay out of the EU during a referendum in November 1994; nonetheless, as a member of the European Economic Area, it

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\(^9\) Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) 2015


\(^1\) [https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/svetlana-reiter/russias-dead-end-prison-system](https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/svetlana-reiter/russias-dead-end-prison-system)
contributes sizably to the EU budget. In anticipation of eventual declines in oil and gas production, Norway saves state revenue from the petroleum sector in the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, valued at over $830 billion in January 2014 and uses the fund's return to help finance public expenses. After solid GDP growth in 2004-07, the economy slowed in 2008, and contracted in 2009, before returning to positive growth in 2010-13. Nevertheless, the government budget remains in surplus.

Russia, on the other hand, has undergone significant changes since the collapse of the Soviet Union, moving from a globally-isolated, centrally-planned economy towards a more market-based and globally-integrated economy, but stalling as a partially reformed, statist economy with a high concentration of wealth in officials' hands. Economic reforms in the 1990s privatized most industry, with notable exceptions in the energy and defense-related sectors. The protection of property rights is still weak and the private sector remains subject to heavy state interference. Russia is one of the world's leading producers of oil and natural gas and is also a top exporter of metals such as steel and primary aluminum. Russia's manufacturing sector is generally uncompetitive on world markets and is geared toward domestic consumption. Russia's reliance on commodity exports makes it vulnerable to boom and bust cycles that follow the volatile swings in global prices. The economy, which had averaged 7% growth during 1998-2008 as oil prices rose rapidly, was one of the hardest hit by the 2008-09 global economic crisis as oil prices plummeted and the foreign credits that Russian banks and firms relied on dried up. Slowly declining oil prices over the past few years and difficulty attracting foreign direct investment have contributed to a noticeable slowdown in GDP growth rates. In late 2013, the Russian Economic Development Ministry reduced its growth forecast through 2030 to an average of only 2.5% per year, down from its previous forecast of 4.0 to 4.2%. In 2014, following Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, prospects for economic growth declined further, with expectations that GDP growth could drop as low as zero.12

The GDP PPP per capita of Norway is very close to that of Ireland. Ireland spends ~190 Euro/convict/day.13

12 http://www.indexmundi.com/factbook/compare/norway.russia Retrieved: 2017.05.01
13 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) 2015
Table 7: Norway and Ireland GPD PPP per capita

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>69,249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>69,231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Their population is similar as well, their prison population rates too (Norway has a rate of 70, Ireland has a rate of 80\(^1\))
But Ireland has a recidivism rate of 62\%.\(^2\) How come?

There are 14 institutions in the Irish prison system consisting of 11 traditional “closed” institutions, two open centres, which operate with minimal internal and perimeter security, and one “semi-open” facility with traditional perimeter security but minimal internal security (the Training Unit).
The majority of female prisoners are accommodated in the purpose built Dóchas Centre on the Mountjoy campus in Dublin, and the remainder are held in a separate part of Limerick Prison.
17-year-old boys detained on remand are held in a separate wing in St Patrick's Institution, and 17-year-old boys detained under sentence are held in a separate wing of Wheatfield Place of Detention. Both prisons are in Dublin, and the continuing practice in Ireland of detaining children in prison is in direct contravention of international human rights standards.\(^3\)

With similar socio-economic situation in both countries (GDP PPP similar, population, prison rates etc. similar), the major differences that stand out at once, is the amount spent on a convict, and the prisons themselves.

Norway spends 350 EUR, while Ireland spends 190 EUR on a single prisoner per day. I don’t mean to insinuate that the only reason Norway has the third of the recidivism as Ireland is because they spend twice the money, but it is certainly an interesting notion. There is correlation, but that does not imply causation. A cursory glance over Irish prisons (and news articles on Irish prisons), they appear to be pretty violent. With a stronger sense of victimization and/or prisonization, alienation and isolation,

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14 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_GDP_(PPP)_per_capita
15 Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) 2015
16 http://www.iprt.ie/contents/2516
17 http://www.iprt.ie/prison-facilities-in-ireland
reintroduction is an altogether harder process. Other contributors to recidivism include the difficulties released offenders face in finding jobs, in renting apartments or in getting education. Owners of businesses will often refuse to hire a convicted felon and are at best hesitant, especially when filling any position that entails even minor responsibility or the handling of money (note that this includes most work), especially to those convicted of thievery, such as larceny, or to drug addicts (Bailey, K., 2009). Many leasing corporations (those organizations and/or people who own and rent apartments) as of 2017 routinely perform criminal background checks and disqualify ex-convicts. (However, especially in the inner city or in areas with high crime rates, lessors may not always apply their official policies in this regard. When they do, apartments may be rented by someone other than the occupant.) People with criminal records report difficulty or inability to find educational opportunities, and are often denied financial aid based on their records.

And, not lastly, there are differences in the prisons themselves. Norway relies on a concept called “restorative justice”. This system focuses on rehabilitation, instead of punishment.

