

EDUCATION OF CONVICTED PERSONS IN THE CZECH PRISON SYSTEM: RESOCIALIZATION MEANING, INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR EFFECTIVENESS

EDUCAÇÃO DE CONDENADOS NO SISTEMA PRISIONAL TCHeco: SIGNIFICADO DE RESSOCIALIZAÇÃO, CONDIÇÕES INSTITUCIONAIS E PERSPECTIVAS DE EFICÁCIA

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Abstract: *The aim of this professional paper is to analyse in depth the role of education for prisoners in the process of their resocialisation and reintegration into society after serving a prison sentence. The research questions focus on the specific functions of formal and informal education in the Czech prison system, their institutional and organisational conditions, and the extent to which they contribute to reducing the risk of recidivism. To achieve this objective, a strategy of expert qualitative analysis of secondary data was used, including content analysis of official statistics of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, legislative documents and relevant professional literature. The study identifies key determinants of the effectiveness of educational programmes, analyses their structure, content focus and institutional framework, and formulates recommendations for the further development of educational policy in the prison system, taking into account the current challenges of resocialisation practice.*

Keywords: *correctional education programs. Imprisonment. prison education. resocialization.*

Resumo: *O objetivo deste artigo profissional é analisar em profundidade o papel da educação de presos no processo de ressocialização e reintegração à sociedade após o cumprimento de pena. As questões de pesquisa concentram-se nas funções específicas da educação formal e informal no sistema prisional tcheco, suas condições institucionais e organizacionais e em que medida contribuem para a redução do risco de reincidência. Para atingir esse objetivo, utilizou-se uma estratégia de análise qualitativa especializada de dados secundários, incluindo análise de conteúdo de estatísticas oficiais do Serviço Prisional da República Tcheca, documentos legislativos e literatura profissional relevante. O estudo identifica os principais determinantes da eficácia dos programas educacionais, analisa sua estrutura, foco no conteúdo e arcabouço institucional, e formula recomendações para o desenvolvimento futuro da política educacional no sistema prisional, levando em consideração os desafios atuais da prática de ressocialização.*

Palavras-chave: *programas de educação correcional. Prisão. Educação prisional. Ressocialização.*

Introduction

Every modern state designs its prison system in accordance with legislative, economic and cultural-social conditions. In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, the prison system is perceived not only as a tool for the protection of society, but also as a means of resocialization of convicted persons. The emphasis is on treatment that respects fundamental human rights and dignity and also creates conditions for positive behavioural change (Council of Europe, 2006). This approach includes efforts to prepare prisoners for their return to society through targeted programmes aimed at developing work, social and personal skills. One of the main areas in this process is education, both formal and non-formal, which creates the conditions for social reintegration after release (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020).

The issue of prison education must be viewed through the prism of several complementary theoretical perspectives. The first point of departure is the concepts of resocialisation and secondary socialisation as defined by Berger and Luckmann (1966). Secondary socialisation is the process of acquiring new roles, values and norms that takes place in adulthood and in situations of major life change, which imprisonment undoubtedly is. Here, educational activities function as a mechanism to promote adaptation and the restoration of identities that have been disrupted by deviant behaviour and isolation (Giddens, 1991).

Also fundamental is the theoretical anchorage in the concept of human capital (Becker, 1964), according to which education represents an investment in an individual's future socio-economic status. Empirical findings have long demonstrated that completing educational and vocational programs in prison increases the chances of employment upon release while significantly reducing the risk of recidivism (RAND Corporation, 2014; Cervone, 2018). For example, an analysis by the RAND Corporation (2014) shows that participation in an education program reduces recidivism rates by 13 percentage points, representing not only individual but also macroeconomic benefits.

Social deviance theories are also an important inspiration. Merton's (1968) notion of anomie explains crime as the result of a mismatch between society's goals and the available means to achieve them. Educational programs can therefore play a key role in mediating legitimate means to achieve life goals and reducing the tendency to resort to illegitimate strategies. From this perspective, education is part of a broader strategy of preventing recidivism through empowerment and self-esteem (Lernert, 1971).

The lifelong learning paradigm is also part of the theoretical framework (Delors et al., 2010), according to which education goes beyond formal schooling and is to be understood as a lifelong process of developing personal, civic and professional competencies. In this sense, prison education represents a specific field that builds on the principles of inclusion and the right of every person to education, regardless of their social status or background (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020).

Psychological theories of motivation and self-regulation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Bandura, 1997) point to the importance of autonomy, competence and a sense of meaningfulness as key factors in intrinsic motivation to learn. Therefore, in prison settings where many inmates have negative learning experiences, it is essential to build an environment that fosters self-confidence and motivation for self change. Experience from Scandinavia shows that it is the approach of promoting autonomy and meaningfulness that is one of the main factors in low reoffending rates (Prison Reform Trust, 2021).

