

Therapeutic programs for drug users in Czech prisons: outcomes, shortcomings and perspectives

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BACKGROUND:

- EU Drugs AP 2021-2025 calls for, i.a., responding to the drug use in the prison settings and ensuring evidence-based drug services for imprisoned users
- Substance use is generally accepted as criminogenic factor; the existence of a relationship is well documented, although its nature is ambiguous (Carpentier, 2007)
- Proportion of drug users among prisoners is significantly higher than in the general population (Griffiths, Nilson, Carpentier, & Merino, 2003)

→ effective treatment programs for imprisoned drug users have the potential to contribute to reducing criminal recidivism and to rehabilitating or resocializing drug-using prisoners in general

Specialized departments for treatment of drug addiction (SDDA):

- Aim: to change the high-risk attitudes, values, thinking patterns and behaviour of drug-using convicts towards socially acceptable forms
- operate in 13 of the total of 35 Czech prisons
- specific extended treatment programs (usually 21 hours per week) based on the therapeutic work with imprisoned drug users (i.e. drug users sentenced for any criminal offence to imprisonment)

IKSP research project „Treatment of Drug Users in Prison“ (2016 – 2019)

OBJECTIVES:

to map the treatment programs applied at the SDDA and assess their effectiveness in terms of (1) reducing criminal recidivism and (2) changing criminogenic attitudes of the participants

RESULTS:

(1) Reconviction analysis (Penal Register data – i.e. proxy indicator)

Research sample (**RS**): prisoners undergoing program in SDDA and being released in 2014

Control groups (**CGs**):

- CGA: imprisoned heavy drug users released in 2014
- CGB: prisoners non-users/occasional users released in 2014
- CGs: random sample

(2) The criminogenic attitudes and their changes were measured using the PICTS-cz

Research sample (**RS**): prisoners entering program in SDDA from November 2016 to June 2017

Control groups (**CGs**):

- CGA: imprisoned heavy drug users
- CGB: prisoners non-users/occasional users

Comparability of RS and CGs; Double testing (pre-test phase and post-test phase)

Tab. 1: Number of reconvicted offenders

	RS	CGA	CGB
< 1 year	39.5%	43.0%	30.7%
< 2 years	58.9%	64.8%	48.9%
< 4 years	70.2%	78.8%	61.8%

Tab.2: Mean difference between pre-test and post-test results

PICTS	RS	CGA (n=66)		CGB (n=60)	
-cz	(n=129)	t-value		t-value	
GCT	9,71 (21,31)	-5,33 (30,14)	4,00**	-2,9 (34,9)	2,54*
CUR	3,13 (8,21)	-1,22 (8,73)	3,39**	0,6 (9,22)	ns
HIS	0,54 (6,30)	-1,67 (6,34)	2,29*	0,4 (7,50)	ns
P	2,74 (18,76)	-5,69 (22,4)	2,75**	-2,5 (27,3)	ns
R	9,22 (24,6)	-3,96 (29,1)	3,29**	0,9 (30,1)	ns
MO	1,79 (4,06)	-1,72 (5,50)	2,54*	-0,2 (5,8)	2,39*
CO	1,50 (4,21)	-0,61 (5,68)	2,92**	-0,5 (5,89)	2,58*
EN	0,85 (3,21)	-0,86 (4,72)	2,62*	-0,6 (5,28)	ns
PO	0,511 (3,80)	-0,86 (5,76)	ns	-1,2 (5,29)	2,28*
SN	2,03 (3,74)	-0,23 (5,01)	3,53**	0,1 (5,34)	2,81*
SO	0,29 (4,31)	-1,17 (4,36)	2,20*	-1,0 (4,53)	ns
CI	1,70 (4,20)	-0,42 (4,61)	3,19**	0,7 (5,75)	ns
DS	1,03 (4,99)	-1,00 (5,81)	2,52*	-0,2 (5,32)	ns

CONCLUSIONS:

- Significant positive changes in participants' pre- and post- program criminal thinking were found
- Compared to control groups, their mean differences between pre-test and post-test results were significantly better (in all but one scales compared to “heavy users“, in 5 scales compared to “occasional/non-users“)
- Post-release re-offending rate of participants still high (slightly better results than heavy users controls, clearly worse results than occasional/non-users controls)
- Sustainability of the effects of SDDA programs after release is currently a major problem

- Sustainability of the effects of SDDA programs after release is currently a major problem
- Treatment alternatives to imprisonment for drug-using offenders should be more available and used in the highest number of cases possible



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