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Deficits in skills and communication competence of staff and volunteers of the post- penitentiary system in Lithuania, Germany and Poland

Survey report

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List of abbreviations

Beneficiary	an entity or natural person that has received funding or other forms of support from the European Union;
BIP	Public Information Bulletin;
CAWI	Computer-assisted web interview (CAWI) surveys conducted by means of an electronic questionnaire to be completed online.
CZSW	Central Board of Prison Service
DFS	Department of the Justice Fund - an organisational unit of the Ministry of Justice performing the tasks of the Fund's Disposer;
FGI	Focus Group Interviews (FGI - Focus Group Interview), a discussion led by a moderator in a group of purposefully selected people (min. 6, max. 12 people). The discussion is focused around a specific topic or several topics,
DSRiN	Department of Family and Juvenile Matters of the Ministry of Justice;
IDI	an interview conducted face-to-face by a moderator with a single respondent (IDI - Individual in-depth interview),
SFP units	units of the public finance sector;
kkw	Act of 6 June 1997 Executive Penal Code;
kpa	Act of 14 June 1960 Code of Administrative Procedure (Journal of Laws 2021, item 735, as amended);
OPP	assistance centres for victims of crime, witnesses and their relatives;
OPS	social welfare centres operating as communal (municipal) units;
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	legal persons or organisational units without legal personality, to which a separate act grants legal capacity; not being units of the public finance sector within the meaning of the Public Finance Act or enterprises, research institutes, banks and commercial law companies that are state or local government legal persons; not acting for profit, including in particular foundations and associations;
First contact person	a person who can be directly approached by victims of crime or others who are entitled to post-penitentiary support, responding to their needs and identifying further forms of support (e.g. referring them to a specialist lawyer or psychologist);
PCPR	District Family Assistance Centre;
Post-penitentiary assistance	assistance provided to persons deprived of their liberty, released from prisons and detention centres, and their relatives;
PUP	District Labor Office.

Introduction

This report presents the results of research carried out in the three countries involved in the project *Communication Without Borders*. The project coordinator is the West Pomeranian Forum of Social Organisations (Poland) and its partners are the Tulipan Foundation – Szczecin (Poland), ŽISPB - Šiauliai (Lithuania) and Uckermärkischer Bildungsverbund gGmbH - Schwedt/Oder (Germany).

Implemented by a transnational partnership, the project aims to prepare a training programme for staff and volunteers of public institutions and NGOs who are in direct contact with people leaving prison and whose role is to support their reintegration into society - so that they become part of it. It is therefore a project in the field of post-penitentiary programming.

An essential issue addressed by the project is to fill, through specialised training, the deficits in effective interaction on the line ex-prisoner - employee - volunteer of the institution /non-governmental organisation contacting the ex-prisoner in order to support him/her in the rehabilitation process.

The research carried out as part of the project aims to identify the problem of lack of knowledge and skills in communication. Employees and volunteers of post-penitentiary institutions have good intentions, but they are not always devoid of negative stereotypes, prejudices, which results in limitations in effective cooperation and, as a further consequence, has a significant impact on the social marginalisation of ex-convicts, the deepening of mutual antagonisms, reduced effectiveness in social readaptation and professional activation, and thus has an impact on the risk of re-entry into prison.

Providing knowledge and skills to the staff of public institutions and NGO's in the field of effective communication will allow to increase job satisfaction, as well as to reduce the anxiety resulting from confrontation with an ex-prisoner. The phenomenon of recidivism is a failure not only of the offender himself, but of society as a whole. So far, the aforementioned problem has been addressed through periodically organised theoretical training courses, based on literature and not supported by the professional practice of the trainers. Training in communication with difficult clients often neglects the aspect of working with specific client groups, such as people leaving prison. However, this group requires special support from society and especially from those who are part of the post-penitentiary system.

The research objectives outlined were operationalised and a research programme and research tools were developed.

The first stage of the research focused on qualitative analysis. Due to the aim of the project, the focus was on obtaining information from people in contact with former prisoners. The fundamental challenge in carrying out this research was to confront the reality of post-prison support in three countries: Germany, Lithuania and Poland. However, already in the course of the initial qualitative research it became apparent that with regard to the issue of post-penitentiary support, both institutional and cultural differences are not large. The interviews conducted with experts showed a high convergence in the perception of the desired modalities of action for former prisoners. One can even conclude that both the strategic goals

and the post-penitentiary practice in the countries studied are very similar. Differences emerge at the systemic level, in particular with regard to support from the institutional environment, where one can clearly observe significantly more support for the ex-prisoner in Germany than in Lithuania or Poland. Clearly, the differences are due to different financial and organisational capacities, e.g. with regard to the possibility of providing housing and work for the ex-convict.

A quantitative survey was carried out in all 3 countries using the PAPI technique and complementarily CAWI. It concerned communication competences and reported needs to improve professional skills of the project target group. A total of 211 questionnaires were carried out.

The report is divided into three parts. Part one presents the results of a secondary analysis on desk research on post-penitentiary systems operating in the countries studied. Part two is a report on the primary research, which included qualitative and quantitative analysis. The report concludes with the research findings.

The post-penitentiary system in Germany, Lithuania and Poland. Similarities and differences

The issue of social and vocational readaptation of prisoners is the subject of research and discussion in the social and legal sciences and practice worldwide. In the countries of the European Union, the system of assistance to prisoners extends beyond the prison service to probation officers, employment services, social welfare institutions and non-governmental organisations. Helping ex-convicts and reintegrating them into society has benefits beyond the individual and pays off not only in the local area, but also in the longer term - influencing future generations and shaping their resources and patterns of functioning.

Therefore, it is important to provide assistance and undertake activities related to the readaptation process of former prisoners, inmates, other people with previous problems with the law and people excluded by society. In order to help, various types of aid organisations are established all over the world to support socially excluded and stigmatised people. Their aim is to bring back to normal life an individual at risk of marginalisation and exclusion due to the stigma of 'prisoner', in order to provide support not only to ex-offenders, but also to their families and relatives, who also suffer social, professional and moral consequences in the eyes of their environment.

The following sections of the chapter will discuss the national guilt sentencing directives and the post-penitentiary systems in place in these countries in Germany, Lithuania and Poland, followed by statistical data showing the differences and similarities between the countries analysed.

Germany

Germany operates in the form of a federal state, which implies the decentralisation of the political system and the autonomy of the federal states. Germany has a four-tier administrative structure, consisting of: federal states, counties, cities excluded from the counties and local administrative units (municipalities and smaller associations of municipalities).

The state is divided into 16 Länder (states), each with its own Ministry of Justice, prison administration and court and prosecution system. Implementing legislation on the serving of prison sentences may vary from one state to another.

In Germany, custodial sentences and probation measures are preferred. Imprisonment is used as infrequently as possible, especially in cases where there are reasonable grounds (possible escape of the convicted person or posing a danger to society).

The Criminal Code of Germany is based on the principle of individualisation of responsibility. Section 28(1) of the n.c.c. provides that in the case of criminal cooperation, aggravating or mitigating circumstances, as well as those excluding liability, apply only to those persons directly affected. The relevant provisions are contained in Chapter II entitled "Sentencing". The German Criminal Code knows the following punishments: imprisonment (term from 1 month to 15 years and life imprisonment); fines - spontaneous and accessory in daily rates (from 5 to 360 rates ranging from 1 to 30,000 euros). In addition, he is familiar with confiscation of property, temporary driving prohibition, prohibition from exercising certain functions.

In Germany, as a general rule, a convict is placed in an open-type prison if he or she agrees and there are no grounds for claiming that he or she will evade and abuse the possibility of serving a sentence in this type of prison. In other cases, convicts shall be placed in closed-type prisons.

During the admission of the convicted person to the prison, his/her identity is established on the basis of an identity card, a medical examination is carried out, physical fitness and ability to work are checked, his/her life situation is discussed and the risk of suicide is assessed. An individual plan for serving a custodial sentence is created for the convicted person based on the diagnostic procedures carried out. The plan sets out the measures to be taken to promote social rehabilitation. The draft plan should be discussed with the prisoner and his or her comments or suggestions taken into account, as far as possible.

The individual plan for serving a custodial sentence includes, inter alia: a summary of the results of the diagnostic procedure, a declaration of cooperation made by the prisoner, accommodation or accommodation in a socio-therapeutic ward and referral to participation in specific programmes, selected to meet the individual needs of the prisoner: therapeutic, psychiatric treatment, drug treatment, educational and vocational qualification and related to the development of a work programme, sports and recreational activities, and furthermore related to: debt counselling, debt settlement and fulfilment of maintenance obligations; measures aimed at preparing for release from prison¹.

While serving a prison sentence, employment opportunities are provided for. Prisoners are obliged to perform the work assigned to them, according to their physical capacity. For a maximum of three months per year (or longer with the inmate's consent) they may be assigned auxiliary work within the prison unit, e.g. serving meals, cleaning the prison premises. Persons over 65, pregnant women and nursing mothers are excluded from the obligation². Prisons cooperate with external organisations, such as the *Berufsförderungswerk* (vocational promotion centre) and the Employment Agency. The allocation of work is an important element of a personalised plan for serving a prison sentence. The work takes place on the prison premises or at the premises (on the premises) of the employing companies. Prisoners do not pay contributions to the pension fund.

If the convicted person has not completed secondary school, the opportunity is created for him to attend classes and acquire education at this educational stage. Prisoners are also provided with classes at a vocational school, both from scratch and for the continuation of previously undertaken education³. In addition, convicts can take part in German language courses, foreign language courses, as well as courses for written qualifications for higher education. Participation in professional qualification and vocational training activities is available in almost all federal states.

The preparation of the convicted person to leave prison begins with the mitigation of the imprisonment. Provision is made for receiving permission to leave prison temporarily in the manner specified in § 11 StVollzG or for transfer to an open prison⁴. If the convicted person

¹ European Prison Observatory, p. 48.

² (§ 41(1) and (2) StVollzG).

³ (§ 38(1) StVollzG).

⁴ (§ 15(1) and (2) StVollzG).

does not have sufficient funds, he receives monetary support from the penitentiary unit for the purchase of clothing, travel expenses and basic needs⁵.

Prisoners are prepared for leaving prison through support in the form of financial, social and personal counselling. Prisons cooperate with other organisations (Employment Agency, social welfare organisations) in order to find the convict accommodation and a job or apprenticeship⁶. The support includes, among other things, help with writing applications, advice on specific work programmes, opportunities for further training and upskilling, and assistance in processing applications for basic social security⁷.

The German Criminal Code allows the court to suspend the execution of the remainder of a sentence in the following cases: the convicted person has served two-thirds of the sentence imposed (and at least two months), the convicted person has served at least 15 years of the sentence imposed, the convicted person has served at least 15 years of the sentence imposed⁸ suspension of the sentence is not contrary to the public interest and the convicted person agrees⁹.

Post-penitentiary assistance in Germany is provided by both state institutions and non-profit organisations, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which provide a great deal of support for institutional activities and also sometimes - when state institutions do not have sufficient aid offer - replace them in the process of readaptation and social reintegration of convicted persons.

According to the provisions of the German Social Welfare Act, every citizen is entitled to housing and funding to secure basic needs (the so-called Grundsicherung). Every convict leaving prison is therefore provided with accommodation and food and is insured for health care. In addition, he or she receives support from public institutions in taking up employment or acquiring missing qualifications, as well as psychological support if necessary.

In Germany, there are many NGOs supporting the state in post-penitentiary care. This trend is also evident in other countries in Europe and around the world. For example, in the Danish post-penitentiary system, considered to be the most effective, NGOs carry out effective and multifaceted activities against the social exclusion of former prisoners. Among other things, the 'High Five' and 'Rehabilitation Project' provide career counselling, a mentoring system and information activities aimed at identifying and securing jobs. Danish NGOs also take considerable care to strengthen inmates' bonds with their families.

Contemporary German non-governmental organisations providing assistance to former prisoners are institutions or associations whose activities tend towards close interaction with the authorities and courts. The funding of NPOs mainly comes from membership fees or funds from donations (German: *Spenden*). Some organisations also receive judicial or state subsidies, e.g. for the operation of nursing homes. Support of this kind is also granted for the running of social housing. NPOs prepare prisoners for their release already during the period of imprisonment, mediate in finding work and housing, teach proper money management,

⁵ (§ 75(1) StVollzG).

⁶ § 74 StVollzG.

⁷ European Prison Observatory, pp. 32-33.

⁸ § 57a StGB.

⁹ § 57 StGB.

provide financial support and material assistance, provide counselling, addiction therapy and social skills training, help prisoners to organise their leisure time and mediate between offenders and victims.

German solutions, which to a large extent prevent recidivism and which could be transferred to Poland, are first of all the comprehensive coverage of support not only for former prisoners, but also for their families. The way in which various forms of accommodation are organised for former prisoners at risk of homelessness could also be transferred from the German experience. Some German associations specialise in precisely this area. For example, the association "Die Brücke" builds information bridges and mediates between homeless ex-prisoners and institutions and individuals offering them real housing assistance. The organisation publishes the brochure "Wo? Wann? Wer?", in which interested parties can find a wealth of information about housing options.

In crime prevention activities, the German state is supported by non-governmental institutions and local communities. Indeed, German post-penitentiary policy assumes that crime can only be prevented to good effect if all parties - governmental institutions, non-governmental institutions and local communities - are interested in achieving the final goal and work towards a common strategy. Prevention is the responsibility of municipalities and Länder in Germany. Each federal state has regional prevention councils (Landespräventionsräten). For example, such a council in Lower Saxony is made up of around 250 institutions and organisations - municipalities, NGOs, local community groups, scientific institutions.

Also of interest are some activities of German NGOs aimed at preventing juvenile delinquency. Noteworthy is, for example, the running of social skills training for young people with diagnosed delinquent tendencies by "Caritas" of Frankfurt/Oder. These can be attended by 14 to 21 year-olds who have entered the criminal justice system, are awaiting trial or have served a prison sentence. During the training, the delinquency path is analysed and life priorities are formulated - with the help of therapists, the young people construct their new life concept, in line with the norms and rules of social functioning.

An example of good practice can also be found in the initiative carried out by the 'Evangelisches Johanneswerk' for former prisoners addicted to gambling, which is becoming, both in Germany and Poland, a growing social problem. Johanneswerk was the first NGO to introduce counselling and therapy for poker addicts. Those in the clutches of this type of addiction are offered drug treatment and psychotherapy, and not only therapists and doctors, but also social workers and nursing staff are involved in helping them.

Support for juveniles and young people plays a special place in the post-penitentiary assistance system in Germany. The motto of these measures is to prevent delinquency or a return to delinquency among young people. For minors and juveniles at risk of crime, comprehensive measures are carried out within the framework of the so-called Jugendhilfe, aimed at isolating them from the criminal environment, finding them a place to live, work or learn a trade. For those already incarcerated, the so-called Uebergangsmanagement is offered - multidimensional support whereby the juvenile can still learn a trade, work, receive therapy while in prison so that he or she can start a new life after leaving prison.

Lithuania

The Criminal Code of Lithuania¹⁰ in Article 41 defines the purpose of punishment. Punishment should be a means of repression applied by the state, imposed by the court on a person who has committed a crime (or an offence). The purpose of punishment is to deter people from committing criminal acts, to punish the perpetrator of a criminal act, to deprive the convicted person of the possibility of committing new criminal acts or to reduce such possibility, to influence convicted persons so that they obey the law and no longer commit criminal acts, to ensure the application of the principle of justice. The Code is aware of the following penalties: deprivation of public rights, deprivation of the rights to be employed in a certain position or to engage in carrying out an activity of a certain kind, community service, fine, restriction of liberty, arrest, term imprisonment, life imprisonment (Article 42(1) l.c.c.). As a rule, only one punishment may be imposed for a single offence, except as indicated in the provision.

The general rules for the assessment of punishment are formulated in Article 54 l.c.c.. It stipulates that the court shall impose punishment within the statutory threat provided for in the special part of the Penal Code and in accordance with the principles of the general part. When imposing the punishment, the court shall take into account seven factors: the degree of danger of the committed act, the form and form of guilt, the motivation and purpose, the stage of committing the act, the personality of the perpetrator, the form and type of the role of the perpetrator cooperating in the commission of the act; aggravating and mitigating circumstances. If it would be manifestly contrary to justice to impose the punishment prescribed for the offence in question, the court may, taking into account the purposes of punishment, impose a reasonably mitigated punishment. Article 67 l.c.c. provides that criminal sanctions must serve the purposes of punishment.