Critical approaches, represented in particular by Foucault's (1995) analysis of prison institutions, note the risk of instrumentalising education as a means of discipline and social control. Therefore, educational activities should be understood not only as a means of formal correction, but also as an opportunity to restore human dignity and participation in social life. Moreover, the restorative justice perspective (Braithwaite, 1989) emphasizes that the reintegration process is effective when it promotes the active assumption of responsibility for one's own life and positive relationships with the community.

Finally, prison education needs to be seen in the wider context of social exclusion and the accumulation of disadvantage. Bauman (2005) points out that under conditions of so-called fluid modernity, social exclusion becomes a structural characteristic of social processes. Therefore, education not only serves the function of vocational training, but also that of strengthening social cohesion and alleviating the inequalities that are often at the root of criminal careers (Silver, 1994).

Based on these theoretical approaches, it can be concluded that prison education is a multi-layered phenomenon with significant individual, social and economic impacts. Its effectiveness, however, is contingent not only on the quality of its curricular content, but also on its ability to respond to the complex educational needs of inmates and to promote their motivation, self-regulation, and sense of meaningfulness in their own endeavors.

Methodology

The methodological framework of this paper is based on the strategy of in-depth expert analysis of secondary data, which was chosen with regard to the nature of the topic under study and the specific research questions focused on systemic, institutional and content aspects of education of prisoners in the Czech prison system. The chosen approach combines elements of qualitative content analysis with descriptive and comparative analysis of statistical data. The aim of the methodological approach was to systematically identify and interpret the key determinants of the effectiveness of educational activities and to clarify their relationship to the process of resocialization and reintegration of convicted persons into society.

The research questions were designed as follows:

- (1) What is the structure, organization and content of formal and informal educational programs implemented in prison facilities in the Czech Republic?
- (2) What are the institutional, legislative and personnel conditions for their implementation?
- (3) What is the expected and empirically documented impact of these educational activities on reducing the recidivism rate and strengthening the work and social potential of prisoners?
- (4) What are the main barriers and limiting factors that affect the effectiveness of education in the prison environment?

The data base of the study consists mainly of a set of official statistical data published by the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, including quantitative data on the number of persons involved, the structure of educational programmes, completion rates and demographic characteristics of convicts. Furthermore, legislative documents (in particular Act No. 169/1999 Coll., on the execution of imprisonment, and Act No. 555/1992 Coll., on the Prison Service of the Czech Republic), internal regulations of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, conceptual materials of the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic and related strategic documents of the European Union and the Council of Europe were analysed. The methodological procedure also included a detailed content analysis of the literature, which included relevant monographs, articles in impacted and peer-reviewed journals, research reports of reputable institutions and available international comparative studies.

The analytical part was carried out in two main stages. In the first stage, a systematic categorization of information was carried out, sorting it into thematic headings and identifying the basic characteristics of educational programmes (e.g. type of educational activities, form of implementation, target group, scope of curriculum, completion of education). At this stage, data were triangulated between multiple sources to ensure validity and reliability. The second stage consisted of an analytical assessment of the available quantitative indicators and their interpretation in the context of relevant theories of resocialisation and lifelong learning. Emphasis was placed on identifying trends, barriers and associations between educational participation and recidivism risk factors.

A combination of open and selective coding was applied in the content analysis, which allowed for the gradual refinement of categories and the construction of thematic units reflecting institutional, organizational, personal and motivational aspects of education. A comparative approach was used to compare the Czech prison education system with examples of good practice in selected European countries (especially Scandinavia, Germany) and the United States. This comparison was based on available studies published in international databases and research reports of professional institutions.

The limitations of the chosen methodological strategy lie primarily in the absence of primary empirical research focused on the perspective of the prisoners themselves and the teaching staff directly involved in the educational process. Therefore, the results of the analysis mainly reflect

the institutional and systemic level of the issue, not the individual experiences of the programme participants. These limitations have been partially mitigated by triangulating different types of sources and by emphasizing data comparison with the results of recent international studies.

Overall, the methodological strategy was designed to enable a comprehensive and critical analysis of the topic under study and to provide a basis for the formulation of relevant recommendations for both the professional community and prison education policy makers. Emphasis was placed on linking the analytical level with the conceptual framework of resocialisation, on identifying systemic obstacles and opportunities, and on placing the results in the broader international context of prison education reform.