It also shows a deeply different worldview, when it comes to convicts. Society, as a whole, sees criminals as criminals. Criminals commit crimes, easy as that. It’s a Scarlet Letter, which follows them everywhere they go. Their whole identity is consumed by this, since it's all anyone ever sees.

It’s not enough to teach them skills or give them training, because society pre-rejected them. In order to break recidivism, we have to change how people think, how they see convicts and ex-convicts.

Society aside, employment is the key element and main instrument of the reintroduction of prisoners into society. In the Hungarian prison system, convicts are obligated to work, in several fields, shown below.

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19 BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics
Since 2015 January, a new Prison Code is in effect for misdemeanors and such. One novelty of the law is the fact, that the Prison Probation Service carries out the aftercare for prisoners released conditionally from the prison. The aim of this activity is the reintegration to society and the prevention of re-offending. The support and control functions are united and both present during the activities carried out by the Prison Probation Services. In addition to the tasks above the Prison Probation Service prepares the inmates for their release, provides for their reintegration care, prepares the social enquiry reports before the clemency process of those inmates serving actual life sentence, prepares the social enquiry report before placement into reintegration custody, prepares the social enquiry report before the interruption of the punishment, and prepares the social enquiry report before the placement into juvenile admission unit, furthermore carries out the completion of the report ordered in relation and as a condition of the conditional release, and provides the opportunity of aftercare for those released from the prison.
The table above\textsuperscript{20} shows another big problem, and highlights pretty well why we need extensive prison education in Hungary. More than 50\% of inmates only hold elementary qualifications, that is, they finished primary school. After spending 12 months (on average) in prison, there is no way you are going to find a job with elementary qualifications and a tarnished record. It is interesting to point out, that the low (illiterate or less than 8 grades) schooling indicators are more common is proportion for female inmates, than for male prisoners. Yet at the same time the highest qualifications (high school or university) is also more characteristic for this group than for the total prison population. We may say about both male and female inmates that the most typical schooling indicator is elementary school, since 49.1\% of women and 53.5\% of the total prison population has named elementary school as their highest qualification.\textsuperscript{21}

Countless policies aim to ameliorate recidivism, but many involve a complete overhaul of societal values concerning justice, punishment, and second chances. Other proposals have little impact due to cost and resource issues and other constraints. Plausible approaches include allowing current trends to continue without additional intervention (maintaining the status-quo).

Increasing the presence and quality of pre-release services (within incarceration facilities) that address factors associated with (for example) drug-related criminality—

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Qualifications} & \textbf{Female Capita} & \textbf{Female \%} & \textbf{Male Capita} & \textbf{Male \%} & \textbf{Total prison population Capita} & \textbf{Total prison population \%} \\
\hline
Illiterate & 33 & 2.41 & 106 & 0.62 & 139 & 0.75 \\
Less than 8 grade & 236 & 17.21 & 1865 & 10.92 & 2101 & 11.38 \\
Elementary & 673 & 49.09 & 9201 & 53.85 & 9874 & 53.50 \\
Vocational & 96 & 7.00 & 2729 & 15.97 & 2825 & 15.31 \\
General Certificate of Secondary Education (GSCE) & 164 & 11.96 & 1518 & 8.88 & 1682 & 9.11 \\
Special needs education & 2 & 0.15 & 8 & 0.05 & 10 & 0.05 \\
High school or university & 68 & 4.96 & 379 & 2.22 & 447 & 2.42 \\
N. a. & 11 & 0.80 & 186 & 1.09 & 197 & 1.07 \\
\hline
Total: & 1371 & 100.00 & 17085 & 100.00 & 18456 & 100.00 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Table 24: BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{20} BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics
\textsuperscript{21} BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics

Table 24: BVOP – 2016/2 Review of Hungarian Prison Statistics
addiction treatment and mental-health counseling and education programs/vocational training.

Increasing the presence and quality of community-based organizations that provide post-release/reentry services. This is where there is a great deal of pressure on NGOs. The current criminal-justice system focuses on the front end (arrest and incarceration), and largely ignores the tail-end (and preparation for the tail-end), which includes rehabilitation and re-entry into the community. In most correctional facilities, if planning for re-entry takes place at all, it only begins a few weeks or months before the release of an inmate. "This process is often referred to as release planning or transition planning and its parameters may be largely limited to helping a person identify a place to stay upon release and, possibly, a source of income." Any program that involves service provision for individuals convicted of crime will likely face significant pushback from voters and from special-interest groups who take issue with providing "special treatment" (such as mental-health, rehabilitation and educational services) which is not accessible to many needy law-abiding citizens. Some people may view such a program as providing privileges for those considered undeserving. A judge in Missouri, David Mason, believes the Transcendental Meditation program is a successful tool for rehabilitation. Mason and four other Missouri state and federal judges have sentenced offenders to learn the Transcendental Meditation program as an anti-recidivism modality.