In Lithuania, the following stages of rehabilitation are distinguished:

- identification of factors leading to the crime;
- Identification of the convicted person's problems; - Individual selection of rehabilitation measures;
- development of a rehabilitation plan;
- implementation of rehabilitation measures;
- monitoring and evaluating the effects of rehabilitation.

Successful rehabilitation requires motivation of the convict to take action to participate in the rehabilitation process, as well as mutual understanding and respect between staff and the offender. In Lithuania, re-socialisation is carried out in prisons by specialists in re-socialisation departments, psychologists and social workers.

Re-socialisation is carried out by specialists from prison re-socialisation units, psychologists, social workers, specialists from the probation service, employment services, addiction counsellors and other institutions (NGOs, etc.) that help the convicted person to change his/her behaviour and skills in order to be able to live a crime-free life.

¹⁰ The Criminal Code of Lithuania 26.09.2000 (hereinafter l.c.c.), Law No. VIII-1968; cf. <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/criminal-codes>.

As in most EU countries (Germany, Lithuania, Poland), the system of re-socialisation is similar to that in Lithuania: in prisons there are re-socialisation units whose officers are focused exclusively on re-socialisation activities. Re-socialisation of prisoners serving a custodial sentence is organised by the Department of Prisons and carried out by the prison administration, which includes institutions and bodies, state and local government organisations, associations, religious communities.

The rehabilitation process is governed by the Criminal Code and the Criminal Code *Probation Act*.

Article 137 sets out the objectives, actions and measures of social rehabilitation:

1. The rehabilitation of convicts takes place on the basis of managing the risk of criminal behaviour and implementing restorative justice measures.
2. The objectives of the rehabilitation of convicted persons are: to reduce the risk of criminal behaviour of convicted persons; to motivate convicted persons and to develop their ability to rehabilitate themselves and to pursue their goals in life by lawful means and ways; to ensure that the damage caused by the crime is repaired and that the victim and the convicted person are reconciled.
3. Risk assessment of criminal behaviour; Identification of criminogenic factors; Identification and implementation of measures to counter criminogenic variables.

The Law on Probation of the Republic of Lithuania defines the following forms:

- Rehabilitation during imprisonment:
 1. Individual and group work with the trainee to motivate and promote the trainee's ability to live a normal life freedom from crime and social integration of the trainee;
 2. Satisfying the trainee's spiritual and social needs;
 3. Social support in solving the trainee's personal and social problems;
 4. Social skills training;
 5. Implementation of behaviour correction programmes;
 6. Individual or group psychotherapy;
 7. Psychological support;
 8. Remedies to reconcile the probationer and the victim and for reparation of the harm caused by the offence.

The Probation Act also regulates the social assistance of trainees and the implementation of behavioural correction programmes. However, the study identifies the following shortcomings in the legal framework of the legislation, which may lead to flawed implementation of rehabilitation:

- The legislation does not specify requirements for the professionalism of personnel involved in rehabilitation. There are no guidelines on the frequency and intensity of rehabilitation measures;
- there are no guidelines on how to cooperate and what steps to take in a given case.

To summarise the legal part of the discussion, Lithuanian re-socialisation is regulated at international, EU and national level. However, there is no single and detailed legal act dedicated exclusively to rehabilitation and its implementation. The legal regulation of rehabilitation is embedded in the regulation of the execution of sentences and is therefore

rather fragmented and not very detailed. Although there are scholarly sources on the subject of rehabilitation, there is no legal regulation.

In Lithuania, re-socialisation is regulated by the Code of Civil Procedure, the Law on Probation and the decrees of the Minister of Justice, which regulate the rules of procedure of penitentiary institutions. There are no methodological guidelines for the application and implementation of rehabilitation, which is considered an obstacle to the systematic and comprehensive (inter-institutional) long-term implementation of rehabilitation. The current legislation is very broad in terms of orientations and guidelines for rehabilitation, but in each case it is up to the officer or other professional to decide how to carry out rehabilitation. This makes cooperation between different professionals particularly difficult.

The problem of social reintegration of convicted persons has recently intensified. According to 2012 data, almost 40% of people who have served a prison sentence re-offend, suggesting that such a trend has not changed significantly in recent years, despite the addition of new services to the rehabilitation system. For this reason, it is particularly important to develop a skills training and reinforcement system that actually reduces recidivism and helps prisoners to change their attitudes and behaviour. Often, the process of deprivation of liberty has a negative impact on the prisoner's personality: their attitudes, interests, needs and life goals. Difficulties also arise in day-to-day relations with the family, such as resolving dilemmas and conflicts in raising children.

A large proportion of people with previous convictions are unable to fully integrate into a rapidly changing society, and one of the biggest challenges is integration into the labour market. As the practice of the Lithuanian Employment Service shows, people returning from prison are one of the least desirable groups by employers.

They are often long-term unemployed or low-skilled, with little general education and no motivation to work, and their criminal record significantly reduces their attractiveness to employers. It can be assumed that the problems of people returning from prison in the labour market are due to complex causes. Often there is an unresolved accommodation problem, many of them have health problems, especially addiction problems. There are also difficulties in dealing with various documents, relations with authorities and other institutions. Addiction among prisoners is one of the biggest problems with momentous social consequences.

According to a press release from the Parliamentary Commission for the Prevention of Addiction, although therapy is provided to every prisoner in prison according to approved procedures, only 128 received it in 2021.

Although a significant number of counsellors are trained annually in addiction support at a national level, their results are not satisfactory. It is therefore important that as many prisoners as possible receive addiction counselling before they leave prison, as their availability after leaving prison is lower.

It is noteworthy that the support process for addicts is often limited to work in penitentiary institutions, and once the convict is released, the support process is interrupted. Also, due to the lack of human resources, methods, capacities, environmental and structural constraints, the prison process is primarily a punishment and only secondarily a process of building social skills. The Lithuanians emphasise that it is important to ensure that the convict receives specialised support to help him prepare for the change in living conditions after release, to

receive continuous, individualised, integrated support, but also to take responsibility for his own goals and decisions.

Specialised programmes, e.g. the cognitive-biobehavioural 'Just you and me'; the Swedish motivational interview programme 'Behaviour - Talk - Change', which motivates prisoners to seek alcohol and drug rehab treatment, are run in Lithuanian penitentiary centres.

The penal policy of the Lithuanian state has been widely criticised by the academic community due to its severity, leading to overcrowding in prisons. It is noteworthy that elements of the recidivism risk assessment (RNR) and the good life model (GLM) are used in practice, Elements of the GLM are now prevalent in Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, Canada, among others. The Lithuanian model has a mixed system in which the RNR model predominates, but there are also elements of GLM, the main aim of which is to minimise the harm caused to offenders by society.

Poland

The Polish criminal legislator has introduced a system of alternatively defined sanctions¹¹. It explicitly gave priority to the use of punitive measures and non-consensual penalties over unconditional imprisonment.

Article 32 of the Criminal Code, which contains a closed catalogue of punishments, lists the following **penalties**:

- a fine (to be imposed in daily rates ranging from 10 to 540 in the amount of PLN 10 to 2,000);
- restriction of liberty (from 1 month to 2 years);
- term imprisonment (from 1 month to 15 years);
- 25 years' imprisonment and
- life imprisonment.

In addition to penalties, the Polish Criminal Code also knows **punitive measures** (Art. 39 CC:

- deprivation of public rights;
- prohibition to hold a specific position, to exercise a specific profession or to carry out a specific economic activity;
- a prohibition on activities relating to the upbringing, treatment, education or care of minors;
- A prohibition on being in certain environments or places, contacting certain persons, approaching certain persons or leaving a certain place of residence without the permission of the court;
- prohibition of entry to a mass event, prohibition of entry to gaming centres and participation in gambling;
- an order to temporarily vacate the premises occupied jointly with the victim;
- driving ban;

¹¹ Act of 6 June 1997 - Criminal Code (Journal of Laws of 2024, item 17) - hereinafter referred to as the Criminal Code.

- pecuniary benefit; making the judgment public), compensatory measures (Chapter Va: reparation obligation, pecuniary reparation, restitution) and forfeiture.

The framework for the assessment of the penalty is set by the limits of the statutory threat. The court should furthermore be guided by the general principles of punishment and the sentencing directives when assessing punishment. The principles of judicial assessment of punishment include the principles of judicial discretion, individualisation of punishment and determinacy of punishment.

The court may apply extraordinary leniency in the cases provided for by the law and with respect to a juvenile, if it is supported by considerations of individual (educational) prevention. The court may also apply extraordinary leniency in particularly justified cases, when even the lowest penalty provided for the offence would be disproportionately severe, in particular if the victim has reconciled with the offender, the damage has been repaired or the victim and the offender have agreed on the manner of reparation of the damage; due to the attitude of the offender, especially when he or she has made efforts to repair the damage or to prevent it; if the offender of an unintentional offence or his or her next of kin has suffered serious harm in connection with the offence committed.

A special case of obligatory extraordinary mitigation of punishment (and even the possibility of conditional suspension of its execution) in relation to a perpetrator who cooperates with other persons in the commission of an offence, if he discloses to an authority established for the prosecution of offences information concerning persons participating in the commission of an offence and essential circumstances of its commission, is provided for in Article 60 § 3 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. At the prosecutor's request, the court may apply extraordinary mitigation of punishment or even conditionally suspend its execution to a perpetrator of a criminal offence who, irrespective of the explanations given in his case, disclosed to a law enforcement authority and presented relevant circumstances, previously unknown to that authority, of a criminal offence punishable by more than five years of imprisonment (Article 60 § 4 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). Extraordinary mitigation of punishment consists in imposing a punishment below the lower limit of the statutory threat or a lighter type of punishment. Detailed technical rules for extraordinary mitigation of punishment are contained in Article 60 § 6 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The court may also make the penalty more severe. General rules for the aggravation of penalties are contained in Article 38 of the Criminal Code. If a law provides for an extraordinary aggravation of the upper limit of the statutory threat, and the statutory threat covers more than one of the penalties, the aggravation applies to each of these penalties. The extraordinary aggravated penalty may not exceed 810 daily rates of fine, 2 years of restriction of liberty or 20 years of imprisonment; the penalty of imprisonment shall be measured in months and years. The aggravation of punishment is always optional. It is provided for, for example, in Articles 64 § 1 and 2 and Article 91 § 1 of the Criminal Code.

Irrespective of these situations, convicts leaving prison can obligatorily count on receiving support from social welfare institutions, for which they should be prepared while still in isolation and especially intensively from the time of the decision to leave prison. This task rests

with the prison administration¹² . Relevant provisions in this regard are contained in the Executive Criminal Code, which stipulates that a period of 6 months shall be applied before the anticipated conditional release or the end of the sentence as the time necessary to prepare the convicted person for life after release (Article 167)¹³ . The prisoner within this period has the right to apply for a preparatory period. As soon as such a decision is taken, the social services and the convicted person himself, who becomes obliged to cooperate with the prison administration, take their action. In the case of early conditional release, the decision to impose a preparation period can be taken by the court, but again this is for no longer than 6 months. The court may also set a period of preparation of the convict for release, refusing to grant parole, in case the convict does not have adequate conditions for future readaptation.

The period of preparation of the convict for release includes the whole process of the prison administration. This is because it is necessary to update the personal-recognition data that concern the needs of the convict upon release, and it is also important to establish and maintain contact with the probation officer (penitentiary superintendent) and representatives of organisations and institutions whose tasks include providing assistance to convicts. The assistance provided by the penitentiary probation officer to the convict is aimed at facilitating social readaptation and, in particular, at preventing recidivism. This assistance consists, inter alia, in indicating appropriate institutions to which the prison leaver may apply and in finding a suitable place of residence in a situation where, for various reasons, the convict cannot return to his or her family or rely on its assistance. During the period of preparation for leaving prison, the prisoner should stay as close as possible to his place of residence because of his right to leave, which should enable him to meet his family or to seek work or accommodation.

The scope of post-penitentiary assistance includes:

- covering the costs of temporary accommodation and providing shelter in a centre for the homeless,
- a periodic surcharge on current rental obligations for the dwelling,
- funding for public transport or covering the cost of special transport as medically indicated,
- covering the costs of obtaining an identity card and other necessary documents,
- organising and financing legal advice, employment promotion and professional activation,
- covering costs related to specialised medical treatment or health rehabilitation,
- obtaining certificates of disability or incapacity for employment,
- psychological assistance and addiction therapy organised outside the therapeutic facility. Depending on their individual needs, released persons receive information on the possibilities of obtaining support after leaving prison. In addition, the director of the penitentiary unit may provide the convict with additional assistance in the form of money and in kind (clothes, underwear, shoes, travel tickets, foodstuffs).

Each released person receives a certificate of release, in which there is information on whether he received post-penitentiary assistance, in what form and in what amount. The director of

¹² Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 25 August 2003 on the Rules of Organisation and Order for the Execution of Prison Sentences (Journal of Laws 2003, No. 15, item 1493).

¹³ Act of 6 June 1997 - Executive Criminal Code, Journal of Laws 1997 No. 90, item 557 as amended.

the prison, when releasing the convicted person, is obliged to inform him about the possibilities of obtaining post-penitentiary assistance (Article 166 § 2 of the CC)¹⁴ . The released person receives from the prison's depository the money, documents and valuables belonging to him, a certificate of employment and up-to-date results of medical examinations. If he requires hospital treatment and his state of health does not allow him to be transferred to a public health care facility, he shall remain with his consent or, if he is unable to express it, with his doctor's consent for treatment in the prison. If the released person has not accumulated sufficient resources, the director of the prison may provide him with monetary assistance up to 1/3 of the employees' monthly salary.

Post-penitentiary assistance benefits are provided for the period of time needed to fulfil the objectives of this assistance and until institutional support is obtained, but this cannot be longer than 3 months after release. In justified cases (e.g. in case of illness) it is possible to extend this period to 6 months. As far as the families of persons deprived of liberty are concerned, assistance is provided for no longer than 3 months from the date of the family member's incarceration in a prison or detention centre, unless the necessity to extend this period to 6 months is due to special circumstances.

According to Article 41 § 1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, in order to facilitate social readaptation and, in particular, to prevent recidivism, the necessary assistance to convicted persons and their families is to be provided by governmental and local authorities. This applies in particular to material assistance, medical assistance, assistance in finding work and accommodation, as well as legal advice. The detailed scope of this assistance is set out in the Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 22 April 2005 on the Post-Penitentiary Assistance Fund. Among the forms of support provided, material assistance, clothing and food as well as travel tickets predominate.

Persons leaving penitentiary institutions most often have difficulties in finding a place to live, yet the need for housing or shelter is one of the elementary needs of every human being - the provision of shelter is counted among the first necessities. The need for shelter is fulfilled by social welfare centres, and the provision of shelter consists in granting a temporary place in a night shelter, hostel, centre for the homeless or other place designated for this purpose. Such benefit is granted for a limited period of time and the condition for using it is compliance with the rules of the facility. If a person leaving prison meets the conditions enacted by the municipality, he or she may be granted municipal housing. In reality, however, the waiting time for such housing is very long, as a resolution of the municipal council must specify the household income or living conditions that qualify for housing.

The Job Centre also has specific tasks in the field of post-penitentiary assistance, helping unemployed persons and job seekers, including those leaving prison, to find employment. This is realised by organising vocational guidance, assistance in active job search, initiating, organising and financing training and placement, and awarding and paying scholarships. The Job Centre is also responsible for subsidising additional jobs, granting and paying allowances and other unemployment benefits. After release from prison it is also possible to receive unemployment benefits, but certain requirements must be met in order to receive them:

¹⁴ Act of 6 June 1997 - Executive Criminal Code, Journal of Laws 1997 No. 90, item 557 as amended.

- being employed for 365 days in the 18 months preceding incarceration and earning at least the minimum wage during that time (this includes a contract of mandate),
- no offers at the labour office,
- registration at the employment office within 30 days of release from prison.

