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## The economic situation and social interactions of prisoners' families

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This article shows the current state of knowledge about: the economic situation and social interactions of families of prisoners. An in-depth analysis of own research, as well as those presented so far in Polish and foreign literature, has allowed to distinguish three types of social situations of families of prisoners, with particular emphasis on their economic situation and social interactions, namely; (1) the social situation of a family supporting the resocialization of the prisoner, (2) the social situation of a prisoner's family, which is in opposition to the process of resocialization, (3) the social situation of a family focused on the reconstruction of its own social environment.

**KEY WORDS:** social situation, social interactions, families of prisoners, imprisonment

### Introduction

Literature on the subject treats the resocialisation role of prisoners' families in a rather conservative and instrumental manner. Such families are considered mainly in the context of intermediaries between the convicted person and society. They are assigned co-responsibility for the further course of the re-adaptation process. The fami-

lies are to provide protection against the preclusive reactions of the neighbourhood and prevent former prisoners from returning to criminal behaviour. However, the problem of the collateral consequences of incarceration is neglected.<sup>1</sup> The consequences of imprisonment cannot be treated individually only in relation to the imprisoned person. Every convicted person leaves behind his or her loved ones, and the socio-economic consequences of criminal policy for the families remain almost unknown. On the basis of data obtained from prison population surveys<sup>2</sup>, it can be estimated that around 60% of the prisoners remain in a relationship. The same data indicate that the number of children in Poland who are deprived of a parent because he or she is serving a prison sentence ranges from 50 000 to 100 000.<sup>3</sup> The reason why the functioning of families should be the subject of in-depth scientific analysis is that imprisonment affects not only the material sphere of their live<sup>4</sup>, but also intra-family relations and external interactions.<sup>5</sup> According to Renata Szczepanik and Kamil Miszewski: "[...] the imprisonment of one of the family members changes its (the family's - S.DZ-B) quality, and it is the family and procreation that constitute those ele-

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<sup>1</sup> R. Szczepanik, K. Miszewski, *Wpływ długoterminowego uwięzienia na rodziny więźniów – stan wiedzy i zaniebane kierunki badań*, *Profilaktyka społeczna i resocjalizacja* 30/2016, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> A. Rzepliński, *Rodziny więźniów długoterminowych*, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum – PWN, Wrocław 1981; A. Szymanowska, *Więzienie i co dalej?*, Wydawnictwo Żak, Warszawa 2003; M. Muskała, *Więź osadzonych recydywistów ze środowiskiem*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Polskiego Towarzystwa Pedagogicznego, Poznań 2006; A. Matysiak-Błaszczak, *Sytuacja życiowa kobiet pozbawionych wolności*, Oficyna Wydawnicza „Impuls”, Kraków 2010.

<sup>3</sup> A. Barczykowska, *Sytuacja życiowa rodzin osób pozbawionych wolności*, [in:] L. Golińska, B. Dudka (ed), *Rodzina i praca z perspektywy wyzwania i zagrożeń*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2008, pp. 341–352; S. Dzierżyńska-Breś, *Niewidzialne dzieci – o sytuacji społecznej dzieci osób pozbawionych wolności*, *Resocjalizacja Polska* 14/2017, pp. 137–150.

<sup>4</sup> R. Smith, R. Grimshaw, R. Romeo, M. Knapp, *Poverty and Disadvantage Among Prisoner's Families*, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (ISTD) 2007.

<sup>5</sup> R. Coundry, *Families Shamed; The Consequences of Crime for Relatives of Serious Offenders*, Willan publishing, Uffculme 2007.

ments of life that most often prevent from returning to crime and imprisonment".<sup>6</sup>

One of the most important issues related to the functioning of families of persons held in custody is their social position. It is the "location" on the social ladder that influences: the families' own perception of imprisonment, the families' actions and the social perception of the situation. These families are not a homogeneous group, they face different problems, depending on the interpretation perspectives set by socio-cultural conditions.<sup>7</sup> Family role models and functioning are created in social circles, therefore, on the one hand, the stay of a husband/partner and father in prison will not always be treated as a cause for shame and despair or ostracism on the part of other relatives and neighbours. The effect on their material status may not be significant. On the other hand, the trauma and problems experienced in connection with the conviction of the closest family member may lead to its disintegration, exclusion and stigmatisation on the part of the public, as well as the loss of all property. Therefore, this article addresses two categories of issues: the economic situation of families and their relations with the social environment. It would be optimistic to assume, that families are willing and able to support the convicted person in his or her social rehabilitation process and re-adaptation. However, the worsening of financial conditions, financial problems and the negative reactions of the extended family and neighbours often lead to a break in contact with the convict, and, consequently, the break-up of the family.