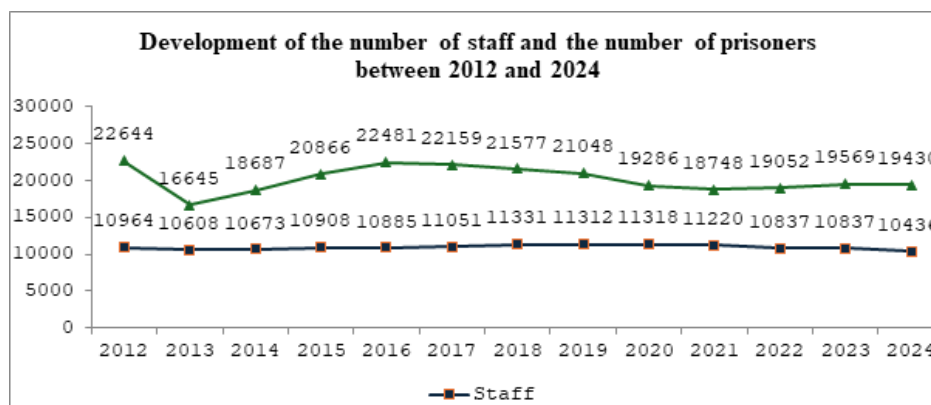
Results

Organisational structure and characteristics of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic

The Prison Service of the Czech Republic is a security service established by the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic. Its main tasks derive from Act No. 555/1992 Coll., on the Prison Service and Judicial Guard of the Czech Republic. The Prison Service of the Czech Republic ensures the execution of detention, the execution of custodial sentences and the execution of pre-trial detention.

It consists of 35 prisons (10 of which are remand prisons) and three detention facilities. The system also includes the Academy of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, based in Stráž pod Ralskem, and the Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, which provides education for prisoners through educational centres in selected prisons (Jůzl, Vlach, 2022).

Figure 1. Development of the number of staff and the number of prisoners between 2012 and 2024



Source: own research (Statistics from the Prison Service of the Czech Republic)

As of 31 May 2025, there were 17,843 persons in custody, 1,689 persons in detention and 117 persons in protective custody. Women accounted for 1,779 of the total number of prisoners, juveniles were 84 and foreigners 1,674. The density of prisons was 98 per cent, which confirms the persistent overcrowding of facilities. The average daily cost per prisoner was CZK 1 900 (Juříček, Vlach, Kopencová, 2022).

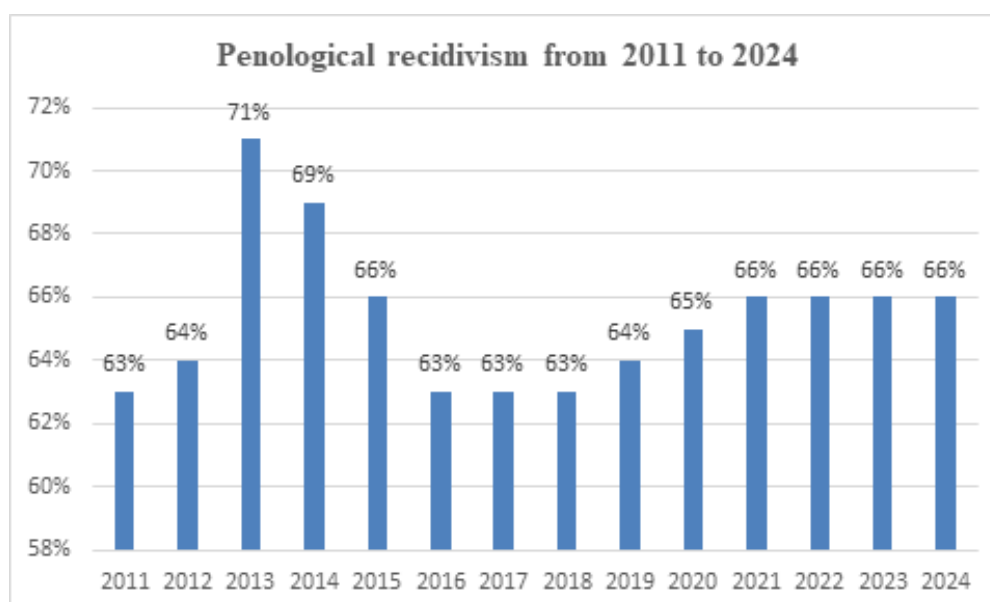
The employees of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic include members of the service who perform security, escort and guarding tasks, and civilian employees with professional competence, such as social workers, educators and psychological specialists. The total number of employees as of 31 December 2024 was 10 436 persons, including 6478 officers and 3958 civilian employees (Statistics of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic).

Execution of prison sentences and treatment programme

The execution of custodial sentences in the Czech Republic is governed by Act No 169/1999 Coll., on the execution of custodial sentences, as amended. This legislation defines not only the basic conditions of execution of sentences and the organisation of the prison system, but above all reflects the modern concept of punishment, which does not consist solely in isolating the offender from society. The primary aim of serving a sentence is to positively influence the behaviour of the convicted person, motivate him or her to change and prepare him or her for successful integration into life at liberty.

Therefore, the law clearly obliges the Prison Service of the Czech Republic to create systemic, personal and material conditions for the implementation of the process of resocialisation by convicts. This includes, in particular, the implementation of individualised programmes aimed at education, job placement, personal development, strengthening of social competences and support for maintaining family and social ties. The aim is systematic and planned work with imprisoned persons, based on the knowledge of penology, psychology and pedagogy, which aims to contribute to their resocialisation and reduce the risk of recidivism (Vlach, Rak, 2021).

