

Harmful Effects of Imprisonment, Overcrowding in Prisons – Facts, Reasons, and the Way Forward

■ **ABSTRACT:** High prison occupancy – regardless of the type of violation – is a serious problem and a significant obstacle to reformatory, reintegrational, and educational work. Neither the negative side effects of imprisonment, nor the harmful effect of overcrowding are uniquely Hungarian, but according to Eurostat data on the prison population between 2015 and 2017, the highest level of prison overcrowding was observed in Hungary. What could be the reason for this? Are there any peculiarities that could serve as an explanation and that make domestic conditions so different? Can repressive criminal policy really be the cause, or strict sentencing practices, or new rules in the Criminal Code, such as mid-scale sentencing? Or will the change in civic attitudes and the associated criminal policy affect professionals? Is it that public security is becoming a political issue? Maybe historical roots or other objective reasons (such as the nature of the buildings) lead us here? This study seeks answers to this situation.

■ **KEYWORDS:** harmful effects of imprisonment, overcrowding, risk factors, criminal policy, sentencing practice, mid-scale sentencing, good practice, diversion.

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