

# **Young offenders in Hungarian prisons**

## **- measures of successful reintegration offered by the Code of Prison in Hungary -**

### **Summary**

Hungary had adopted a new prison law in 2015. The former prison law passed during the time of socialism, was in effect for more than three and a half decades. During the past quarter of the century – but especially in the last 10 years – the legislators have attempted to form the new Code of Law enforcement but it is only recently that they have achieved their purpose. There were several conceptions and law-text drafts prepared by the prevailing ministries of justice and also there were professional discussions and social disputes. These drafts and disputes often pressed for the settlement of the juveniles' situation either in a separate law or in even in inferior legal regulations. In the set of rules and principles of the new Code of utmost importance is the aspect according to which becoming acquainted with the juvenile needs to be done in minor detail utilizing all the information gained from his/her former social environment (family, school, civil organizations). In the knowledge of these a personalized reintegration plan needs to be elaborated during the time of detention. In the course of this plan – and during the whole enforcement process – insufficient or failed socialization mistakes should be corrected the most important fields for this purpose being moral education, education and training and accustoming juveniles to work.

### **Key words:**

juvenile prison, juvenile delinquency, prison system, hungarian prison system

### **Preface**

If you ask a child psychologist whether it is merely eating, growing and sweet smiles what it takes for a child to be considered normal, the answer would definitely be ‘not at all’.

If s/he trusts his/her parents, a normal child would try out everything. In the course of time s/he will try out to what extent s/he can disturb or exhaust others, destroy things, cause fear, manipulate or monopolize people. Everything that people get to court (or psychiatry) with has its equivalent in the respective person's early babyhood and childhood, or to be more precise, in the child's relation with his own home. If the family is able to tolerate and set right the all the child's “attacks”, the child will sooner or later end up playing. However, “business first” which means that attempts have to be made first, especially when the child feels the slightest doubt regarding the stability of the parents and that of the home. For a child to be free, to play, to use his/her imagination and have an unclouded childhood, s/he first needs to be aware of the limits.

Why is that so? The fact is that the early phases of emotional development are filled with possibilities for conflicts and for destruction. The relation with the outside world has not been firmly established yet and so has not the young personality become an integral whole. Primitive love has a destructive purpose and the child has not yet learnt how to tolerate and

handle his/her instincts. However, if the environment s/he lives in is stable and personal, s/he can come to a point where s/he will be able to control his/her instincts. According to Winnicott, crime is the sign of some hope left. A child whose behavior is antisocial is not necessarily ill. In some cases this is merely a call for help so that strong, loving and trustworthy people can provide him/her the necessary control. It is important that a child should dare to and be able to speak. Also, there should be a supportive person who is able to listen and help them rebuild the broken trust.

In the majority of the cases these children do not have anyone they could talk to about their problems. Their parents are abusive and rejecting; the image they had to create about themselves within their age-group needs to be preserved. The institutions of law enforcement are not the best places for this purpose even though these youngsters are craving for attention and interest.

Today we already know that crimes committed by young offenders are closely related with social and economic processes like child poverty and increasing differences between incomes, increased number of divorces, trying out psychoactive substances (alcohol and drugs) at early age and in growing numbers, reduced possibilities for young people to get jobs, increasing unemployment among young adults especially among those having low education or no education at all. We also have to mention social and economic problems causing crimes and violence which are concentrated to deprived areas or the outskirts of cities. **1)**

It is also a well-known fact that in Hungary the number of registered children and youngsters being taken under protection has been over 15000 for several years. A large group of minors live their lives without any future prospects, they hang out aimlessly, spend their free time wandering around in gangs. Having no proper family relations they have little chance to integrate into society, most of them do below the average at school or have failed several times and are overage.