Generally speaking, both the district and provincial labour offices offer assistance in obtaining new qualifications, in preparation for entering the labour market through individual counselling talks with a vocational counsellor, contact with an employment agent, participation in activation classes and EU programmes, participation in workshops and group meetings. Difficulties in taking up employment after leaving prison have their source both on an objective level (unfavourable situation on the labour market) and in individual predispositions (insufficient or outdated professional qualifications not adapted to the actual needs of the local labour market and social stigmatisation of the convicted person). The combination of these factors makes the problem of employment a priority in the area of building a post-penitentiary assistance system. If a person leaving the penitentiary unit is under the custody of a probation officer, he or she is also provided with information and counselling support, which is most often the case for those deprived of family, place of residence and work.

Court probation officers supervise the functioning of persons leaving prisons under early conditional release in a custodial setting - these are persons for whom the court has suspended the remainder of the prison sentence and set a probation period, as well as imposed a range of obligations to be fulfilled (e.g. abstaining from alcohol or other drug abuse, undergoing drug treatment, taking up employment, ceasing contact with a particular environment, maintaining contact with institutions and organisations whose assistance in the field of rehabilitation and readaptation is necessary). The probation officers also supervise the execution of suspended sentences, the execution of the sentence of restriction of liberty and the execution of socially useful work.

Once contact is made with a person placed under supervision, the probation officer has a number of important tasks to perform:

- the development of an environmental diagnosis and a work plan, taking into account the extent of the necessary assistance to the supervised person,
- identifying the spectrum of risks of the supervised person's functioning in a custodial setting,
- to apply for additional obligations to be imposed on the supervised person or for exemption from those already imposed,
- filing of applications for conditional early release, changes to the probation period, revocation of conditional early release, ordering execution of the sentence (Article 173 § 2 of the CC).

In view of this, it is the probation officer who reads the case file of the client, gets to know his/her needs by analysing the family and environmental situation, instructs the client on his/her rights and duties. It is very important for the probation officer to prepare the family and social environment for the return of the convicted person. This involves identifying the needs of the convict and his/her immediate family. The probation officer prepares the ward to cope independently with the family difficulties that have arisen. He/she cooperates with the convict, as well as with the administration of the penitentiary, governmental administration

bodies, local self-government bodies, foundations, organisations, institutions whose aim is to help in the social readaptation of convicts. Apart from professional court probation officers, post-penitentiary assistance activities also involve social probation officers, whose task is primarily to visit the ward in his/her place of residence or stay, maintain contact with his/her family, cooperate with various foundations, associations in order to improve housing conditions, health conditions, provide support, help in finding a job, improving qualifications, conduct community interviews and collect necessary information, and if necessary undertake other activities. An important link in the whole system of post-penitentiary assistance are social assistance centres and district family assistance centres. While still serving a custodial sentence, the convicted person may apply for his/her family to be covered by social work. During the period of preparation for leaving prison, convicts usually contact a social worker for family advice. Immediately after release, however, they are entitled to other benefits, which are provided after a community interview, according to the existing economic and family situation and the possibilities of the centre. These include, in particular:

- cash benefits (permanent benefit, periodic benefit, purpose-specific benefit, special purpose-specific benefit),
- benefits in kind (credit ticket, meal, clothing, shelter, care services, crisis intervention, specialist counselling),
- assistance in obtaining and covering the costs associated with obtaining an identity card or other necessary documents,
- assistance in reproducing or collecting work certificates, school certificates, course certificates, in the event of family problems assistance in establishing contacts through mediation centres,
- assistance in obtaining housing or clarification of the housing situation,
- help to solve family problems by obtaining support from social welfare institutions and associations.

Social work with convicted persons preparing to leave prison and those already released makes an important contribution, especially to the first period of life at liberty. It reduces recidivism and gives an outlook on further life. This applies mainly to people who have been sentenced to long-term sentences, as well as those who have served multiple terms of imprisonment (recidivists) and have lost the link with their family.

In the case of persons leaving prisons, it is important to realise the municipality's own tasks, in particular the running and provision of places in social welfare homes and support centres with municipal coverage, thus directing persons in need of care there and cooperating with the district employment office. In the scope of assignments delegated by the government administration and performed by the municipality in relation to persons undergoing social readaptation, it is necessary to indicate, above all, the realisation of assignments resulting from government social welfare programmes and aimed at protecting the living standards of individuals, families and social groups and the development of specialised support.

Similar tasks arise from the activities of the district and provincial governments, with an additional emphasis on the need to inspire and promote new social welfare solutions.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a significant role in the whole process of readaptation of convicted prisoners and helping them to return to life at liberty. Several in particular are showing increased activity in assisting former prisoners:

- K.Ch. Kofoed Association for Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation and Social Welfare (social and professional activation of convicts leaving penitentiary units and groups at risk of marginalisation and crime; the Association's facilities are also a place for alternative probationary sentences),
- “Sławek” Foundation (assistance to inmates, ex-inmates and their families; runs various assistance programmes, mediation between convicts and their families, vocational courses; also employs ex-convicts to facilitate their return to the labour market),
- “Barka” Mutual Aid Foundation (sets up communities that are places 'to live and work', usually small organic farms that earn their own living by running businesses),
- St. Brother Albert's Catholic Family Support Association (helps former prisoners reintegrate into society; runs support farms where ex-convicts work; helps people to leave homelessness and become independent),
- “Emmaus” Association for People on the Move after Prison Sentences (establishes communities where ex-convicts live and work after leaving prison without work or housing),
- Lesser Poland Association "Probacja" (provides emergency living assistance to ex-convicts and their families; acts as an intermediary in finding jobs for those leaving prison),
- “Patronat” Penitentiary Association (provides spiritual, material and legal assistance to persons deprived of liberty, released from prisons and their families).

One of the assistance links is the Fund for Victims' Aid and Post-Penitentiary Assistance, which is a state purpose fund aimed at assisting victims and witnesses, counteracting crime and post-penitentiary assistance, which is administered by the Minister of Justice. The detailed scope and manner of transfer of funds from the fund is set out in the Regulation of the Minister of Justice on the Fund for Victims' Assistance and Post-Penitentiary Assistance¹⁵. In accordance with the content of the Ordinance, assistance is granted, inter alia, to persons deprived of liberty, released from penal institutions and detention centres, as well as to their families. Assistance is provided upon request or ex officio. Assistance may be requested personally by the person entitled to it, but also by the prosecutor, defence counsel, attorney and the convicted person's representative, established in accordance with the applicable legislation. The convicted person may also submit an application to the director of the penitentiary unit and, if he is at liberty, to the professional probation officer.

From the fund, the convict may apply in particular for:

1. covering the costs of temporary accommodation or providing shelter in a centre for the homeless;
2. a periodic supplement to current rental obligations for a dwelling to which the applicant has legal title and the dwelling is not used by other persons;
3. organising and financing legal advice, employment promotion and professional activation;
4. organising and financing training and courses to improve professional qualifications and covering the costs of examinations confirming professional qualifications;

¹⁵ Ordinance of the Minister of Justice of 28 March 2022 amending the Ordinance on the Fund for Victims' Aid and Post-Penitentiary Assistance - Justice Fund (Journal of Laws 2022, item 748).

5. organising and financing programmes to improve social skills to counter criminogenic factors, particularly aggression and violence, including domestic violence, and addiction problems;
6. the purchase of materials, tools, equipment and devices, as well as protective clothing and footwear necessary for the implementation of the programmes referred to in point 5 and for training and professional qualification courses and the performance of unpaid work;
7. covering the costs of specialised medical treatment or rehabilitation and obtaining a certificate of disability or inability to work;
8. covering the costs of special transport as medically indicated or travel to places of residence, study, therapy, work, especially unpaid work;
9. covering the costs of obtaining an identity card and other documents necessary for obtaining assistance;
10. covering the costs of specialised examinations required for eligibility for the programmes referred to in point 5, training and professional qualification courses and unpaid work;
11. covering the costs of group accident insurance for persons qualified to participate in training and professional qualification courses, programmes mentioned in point 5 and unpaid work;
12. Promoting and supporting initiatives and projects for the effective readaptation of convicted persons, educational and information activities, organising and conducting training, organising and commissioning research on the situation of convicted persons;
13. covering costs related to the organisation and provision of in-kind assistance in the form of:
 - a. food or food vouchers,
 - b. clothing, underwear, footwear, cleaning and personal hygiene products,
 - c. public transport tickets,
 - d. medicines, dressings and sanitary products,
 - e. medical devices, including orthopaedic items and aids,
 - f. teaching and learning aids, books and office supplies,
 - g. necessary items of household equipment or other items of personal use to assist social functioning at the place of residence or stay, especially for persons with disabilities,
 - h. materials, tools and equipment needed to participate in vocational training, pursue a learned profession or become self-employed;
14. in particularly justified cases, the provision of cash benefits for a purpose indicated by the granting authority.

Summary

The post-penitentiary support systems used in the countries analysed are similar to each other in a formal sense. In all countries, preparation for rehabilitation begins while still in prison before release.

Institutions and individuals involved in post-penitentiary activities benefit from a wide exchange of experiences within bilateral relations as well as within the European Union. As a result, national systems are converging - coming closer together; good practices are displacing bad ones; ultimately the support system is being improved.

As a matter of fact, in all the countries analysed, support measures start at the very beginning of an inmate's stay in penitentiary isolation. At that time, a diagnosis of the prisoner's needs and deficits is made, which serves to develop an individual rehabilitation programme.

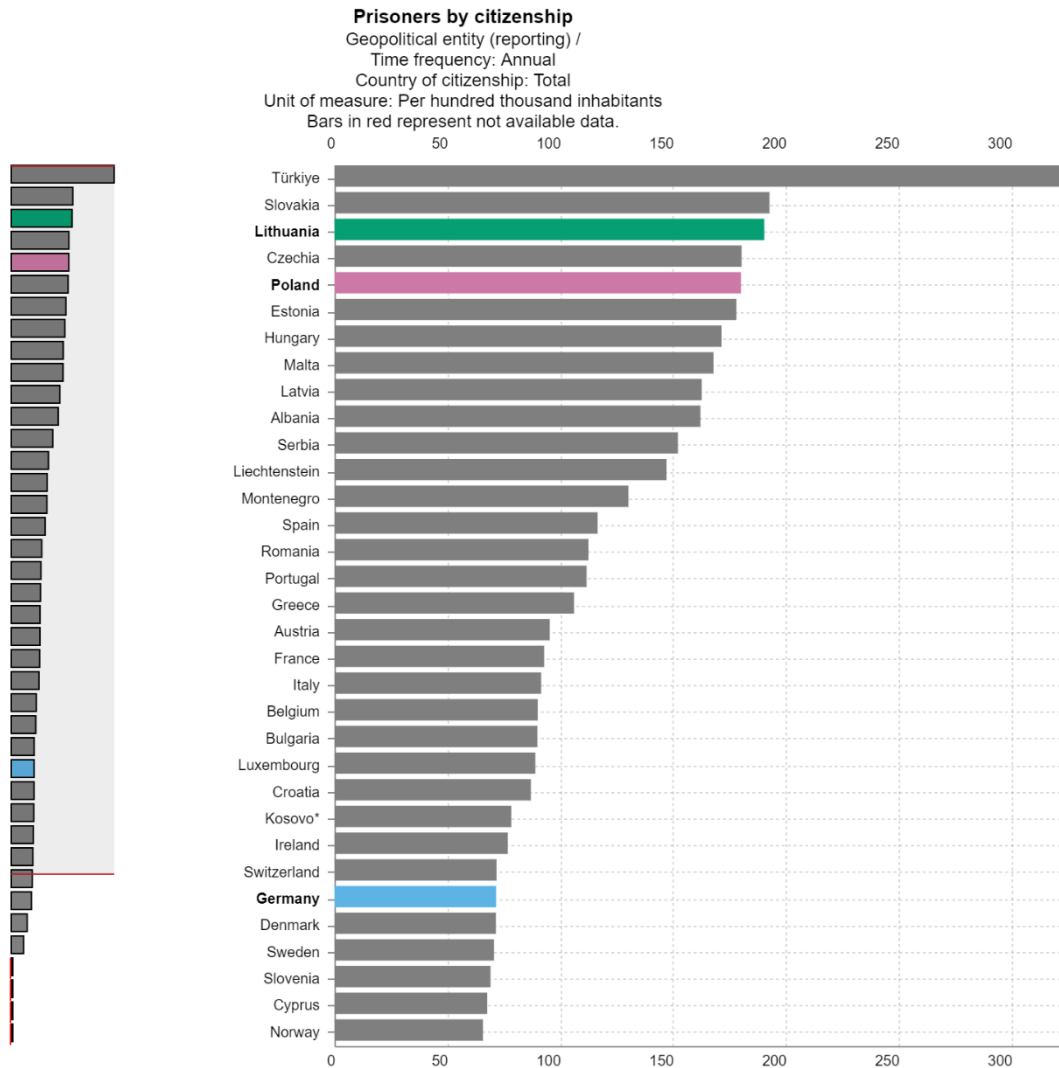
Differences arise with regard to the extent of support: in Poland, support can only cover the person being released from prison, and only in certain cases, also the family of the former inmate. Meanwhile, in Germany, support not only concerns the family, but also the wider social environment of the released person.

Analysing strategic documents and legal solutions, it can be concluded that in all countries the aim of post-penitentiary measures is for the person released from solitary confinement to become independent in life by activating and activating his or her own resources and potentials, preventing recidivism and enhancing his or her social reintegration. The type, form and size of post-penitentiary assistance are determined by the resources at hand, making it tailored to the possibilities and circumstances that justify its provision.

Undoubtedly, and this is particularly emphasised in the programme documents, the most effective assistance is provided by a number of sources, complementing each other - the state, local government, NGOs, religious organisations and others. At the same time, it should be remembered that one of the greatest challenges of support is to make the family of the inmate aware of the importance of their moral support in the process of reintegration and activation of the person in question.

Eurostat statistics

The scope of official statistics relating to the penitentiary system is very limited. The penitentiary systems of the European Union countries are diverse, which is due to the fact that there are differences in the definition, as well as the way in which data on the penitentiary and post-penitentiary system are collected between countries, although - on the other hand - there is, for example, considerable cooperation between the police and their agencies.



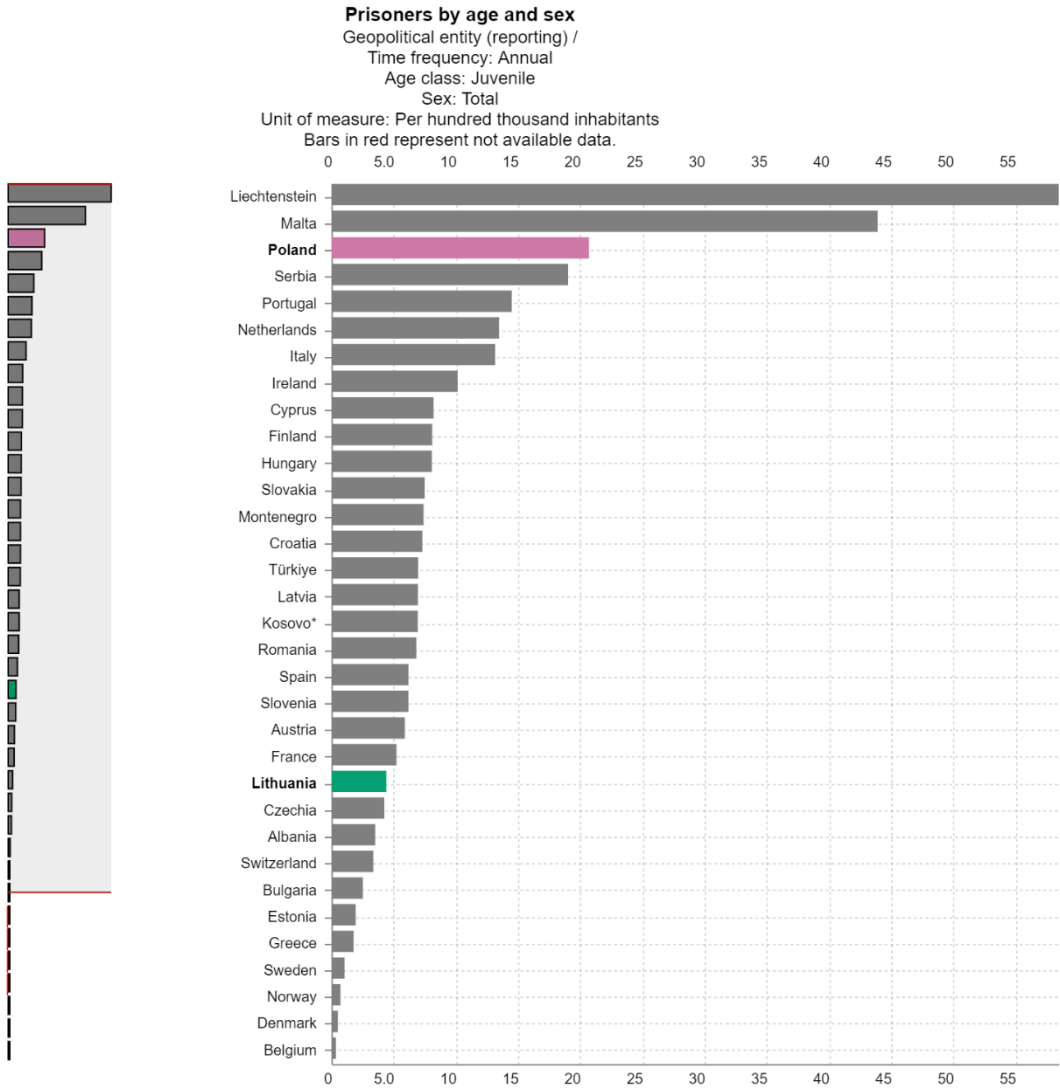
eurostat

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We can already see the systemic differences when analysing the number of inmates in each country.