This study will present the state of knowledge concerning: the economic situation and social relations of families of convicted persons. What is important, and only occasionally mentioned in litera-

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<sup>6</sup> R. Szczepanik, K. Miszewski, *Wpływ długoterminowego uwięzienia na rodziny więźniów – stan wiedzy i zaniechane kierunki badań*, Profilaktyka społeczna i resocjalizacja 30/2016, p. 58.

<sup>7</sup> R. Szczepanik, K. Miszewski, *Wpływ długoterminowego uwięzienia na rodziny więźniów – stan wiedzy i zaniechane kierunki badań*, Profilaktyka społeczna i resocjalizacja 30/2016, pp. 53–95.

ture on the subject, the presented research will not only refer to the current situation of the families, but also to the situation prior to the incarceration of one of the family members, the husband/partner and father. This is purposeful and intended to capture the change that takes place in two of these areas of life. When I write about families, I mean families of the convicted persons, i.e. their wives and life partners, as well as their children over the age of 10. However, before I refer to the analysis of the research, I will present how the economic situation and social relations of families of convicted persons have been described in subject literature so far.

## The economic situation of families of convicted persons

The experience of families related to the economic sphere of life, presented in the research<sup>8</sup>, is quite universal, at least during the first period of imprisonment and the first sentence of a husband/partner and father. The majority of families are faced with the following problems: taking over the role of the main breadwinner of the family by the wife/partner, maintaining financial stability and material assistance for the convicted person. However, this does not mean that these families had not experienced financial problems before the conviction. Anna Szymanowska's research shows that in the case of 70% of the families, prior to the arrest, the convicts did not work or their work was of a temporary nature.<sup>9</sup> They coped mainly thanks to social assistance. In one of the first Polish studies on the families of long-term prisoners, Andrzej Rzepliński pointed out that before the arrest, 21% of the families lived below the social minimum.<sup>10</sup> The dominant type of education among convicts is voca-

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<sup>8</sup> J. Christian, J. Mellow, S. Thomas, *Social and economic implications of family connections to prisoners*. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34/2006, pp. 443–452.

<sup>9</sup> A. Szymanowska, *Więzienie i co dalej?*, Wydawnictwo Żak, Warszawa 2003, M. Muskała, *Więź osadzonych recydywistów ze środowiskiem*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Polskiego Towarzystwa Pedagogicznego, Poznań 2006.

<sup>10</sup> A. Rzepliński, *Rodziny więźniów długoterminowych*, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum – PWN, Wrocław 1981.

tional education. The fact that they lack the skills and qualifications sought on the labour market does not make their difficult situation any easier.<sup>11</sup> In illustrating the economic situation of families of convicted persons, reference can be made to the detailed study on this population carried out by Jeremy Travis.<sup>12</sup> As a result of the imprisonment of the partner/father there is usually a reduction of the income of the whole family. More than 70% of men imprisoned in the United States of America declared having permanent or temporary employment in the month before their arrest. In more than 60% of cases their salary was the only source of income for the family. The life partners of convicted men had permanent jobs only in 39% of cases, and the remaining source of their income was social assistance 42% and temporary work 44%.

The more the families try to keep in touch with the convicted person, the more costs they incur. This ranges from paying for a lawyer during the arrest and trial, providing the prisoner with telephone cards, clothes, parcels, travelling to prison for visiting days during the prison stay, to maintaining and supporting the husband/partner who returns home after the sentence.<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that regardless of the sex of the convicted person, it is the women: mothers, wives and partners, who take responsibility for supporting the imprisoned person and stabilising family life. They are left alone with many difficulties they have to cope with: finding a livelihood, paying off debts, the upbringing and emotional problems of children, stress, social reactions, and the convicts themselves, who are demanding not only care and support, but also specific material assistance.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A. Szymanowska, *Więzienie i co dalej?*, Wydawnictwo Żak, Warszawa 2003, M. Muskała, *Więź osadzonych recydywistów ze środowiskiem*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Polskiego Towarzystwa Pedagogicznego, Poznań 2006.

<sup>12</sup> J. Travis, *But they all come back; Facing the Challenges of prisoner Reentry*, Washington DC; The Urban Institute Press 2005.

<sup>13</sup> C. Shapiro, M. Schwartz, *Coming home: Building on family connection*, *Correction Management Quarterly*, 5(3), pp. 52–61, 2001.

<sup>14</sup> R. Coundry, *Families Shamed; The Consequences of Crime for Relatives of Serious Offenders*, Willan publishing, Uffculme 2007.