Figure 2. Penological recidivism from 2011 to 2024



Source: Raszková, 2025, p. 41

The basic tool of this work is the so-called treatment programme, which is structured into five main activities, namely work, education, special education, leisure and the area of external relations. Each convict is given an individual treatment programme upon entering prison, based on his or her personal characteristics, the length of the sentence, the type of crime and the level of education attained. The aim of the treatment programme is to promote attitudinal change, develop work habits, strengthen social skills and eliminate risk factors related to criminal activity. The program is mandatory and regularly evaluated by professional staff (Vlach, Stárek, 2025).

The treatment program includes:

The work activities in the treatment program are primarily focused on establishing basic work habits, responsibility and rhythm of the workday. Inmates are assigned to work activities according to their abilities and health status. The work may be carried out for the benefit of the prison, in cooperation with external bodies or in independent establishments. The remuneration for work is used to cover the costs of serving the sentence, maintenance, fines or savings.

Educational activities constitute a crucial area of the treatment programme. They are mainly

intended for persons without a basic education or without professional qualifications. They are implemented through school education centres, with an emphasis on functional literacy, vocational orientation and skills useful in the labour market. Courses are completed with a certificate or a diploma.

Special education activities include individual and group work led by psychologists, teachers and social workers. The aim is to influence value orientation, attitudes towards crime and to strengthen the ability to reflect on the consequences of one's own actions. It also includes therapeutic work to address addictions and other risk factors.

Activities of interest are a means of active and meaningful use of leisure time. Activities on offer include sports, arts and crafts, literary groups, music ensembles or drama groups. These activities contribute to the development of creativity, interpersonal cooperation and positive self-esteem.

The area of external relations is oriented towards maintaining and strengthening contacts with family and close relatives. This area also provides assistance in securing employment or housing after release, including contact with employment offices, social service organisations and post-penitentiary care.

Education of prisoners

Education of convicted persons in the Czech prison system includes both formal school education and informal educational courses, retraining and other forms of lifelong learning. The aim of educational activities is primarily to increase the qualification level, motivation to work and to strengthen social and cognitive competences necessary for successful resocialisation and re-integration of prisoners (Vlach, Stárek, 2025).

Daněk et al (2023) state that adult education in the prison environment does not only serve to impart knowledge and professional skills, but above all it must be understood as deeply formative, enabling the individual to regain a sense of meaningfulness, renew self-esteem and consciously work to change their life direction.

Education in custody not only serves the function of vocational training, but also has a significant value in the field of re-socialisation, as it contributes to the restoration of the convicted person's distorted identity and to strengthening his or her responsibility towards society. Prison education cannot be reduced to the pragmatic objective of employability. It has a broader psychological, social and ethical dimension, as it helps the convict to reassume roles that have been interrupted or lost (Stárek, Víšek, 2022).

Without professional diagnosis of educational needs, without the collaboration of educators with psychologists, social workers and instructors, and without an environment that respects the dignity of prisoners and supports their intrinsic motivation, effective educational impact cannot be achieved. This framework is necessary for a truly resocializing effect of education (Danek, 2024).

The authors Stárek et al. (2024) state that education of convicted persons cannot be understood only as a means of improving skills or as a tool of vocational training for post-release conditions. In its deeper meaning, it represents a specific form of secondary socialisation that has the potential to remedy deficits incurred in the previous life of the incarcerated person, especially in the areas of educational and work habits, the ability to plan, self-regulation and acceptance of responsibility for one's own life path. Many prisoners enter prison with a significantly impaired school experience, without having completed primary education, without a positive attitude towards learning and often without any meaningful employment. In this context, education plays a key role as a resocialisation tool, contributing to reducing the risk of permanent social exclusion and re-entry into a criminal environment.

Formal education takes place under the responsibility of the Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic, which operates educational centres in several prisons. It provides teaching in three-year and two-year courses, including courses for persons with special educational needs. The study programmes are completed with a certificate of completion and have the same requirements as education obtained in schools outside the prison environment.

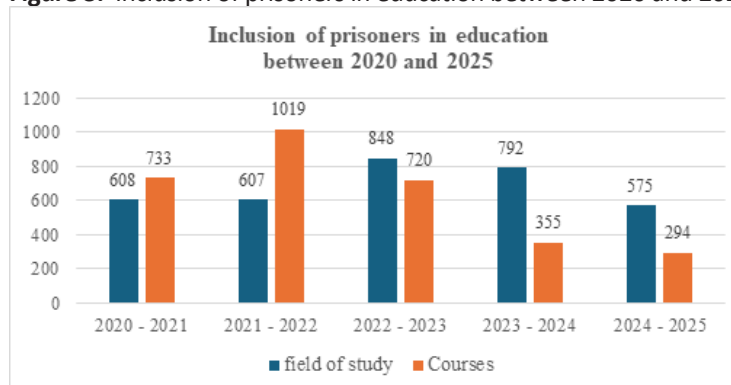
Non-formal education is provided in the form of short-term courses, retraining, computer and language courses and training programmes aimed at developing soft skills. It is often organised in cooperation with external educational institutions and non-governmental non-profit organisations.

The Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic is a specialised educational institution which plays a major role in the system of education of prisoners. As of 31 May 2025, teaching took place in the school education centres established in the prisons of Heřmanice, Pardubice, Plzeň, Rýnovice, Světlá nad Sázavou, Valdice, Všehrady, Kuřim, Stráž pod Ralskem and Příbram, while the Kuřim School Education Centre has a branch in Znojmo Prison. Teaching is mainly provided by tribal teachers with experience in the specific environment of the prison, supplemented by external lecturers.

In the school year 2023/2024, a total of 561 pupils were enrolled in formal education, with a decrease in active learners to 432 in the reporting period 30 September 2023 to 31 June 2024. The subjects taught included. Electrician - Power, Cook - Waiter, Mechanical Engineer, Metalworker, Carpenter, Laundry Sewing and Operational Services. Classes are taught in the so-called evening form, whereby learners are not employed but are considered the equivalent of „working persons“ within the meaning of the European Prison Rules.

In the school year 2023-2024, 148 inmates took part in the final examinations, of whom 136 successfully obtained their teaching certificate. 63 convicts passed with distinction (Statistics of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic).

Figure 3. Inclusion of prisoners in education between 2020 and 2025



Source: own research (Statistics from the Prison Service of the Czech Republic)

The possibility of obtaining a merit scholarship, which is regulated in the internal scholarship regulations, is an incentive to study. Teaching is organised according to the framework and school educational programmes approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, in the range of 21 to 28 teaching hours per week.

The courses on offer focus on technical trades and services such as bricklayer, carpenter, cook, painter-painter, electrician, but also, for example, seamstress or service work. The education of female convicts takes place exclusively at the Světlá nad Sázavou Education Centre, which is also equipped with training workshops and sewing facilities. Graduates receive a teaching certificate without any indication of the place of imprisonment, which positively influences their employability after release. Since 1983, more than 36 000 prisoners have undergone this training system.

However, from the above figures, it is necessary to be realistic about the external and institutional constraints that have burdened education in the prison environment for a long time. The most frequently cited factors are the lack of qualified teaching staff, the lack of suitable teaching facilities, the organisational conflict between education and the prisoners' work commitments, and the security regime of the facility, which severely limits time and staff flexibility. These limitations have a major impact on the capacity of the educational programmes, their stability and the continuity of education for long-term and short-term prisoners. In some prisons, for example, access to formal education is restricted to selected individuals, reducing equality of opportunity for personal development and re-socialisation (Stárek et al, 2024).

Table 1. Breakdown of prisoners by highest educational attainment as of 31 December 2024

Highest educational attainment	Male	Female	Total
Not detected (foreigner), not specified	155	9	164
Special school	433	46	479
No primary education	24	12	36
Not completed primary education	195	16	211
Primary education	7951	859	8810
Apprenticeship without matriculation	5554	361	5915
Apprenticeship with matriculation	320	18	338
Secondary education without matriculation	77	5	82
Secondary education with a high school diploma	1163	193	1356
Higher vocational	26	3	29
Higher education - Bachelor's degree	66	10	76
Higher education - Master's degree	177	14	191
Higher education - doctorate	27	5	32
Total	16168	1551	17719

Source: own research (Statistics from the Prison Service of the Czech Republic)

International perspective on the role of education in prisons and its impact on recidivism

Research and international practice show that participation in formal education during imprisonment has a positive impact on reducing potential recidivism. Education not only enhances work skills and adaptability to the legal labour market, but also contributes to the development of self-confidence, responsibility and the ability to manage conflict or risk situations.

The importance of education for prisoners cannot be seen in isolation from the wider issue of recidivism. Recidivism after serving a sentence is one of the most serious problems in the criminal justice system. According to the available data from the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, the recidivism rate in the Czech Republic has long been over 60%, with particularly high rates recorded for persons without primary or secondary education.

Foreign research published in prestigious impact journals clearly confirms that education of prisoners is one of the most effective tools for resocialisation and prevention of recidivism. Significant analyses, longitudinal studies and case studies from recent years show that participation in formal or vocational education during imprisonment significantly reduces the likelihood of re-offending and at the same time increases the likelihood of successful reintegration into society.

One analysis published in 2023 summarises the results of studies on the effectiveness of prison education and concludes that those involved in secondary education have, on average, a 15% lower recidivism rate than those without such experience. Participants in college or vocational (occupational) programs experienced even more significant declines, as much as 30-43% (see Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2023).