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5. Conclusion

As shown above, it costs, on average, 3 and a half million Hungarian Forints to keep an average citizen locked up, for an average amount of time (12 months).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of sentenced inmates by the length of the imposed incarceration</th>
<th>2011.06.30</th>
<th>2012.06.30</th>
<th>2013.06.30</th>
<th>2014.06.30</th>
<th>2015.06.30</th>
<th>2016.06.30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less than 1 month</td>
<td>Male: 45</td>
<td>Male: 4</td>
<td>Male: 56</td>
<td>Male: 69</td>
<td>Male: 71</td>
<td>Male: 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 4</td>
<td>Female: 0</td>
<td>Female: 5</td>
<td>Female: 8</td>
<td>Female: 3</td>
<td>Female: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 52</td>
<td>Female: 2</td>
<td>Female: 76</td>
<td>Female: 41</td>
<td>Female: 30</td>
<td>Female: 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months - 1 year</td>
<td>Male: 1860</td>
<td>Male: 143</td>
<td>Male: 1531</td>
<td>Male: 1438</td>
<td>Male: 1378</td>
<td>Male: 1293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 119</td>
<td>Female: 113</td>
<td>Female: 93</td>
<td>Female: 96</td>
<td>Female: 80</td>
<td>Female: 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 175</td>
<td>Female: 207</td>
<td>Female: 172</td>
<td>Female: 194</td>
<td>Female: 194</td>
<td>Female: 183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 142</td>
<td>Female: 145</td>
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<td>Female: 153</td>
<td>Female: 153</td>
<td>Female: 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 163</td>
<td>Female: 163</td>
<td>Female: 194</td>
<td>Female: 198</td>
<td>Female: 198</td>
<td>Female: 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 111</td>
<td>Female: 11</td>
<td>Female: 77</td>
<td>Female: 7</td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above 10 years</td>
<td>Male: 666</td>
<td>Male: 41</td>
<td>Male: 711</td>
<td>Male: 46</td>
<td>Male: 768</td>
<td>Male: 808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 45</td>
<td>Female: 46</td>
<td>Female: 768</td>
<td>Female: 56</td>
<td>Female: 69</td>
<td>Female: 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female: 9</td>
<td>Female: 7</td>
<td>Female: 11</td>
<td>Female: 7</td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
<td>Female: 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 11259 Male: 801 Female: 816

The above table shows the number of sentenced inmates by the length of the imposed incarceration. And although I haven’t yet spent any significant time in prison, I’m fairly certain that it is a very boring place. (if you get used to the violence and micro-aggressions) Why not use the time available to rehabilitate? Take some steps so you never have to see that particular offender again. Even if we send every convict to medical university in Budapest, (costs around 1.2 million HUF/semester=2.4 million HUF/year) it would still cost less with one whole million, than to accommodate that offender, when they break the law again. Let prisons fulfill their rehabilitation roles again. This is a farfetched example of course, since not all prisoners have the intellectual capacity to attend (and finish) a university, but most everyone has the capacity to complete some kind of skilled-work training, vocational training and such.

To put the costs in perspective, according to Forbes magazine, “prison is a form of punishment. But let’s not forget that the prison system is a tool of the Department of Correctional Services. Too often, the role of correction, and rehabilitation is forgotten. Time away from society in and of itself doesn’t teach people life lessons. If,

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upon release, inmates are sent back to the same situation with no additional tools or resources, we shouldn’t be surprised that New York’s three-year recidivism rate currently sits at 40 percent.

Each time a prisoner returns, the state can expect to shell out an additional $60,000 per year. Gov. Cuomo’s plan would translate to the state spending $5,000 per year to help each qualified prisoner obtain a college degree. The numbers show the return on this investment is well worth it. One common misconception is that this program will automatically provide access to a college degree for every inmate. It won’t. Not everyone who is incarcerated is accepted into our program. In fact, each person is thoroughly vetted through a rigorous application process. For inmates who are academically talented and prepared for college, it makes a world of sense to provide them with the structure and skill set needed to become tax-paying citizens upon their release.”

It’s easy to show why providing education to those incarcerated would be worth it, the RAND Corporation released a meta-analysis confirming what criminal justice researchers have been reporting for years: Educating people while they're behind bars makes them a lot less likely to return to prison once they get out. Specifically, RAND found that inmates who participated in correctional education programs were 43 percent less likely to become repeat offenders than inmates who didn’t.

All in all, it is cheaper in the long run, more humane, more useful, provides tax revenue in the future, and the convict does not have to feel like a worthless drag on society. It gives them dignity, and a sense of purpose, belonging and inclusiveness, which reduces re-offending. Seems like a win-win-win situation, if we can change the mentality of the people. Presenting them with the facts and figures should do the trick.

So far, the convicts, regardless of why they committed their crimes, are just wasting away and spend their time being bored, but they could be a useful member of society, not to mention the several programs that could be available for them, to stop substance abuse. The question then no longer is “why should we do this” but rather, “why aren’t we doing this already”.

26 Rand Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf
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