The often complicated family situation of convicted persons causes further financial difficulties. It is not only the wives or permanent partners of convicts who complain about the loss of their main source of income, but also their former life partners who experience a loss, for example, the lack of payment of child maintenance for their joint children. The parents of prisoners also experience financial crisis. They try to help not only their convicted son, but often support their wife/partner, who is left without a livelihood for herself and the children. This includes not only financial help, but also taking care of the grandchildren and their upbringing and education. Research conducted on the parents of prisoners who decided to provide care for their grandchildren indicates financial problems – this was one of the main difficulties they declared.<sup>15</sup> Rose Smith, Roger Grimshaw, Renee Romeo and Martin Knap<sup>16</sup> in their 2007 report on the economic situation of families of convicted persons in the UK, calculated that the imprisonment of one family member for six months results in a cost estimated at GBP 5860 per family borne by social policy institutions dealing with family support. If that amount were added to the cost of the prison service, then that institution's expenditure would increase by 31%.

The economic situation of families of convicted persons is influenced by a number of factors which are determined primarily by the individual characteristics of the family's functioning and its social location. In households where the convicted person had a job before his or her stay in prison, did not have an addiction problem, was not violent towards other family members, and his or her income ranged from high to that exceeding the accepted poverty threshold – imprisonment leads to economic losses that the rest of the family has to deal with. Most often, the higher the family's material status, the higher the education of the spouse or partner, as

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<sup>15</sup> J.C. Finney-Hairstone, *Prisoners and Families; Parenting Issues During Incarceration*, University of Illinois, Urban Institute 2002, pp. 44–45.

<sup>16</sup> R. Smith, R. Grimshaw, R. Romeo, M. Knapp, *Poverty and Disadvantage Among Prisoner's Families*, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (ISTD) 2007.

well as the type of profession she performs, the faster the family returns to a relatively stable economic situation.<sup>17</sup> In other cases, where the convict himself or his behaviour had been a source of stress and material loss for the family and had a negative impact on the functioning of all members of the household, his "removal" from the family system, even at the cost of material loss, is perceived as a situation of psychological relief and stability, and over time the economic situation of these families improves.<sup>18</sup>

### **Relations between the families of convicted persons and the social environment**

The feeling of stigmatisation and shame is more difficult for those who remain in society than for the convicts themselves.<sup>19</sup> As Rachel Coundry notes, in prison coping with everyday life comes to the fore. The convicts exist in an environment where their crimes are not a source of public debate or embarrassment, but are a part of the prison norm. Whereas the situation of their wives/partners and children is different, they have to continue their daily lives in communities where their "contaminated status" of the offender's family is well known. Research on families of convicted persons confirms that this group is not only an object of exclusion and stigmatisation in their local communities, but also its interactions with various institutions such as schools, social welfare centres, workplaces, prisons etc. are marked by the stigma of being the wife/partner or child of a prisoner.<sup>20</sup> Families of prisoners share their "ruined iden-

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<sup>17</sup> J. Christian, J. Mellow, S. Thomas, *Social and economic implications of family connections to prisoners*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34/2006, pp. 443–452.

<sup>18</sup> L. Gordon, *Invisible Children, A study of the children of prisoners*, PILLARS report 2009, p. 35.

<sup>19</sup> R. Coundry, *Families Shamed; The Consequences of Crime for Relatives of Serious Offenders*, Willan publishing, Uffculme 2007, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> A. Mills, H. Codd, *Prisoner's families*, [in:] *Handbook of Prisons*, Y. Jewkes (ed.), Willan Publishing 2007.

tity" with the imprisoned family member.<sup>21</sup> A loved one's stay in prison is a source of shame felt by other family members. Shame takes over the individual's life, giving a new dimension to his or her identity, and the relatives of convicted persons feel it in a double sense, not only those whose loved ones committed serious crimes.<sup>22</sup> The very fact that someone is in prison, regardless of how long they have been there and what they have done, stigmatises the families. The feeling of shame felt by the families is also socially determined. Pauline Morris notes that it particularly affects the wives/partners and children of first-time offenders, especially during the initial period of imprisonment. Families of persistent offenders claim that they are unfamiliar with this feeling and that the situation is not embarrassing for them.<sup>23</sup> Research carried out by Robin Bates on adult children of former prisoners showed that shame and embarrassment were the feelings that accompanied them during their father's stay in prison.<sup>24</sup> They have a paralysing effect on the family, preventing it from effectively benefiting from social assistance or the support of close family members. Some families, fearing the loss of friendship, respect or harassment, conceal the situation from their surroundings or even their loved ones, and sometimes even decide to break off contact with the convicted person.<sup>25</sup> Others, especially those linked to the criminal world, with a multi-generational problem of crime and numerous prison stays, may even feel proud and respected by their immediate environment.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> H. Cood, *Prisoners' Families: The "Forgotten Victims"*, *Probation Journal* 45/1998, pp. 148–153.