If we compare the number of inmates to the population, we notice that in Lithuania and Poland the rate is much higher than in Germany. Eurostat data shows that in Lithuania there were more than 190 inmates per 100,000 inhabitants in prison, in Poland just over 180, and in Germany around 70 inmates. The differences are thus more than 2.5 times.

Further differences can be observed with regard to the age of the inmates.



Source of data: Eurostat (online data code: crim_pris_age)
 Last update: 03/01/2024 23:00

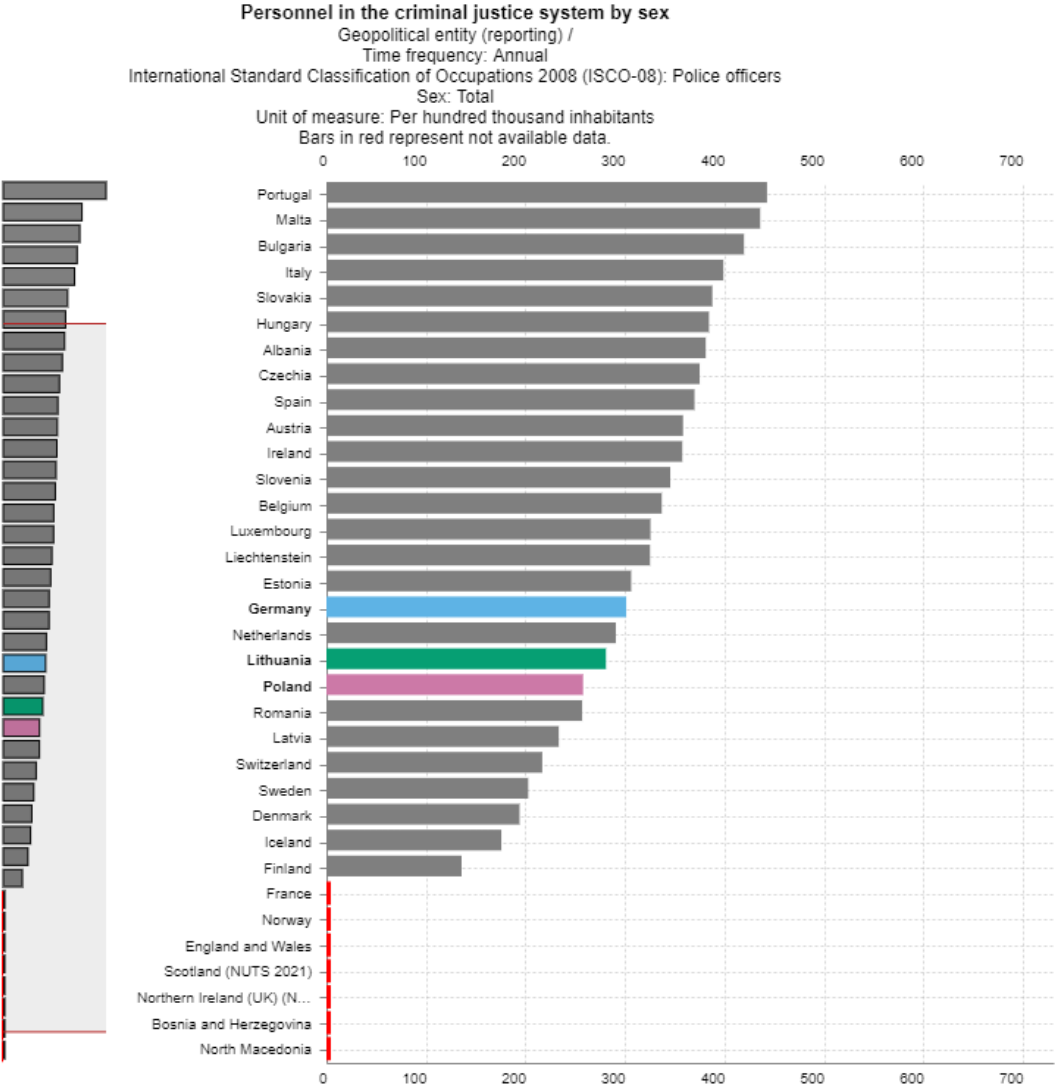


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The difference between the three countries is the high proportion of juvenile prisoners in Poland - nearly 43 per 100,000 population, while in Lithuania it is ten times less, with 4.41 juveniles serving sentences.

No data are available from Eurostat on the situation in Germany. However, it should be emphasised that Germany adopts completely different priorities. The punishment of juveniles and young people does not take into account either retributive or preventive objectives or a simple focus on safety. The treatment of minors (and juveniles as well) is based on the conviction that reprehensible behaviour is related to the developmental process of the individual, which disappears with age, and that young people are susceptible to change and to positive educational influences and must therefore be given a chance and the stigmatisation

of the individual, which is dangerous for his/her further proper development, must be avoided."¹⁶ .



Source of data: Eurostat (online data code: crim_just_job)
 Last update: 03/01/2024 23:00



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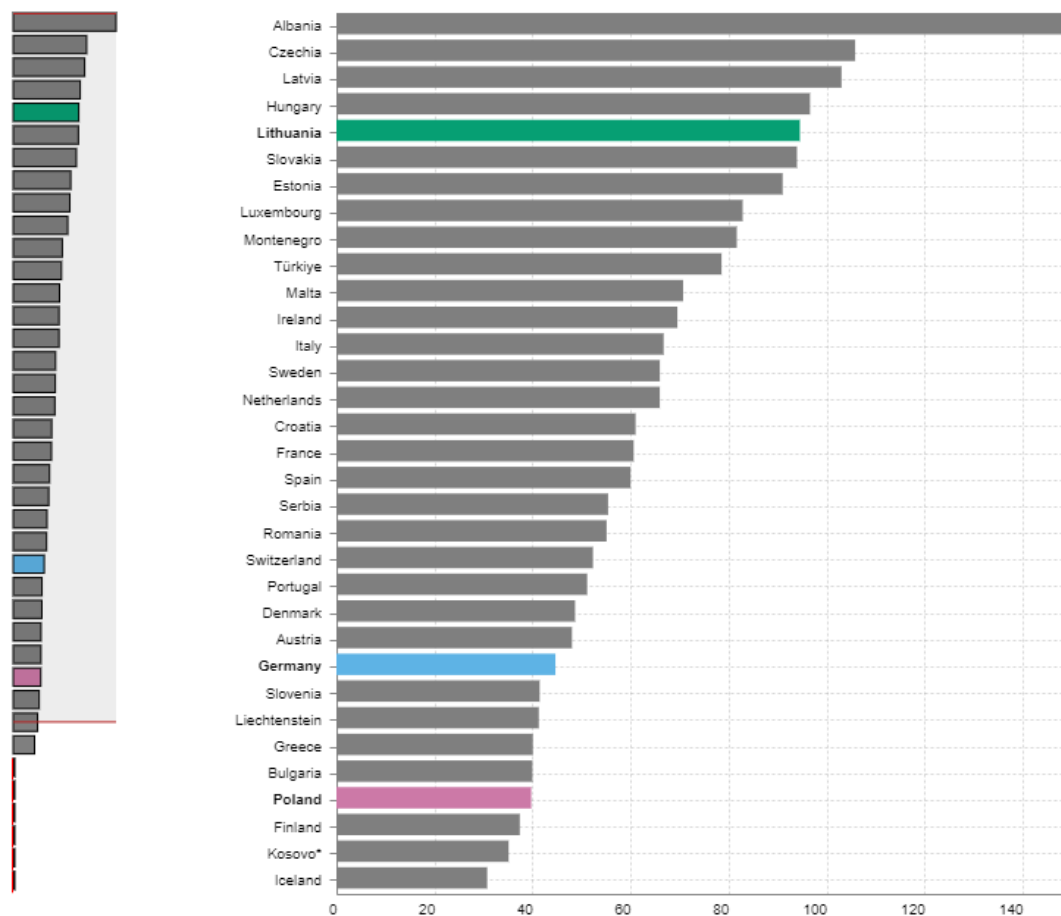
Interestingly, it is despite the indicated differences in the number of prisoners that there is similar employment in police units in the countries analysed.

The corresponding ratios are for: Lithuania - 280 officers per 100,000 inhabitants; Germany - 301 and for Poland - 256.

The next graph shows that the number of staff in the criminal justice system is not dependent on population.

¹⁶ V. Konarska-Wrzošek, *Prawny system postępowania z nieletnimi w Polsce*, Warsaw 2013, p. 250

Personnel in the criminal justice system by sex
 Geopolitical entity (reporting) /
 Time frequency: Annual
 International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08): Personnel in adult prison
 Sex: Total
 Unit of measure: Per hundred thousand inhabitants
 Bars in red represent not available data.



Source of data: Eurostat (online data code: crim_just_job)
 Last update: 03/01/2024 23:00



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Lithuania is characterised by one of the higher ratios reflecting the number of judicial employees in the EU in relation to the number of inhabitants (94.6 per 100,000 inhabitants). Germany has a much lower rate (44.7 per 100,000 inhabitants) and Poland an even lower rate (39.8 per 100,000 inhabitants).

The selected statistical characteristics confirm the existing systemic differences, which we described in an earlier chapter analysing the legal-formal situation. The analysis showed that the differences are not fundamental in a strategic sense. On the contrary, there are similar objectives in all countries, but a comparison of the statistical data shows that we are dealing with different ways of allocating financial resources. This is due, for example, to differences in the number of prisoners or the level of employment in the penitentiary services.

Results of the primary study

Methodological notes

As part of the project, in addition to the secondary research involving the analysis of the data found in the form of information on the functioning of the post-penitentiary system and statistical data, primary research was carried out, relating strictly to the planned project activities related to improving the communication competence of officials and volunteers working on behalf of former prisoners.

The primary research was divided into two phases:

- The first stage was qualitative research. Its aim was to explore issues related to the nature and specificity of communication between ex-prisoners and those with a statutory mandate to support them on their journey towards rehabilitation. Through the individual interviews (IDI) and group interviews (FGI) conducted, the aim was to construct a useful design for conducting a quantitative study. The final outcome of this stage was the development of the survey questionnaire used in the second stage of the study - the quantitative one;
- The second quantitative stage consisted of conducting a survey in the project countries: Germany, Lithuania and Poland. Data was collected using the PAPI or CAWI technique: respondents answered the questionnaire in their national languages. The data obtained allowed for full comparability of statistical distributions and the formulation of research conclusions.

The exploratory phase (qualitative research) was conducted:

- 10 free interviews (5 each with labour market institution staff and 5 with NGO representatives) - IDI (Individual In-Depth Interview) technique;
- 2 group discussions (originally envisaged to conduct one group interview - FGI (Focus Group Interview) technique:
 - The first focus included 6 respondents representing labour market institutions;
 - The second involved 2 respondents from social welfare centres, 3 from NGOs and 2 probation officers.

211 questionnaires were collected during the verification phase, including:

- 51 surveys from Germany;
- 79 questionnaires from Lithuania;
- 81 surveys from Poland.

The quantitative discrepancy in the completed online interviews is due to the fact that the project partners were supposed to complete a minimum of 50 questionnaires, which was treated as a target by the German partner, while the Lithuanian and Polish sides continued to collect data according to the schedule.

Results of qualitative research

The providers of post-penitentiary assistance to convicted persons are primarily:

- State bodies, operating within the Ministry of Justice (e.g. prison administration, probation officers);
- governmental and local authorities (e.g. social assistance centres, counselling centres, labour offices);
- NGOs and faith-based organisations.

The research carried out focused on the issue of the formation of relationships between these entities and their core group of customers, in relation to which special problems arise, referred to as 'difficult customer relationships'.

From the individual and group interviews conducted, common problems affecting these people, and largely resulting from their previous isolation, are:

- lack of employment,
- housing problems,
- bad or very bad financial situation, breakdown of family ties,
- an understated sense of self-worth,
- learned helplessness syndrome,
- mental disorders,
- poor physical health,
- strong identification with the criminal environment,
- long-term prisoners, a phenomenon known as prizonisation.

Each of the above-mentioned problems, occurring independently of the others, may constitute for ex-convicts a barrier serious enough to rule out the chances of their re-inclusion in social life. Usually, however, there is an interconnection of the problems indicated, which creates a kind of maladaptation syndrome. As a result, the ex-convict who is released does not function in accordance with the expectations of his or her environment, so that he or she is not socially accepted and it can be said with high probability that he or she reverts to his or her pre-imprisonment behaviour.

According to the respondents, and this was particularly emphasised by employment service staff, people leaving prison generally do not acquire any new skills or qualifications during their time in prison that would change their situation on the labour market. They are reluctant to show their professional qualifications obtained during their sentence, as if they are ashamed of them. This shows that people leaving prison have low self-esteem, which they mask with ostentatious behaviour, excessive roughness, often using vulgar language.

In their interactions with post-penitentiary support workers, they often conceal their real housing and family situation. They are also reluctant to talk about their education and qualifications. Noteworthy, ex-prisoners often lack basic social and communication skills as a result of the long period of incarceration, but also because of previous experiences: alcohol or drug addiction, or coming from dysfunctional families.

According to one respondent (a probation officer), serving a custodial sentence, especially repeatedly, does not generally help to solve these problems but, on the contrary, seems to only exacerbate them. As a consequence, the 'statistical' ex-prisoner has relatively low chances of an easy, quick and, above all, effective readaptation to the living conditions prevailing at liberty.

During the group interview with labour market advisors, participants highlighted the diverse motivations of ex-prisoners to take up work. According to the interviewees, the same behaviour can be observed among people leaving prison as among the long-term unemployed. Job centre clients can be divided into passive and active.

Among the inactive clients of the labour offices, further categories can also be identified. Firstly, those who are not interested in taking up a job. These are people who do not really want to work, either because they do not think it is worth it, as the potential remuneration barely exceeds the benefit (the so-called classic voluntary unemployed), or because they consider work to be too much effort and a burden, generally an inconvenience, and it is better to live on social benefits and work odd jobs, collect scrap metal or 'take advantage of opportunities'.

A certain proportion of ex-prisoners who are unemployed are not really unemployed because they either work in the grey economy or have undeclared economic activities (e.g. construction services) and they only need to register at the labour office to obtain insurance, possibly other benefits (e.g. extortionate benefit).

