

Globalization of Rehabilitation Assistance

Prisoners need a penal system geared towards reintegration even if they are expecting deportation.

1. The starting point

About 25% of Germany's 80,000-strong¹ prison population are foreign nationals² from over 100 different nations. Each year a large proportion of these people are deported to their home countries straight from prison:

During the first half of 2001 a letter was sent to the Ministry of Justice of each German federal state. Feedback from the ministries showed that only Baden-Württemberg, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saarland and Thuringia were in a position to quote the numbers of remand prisoners and regular prisoners deported in 2000 (or 1999). As they are a mixture of eastern and western states as well as of territorial and city states, we can probably attempt to "project" the results:

Federal state	Prisoners on November 30, 2000	Deportations in 2000	Proportion of deportees (Deportations in 2000 in relation to the prison population in November 2000)
Baden-Württemberg	8,251	1,011	12.25
Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg	3,243	201	6.19
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	1,533	28	1.82
Saarland	865	22	2.54
Free State of Thuringia	1,889	13	0.68
Average proportion of deportees (weighted by regions: new federal states, city states and territorial states)			8.82
Total number of prisoners deported from German prisons (calculated from weighted share of deportees)			6,952

Where details were available, we understood that deportations took place to the following countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Italy, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine, Vietnam, Yugoslavia.

Deportations often hit people who have not seen their original countries for many years or even decades. They are totally unprepared, and they have no social ties in those cultures and societies, which have become alien to them, so that they are unable to integrate. Others take their social, crime-promoting problems home with them, for instance drug addiction. We can assume that such people are in need of integration assistance and social support when they return to their home

¹ On November 30, 2000, there were 78,735 persons according to the statistics of the Federal German Ministry of Justice.

² See: *Erster Periodischer Sicherheitsbericht der Bundesregierung* (First Periodic Security Report of the German Federal Government), June 2001. (The proportion of foreign nationals in penal institutions is clearly higher in the western German states than in eastern Germany.)

countries, so that they do not drift straight into a criminal environment during the first few weeks of arrival. In a number of countries such a development would increase the likelihood of their illegal reentry into Germany. Also, such groups are very prone to be influenced by political and religious extremists.

If a penal system is to be characterized as “treatment-oriented”, seeking to enable prisoners “to live responsible lives in freedom and without imprisonment” (section 2 of the German Penal System Code), then it cannot ignore the large number of foreign nationals among prisoners, awaiting deportation. And yet there are virtually no prospects of reintegrating such prisoners. So when it comes to rehabilitation assistance, the whole area of cross-border help will need to be substantially extended.

2. Globalization of rehabilitation assistance

In view of this situation, it is important to seek globalization not only in the area of criminal prosecution, but also rehabilitation assistance. Reintegration and crime prevention must not make way for repression. Compared with other countries, Germany has a particularly large share of foreign nationals among its prison population, so that it ought to take considerable interest in this issue and become a motor of cross-border collaboration.

Some experience has already been gathered with the globalization of rehabilitation assistance in Germany: German rehabilitation institutions maintain branch offices in Asia and Africa. And BSDG has established a number of joint ventures with organizations in various Eastern European countries as well as in Africa, Asia and America (partly also through its international affiliation in IACPR, the International Association of Christian Charitable Prison and Rehabilitation Ministries). This has made it possible, in several isolated cases, to prepare the return of ex-prisoners to their countries of origin.

3. Required action

Germany’s federal government, federal states and associations would be in a position to initiate a number of activities that are conducive to the globalization of rehabilitation assistance:

- Experiences gained from existing international joint ventures in social welfare, the judiciary and academic institutions must be evaluated and broadened.
- Details must be collected from prisons in all federal states with regard to their procedures in deporting prisoners, on the preparations which are made for the return of such prisoners to their original countries and on the type of assistance that might be required.
- One would also need to find out in the countries of origin what kind of rehabilitation assistance is already being given to former offenders on the part of the state or social institutions and in what form assistance might be offered. Wherever possible, this must also cover the legal, cultural, social and economic conditions which an ex-prisoner then encounters in his or her own country upon arrival. This would be a way of transparently showing the prevailing conditions as well as the complex pattern of institutions involved in rehabilitation assistance (state and private institutions as well as research organizations, etc.).

- International collaboration between institutions that can help with the integration of deported prisoners should also be promoted beyond Europe and the former Communist bloc. It is important that communication structures should be created with such institutions. Wherever possible, partnerships should be initiated and supported between German and foreign rehabilitation assistance institutions.

4. The contribution of rehabilitation institutions

The member institutions of BSDG and IACPR have already succeeded in providing tangible help for deported prisoners in numerous individual cases. Their help has reached as far as Africa and Asia, comprising a variety of activities, such as accompanying ex-prisoners back to their countries of origin, integrating them into shared accommodation, run by a charitable organization, finding them housing and employment and clearing any legal obstacles to their return.

In the future, rehabilitation institutions would like to intensify their international ties while contributing their experiences and contacts in this area.

It is unacceptable that the penal system should offer no more than “safe custody” to prisoners awaiting deportation. It contradicts the Christian conception of man and its values: God “loves the alien, ... and you are to love those who are aliens” (Deuteronomy 10:18f.). Neither does it meet the demands for crime prevention in a penal system, as prisoners who return to their home countries without due preparation are far more likely to reoffend there. And in view of increasing globalization, the criminal environments of other countries are potential threats to people in Germany.

If a penal system is to be geared towards the reintegration of prisoners awaiting deportation, it needs to collaborate with non-governmental organizations. It is a task that requires the involvement of as many forces as possible within our society.

Lindau, October 21, 2001