Another public fact is that in Hungary in the past years crimes have been committed against more than 8000 juveniles and almost 5000 children, numbers that measure up to the average of the past five years. One of the greatest problems concerning child abuse is that it is extremely difficult to estimate an actual number. A large number of these crimes are often latent due to the fact that they are mainly committed within the family where the child is dependent on the offender who – in many cases – is the parent. Threatening actions usually happen at home, where child abuse can remain hidden for a long time without anyone who could be of possible help noticing it. We, however, are encountered with child abuse, sadly too late in most of the cases as we work in law enforcement. **2)**

## **1. The New Prison Law**

Hungary had adopted a new prison law in 2015. The former prison law passed during the time of socialism, was in effect for more than three and a half decades. During the past quarter of the century – but especially in the last 10 years – the legislators have attempted to form the new Code of Law enforcement but it is only recently that they have achieved their purpose. There were several conceptions and law-text drafts prepared by the prevailing ministries of justice and also there were professional discussions and social disputes. These

drafts and disputes often pressed for the settlement of the juveniles' situation either in a separate law or in even in inferior legal regulations.

In the set of rules and principles of the new Code of utmost importance is the aspect according to which becoming acquainted with the juvenile needs to be done in minor detail utilizing all the information gained from his/her former social environment (family, school, civil organizations). In the knowledge of these a personalized reintegration plan needs to be elaborated during the time of detention. In the course of this plan – and during the whole enforcement process – insufficient or failed socialization mistakes should be corrected the most important fields for this purpose being moral education, education and training and accustoming juveniles to work.

The new Code also emphasizes the importance of strengthening family relations. Juveniles should be prepared for their release by the promotion of their being taken back into the family, a process during the course of which grandparents might also get an important role. With this purpose the Code introduces two new legal institutions: family consultation and family therapy.

At the juvenile detainee's own request or upon the request of their legally appointed representative and with the permission of the penal institution every three months the detainee takes part in family consultation. This occasions of keeping contact in a free way take place within the institution. People to participate at these consultations are the parent or any other person who based on the Civil Code is entitled to keep contact with the detainee unless this right has been withdrawn or limited by the court or the guardian court. At the juvenile detainee's own request or upon the request of his/her legally appointed representative and with the permission of the penal institution the detainee may take part in family therapy. If the parent is not entitled to keep contact with the juvenile, he/she may not participate at these family therapy occasions. The number of these occasions is determined according to necessities. The participation of juveniles at these family therapy occasions may be exceptionally permitted even outside the penal institution. Family consultation and family therapy occasions are not considered occasions for receiving visitors and can be permitted even among the convicted themselves. The juveniles are allowed to keep contact with the educator of their training institution in the interest of their educational and exam obligations and for the sake of their personality development. Family consultation is a free form of meeting as opposed to family therapy where a family therapist fulfills his/her duties on a regular basis in the course of thematic occasions being built one upon the other. Family therapy is a method used in psychotherapy with the help of which the therapist can explore the reasons for the problems occurring in the family in collaboration with the person producing the symptoms and his/her family. In the course of therapy the specialist optimizes – as far as possible - the functioning of the family system, changes the quality of living through experiences and thus changes the behavior of the family as well. Putting down the notion of family therapy into a law is not justified as these notions have already been accepted in these supporting sciences and are widely known among professionals. Both the supporting family consultation and the family therapy may be carried out with the permission of the institution after careful consideration of the question whether the presence of the parents is in the interest of the juvenile and whether it endangers the success of the criminal procedure and the order and security of the law enforcement. The experiences gained by the Family Group Decision Making (FGDM), a group yet in its infancy, should all be made use of during family-type

meetings. The FGDM is a model for socialization by means of which and with the help of the family members and close relatives law enforcement, the patrons and the detainee can make decisions together and can draw up a plan which best meets the needs and expectations of the detainee and those of the family members. The discussions are held with the participation of a facilitator who facilitates the parties' situation during the dialogues. 3)

As further innovation I would also mention that upon his/her request of the detainee and his/her same sex sibling may be placed together as far as this is in favor of both juveniles and the penal institution can make it possible. The factors to be taken into consideration in case of these common accommodations are the past records of the detainees and the crimes they committed, the effect the common accommodation may have on the order and security of detention, the security of the juvenile as well as his/her emotional and mental state of development. This, however, is already a step towards strengthening family relations.