Persons who pay alimony do not want to take up work because of the bailiff precisely. There are also those who are apparently unemployed, because they work in the grey economy and only come to get a stamp. As a rule, those who have a bailiff are the ones who work in the black economy.

There is also a category of ex-prisoners who are disadvantaged in life, who have difficulties in contact with the outside world, who are passive, who are unable to adapt to the environment outside prison, who are therefore unable to effectively seek work and make use of the employment office, and who are therefore uninterested in obtaining work and assistance in obtaining it.

[...] We also don't really have and we know how to activate them, because employment contracts, where there is an offer of work under an employment contract, they don't want to take up. Because I know that there are some solutions there, like they collect their wages in cash. [On the black market, yes, they work on the black market.

Finally, among former prisoners there will be those who do not believe in the possibility of improving their situation. Not only have they lost their motivation but also their ability to work, they have come to terms with their situation and their status as unemployed; they are, in a sense, victims of, among other things, the ineffective actions of the labour market institutions, which failed to provide them with appropriate assistance in a timely manner.

According to the respondents, another category of former prisoners who want to get a job, are motivated to look for a job (this is how they differ from the passive life-insecure), but they do not cope with it, is very difficult to identify. They do not know how to navigate the labour market, nor are they able to make effective use of the assistance provided by labour offices

(they do not know, for example, what training to take), nor do they know what forms of assistance they can take advantage of (they know little or nothing about them), etc. They are not active in contacting the labour market. They are not active in their contacts with the labour offices, but are ready to accept help in getting the employment they want. The difficulty in defining this category is due to the fact that they are passive in their interactions with the office.

Employers often don't want to hire them either. It's such an uncertainty with their future, so that's a problem too. Are they difficult clients? Difficult, especially those who have a debt collector, because they don't want to take up work, because they claim that the debt collector will take 60% of their salary, it's not worth it for them to work. And aren't they right about that a bit?

Their contradiction is the ex-convicts who actively interact with the office and its staff. They are those who are genuinely looking for work, manifesting their own activity in this field and interacting with the labour offices in the use of various forms of assistance. The level of this activity varies, of course, but the essential feature is their own commitment and motivation to change their status, increase their chances on the labour market, gain additional qualifications or even, under favourable conditions, decide to start their own business. Such an attitude on the part of the unemployed person is the greatest facilitator of effective assistance in finding employment, and is the basis for the most desirable type of relationship with the Job Centre - the relationship of cooperation.

We know from employers that some ex-prisoners are often better employees than those without a criminal record, as they are much more concerned with their employer's positive reputation, in addition to being afraid of returning to prison, and often avoid their pre-sentence environment.

According to the respondents, the most difficult group of customers of labour offices are the so-called claimant unemployed. They are fairly active in their relationship with the labour offices, except that this activity is mainly focused on trying to enforce various benefits from the office. The underlying attitude is actually one of passivity. They expect that it is the employment office that should find them a job ("because that is what it is for"), that the job should be exactly in accordance with their qualifications (because they have already finished school and are not going to learn any more), that it should take care of various benefits, etc. The unemployed are quite active in their relations with the employment office, except that their activity is mainly focused on trying to claim various benefits from the office.

These types of clients stand out in a special way and perpetuate certain stereotypes.

They're tattooed on their face, for example, or the first thing they walk in, they're set on anti and straight away.... "I'm after prison". They emphasise it a lot, although we only know about some of them from the system.

Nor are employers immune to such stereotypes. As one interviewee stated, the appearance and behaviour of an ex-convict may discourage his/her employment. In his view, this may exclude the ex-convict from the general labour market, but on the other hand encourage self-employment or work in a social cooperative.

Especially if they're so heavily tattooed, especially on the face, where it's not so ornate anymore, you can see it's after prisons - those eyes tattooed and everything. Then employers don't want to hire either. They're just scared or have concerns that way. So that's why here, maybe it's the social cooperatives, the economic activities, because they're self-employed, because that's also the reason why it's difficult for them to find employment in this free sector.

"A 'difficult customer' is first and foremost an aggressive customer. This type of behaviour is well illustrated by the following statement:

Sometimes at the entrance, I don't know for what reason there, sometimes in conversation only later, but there are those who come in with an immediate, combative attitude.

The cooperation with the client is very different, but there are some very aggressive clients. For example, there was one who behaved defiantly from the beginning. He used profanity and forcefully hit the plexiglass [the shielding of the stand between the operator and the customer introduced in connection with Covid-19], so here, too, when handling, you have to be careful, call your colleagues, not infrequently we also ask security, aggression occurs.

A respondent working in a social welfare centre during an individual interview admitted that she had not been able to deal with an ex-prisoner client for a long time. Visits to the client's flat even became traumatic. It was only with the help of the NGO in the form of supervision and additional individual training that the relationship changed. The respondent conducted subsequent visits to the client with a support person, which allowed mutual distrust to be overcome and positive solutions to be sought. A fundamental change took place in the client, who no longer perceived the clerk as a hostile person invigilating his life. In turn, the clerk has gained more confidence and is now also working effectively with other former prisoners.

Relations of ex-convicts with institutions and NGOs providing post-penitentiary support vary in nature. Formal relations predominate. They are mainly expressed in the legally regulated forms of contact between the ex-prisoner and the institutions competent for his place of residence: employment office, social assistance centre, probation officer. They consist mainly in specific formal operations, such as registration, the establishment of the right to benefit and its payment, as well as in compulsory and formalised contacts, such as the famous "appointment visit" at the labour office.

Helping relationships also occur. They are less formalised in nature and are primarily more oriented towards helping a specific person. The active party in this type of relationship is primarily the support unit, usually an NGO, although it is not uncommon to find cases of high empathy on the part of prison, judicial or social welfare system officials. The ex-prisoner is usually in the position of a recipient, a consumer of support activities. Most often these activities include psychological and material support. A significant part of this type of action is financed by the Solidarity Fund.

There are also collaborative relationships, which are characterised by being based on a similar level of involvement of both partners, the post-penitentiary support institution and the ex-convict.

I cannot afford an unequal relationship. It is a waste of my time. I want to help those who want it. I only cooperate when I am convinced that the other party wants my support. I have sometimes argued with a client about their attitude. I have said that we need to trust each other. No tests, just a deep look in the eyes and we trust each other or not.

The essence of this level of relationship lies in the fact that both parties share a common goal - social reintegration - and both want to be active in it. This attitude facilitates the whole process and influences the effectiveness of the activities undertaken.

The issue of adequate motivation, of ex-convicts being proactive in solving their problems, such as resolving their family situations, seeking to maximise their chances on the labour market, improving their qualifications, mobility, etc., is essential for solving their problems, for being able to provide them with effective assistance, based precisely on cooperative relations.

As a result of the qualitative research carried out and summarised, it is possible to identify barriers to the formation of desirable relationships between ex-convicts (especially so-called difficult clients) and institutions and NGOs constituting post-penitentiary support units.

Firstly, it is important to point out barriers of a communicative nature, lying primarily in the ways in which both parties communicate, in the processes of information circulation between former prisoners and post-penitentiary units. The communication barrier relates in particular to the level of understanding of messages and other information presented to clients. Ex-prisoners in solitary confinement are literally and figuratively excluded communicatively. This is not only a technological issue, but more importantly a linguistic and mental one.

A statement by a probation officer may be significant to illustrate this situation:

My client did not call at the agreed time. He explained to me that he couldn't find a payphone and that they didn't want to sell him a phone card at the 'Žabka'. He was full of regret and worried about my reaction. He simply did not know that telecommunications now work very differently. I believed him and felt sorry for him.

First of all, it should be noted that as a result of communication shortcomings, there is a very low level of information of former prisoners about the possibilities of support. It is true that, even before leaving the penitentiary institution, there is an intensive information campaign and prisoners often explain to each other the principles of possible support, but it is precisely for this reason that ex-prisoners experience disappointment, as the reality they find upon release does not correspond to their pre-conceived notions.

The most desirable, from the point of view of achieving the mission of post-penitentiary assistance, are co-operative relationships, based on active attitudes of former prisoners or persons on early release, stimulated by a genuine desire to improve the situation. However, achieving this level of relationship is constrained by a number of barriers. The main ones are barriers of a communicative nature, barriers inherent in the organisation of the work of the offices, concerning the effectiveness of the programmes addressed to the unemployed and, finally, the most significant one - the rigidity and excessive formalisation of the procedures for handling the unemployed.

The units that are supposed to provide support to ex-prisoners are often not properly equipped to do so. Labour market and social assistance institutions are confronted with a wide variety of clients and their problem situations. Staff are severely overstretched due to the need to handle large numbers of people. Ex-convicts make up a small percentage of the clientele in their work, also dealing with their specific problems can be challenging.

There is a lack of exchange of information and experience between individuals, units and institutions performing different tasks for the same client group. Finally, attention should be drawn to the high rigidity of administrative structures and procedures, which often makes it impossible to diversify activities, adapt them to the real needs of clients and respond to changes

Overburdened with excessive tasks, inexperienced, poorly paid staff are unable to respond adequately to the needs of their customers.

Barriers of a communicative nature seem to be a very important obstacle in forming relationships with people returning from penitentiary units. The most important key to solving many of the problems in this area seems to be a turn towards greater and more effective use of information technology, especially the Internet.

In addition, using various communication channels, including the most conventional ones (e.g. brochures, leaflets, local media, etc.), information on support for ex-convicts should be disseminated and they should be made aware of the various forms of assistance available in this way.

Results of the survey

A total of 211 respondents were surveyed, including 51 from Germany, 79 from Lithuania and 81 from Poland. The survey questionnaire contained 11 questions, of which only a few were single-choice and open-ended questions, and the vast majority were matrix questions. Therefore, in the end, respondents addressed a total of 68 different questions.

Characteristics of respondents

The individual country samples varied widely.

The German respondents were predominantly volunteers and representatives of NGOs (half of the respondents - 25 people), including 4 family members of former prisoners, 13 people work in employment agencies and offices (Job Centre), 9 people work in other units not related to the post-penitentiary system but having contact with former prisoners, one respondent each worked as a probation officer, social welfare office worker, prison worker and court clerk. 1/3 of the respondents are male. 9 men are volunteers or NGO workers, 6 work in employment offices, 1 is a court clerk and 1 is a prison worker.

In the 79-person Lithuanian sample, the largest number of people worked as a social worker or probation officer - 45 people, which accounted for nearly 3/5 of the respondents. The next category by number is prison officers - 15 persons, or 1/5 of the respondents. In addition, the sample included 5 NGO workers and volunteers, 1 police officer, 1 employee of a social welfare centre (equivalent to CUS) and 11 people working outside the post-penitentiary system but in contact with former prisoners. In terms of gender, women predominate (52 persons), while men are mainly probation officers (7 persons), prison officers (5 persons), NGO workers and volunteers (2 persons) and persons working outside the post-penitentiary system (3 persons).

The 81-person Polish sample was dominated by labour office employees, who accounted for 2/5 of the respondents (33 persons). A further 21 persons (1/4 of the respondents) were volunteers or employees of non-governmental organisations, 14 persons (nearly 1/5) were probation officers, 7 persons worked in social welfare centres and 2 persons were court employees. In addition, the sample included 1 employee of the prosecutor's office and 3 persons not related to the post-penitentiary system but in contact with former prisoners. Only 21 respondents (1/4 of the total) were male. They were most numerous as volunteers or employees of NGOs (13 persons, including two clergymen), 4 were probation officers. There was one man each among employees of the court, the labour office, the prosecutor's office and social welfare centres.

Service duties undertaken by respondents in the post-penitentiary system

Post-penitentiary activities cover a wide range of activities, which we wrote about in Part One of the report. For the sake of some clarity in cross-country comparisons, their inventory has been limited to six, namely: facilitating the finding of a job or vocational preparation, providing temporary accommodation if necessary, allowing sick persons to continue their treatment, motivating persons after leaving prison to undertake and maintain behaviour in line with social norms, supporting them to undertake and maintain behaviour in line with social norms, and providing material benefits.

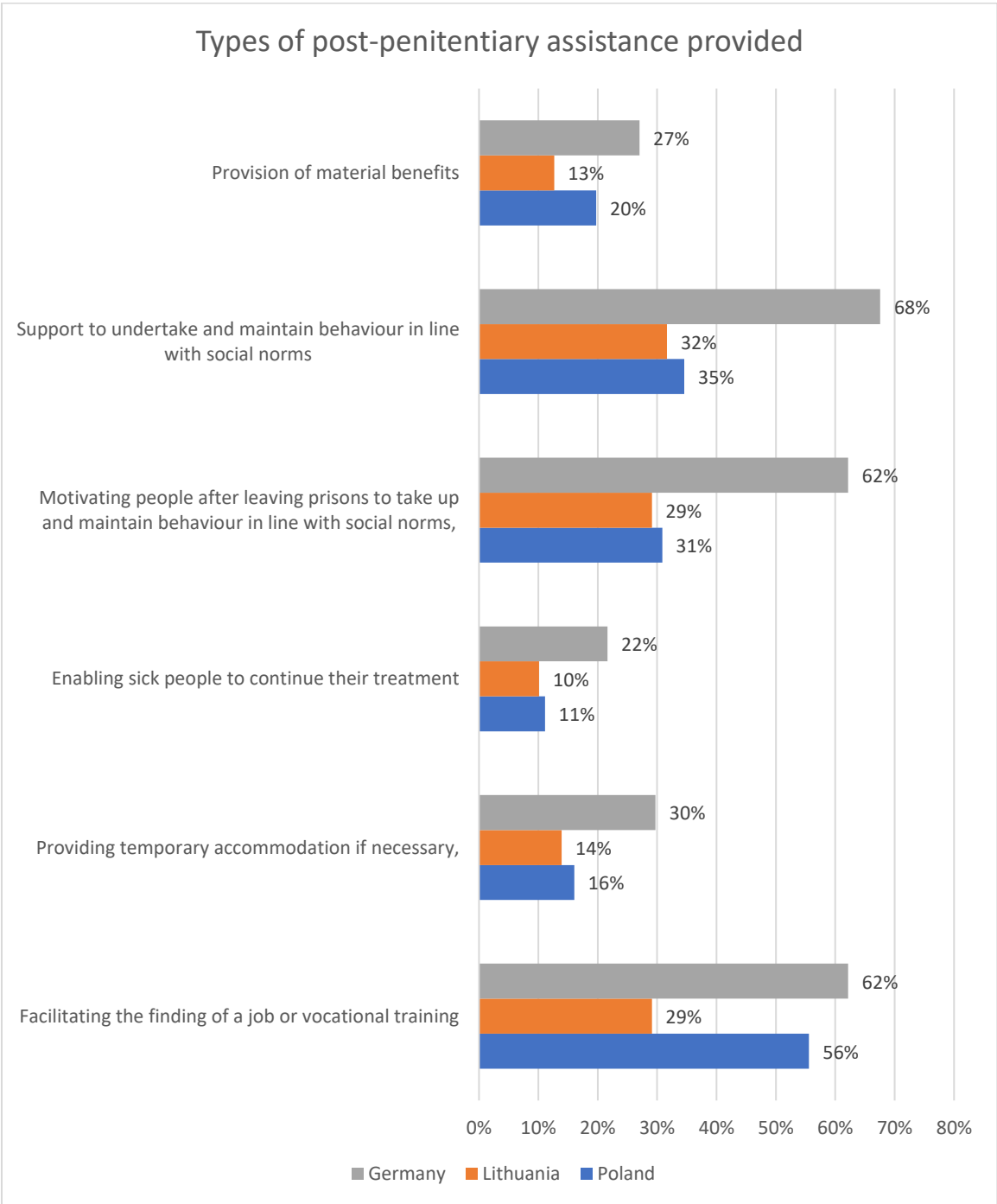


Chart 1. Types of post-penitentiary assistance provided

The differences between the burden of provision in the different countries are due to the different profiles of the respondents surveyed. In the German sample, there is a significant share of vocational and social support workers. One of the main tasks of the German respondents surveyed is support in finding a job and support in starting and maintaining behaviour in line with social norms. In Lithuania, there is a similar burden of implemented functions as in Poland. The only significant difference concerns the realisation of the facilitation of finding a job or vocational preparation for former prisoners. In this case, there are almost twice as many persons performing this task in Poland as in Lithuania.

