

Prediction of crime - illusion or reality

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Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law in Ljubljana carried out in 1991 a research study "Penological aspects of recidivism of offenders in the Republic of Slovenia"; in the frame of this study, a criminal prognosis was made on a sample of 100 convicts released from correctional institutions in the period from 1.3. to 10.8. 1991. In order to establish the rate of recidivism in these 100 convict in the period of ten years after their release, researchers examined in 2003 their criminal records. Results: out of 100 convicted offenders, 20 convicts were without criminal records, because they were not citizens of Slovenia, one of the convicts died on the day of his release; i.e. 10.5.1991 and among 79 convicts with criminal records, 55.7 % of them recidivated in ten years after their release. Among convicts with very favourable criminal prognosis, a portion of the recidivists was 7.69 %, with favourable prognosis 35.71 %, with uncertain prognosis 60.00 % and with unfavourable prognosis 81.25 %. Among convicts with very favourable and favourable prognosis there were together 22.23 % of the recidivists, while among convicts with uncertain and unfavourable prognosis there were 73.07 % of the recidivists. These results suggest that it is possible to identify on the basis of criminal prognosis convicts with low and high risk of recidivism.

Increased proportion of recidivists among convicts with uncertain and unfavourable prognosis points in comparison to convicts with favourable and very favourable prognosis at the high statistic probability of the realisation of their criminal prognosis. A proportion of recidivists rapidly rises from the prognostic assessment 5 points downwards. In spite of high statistical probability of the realisation of the prediction of recidivism, there arises a question regarding usefulness of its application in deciding about parole; as it seems, there was no difference in the rate of recidivism in 10 years after the release among convicts who were paroled and those who served their sentence to the term. That means that parole by itself does not reduce a rate of recidivism and is therefore useless from the point of view of criminal policy; it seems that it is only an expression of humanity towards convicts and their families.

This attempt with criminal prognosis has shown that it is possible to predict with high probability recidivism in majority of released convicts. With the use of the questionnaire »PROGNOSIS-1991«, it would be possible in Slovenia to prevent temporarily a great deal of recidivism. It is necessary therefore to develop as soon as possible in Slovenia professional standards supporting decision making process regarding parole. Criteria for parole must be set in advance and they must be known to convicts as well as to the correctional staff.

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