Another innovation is that participation at these reintegration programmes cannot be forbidden for juveniles even in case of solitary confinement resulting from a possible disciplinary offence. Thus, after getting into a group where he/she regularly gets help to cope with problems resulting from abuse or aggression a disciplinary punishment cannot be the cause of the detainee's dropping out from the process.

The new Code breaks with the former upper age limit for compulsory education which had been set at 16. The national public education act CXC / 2011 makes it possible for students with special education needs (SEN) that the expert committee extend compulsory education age limit to 23 or 21 for juveniles in a penal institution. In penal institutions this sphere of authority is fulfilled by the reformed Commission for Reception and Detention. Based on this, the most important task for juvenile penal institutions is education and training. In case of studies that have already been started the opportunity to meet examination obligations can be provided by the penal institution upon the juvenile's request and with the joint permission of the leader of the educational institution and of the commander of the penal institution. With the permission of the commander of the penal institution juveniles can become students or private students of educational institutions outside the penal institution, with school-attendance and taking examinations also being accomplished in that specific educational institution. School achievement and diligence should not be evaluated according to general standards but rather based on individual skills taking into consideration the juvenile's special needs, his/her personality development and intellectual capacity. This makes it possible even for those with the need for special treatment – resulting from a possible experience of abuse - to have a real sense of achievement. 4)

In accordance with the mentality of the new Code the penal institution is entitled to request pedagogical opinion from the educational institution or from the institute for the protection of children with the purpose of becoming better acquainted with the juvenile considering behavior, diligence, family background and skills that need to be improved. The received data can be utilized for the individual development plan, for the protection of the juvenile and for the estimation of possible risks. Elaboration of the educational programme in the penal institution as well as the juvenile's individual development plan should be based on the professional experience gained by correctional institutions which are controlled by the minister responsible for the protection of children and youth. The aims to be kept in view are: the promotion of the juvenile's integration into society, alleviation of the troubles resulting

from integration, settlement of the juvenile’s psychological state, improvement of his/her education of professional qualifications, acceptance of basic moral standards and preparation for a healthy lifestyle.

Further achievement of the new Code is that before releasing juveniles who have not turned 18 yet, the legal representative should be notified 60 days in advance so that the juvenile can later be turned over to the parent having the right for supervision or to the guardian. If despite prior notification turning over the juvenile to the parent or guardian should not be successful, or if the enforcement process reveals that the juvenile had been the victim of serious abuse, the penal institution appeals to the court of guardians in order to take necessary measures of child protection. Also, if the legal representative of the juvenile does not appear in person at the given time to take over the juvenile, and previously did not consent to the juvenile’s departure without supervision, the penal institution immediately contacts the authorized organ with the purpose of temporary placement at the place specified in the decision regarding temporary placement of juveniles. In other words, in the spirit of taking responsibility we do not allow a juvenile person under the age of 18 to leave the institution alone, unless we are authorized to act differently. We have the same obligation regarding protective supervision. If by the expected release date the juvenile has not turned 18 yet, the penal institution informs the juvenile’s competent service for protective supervision so that measures be taken regarding his/her protective supervision. If the juvenile does not wish to reside at the previous permanent address and notifies the penal institution about this in writing, the penal institution announces the service for protective supervision which is competent according to the address the juvenile wishes to reside at after his/her release. If prior to imprisonment the juvenile was taken into temporary or permanent care, the local service for protection of children must also be announced before the release in order to promote the juvenile’s placement.

Thus, the legislator stands for a clear and definite tendency regarding the enforcement juveniles’ imprisonment. On the basis of these we dispose of the following data regarding the stages of enforcement:

Table 1. Stages of enforcement regarding juvenile imprisonment

<b>Total (14-21 year)</b>	<b>Juvenile men</b>	<b>Juvenile women</b>	<b>Date: 11.09.2019</b>
221 person	204	17	Juv. in detention
	51	6	Juv. appealable convict
	48	3	Juv. in minimum security prison
	105	8	Juv. in prison

(Source: Own research, 2019.)