What work activities do you engage in with former detainees?

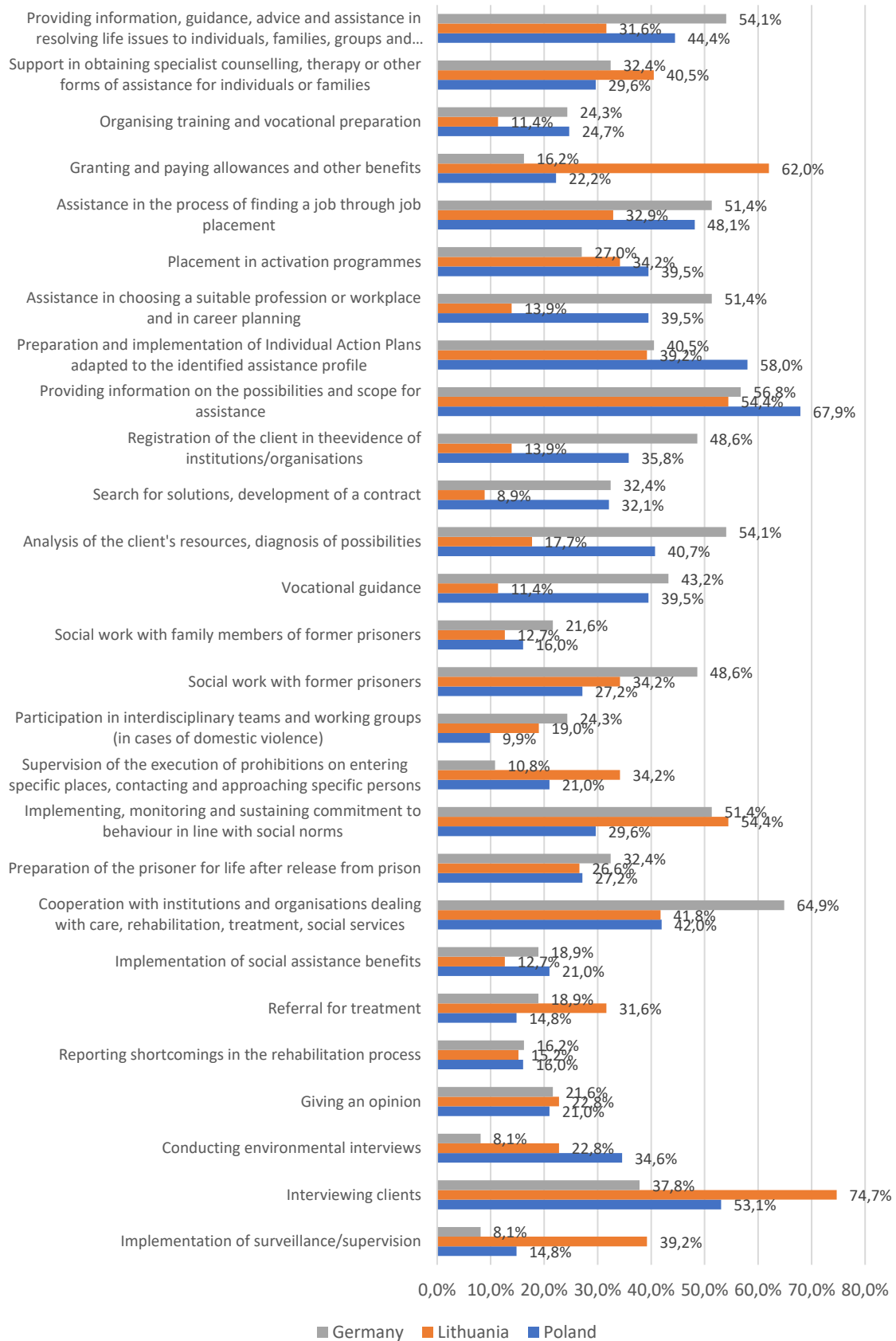


Chart 2. Service activities carried out by respondents in their contacts with former prisoners (responses very often and often combined)

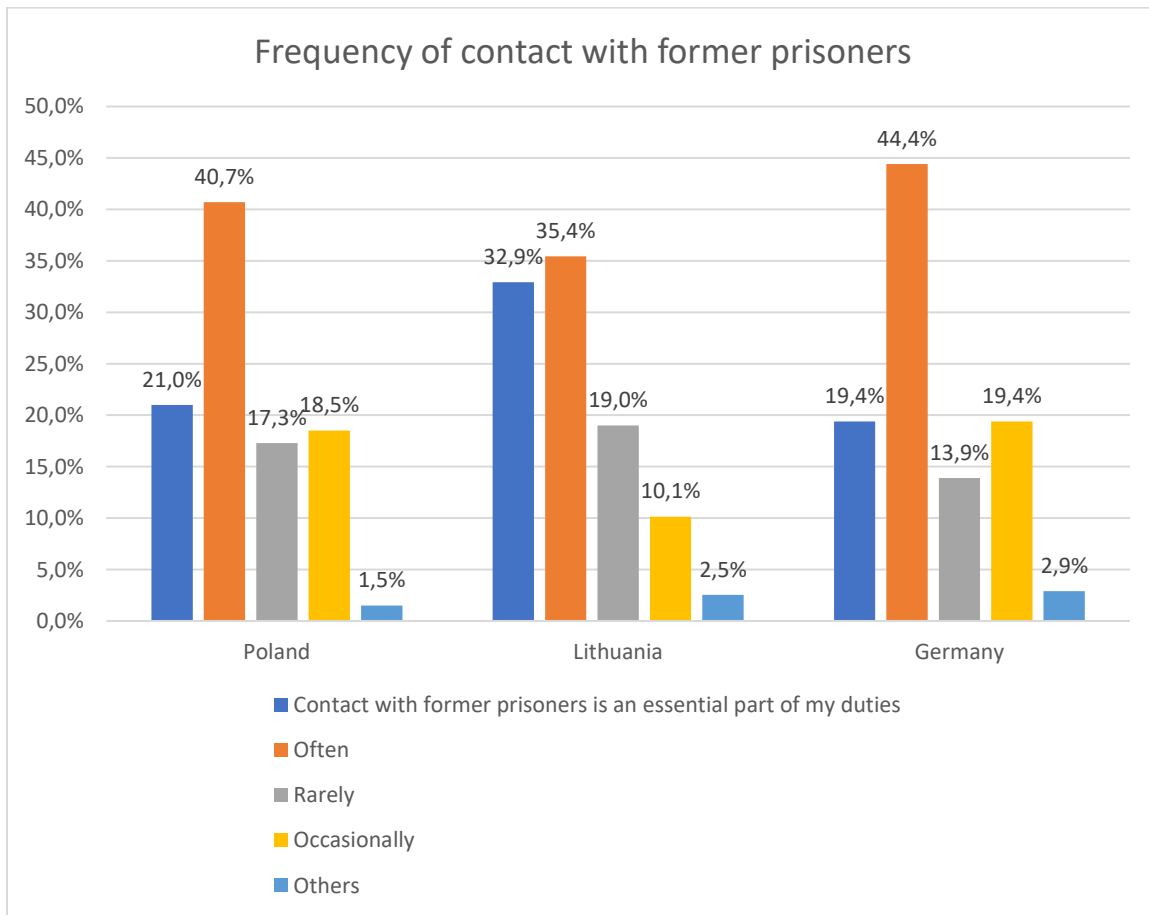


Chart 3. Frequency of contacts with former prisoners

Among Polish and German respondents, about 1/5 have regular contact with former prisoners. More, 1/3 of the respondents from Lithuania, contact with former prisoners is their main part of their duties. However, in all countries, more than 3/5 of the respondents have regular or frequent contact with former prisoners. Respondents' activities in the post-prison system may be initiated within their own units or may be inspired (commissioned) by external units. The survey shows that respondents carried out their responsibilities more often through the use of external - non-institutional - data than through their own data alone. The ability to use external data in the planning and implementation of their activities was demonstrated by the majority of respondents. The percentage of such situations ranges from less than 52% in Lithuania to nearly 56% in Germany. Undoubtedly, the differences are due to the composition of the samples in each country, as best evidenced by the Lithuanian sample, in which there is a significant proportion of penitentiary unit staff initiating post-penitentiary activities. Prison officers have all the data in their institution from the judicial system and do not need to use external data.

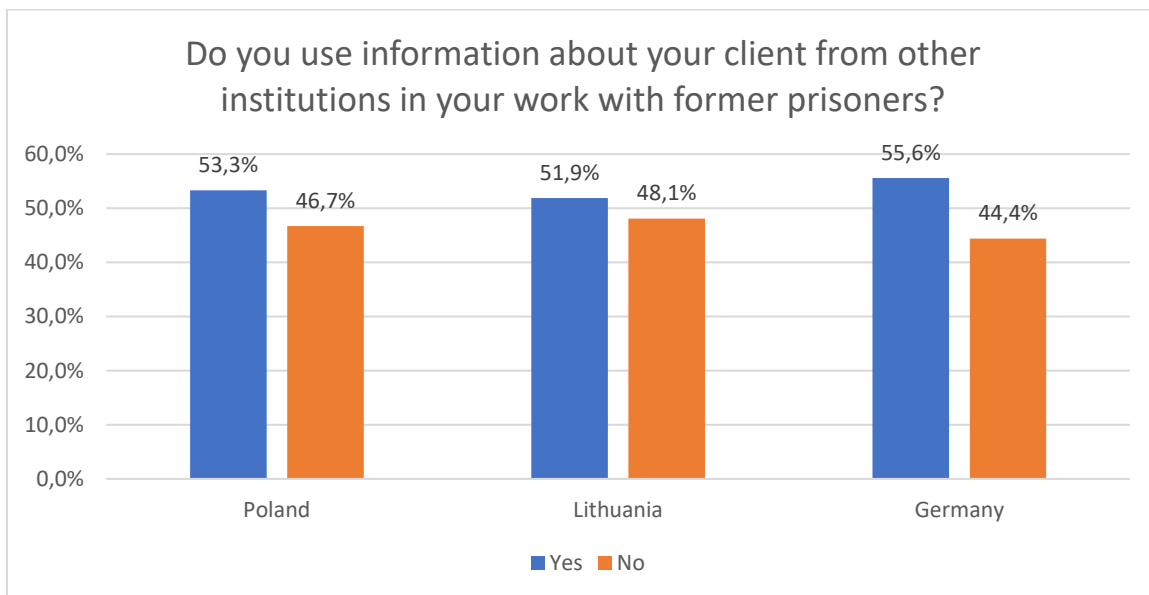


Chart 4. Use of information on former detainees from other institutions

The circulation of information on ex-convicts also includes information provided by our respondents to other institutions that carry out other activities for their clients.

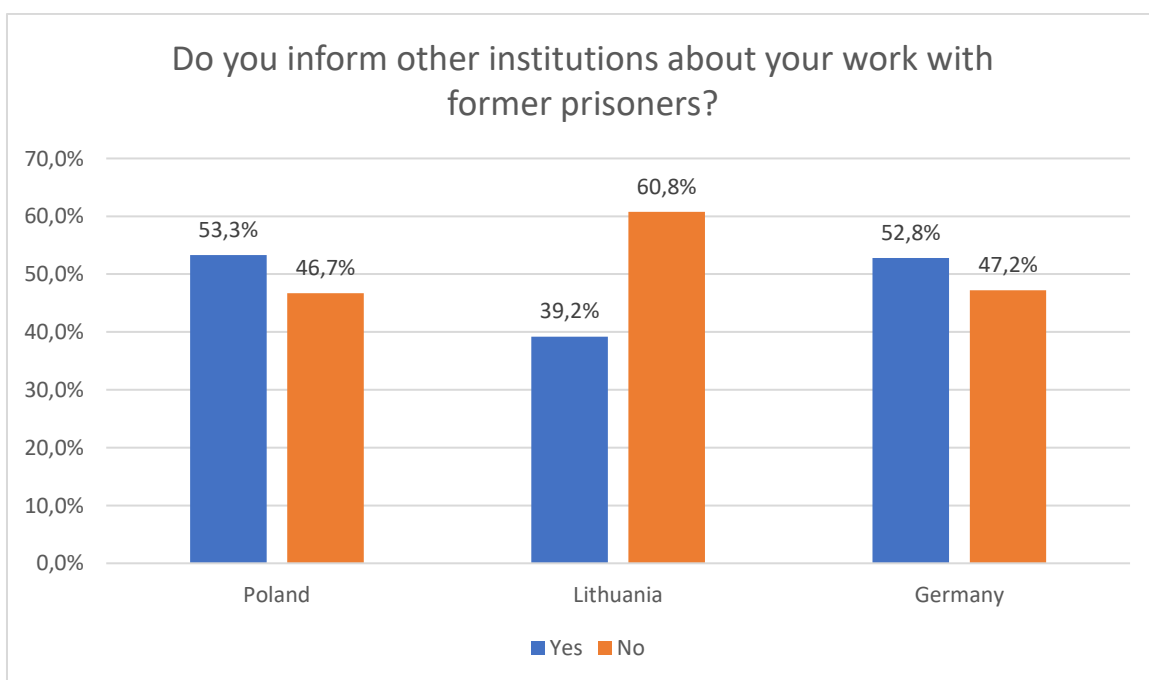


Chart 5. Transfer of customer information to other institutions/offices

The provision of information takes place not only to institutions and offices, but also to family, local government units. The way in which information is provided is strictly regulated, e.g. in Lithuania it is necessary to provide information to the State Service for the Protection of Child Rights and Adoption, Employment Services, medical institutions, etc.

With the exception of one person, in all three countries, respondents do not see the point in further restricting the exchange of customer information between institutions. On the contrary, according to 48% of Lithuanian, 41% of German and 33% of Polish respondents, the scope of customer information should be expanded and the availability of data should be extended.

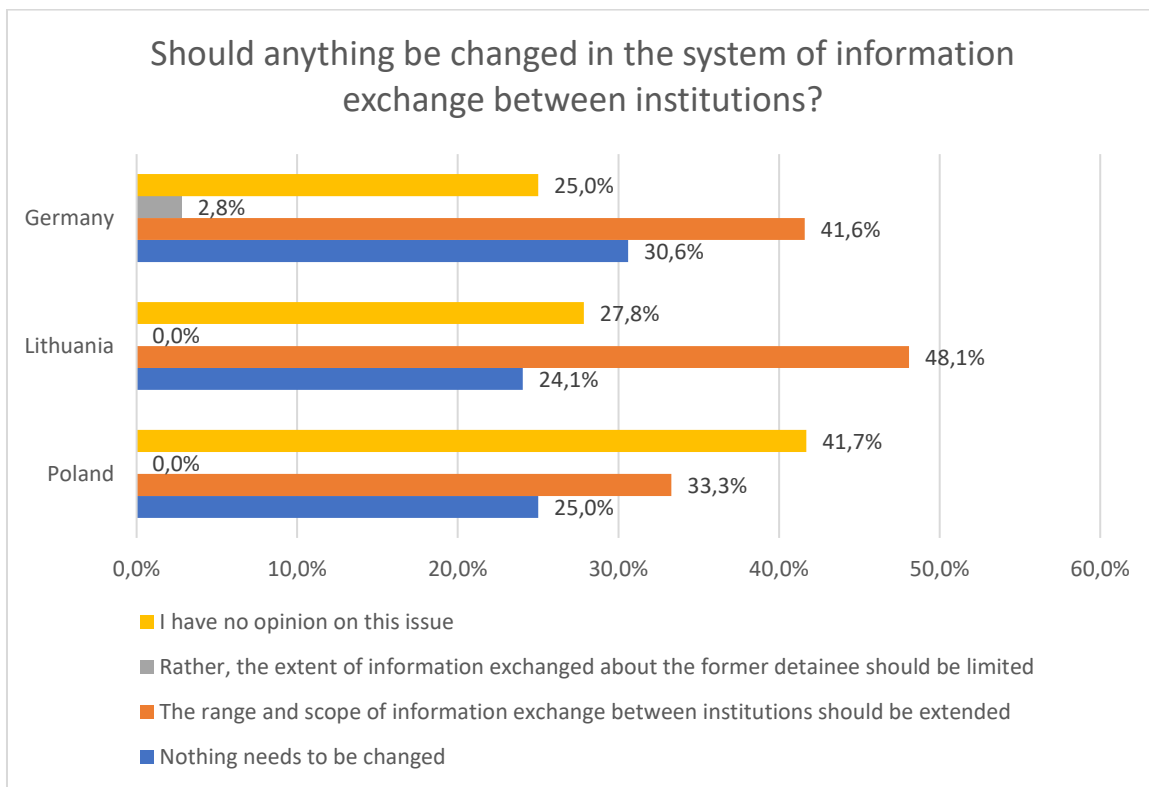


Chart 6. Proposed changes to the ex-convict information system

For roughly ¼ of those surveyed, the system should not be changed. There is a similar and higher share of those who do not have an opinion on this (from 25% in Germany to 42% in Poland).