Similarly, a study by Chloupis and Kontompasi (2025) published in the journal *Global Society* demonstrates that well-structured training programs that focus on practical skills and cognitive shifts contribute not only to reduced recidivism but also to enhanced self-esteem, personal stability, and the development of soft skills that are crucial for employment and social reintegration after release.

Another study published in *The Prison Journal* (Cervone, 2018) shows that the recidivism rate for those who participated in educational activities was only 34%, while for those with no educational experience it was 43%. The importance of education was also confirmed in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when learning was done at a distance, where, according to a study by McNeeley (2023), even short-term retraining courses had a positive impact on enhancing work potential and adaptive skills.

International comparisons of recidivism rates across European countries also confirm the

importance of education as a systemic factor. In the Czech Republic, according to various statistics, the long-term recidivism rate is 57-75% (Econstor, 2023), which is above the EU average. By contrast, in Scandinavia, specifically Norway, the recidivism rate is around 18 % within two years of release, which is often attributed to a comprehensive rehabilitation approach, consistent education, vocational training and reintegration into the labour market

In terms of cost-effectiveness, investments in prison education have repeatedly proven to be highly profitable. For example, a US study documents that for every \$1 invested in prison education, there is a savings of \$4 to \$5 in costs associated with recidivism, rearrest, and court proceedings (RAND Corporation, 2014).

Thus, foreign experience shows that quality and targeted education can be one of the key elements of prison reform and effective fight against recidivism. For the Czech Republic this represents an important lesson: without consistent development of educational infrastructure in prisons, without support for follow-up employment and without inter-ministerial cooperation, the potential of this area remains under-utilised.

Educational programmes cannot therefore be reduced to vocational training alone. Their comprehensive contribution also lies in promoting a change of attitude towards one's own future and responsibility for one's own life. From both a penological and criminological perspective, it is therefore necessary to support not only the development of educational infrastructure in prisons, but also a systemic link with subsequent post-penitentiary care and work integration after release.

In this context, continuity of education is also important, i.e. the possibility to follow up prison education after release, ideally through cooperation with labour offices, NGOs and employers willing to offer jobs to people with a criminal record.

Evaluation of the research objective

The aim of this professional article was to analyse in depth the role of education of prisoners in the process of their resocialisation and reintegration into society after serving a prison sentence. This objective was fulfilled in the course of implementation through systematic collection, categorization and interpretation of secondary data and the content of relevant professional and legislative sources. The analysis has shown that education, including both its main forms - formal and informal - is a key tool for fulfilling the resocialisation functions of punishment in the Czech prison system, but at the same time it has significant institutional, organisational and capacity limitations that significantly affect its availability and effectiveness.

Regarding the first research question, which focused on the structure, organisation and content of educational programmes implemented in the Czech Republic's prison facilities, it was confirmed on the basis of the processed documents that formal education is carried out through the educational centres of the Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic. The latter offers three-year and two-year courses with a teaching certificate, intended primarily for persons without a basic education or professional qualifications. Non-formal educational activities are broader in nature and include short-term retraining courses, education focused on the development of digital competences and language training, as well as interventions oriented towards soft skills and strengthening motivation for further learning. The analysis has shown that the structure of the programmes fits the lifelong learning paradigm, but in practice their capacity is not able to meet the demand of all inmates interested in training. This mismatch is particularly evident in higher security prisons and in facilities with limited space and staffing.

The second research question, focusing on the institutional, legislative and personnel conditions for the implementation of education, identified the main positive determinants as the relatively stable legislative framework provided by Act No. 169/1999 Coll. At the same time, a number of limiting factors were described, among which dominated the long-term lack of qualified pedagogical staff with competence to work with adults in penal conditions, the absence of adequate educational premises and material and technical equipment, as well as the organisational conflict between the work assignments of convicts and the possibility of regular education. A significant obstacle is also the persistent overcrowding in prison facilities, which complicates the systematic planning and implementation of educational programmes on a sufficient scale.

The third research question related to the assessment of the empirically documented impact of educational activities on reducing the recidivism rate and enhancing the work and social potential of prisoners. Available data from the Prison Service, international studies (e.g., RAND Corporation, 2014; Cervone, 2018), and international comparisons suggest that participation in educational programs is a significant predictor of reduced recidivism. Specifically, data show that those involved in education are 13-30% less likely to reoffend than those without this experience. In addition to its preventive effect on recidivism, education also increases the chances of legal employment, boosts self-confidence and develops the ability to reflect on one's own actions and their consequences. These findings have been confirmed in the Czech environment by partial data on the success rate of graduates of educational programmes and their higher rate of employment in the labour market after release. At the same time, however, it was identified that the positive effects of education are conditioned by the quality and continuity of support - i.e. the continuity of post-penitentiary care and the real availability of employment outside the prison environment.