In comparison with the past years this number shows a stagnating tendency since in 2014. As I have already mentioned, when receiving detainees, penal institutions take into consideration several aspects as far as grouping of detainees is considered. Among these are the type of the crime committed and other criminological aspects. According to this, the most frequent crime committed by juvenile delinquents is robbery to be followed by theft, fleeing,

bodily harm and breach of the peace. Considering their age and number the occurrence of homicide is also very frequent. In frequency this is followed by damaging, sexual assault, rape and drug abuse.

From the point of view of both the institutions and the detainees one of the most important factors is the assessment of discipline and rewarding. The main aim of penal institutions is maintaining order and security, guarding and controlling. For detainees, however, it is rather the long-awaited release – be it actual release, probation or temporary leave – that counts more than anything and for this his/her disciplinary situation is very important. In all of the above mentioned penal institutions the section responsible for detainees aims at enforcing the principle of graduation. They employ lecturing as first method but in case this does not lead to a result in succession, punishment is employed and it is only in the last case that solitary confinement is used. Due to the characteristics of the age-group, juveniles have difficulty coping with solitary confinement since hereby they lose contact with their everyday community. Cutting on the amount of money they can spend on personal needs is a form of punishment rarely used with juveniles since they do not really dispose of deposit money. If we are assessing the disciplinary situation of detainees spending their prison sentence or those who are yet in detention, the examined period of time shows that the proportion for breaching of discipline is much higher in case of the latter. The reason for this behavior is that they do not understand that by being sentenced to imprisonment they might lose the possibility of being put on probation. Even if receiving a sentence seems probable, the due-date of the release seems so distant that they are unable to judge the importance of future legal consequences. Among them there are many who notoriously breach discipline and even employing solitary confinement does not have a retarding force. Those having received final judgment – as long as being put on probation is not excluded – are much more thoughtful and easier to manage especially if they are in the “prison” stage of enforcement.

As far as rewarding is considered enforcing positive management is the standard. It is characteristic for the majority of penal institutions that the proportion of rewarding for the sake of improving and maintaining motivation is higher than taking disciplinary actions. The most common form of rewarding is praise, but being allowed to maintain personal relations is another form serving for integration purposes. In this respect lengthening of visiting hours, accepting visitors out of turn, short-term leave, staying out in small groups are the most common ways. Due to the reasons mentioned above, another important form of rewarding is removing punishments from the record since chances are higher when there is a proposal made for the detainee to be put on probation. With their own resources and by involving outside organizations penal institution organize numerous programmes for detainees. Successful participation in these programmes is also a form of rewarding especially when they are related to national and religious holidays. The factors that some institutions mostly take into consideration in their rewarding practice are outstanding school achievement and exemplary work. Considering the fact that respecting the rules and working without payment are basic requirements towards the detainee, these are rarely rewarded or mainly upon initiative of the local supervisor.

Another fundamental concept of reintegration is education. For juvenile detainees everyday school education is extremely important, thus the above mentioned penal institutions have a contractual relation with 16 local or foundational schools nationwide and

work together with nearly teachers On demand, all four of the juvenile penal institutions provide possibilities for both primary and secondary education.

The juveniles who – for some reason – do not attend either primary or secondary school take part in specialized courses organized by the penal institution and/or civil organizations. Currently the most popular courses are the following: house-painter, folk-craftsman, cartman, real-estate maintainer, paver, kitchen assistant, butcher and agricultural worker. Based on the data available and on the examined period of time it can be stated that compared to previous years the number of juvenile detainees enrolled in education and training has risen. Despite these facts realizing and organizing trainings and courses meet with several difficulties. One of these difficulties is the fact that taking part in officially accredited trainings requires a grounding which is not always given in the case of juveniles (having completed the 8<sup>th</sup> or the 10<sup>th</sup> grade is a basic requirement for learning a profession). Furthermore, trainings are partly related to some kind of application which in some institutions can be realized with the help of a civilian organization. Once a person has taken part in some kind of course/training, taking part in further courses free of charge is not possible. Also, if in civil life a person has already taken part in an officially accredited training, there is no possibility to obtain further qualifications free of charge.