In particular, respondents drew attention not only to the importance of increasing access to information, but also to increasing interaction, 'networking' the system. It is worth quoting here 3 typical statements for all countries. The first two refer to increasing the efficiency of the system by reducing its anonymisation and digitisation.

I believe that data protection regulations should be reviewed, they are an obstacle to cooperation. We, as a support network, act in the interests of our customers, so the regulations only hinder the exchange and lead to delays. So they have a negative impact on the overall result for the customer. [Germany]

Creation of a common information management system to enable the rapid, secure exchange of information between different institutions. [Lithuania]

The third statement argues for cooperation 'across' the existing institutional divide.

Joint training of representatives of different institutions would allow for an exchange of knowledge and experience, in each field of action, and this will result in a more effective and complete possibility of taking action. [Poland]

Assessment of existing communication skills

The core issue of the present research was to determine the communication competences of the interviewed participants in the post-penitentiary system in the three project countries.

Communication competence, is the common characteristic of interacting individuals to build and maintain healthy communication and rapport with colleagues, subordinates, management, clients, partners and all participants in the process being implemented, e.g. post-penitentiary support.

Communication competence consists of several elements. These include:

- an innate talent and aptitude for communicating with people;
- ability to convey information in a simple and understandable way, to formulate a question or request without showing negativity or aggression, to constructively build a dialogue;
- ability to adapt communication style to the interlocutor;
- the ability to listen to the interlocutor and understand their emotions and needs.

For the implementation of the present study, using the available literature and the results of qualitative research, an inventory of 24 statements relating to communication competences associated with cooperation with so-called difficult customers was created.

The list of statements is as follows:

- I can recognise an ex-prisoner because of his/her specific behaviour.
- In the case of aggression from the client, I am able to control my emotions.
- I can be assertive when dealing with difficult customers.
- I can talk to any person, regardless of their level of education and vocabulary.
- I do not tolerate swearing during conversation.
- I am able to talk in an informal way.
- When talking to a client, I focus on the facts.
- I have particular trouble communicating with people whose behaviour deviates from standard behaviour (e.g. movement disorders, nervous tics).
- In conversation, I am able to consistently seek to clarify matters - I do not get into unnecessary threads.
- I aim to establish a partnership with the client.
- I can guide the conversation in such a way that the interviewee feels valued.
- I am very cautious with former prisoners.
- I try to understand my client's situation and experiences.
- When dealing with clients, my main focus is on opportunities to provide real support.
- I pay particularly close attention to the client's non-verbal behaviour (facial expressions, gestures).
- I can explain the applicable legislation in simple terms.
- In conversation with the client, I present myself as a competent person who will lead to an appropriate solution.
- In getting things done, I prefer to work as part of a wider team rather than acting individually.

- During a conversation, I am able to show my commitment through appropriate tone of voice.
- I am able to create common ground with the client through subsequent agreements.
- During the conversation, I aim to involve the client as much as possible in the resolution of their case.
- I can interview the client in a differentiated manner according to the type of client.
- During the conversation, I am able to recognise the client's true intentions.
- Sometimes, after a case has been settled, the client comes to me with information about his or her follow-up.

Respondents in the questionnaire referred to this list each time by answering the question, *"Please define your communication competences in your business dealings with clients and especially former prisoners?"*

Responses were formulated on a Likert scale, meaning that respondents could choose one of the following in their answer: "definitely yes", "rather yes", "rather no", "definitely no" or "hard to say". This resulted in an ordinal scale, which was given appropriate ranks. Thus "definitely yes" was given a value of 2, "rather yes" a value of 1, "rather not" a value of -1 and "definitely not" a value of - 2. - No answer or "hard to say" was valued as neutral and therefore given a value of 0. Weighted averages were then calculated from the data processed in this way. The range of variation of the calculated values theoretically ranges from a value of "-2" when all respondents choose the answer "definitely no", to a value of "+2" when all respondents answer "definitely yes".

By using a synthetic measure in the form of a weighted average, the creation of complex graphs or tables was avoided, as a single aggregated measure was obtained, precisely in the form of a weighted average, which synthesises the diverse statements.

The following charts, numbered 7-10, present the results of the analysis carried out. Chart 7 presents the aggregated results of the respondents' statements by the three project countries. The weighted averages show the similarities and differences between the self-assessment of communicative competence in each country. As can be seen, the differences are not large, and in each case show very similar trends.

The next three charts (Nos. 8, 9 and 10) show the variation in respondents' self-assessments across countries. The graphs have been arranged in an ascending order, i.e. the indications with the lowest values are on the right and gradually increase to indicate the statements with the highest values on the left.

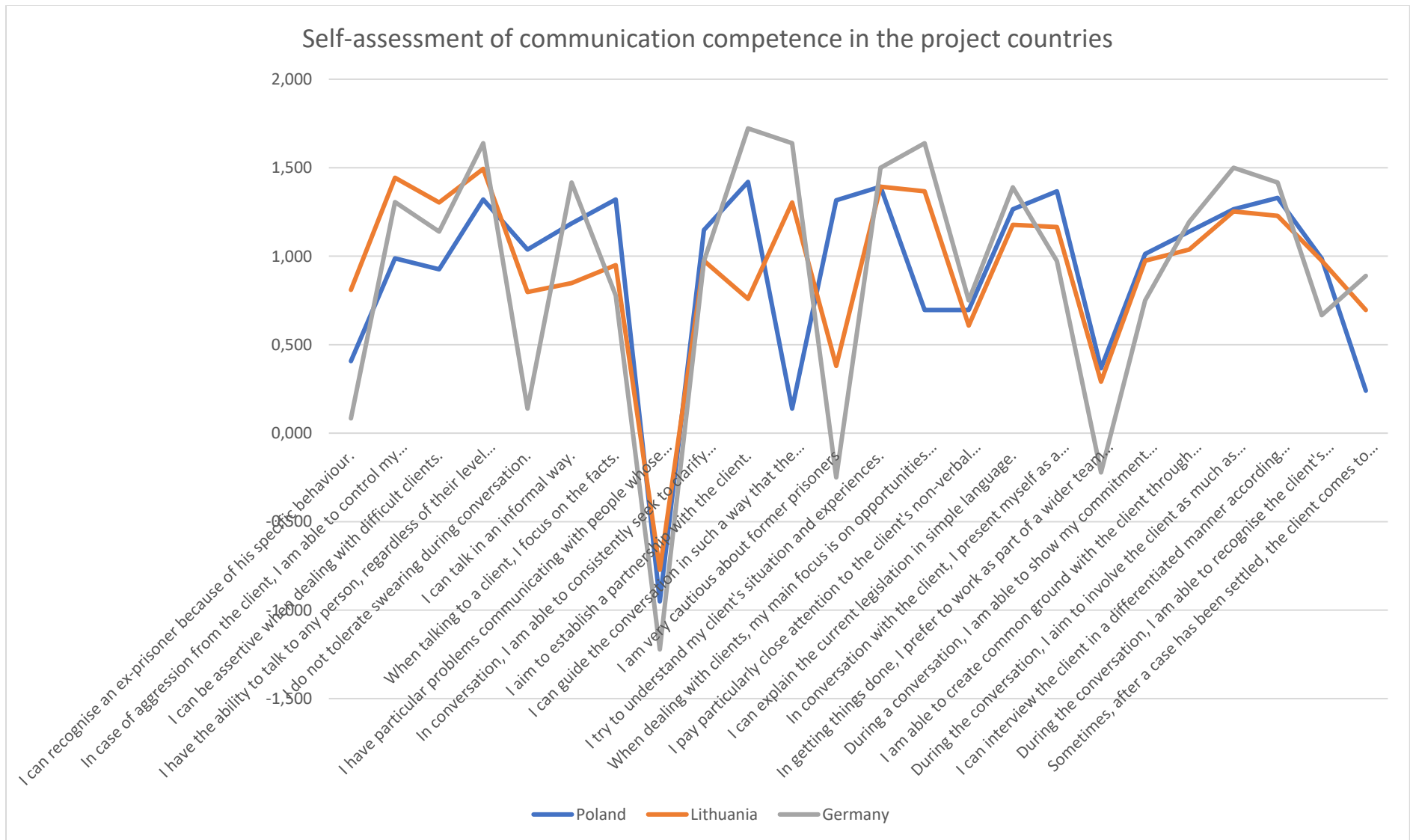


Chart 7. Weighted averages of self-assessed communicative competence in Germany, Lithuania and Poland

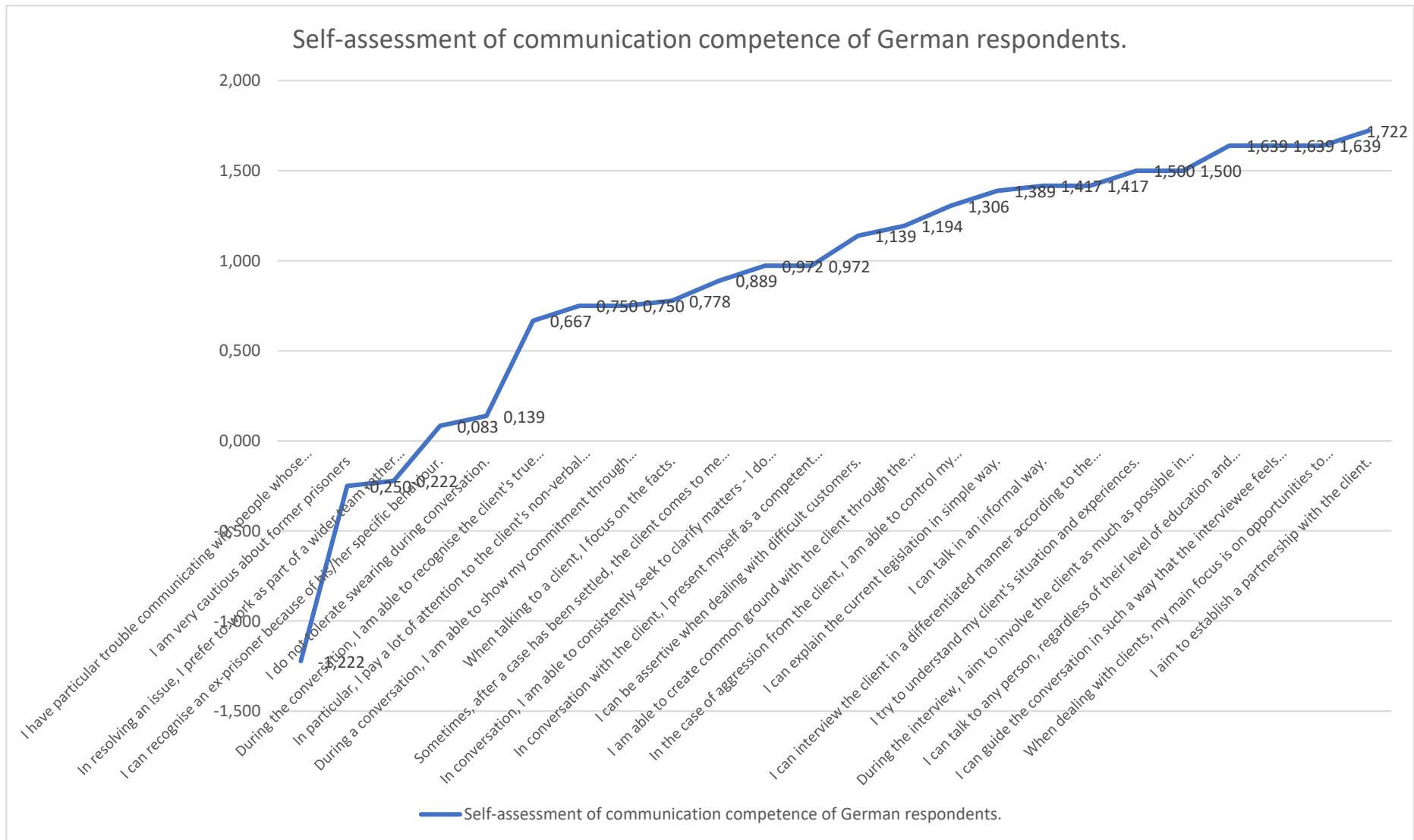


Chart 8. Ranked values of weighted averages of self-assessment of communication competence of German respondents

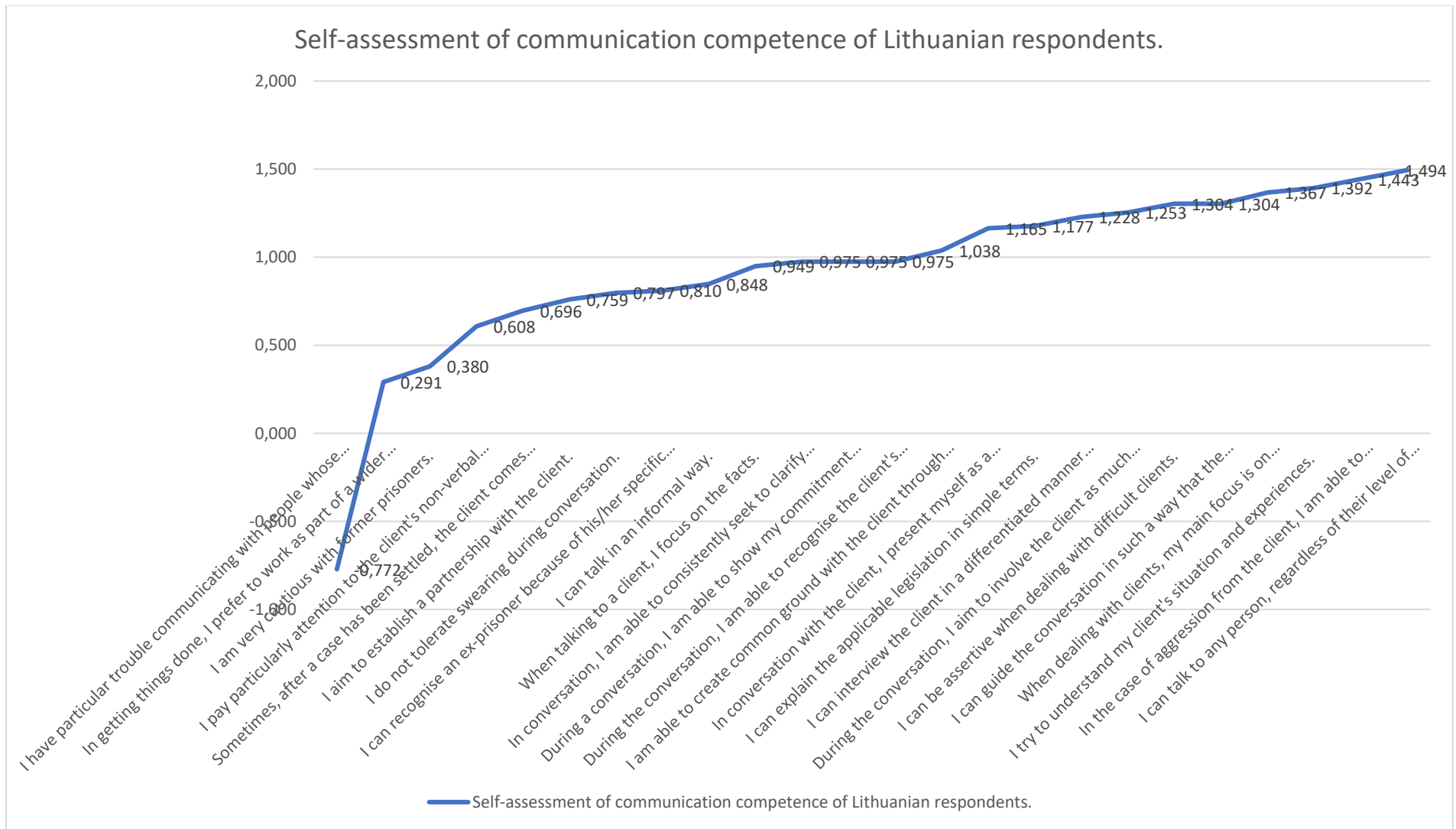


Chart 9. Ranked values of weighted averages of self-assessment of communication competence of Lithuanian respondents