On the last research question, focusing on barriers and limiting factors to the effectiveness of educational activities, four main categories of barriers were identified based on the analytical outputs. The first is the aforementioned staffing and capacity constraints of education centres. The second is the low motivation of some of the convicts, which is the result of accumulated educational deficits, previous negative experiences with school and psychological barriers associated with long-term social exclusion. The third factor is the conflict between employment and the possibility of systematic education, which is particularly evident among prisoners in regimes with stricter rules. The fourth determinant is the lack of follow-up to distance and hybrid forms of education, which would allow a more individualised approach and better continuity of preparation for life in prison.

Thus, the overall evaluation of the research objective shows that education in prison in the Czech Republic is undeniably a functional part of the state's resocialization efforts, but its potential is not fully exploited. Although it is systemically and legislatively anchored and its empirically documented positive impact on recidivism is evident, its practical implementation faces numerous obstacles of an organisational, personnel and structural nature. At the same time, the results of the analysis confirm the theoretical assumptions defining education as a key instrument of secondary socialisation and restoration of the human capital of convicted persons, with consequences far beyond the scope of vocational training. These findings support the thesis that a consistent development strategy for prison education, coupled with support for post-penitentiary integration, represents a crucial opportunity to reduce the social and economic costs of recidivism and to promote social cohesion.

Discussion

The results of the in-depth analysis confirm that education of prisoners in the Czech Republic is currently conceived as an integral part of the resocialisation process, but its organisational, institutional and capacity framework remains underdeveloped in many respects. Comparison with examples of good practice in the international context, in particular with the prison education system in Norway, Germany and the United States, offers valuable insights into the factors that significantly determine the effectiveness of educational interventions and their impact on recidivism rates.

In Norway, education is perceived as a key right of prisoners, and every prisoner is guaranteed access to an individualized education plan, with a choice of both vocational and academic courses (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). The success of the Norwegian approach is contingent not only on high standards of material provision and low prison density, but especially on the consistent integration of education with post-penitentiary support and follow-up employment. The long-term recidivism rate of around 20 % is exceptionally low in the European context and demonstrates the viability of a comprehensive model based on the principles of autonomy, motivation to learn and empowerment of prisoners' self-esteem. In Germany, the education system is also enshrined in legislation as an entitlement of the convicted person, with the Länder having a relatively high number of educational facilities directly in prisons and an emphasis on a combination of vocational and civic education. A specific feature of the German approach is the emphasis on the so-called dual model of education, which combines theoretical training with practical activities, thereby

strengthening work competences and reducing transition barriers after release.

In contrast, in the US environment, which has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, the situation differs in its heterogeneity and polarised national approaches. Nevertheless, longitudinal studies (RAND Corporation, 2013; Cervone, 2018) repeatedly confirm that participation in educational programs reduces the likelihood of recidivism by 13-43%, with college and vocational courses having the greatest effect. However, in the U.S. environment, education is strongly determined by capacity inequities between federal and state facilities and often depends on funding from private and foundation sources. These comparisons show that the level of standardization, accessibility, and systematic development of educational infrastructure is directly correlated with the effectiveness of programs.

From this perspective, the results of the analysis of the Czech context can be interpreted as a partial success, because the system of formal education implemented through the Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic ensures a relatively stable offer of teaching fields and several hundred convicted persons participate in it every year. However, the level of participation represents only a fraction of the total prison population and capacity constraints lead to selective availability, with a significant proportion of convicts not participating in education for organisational or staffing reasons. In this respect, the Czech system lags behind Germany and Norway, where participation in education is not only a preferred treatment tool, but in practice is a common and accessible part of sentencing.

A comparison of empirical findings with the literature confirms that the determinants of the effectiveness of prison education are structured in multiple layers. At the individual level, these are primarily the level of prior education, motivation to learn and life experience, as repeatedly illustrated by Danek (2024) and Stárek et al. (2024). At the organisational level, the main barriers are related to the lack of qualified teachers, space capacity and the clash of educational activities with the prisoners' work assignments. At the systemic level, a key issue is the low level of linkage between education and follow-up employment programmes and post-release support. This lack of a continuum is a key difference from the Scandinavian models, which explicitly ensure that education is linked to the social reintegration process.

The discussion also brought reflection on the impact of the identified barriers on the quality and continuity of the educational process. The most significant constraints include the persistently high density of prison facilities, which fundamentally limits the possibilities for individual planning, and the relatively low priority of educational activities in the overall prison policy setting. Although empirical data clearly confirm that education significantly reduces recidivism rates and strengthens the work and social competences of convicts, in practice there is underfunding and the absence of a strategic framework for the development of educational infrastructure. These findings are in line with the conclusions of foreign studies (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025; RAND Corporation, 2013), which highlight the need for a combination of quality curriculum, professionally trained staff and systemic support for subsequent career placement.