## **2. Proceedings and methodology**

The target group of the research was the group of juvenile delinquents<sup>1</sup> – both boys and girls – spending their valid sentence to imprisonment irrespective of the stage of enforcement. The place of our investigation were the four national – regional juvenile - penal institutions.<sup>2</sup> Due to the primarily empirical character of the research as a first step the juveniles were asked to fill in a questionnaire package which consisted of three complete psychological questionnaires and one complementary sociological questionnaire. Aggression and hostility were measured with the Buss-Durkee questionnaire, childhood memories were measured with the EMBU questionnaire, and abuse was measured with the questionnaire Duluth Minnesota “Nagy 26”.<sup>3</sup> The complementary questionnaire was meant to complete the “Nagy 26” questionnaire concentrating on its social aspects, thus they were assessed together.

The questionnaires were filled in by the juveniles themselves inside the institutions in the premises indicated for this purpose by the penal institution. Each questioned convict was given a research number which consisted of the initials of his/her penal institution and three numbers. Coding was considered extremely important since we are convinced that these juveniles have serious problems of distrust. Thus, before starting the questionnaires we had already explained to them what we were measuring, what we were curious about and we

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<sup>1</sup> Juvenile delinquent: a young person between the age of 14-21 spending his/her sentence to imprisonment

<sup>2</sup> At the time of the investigation the number of juveniles in our penal institutions was as follows: 157 persons in Tököl; 24 persons in Kecskemét; 52 persons in Szirmabesenyő; 32 persons in Pécs.

<sup>3</sup> In selecting the questionnaires only those were considered, which were valid questionnaires in Hungarian language expediently measuring the specific problem and which had already been used in similar international researches. This is how the above mentioned three questionnaire types were selected.

emphasized the anonym character of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were handed out one by one, with no time limit set for filling them in.<sup>4</sup>

The Buss-Durkee questionnaire was the first to be completed since the 75 items it contains supposedly required the most serious concentration. This was followed by the 23 items of the EMBU questionnaire (with 2x4 possible answers) and then the Nagy “26” (consisting of twenty-six “yes-no-I do not know” possible answers). Thanks to the supporting attitude of the institutions even those juveniles were able to fill in the questionnaires who were just then taking part in education or doing work, or were - for certain reasons – being put into security separation or solitary confinement. Filling in the questionnaires – except for those in solitary confinement – happened in the presence of invigilators (supervisors were not present) and juveniles were seated in the room in such a way that they could not see each other’s test or answers and they could not communicate with each other. Once one set of questionnaire had been completed, the invigilators collected them and handed out the next set. Our primary goal was to create an atmosphere where those filling in the questionnaire dared to mark the answers that best described their actual situation. If there had been a threat that they or the invigilator might have looked into each other’s papers, these juveniles would have tended to mark the answers they think others expected them to. Being wicked and preserving the image they have created about themselves in front of others are sometimes the reasons for their totally denying the actual truth.

The second stage of research – based on the results gained from the processing and assessment of the questionnaires – was setting up a focus-group formed by those juveniles who were most likely coming from abusing families. The group comprised 148 people. With each member of the group we took a semi-structured in-depth interview prepared by us and lasting several hours on multiple occasions. By means of this interview – and already in possession of the questionnaire results – we intended to create a dialogue where getting better acquainted with the juvenile might lead to revealing the problems related to the concerned area and we also might get an idea about possible treatment demands. In the interest of this, when preparing the guidelines of the interview we took into consideration those Euro ADAD structured interview items which could be applied to the target group of our research. Subsequently the interview was complemented with the guidelines of the “Rooming In” reception-interview applied by juvenile penal institutions. After receiving general information our aim was to examine parental-family background. It is difficult to call it parental background because quite a few juvenile convicts grew up in community homes or were brought up by grandparents or other relatives. The aim of the in-depth structured interview was to start a conversation where we might specify the details not revealed in the questionnaire (eg. the identity of the abusive person, the way of abuse, its degree, the current relation with the abusing person, the post-release situation – whether the detainee has to return to the abusive person etc.)