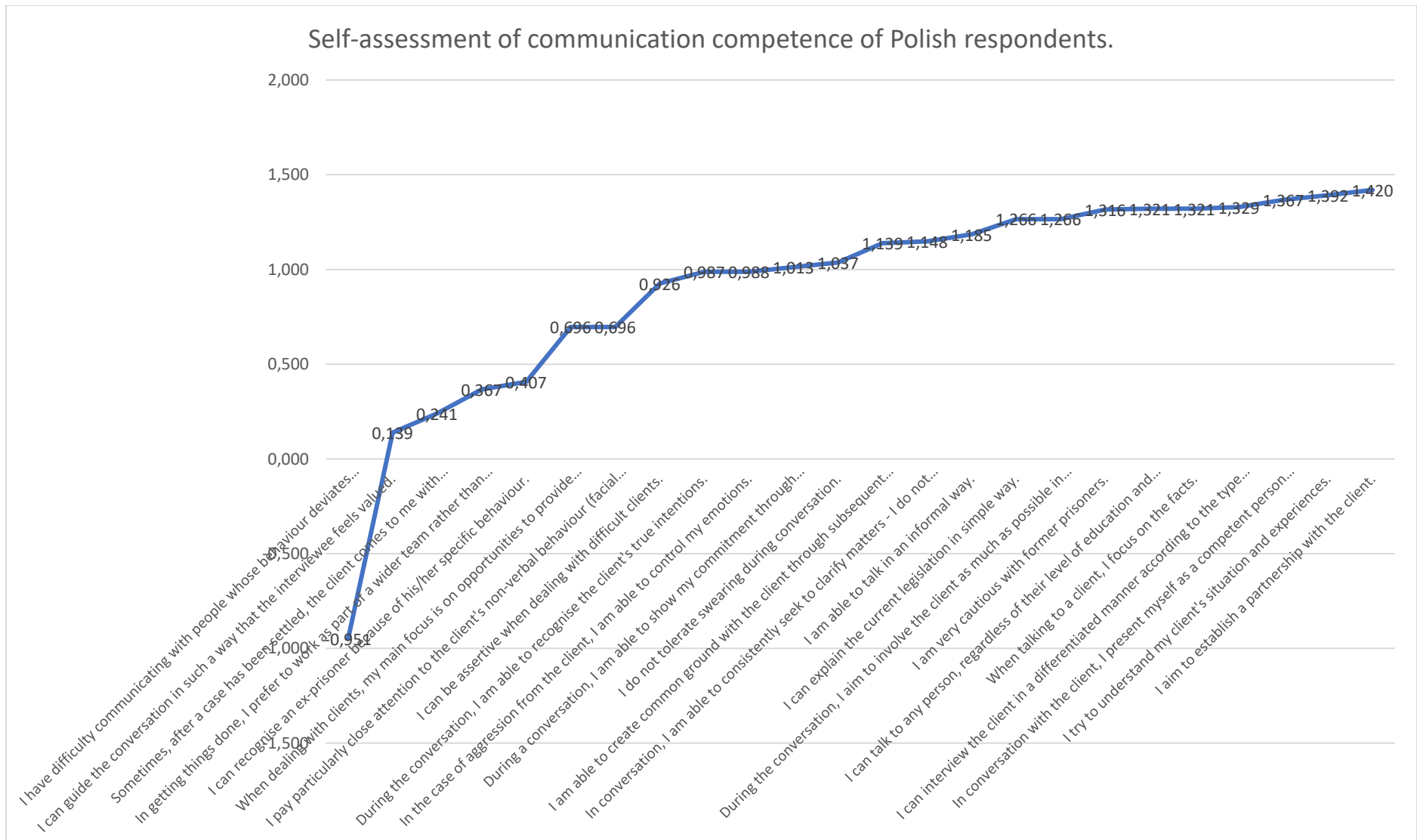


Chart 10. Ranked values of weighted averages of self-assessment of communication competence of Polish respondents

Figure 7 shows the weighted averages of the self-assessment of communicative competence in Germany, Lithuania and Poland. At first glance, there are great similarities between the countries studied in the tendency to self-assess competence. Only a statistical analysis, calculating the standard deviation between the individual indicators, reveals significant differences in self-assessment of competence.

We can see that a total of 10 indicators are differentiated at a level above 0.2, which can be considered a significant statistical difference for the countries studied.

The greatest variation is found in relation to the statement "One is very cautious towards former prisoners", where the deviation is 0.644. The high value of the deviation is due to the fact that the spread between the highest score (Poland) and the lowest (Germany) is more than 1.5 points. Thus, it can be concluded that Polish post-penitentiary professionals are definitely more cautious in their dealings with former prisoners than their German colleagues, while Lithuanian ones remain at almost the same distance towards both categories.

A full summary of the differences for the 10 statements is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Weighted averages of statements with the highest dispersion

Statement	Poland	Lithuania	Germany	Standard deviation
I am very cautious with former prisoners.	1,316	0,380	-0,250	0,644
I can guide the conversation in such a way that the interviewee feels valued.	0,139	1,304	1,639	0,643
I aim to establish a partnership with the client.	1,420	0,759	1,722	0,402
When dealing with clients, my main focus is on opportunities to provide real support.	0,696	1,367	1,639	0,396
I do not tolerate swearing during conversation.	1,037	0,797	0,139	0,380
I can recognise an ex-prisoner because of his/her specific behaviour.	0,407	0,810	0,083	0,297
Sometimes, after a case has been settled, the client comes to me with information about his or her follow-up.	0,241	0,696	0,889	0,272
In getting things done, I prefer to work as part of a wider team rather than acting individually.	0,367	0,291	-0,222	0,262
I am able to talk in an informal way.	1,185	0,848	1,417	0,233
When talking to a client, I focus on the facts.	1,321	0,949	0,778	0,227

Source: own research.

Assuming that the recruitment for training in the project countries will involve similar professional categories as in the conducted research, it can be considered that the presented disproportions may be useful for the development of detailed training programmes. If we make such an assumption and look for specific national distinctions, then with regard to Polish trainees we should focus on issues related to raising conversational competence on an equal footing and not from a superior position; content-related support and obtaining feedback on the results of support (feed-back effect).

Lithuanian training, on the other hand, should pay attention to shortening the distance to the ex-prisoner; aiming for more cooperation with the ex-prisoner and less formalised behaviour in mutual relations.

Finally, with regard to German professionals, attention should be paid to the ability to recognise ex-prisoners; to focus more on facts and to work as a team to solve the problems of ex-prisoners.

This is one viewpoint emphasising the differences that occur. On the other hand, however, it is also possible to look at the results obtained in terms of similarities between national samples. In such a view, we can see more universal issues, shared by professionals from all countries, which can be the subject of common training.

For respondents from all three countries, communication competence is similarly important, as expressed in the following statements:

- I can explain the applicable legislation in simple terms.
- In conversation, I am able to consistently seek to clarify matters - I do not get into unnecessary threads.
- I can interview the client in a differentiated manner according to the type of client.
- I am able to create common ground with the client through subsequent agreements.
- I pay particularly close attention to the client's non-verbal behaviour (facial expressions, gestures).
- I try to understand my client's situation and experiences.

Reported need to improve communication skills and competences

During the qualitative research, respondents were asked to indicate the training courses they would like to participate in. These expectations were then confronted with existing training offerings, which showed that respondents pointed to training available on the market, even used the same wording, thus not being innovative, but reproducing previously known offerings that seemed attractive to them.

During the qualitative research, respondents identified the following training courses that may be of interest to them:

- Skilful establishment of dialogue
- Development of active listening
- Managing emotions during interpersonal communication
- Elimination of errors at message interpretation level
- Assertive communication
- Having difficult conversations
- Involving the customer in the support process
- Planning of support activities
- Targeting the support process

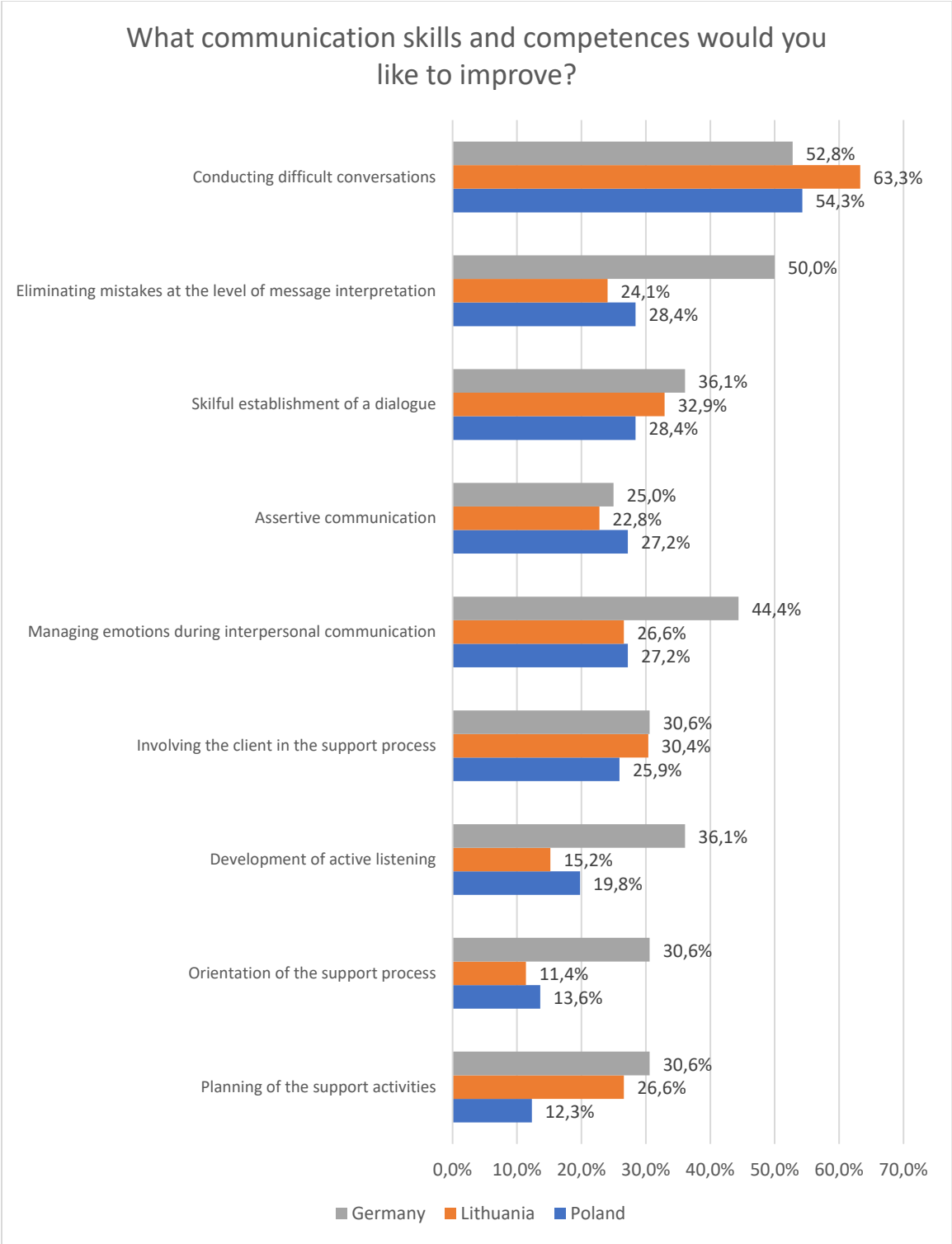


Chart 11. Preferred training and courses to develop communication skills

Respondents identified 'Conducting difficult conversations' as the most desirable training. This is the clear training leader in all three countries, with between 52 and 63% of respondents wanting to attend.

This is followed by the training course 'Eliminating mistakes at the level of message interpretation', which 24% of Lithuanians to 50% of Germans would like to attend. Misinterpretation is one of the main communication barriers. The trainings offered on the

market are workshop-based and highly involve participants. At the same time, they are very well prepared in terms of content.

"Skilful establishment of a dialogue" ranks third in the ranking created here. This training is also workshop-based and highly structured. Its main emphasis is on the creation of mutual bonds between the parties to the dialogue.

In fourth place among the proposed training courses was classical assertiveness training. This type of training is wanted by more than 1/4 of the respondents surveyed. Another suggestion, 'Managing emotions during interpersonal communication', achieved a similar result. Training courses have entered the mainstream from a wide range of negotiation workshops. They have the advantage of building emotional flexibility, which is particularly attractive to participants due to the lively form of the classes.

The trainings listed so far have been of a general nature. "Involving the client in the support process" is the first of the trainings geared towards substantive support for those operating in the post-penitentiary support system. The methodology transferred during the training is derived from active social work practices and psychological intervention.

"Developing active listening" is of greater interest to German respondents than to Lithuanian or Polish respondents. Meanwhile, it is a very effective way of improving the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, which has its origin in family counselling.

Finally, the last two proposals related to substantive support for participants in the post-penitentiary system. These trainings are "Orientation of the support process" and "Planning of the support activities". The trainings are based on social work experience and, in addition to elements of social pedagogy, refer to the achievements of contemporary psychology.

Conclusions of the study

As indicated in the concluding section of the secondary analysis, the post-penitentiary support systems in place in the countries analysed are similar to each other in a formal sense. In all countries, preparation for rehabilitation begins while still in prison before the prisoner is released. Importantly, institutions and persons involved in post-penitentiary activities benefit from an extensive exchange of experience within bilateral relations as well as the European Union. Consequently, a convergence of national systems can be observed, resulting in systems becoming more similar to each other. There is an exchange of good practices, which allows for the improvement of the post-penitentiary system.

The rehabilitation of ex-prisoners is at the forefront of the systems' activities in all the countries analysed. The process of rehabilitation starts already in prison. Post-penitentiary activities are intensified during the final period of imprisonment. Diagnoses of the prisoner's needs and deficits are then carried out, which are used to develop an individual rehabilitation programme.

Despite similarities in the strategic goals and legal arrangements for post-penitentiary assistance, major differences emerge between countries as a result of local laws. Nevertheless, in all countries the aim of post-penitentiary measures is for the person released from solitary confinement to gain independence in life by activating and activating his or her own resources and potentials, preventing recidivism and enhancing his or her social reintegration. The type, form and size of post-penitentiary assistance are dependent on the resources at hand, making it tailored to the possibilities and circumstances that justify its provision.

Undoubtedly, and this is particularly emphasised in the programme documents, the most effective assistance is provided by a number of sources, complementing each other - the state, local government, NGOs, religious organisations and others. At the same time, it should be remembered that one of the greatest challenges of support is to make the family of the inmate aware of the importance of their moral support in the process of reintegration and activation of the person in question.

The qualitative research confirmed the ex-prisoner's difficulties in communicating effectively and efficiently.

This self-perception of one's own position leads to apathy and, in stressful and demanding situations, drives the ex-prisoner to aggression. This results in ex-prisoners being perceived as 'difficult clients'.

On the other hand, it is clear from the study that those functioning in the institutional setting of ex-prisoners, who should provide a foothold and support for ex-convicts, have certain deficits in communication competence.

The respondents' opinions collected indicate the following training areas ranked in order of their importance to the respondents:

- Having difficult conversations
- Skilful establishment of dialogue

- Eliminating mistakes at the level of message interpretation
- Managing emotions during interpersonal communication
- Assertive communication
- Involving the customer in the support process
- Development of active listening
- Orientation of the support process
- Planning of the support activities

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