

## **Wealth, poverty and reaction to crime - from 2000 to 2007**

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The paper is a follow-up of research on the link between poverty and response to crime (published by D. Petrovec in the European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, vol. 8, 2000, no. 4, Poverty and Reaction to Crime). Poverty is measured by HPI (Human Poverty Index) and not by the usual GDP. HPI is the only instrument that enables the measurement of social exclusion, the rate of poverty and the care provided to marginal populations. GDP gives only an average picture, without giving any idea of the proportion of the very poor.

In measurements conducted in 2000, a high correlation (+0.58) between poverty according to RPI and the number of prisoners was established. This result is a warning sign to certain countries, in particular countries in transition, i.e. EU candidates, not to create a wide gap between the rich and poor parts of the population, even though on average well-being is growing. It has been proved that such a gap between the poor and the rich leads to the exclusion of a part of population, including through a harsher sentencing policy.

Fresh research in 2007 confirmed that grabbing fast profits in new EU members has given rise to considerable social inequalities. In addition, the growth of poverty also goes hand in hand with a rise in the prison population. By the use of HPI and an additional inequality index, it was established that in different groups of states (countries in transition and older EU members separately), in particular in new member states (Estonia, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary), a correlation between economic inequality and the number of prisoners is very high, increasing over three time periods (1995, 2001 and 2006) from 0.80 to 0.84.

The social elite, which, due to money, is also in possession of power, sets roles according to which only a small circle of people can get rich; in contrast, there is an increasing number of the poor, which have to be diverted from having an impact on social changes, even by confining them to ghettos or prisons. The solution to fundamental criminological issues is in the hands of politicians, who have a strong interest in preserving the status quo.

**Key words:** criminal sociology, social stratification, economic inequality, wealth, poverty, crime, societal reaction

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