Throughout the whole interview we never lost sight of the question of reliability. Unbroken focus was required on the things told by the convicts and their correspondence with the official information form convicts’ files. It is a characteristic feature of abused juveniles

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<sup>4</sup> Considering the time needed for the questionnaires the juveniles in all four institutions spent an average of 1,5-2 hours on filling in the packages.



that they like to confabulate.<sup>5</sup> In addition to this it is also possible that the detainee distorts reality and the question of credibility arises, whether the interviewee is lying or not. Furthermore we also had to take into consideration the fact that subjective value judgment and fading of memories may also occur in these cases.

Before making the interview the results of the questionnaires had been examined and beside detailed analysis of certain items we also looked into the interviewee's background files. These were mainly provided by psychologists of the institutions and the convict's reintegration officer. We also looked into the study of the patron's living conditions, the record of the reception interview, the rewarding and disciplinary situation of the detainee during the time of detention, his/her relations, and notes of any other impressions that could help us prepare for the interview. This way we were able to guide our questions in a direction that focused on answers that were related to the topic of our research and often brought along serious emotional waves.

After the interviews and in possession of seriously founded facts a further analysis followed. The respective juvenile's reintegration officer was asked to give verbal details about the detainee's non-official behaviour inside the institution, about his/her conduct with his cell-mates, classmates and staff members, and about his/her possible position in the prison's informal network. In short, all the data not included in the detainee subsystem, in the studies of living conditions, or in the issuance of the sentence. After summarizing all the above data we were able to complete the respective juvenile's profile of abuse.<sup>6</sup>

### **3. A short survey of the Hungarian research**

In 2015-2016 we had a longitudinal research of the population in Hungarian juvenile prisons. Our main goal was to assess on a national level the relations existing between juveniles and their being abused, i.e. the proportion to which young offenders coming from abusing families are present in the penal institutions, the type of crimes they have committed and whether there is a pattern to be found in that crime or in the way it was committed. The primary focus of our home research was the examination of relations between child abuse and violent crimes among our juvenile convicts.

The research was built upon the investigation of two aspects. Our primary goal was to examine how many of the juvenile delinquents being imprisoned in our penal institutions were actually abused by their family. Furthermore we examined whether juveniles coming from abusing families have committed more violent crimes than those coming from non-abusing families and also the way they were behaving during the time of their detention. A rather indirect but still very significant aim of the research was to draw attention to a specific group which is not examined separately by law-enforcement, even though their significant number would give cause for attention. For it is a fact that among juveniles spending their detention in our institutions there are quite a few coming from very severe abusing and

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<sup>5</sup> Meaning: a kind of pathological inaccuracy where during remembrance memories are complemented with or replaced by false, fictitious elements. A lot of research and numerous studies have proven by now that recalling false memories or confabulating may also appear if the person had experienced serious traumatic events and thus finds it difficult to distinguish between real memories and associations coming from his/her fantasy.

<sup>6</sup> The profiles can be read in the monograph published by the author (Czenczer, Orsolya: Dangerous juveniles or juveniles in danger? NKE Kiadó kft, Budapest, 2014)

endangering family circumstances. These children have very little chance for successful reintegration if they only receive the currently applied programmes and activities. In their case a lot more attention is needed, they require activities held separately and expediently and also extensive mental care.

