

Crime trends and sentencing policy in Slovenia in the last decade

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The number of criminal offences reported to the police in Slovenia increased in the period 1980-2003 two and half fold (index 264.3), while the number of convicted persons decreased by more than one third (index 61.7), which indicates that there is no statistical relationship between reported crime and the number of convicted offenders. While the population increased in the period 1980-2003 by 5.2 %, crime increased according to police statistics for 164.3%. The crime rate increased in the period 1980-2002 from 1,525.4 to 3,868.6 (index 253.6), which indicates larger involvement of citizens in crime.

In the period examined, the highest number of convicted adult and juvenile offenders was reached in 1985 (14,626) and the lowest in 1995 (3,961, index 27.1). In 1985, 741 persons were convicted per 100,000 residents and in 1995 only 199 (index 26.9), while in 2003 this number grew to 368. That makes us believe that the social danger of crime declined in that period, and that there is no reason for a modification of the current sentencing policy.

In the period 1965-2003, criminal sanctions imposed on offenders were as follows: judicial admonition increased from 1.2%-4.0%, fines increased from 1.8% to 38.2% and the sentence of imprisonment decreased from 24.0% to 15.9%. The rate of conditionally suspended fines and sentences of imprisonment grew from 51.5% to 73.8%. Data on the use of prison sentences indicate that major changes were in the imposition of short prison sentences of up to 6 months, much fewer changes took place in prison sentences from one to three years and very few changes occurred in sentences lasting 3 years and over. In 1985, 2,003 offenders were sentenced to imprisonment, while in 1995 only 550. Of all prison sentences handed down by courts in 1980, 97.8% were sentences up to 5 years of imprisonment, while in 2001 this percentage was 97.2%, which indicates fairly stable sentencing policy. Courts only rarely pronounced sentences of imprisonment from 10 to 15 years and only exceptionally those which were over 15 years, while a sentence of 20 years was not imposed at all. The presented sentencing policy is on the one hand a reflection of a less serious criminality and, on the other hand, a result of the current orientation of the criminal justice system.

Key words: crime, crime trends, statistical data, crime statistics, penal statistics, sentencing policy, Slovenia

UDC: 343.3/.7 + 343.211.6 (497.4)