A limitation of this study is that the analysis was conducted solely on the basis of secondary data and documents, i.e., without direct empirical investigation of the perspectives of inmates themselves and educators working in prison education. This means that individual motivations, experiences and subjective perceptions of the benefits or barriers to education remained outside the scope of this research. Future research should therefore include both qualitative and quantitative investigations that focus on longitudinal tracking of the impact of education on post-release life trajectories and on factors influencing inmates' willingness to actively enter educational programs. Prospectively, it is desirable to carry out comparative studies between prisons with different organisational conditions and to take into account differences in recidivism rates depending on the type and level of education received.

On the basis of the results of this study, several key recommendations for prison policy makers and the professional community can be formulated. First of all, it is necessary to develop a strategic framework for the development of prison education that reflects the need to increase capacity, diversify the range of disciplines and strengthen the quality of teaching staff. Priority should be given to systematically building the continuity of educational programmes to support post-release employment and involving labour offices, employers and NGOs in the process of post-

penitentiary integration. Emphasis should also be placed on the promotion of digital literacy and the introduction of distance and hybrid forms of learning to overcome the organisational and spatial limitations of individual prisons. Last but not least, it is necessary to promote interventions aimed at motivation and self-confidence of convicted persons, so that education is not seen as an external coercion, but as an opportunity for positive change and restoration of life chances.

Conclusion

In contemporary democratic societies, education of prisoners is one of the key instruments of resocialisation, the importance of which goes far beyond simple vocational training for life after prison. As demonstrated by the in-depth analysis of secondary data, institutional documents and available literature, education serves as a complex mechanism of secondary socialisation, which contributes not only to the restoration of disrupted social roles and work habits, but also to the strengthening of psychological resilience, self-reflection and motivation for responsible living. In the Czech environment, the system of education of convicted persons is relatively stably embedded in the legal and organisational structures of the prison system, in particular through the activities of the Secondary Vocational School of the Prison Service of the Czech Republic and a wide range of informal educational programmes implemented within the framework of individual treatment programmes. Although there is a legislative basis and professional consensus on the importance of education for the resocialisation process, practical implementation faces a number of structural, personnel and capacity constraints that significantly limit its availability and impact.

The analysis of research questions has shown that the key determinants of the effectiveness of educational activities include, in particular, the level of institutional support, the quality of teaching staff, material and spatial conditions, the possibility of individualizing educational plans, and the continuity of programmes with the post-penitentiary system of employment and social integration. Empirical data and international comparisons repeatedly confirm that participation in educational activities is a significant predictor of reduced risk of recidivism - available studies document a 15-43% reduction in recidivism among participants in educational programmes, depending on the level and type of education. These findings are not just a theoretical basis, but a practical argument for the systematic development of educational infrastructure and capacities that remain underutilized in the Czech context.

Particular attention should be paid to linking education with comprehensive resocialisation strategies and to strengthening the continuity between serving a sentence and life at liberty. Experience from the Scandinavian countries shows that it is the continuum model, which integrates education, employment and psychosocial support, that leads to low long-term recidivism rates and lower social and economic costs of penal policy. In the Czech context, the expansion of the range of disciplines to include promising technical and technological professions, the systematic promotion of digital and media literacy, and the use of distance and hybrid forms of education, which allow overcoming the organisational and spatial barriers of prison facilities, are crucial in this respect. From an analytical perspective, it is also clear that education must be conceived as a tool to promote the intrinsic motivation of convicts for positive change and to strengthen their sense of autonomy, competence and meaningfulness. Only in this way can the educational process go beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and become a real means of restoring confidence in oneself and one's own life perspective. This dimension is particularly important in view of the fact that a significant proportion of convicts enter prison with long-term educational deficits, negative experiences of the school environment and a high level of social exclusion. In the context of the results of this study, it is desirable to recommend the development of a long-term strategic concept of prison education, which will reflect not only the current requirements of the labour market and the digitalisation of society, but also the complex needs of specific groups of convicted persons - especially those with low levels of functional literacy, foreigners or persons with specific educational needs. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen intersectoral cooperation between prison facilities, labour offices, educational institutions and non-profit organisations so that education is not an isolated activity within the framework of imprisonment, but an integral part of the transition to society.

Overall, it can be concluded that education of prisoners is a legitimate and empirically proven means of reducing recidivism, strengthening social cohesion and restoring individual responsibility in the Czech context. However, its effectiveness is conditioned by the degree of systematicity, accessibility and continuity with other segments of resocialisation practice. A comprehensive approach to education that links curricular quality, motivation to learn, material provision and interdisciplinary cooperation represents a crucial opportunity to fulfil the principles of modern penal policy oriented towards restoring human potential and minimising the social and economic costs of crime. Thus, in the long term, a quality education policy in the prison system can contribute not only to reducing recidivism, but also to creating conditions for the sustainable reintegration of individuals into society and to strengthening the values of solidarity, responsibility and respect for human dignity.

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