#### **4. Field research results**

There are a lot of tasks to deal with in the field of juvenile corrections. Taking one step back and looking at the whole picture from a distance one could state that current penal institutions, especially juvenile prisons, actually fulfil the task of a parent. And that is quite a task since we receive the convict as he is in his actual physical, mental, spiritual, and financial state. Then begins the race with time, where we have a determined period of time at our disposal to turn the received convict into such a law-abiding person in proper physical, mental and spiritual condition who is turning his back on criminal life style. During all this time we fulfil the role of a parent i.e. we provide accommodation, food three times a day, clean clothes, health service and several ways to maintain relations with others. Furthermore, we provide education, training, professional trainings, jobs and employment to everyone according to their needs. We create groups so that our help be more efficient in drug-prevention, personality disorders, and psycho-social problems. We raise spirits and organize group-activities; we employ pet-stroking, drama pedagogy and acting; we provide sports facilities, cultural programmes, concerts, a library, guitar club and numerous other possibilities. We have one unit of time at our disposal to correct, develop, support, or remove those primary or secondary socialization-deficiencies, models, and patterns where parents or schools have failed. Furthermore, we need to make it all measurable and thus we measure ourselves as well by estimating the risks of relapsing. However, what happens if during all these measures or rather before them we come to realize that we need to re-evaluate our task and our role as the “parent” because we are standing in front of an abused child.

#### **5. Results and findings of our research**

The research provided us with a comprehensive and thorough picture about the situation of abuse of juvenile detainees spending their prison-sentence in our national penal institutions. Due to the limited length of this study there is no possibility for a detailed presentation of the situation. Thus we only intend to give a brief description of the statistical analysis, the questionnaire results, and with demonstrative purpose we will present our prepared suggestions.

The research has brought about quite surprising findings. One of these was the fact that the frequency of answers on both the paternal and maternal scale was of about the same proportion. It is important to point out that the majority of respondents stated that they had never experienced hard treatment, corporal punishment, judgment, the role of the black sheep, a sense of shame, or punishment on the part of either parent. In fact, love, consolation, and showing pride occurred very frequently at the majority of respondents. On maternal scale excessive anxiety had often been experienced by the majority of the respondents. The rather infrequent presence (representation) of a negative parental relationship can be assessed only moderately since it was precisely the EMBU questionnaire that the fewest respondents filled

in thoroughly. These frequency results – together with those previously presented results which have proven the average score of the NAGY-26 abuse-questionnaire to be significantly higher in the case of those not having filled in the EMBU questionnaire – raise the possibility that it may have been exactly those who were sensitive to this topic who were “hiding” and refused to fill in certain items of the EMBU questionnaire. In other words, we are talking about those having bad memories about their relationship with their parents. This, however, would be very difficult to prove scientifically. This is why we need to consider a number of possible reasons for the results:

1. As a basic functioning method or inner driving force detainees of penal institutions tend to put themselves in a favourable light, and conceal their deficiencies or hide certain features from the staff with the intention of strengthening their own imaginary or actual status inside the closed community. This can most easily be done in terms of their outside circumstances and relations which are difficult to check. Regarding the above mentioned scales of rejection and abuse – besides warding off or rejecting memories – further reason behind the shifted frequency of answers may be concealment or the intention of putting themselves in a favourable light.

2. At the same time we should consider and through further research examine the fact that due to their socialization circumstances and subcultural characteristics juvenile detainees taking part in this study-sample may relate dissenting interpretations and a concrete behaviour to certain items of the questionnaire. Also, they may not even exactly understand the meaning of the statements.

3. One of our most significant findings was that the most important factors influencing the score on the topic of aggression in the whole study-sample were maternal and paternal rejection, and abuse. Based on the aggression-subscales the sample got clearly divided into two groups: one group with a higher and one with a lower score for aggression. In the group with higher aggression the scores for maternal and paternal rejection, for maternal emotional warmth, and for abuse were higher. Considering the fact that those who had only partially filled in the EMBU questionnaire scored significantly higher at the item of abuse than those who had fully completed it. Thus the possibility has occurred that refusing to complete the questionnaire might be related to a psychological averting mechanism. This is how those who had been severely abused by their parents are trying to exclude or deny their traumatic experiences.

4. Another possible answer to this situation is that being abused was considered to be a normal pattern and had become part of his-her set of values to such an extent that its actual quality had never been questioned. During the interview several convicts confirmed that physical violence is a normal means to be used by a parent when raising a child. Thus, it is possible that the persons examined in this study interpreted abstract notions like love, parental pride, tenderness, over-protection, and anxiety exclusively through their own socialization patterns. If we accept the fact that these semantic contents may have significantly different interpretations in certain subcultural communities, it will be easier to understand how opposite scales are parallel to each other in high scores. In this respect it would be worth examining the effect of subcultural differences as well. Since in certain closed and small communities sentences like “My father was proud of me”, “they comforted me when I

was sad”, or “they worried too much about me” may have totally different meanings or behavioural manifestations.

5. A further possibility might be that protecting the desired maternal or paternal image was a stronger driving force than the motivation for filling in the tests. These juveniles may not have had a tender, emotionally warm relationship with their father or with either of the parents but still, since the questionnaire is insisting on exactly this sore point, they marked the higher score on the positive scales in order to protect the parental pattern and also their own self.

Professionals state that neither those committing domestic violence, nor the victims of it dispose of a special psychological profile. Naturally, studies show that there exist some risk factors or factors of resistance influencing the complex phenomenon of domestic violence. The first risk factors to be emphasized by these studies are those socio-cultural traditions or “patriarchal features” which in certain social groups “prescribe” the abuse of family members (“I was also beaten by my father, this is how I ended up being a decent man” or “the more you beat a woman, the better they be”). Alcohol and drug addiction are also to be mentioned here as well as the occurrence of violence in earlier family history. However, there are persons (both women and men) who despite these risk factors are not violent in the family, their psychological resistance – inner rejection – is stronger than family traditions or patterns.

## **Summary**

According to Daniel Coleman juvenile prisons have become almost inevitable stations in the stormy life of those who have been abused since their early childhood. As the interpretation of the statistical data of our own research shows the score for aggression in the case of juveniles living in our penal institutions was mainly influenced by the paternal or maternal rejection, and abuse. Thus, it has become obvious that violence occurring in the majority of crimes committed at a young age is a manifestation of a deviant attitude for handling a problem in a community and it may originate from home.

The study has revealed some interesting connections, however, it is likely to have raised even more questions than to have found answers.

It was an interesting experience that the majority of juveniles “officially” considered to have been neglected had a positive opinion about prisons. For them the prison is a strong and stable environment where the staff handle them with love (the educator, the priest, the psychologist, and even the district representative cares about them). Another interesting experience was to see how many physically abused children protect their parents and seek for some excuse or absolution for them. Especially in those cases where both parents were emotionally cold or abusing, the child tended to blame himself, the situation or life in general. However, he understands, protects his parents and searches for explanations. In those cases where there is a secure and loving relationship with the mother, the child usually recognizes the improper behaviour of the father. As a result the child stands aloof or turns away from the father, does not want to have any relationship with him and is aware of the fact that the father’s hurting him was unfair. Further interesting observation was that each and every child had a desperate desire to have a family. Despite a series of disappointments, not returned relationship-sheets, or parents not showing up on visiting days, the moment the slightest sign of interest appeared on the side of the parent the majority of the children reacted in an extreme

way: either they responded immediately, and were happily looking forward to the visit or they were aggressive venting their tension on others, turning against themselves, against others, or against the rules. Those juveniles who, based on the results of the questionnaires, got into the “abused” group showed a connection between maintaining a relationship with a relative and the frequency of disciplinary, educational, or psychological hearings.

Programmes organized by penal institutions should be specifically personalized, if needed. The task of law enforcement is – especially in the case of juveniles – to organize programmes and activities that adjust to the characteristics of the age-group promoting their physical development as well as the improvement and maintenance of their skills and abilities. Reintegration is a system of multiple stairs, leaving out a stair or taking them in twos is not possible.