<sup>22</sup> A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. „Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, Warszawa 2001, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup> P. Morris, *Prisoners and their families*, Allen & Unwin, Londyn 1965.

<sup>24</sup> R. Bates, S. Lawrence-Wills, C.F. Hairstone, *Children and families of incarcerated parents; a view from the ground*, [in:] *Research brief on Children, Families and Criminal Justice System*, University of Illinois, Chicago 2003.

<sup>25</sup> A. Mills, H. Cood, *Prisoner's families*, [in:] *Handbook of Prisons*, Y. Jewkes (ed.), Willan Publishing 2007.

<sup>26</sup> R. Szczepanik, K. Miszewski, *Wpływ długoterminowego uwięzienia na rodziny więźniów – stan wiedzy i zaniebane kierunki badań*, *Profilaktyka społeczna i resocjalizacja* 30/2016, pp. 53–95.



Families of convicted persons feel shame not only “in their own eyes”, but are often forced to hide from the disdainful looks of others. They are aware of the change that often takes place: from a “disdainful gaze” to harmful actions such as ending friendships, spreading false information about their relatives or even physical attacks on them. At this point, the wider socio-cultural context also plays a significant role. The higher the social class and the higher the social status of families, the more severe the effects of the social reactions they feel.<sup>27</sup> Rachel Coundry, who deals with the families of people who have committed serious crimes such as murder or sex crimes, has provided an interesting analysis of this issue.<sup>28</sup> In her work, she cited five types of “blame” imposed on the families of convicted persons; two of these concerned the influence of the family, such as:

1. *Association* – which assumes that relatives of convicted persons due to the close relationship between them and the convicted person are the same as the prisoner.
2. *Genetic* – linked to a rather primitive idea of bad blood. For the social audience, information about an individual belonging to the same family as the offender, triggers negative comments and actions, and genetic conditions become an excuse for bad treatment.

The next three types concern direct reasons for blaming the family members of convicted persons.<sup>29</sup>

3. *Omission* – negligence, family members of the convicted person are blamed for something they did not do, something they neglected or did not know about, and which, in the opinion of the public, was the cause of the crime.

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<sup>27</sup> R. Szczepanik, K. Miszewski, *Wpływ długoterminowego uwięzienia na rodziny więźniów – stan wiedzy i zaniedbane kierunki badań*, *Profilaktyka społeczna i resocjalizacja* 30/2016, pp. 53–95.

<sup>28</sup> R. Coundry, *Families Shamed; The Consequences of Crime for Relatives of Serious Offenders*, Willan publishing, Uffculme 2007.

<sup>29</sup> R. Coundry, *Families Shamed; The Consequences of Crime for Relatives of Serious Offenders*, Willan publishing, Uffculme 2007, pp. 65–78.

4. *Commission* – authority or mandate, blaming relatives of the convicted person for what they did in the past, or just before the crime was committed by the convicted person, and which may have contributed to the commission of the crime.
5. *Continuation* – applied to those family members who are in contact with the convicted person and who, in the public's opinion, should break any contact.

### **The typology of the social situation of families of convicted persons**

In my research, carried out between 2013 and 2014, I used a qualitative paradigm. Qualitative research leads to an understanding of facts and processes, allowing for a qualitative description of reality. One of the constitutive features of these studies, apart from the interactive method of collecting and obtaining data from significant cases, are small research samples.<sup>30</sup> The researcher is not interested in the representativeness of the results obtained, but in generating as much comprehensive information as possible on the research problems posed. The aim of qualitative research is not to show the phenomena taking place in the population, but rather to deepen them, to obtain “new” information, so as to better understand the analysed aspect.<sup>31</sup>

For the purposes of this text, I will only present some of the results which have been obtained by describing and typologising the economic situation and social relations of the families of convicted persons.<sup>32</sup> The research included the families of prisoners (32 fami-

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<sup>30</sup> S. Pasikowski, *Czy wielkość jest niezbędna? O rozmiarze próby w badaniach jakościowych*, Przegląd Badań Edukacyjnych, no. 21 (2/2015), pp. 195–211.

<sup>31</sup> S. Juszczyk, *Badania jakościowe w naukach społecznych. Szkice metodologiczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2013.

<sup>32</sup> All studies published in: S. Dzierżyńska-Breś, *Sytuacja społeczna rodzin osób pozbawionych wolności*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2016.

lies) represented by their wives or life partners and children between 10 and 18 years of age, who knew about their father's stay in prison and expressed their wish to participate in the research. The selected families were characterised by a variety of social and financial circumstances. Families who were in contact with the imprisoned person were interviewed, as well as those who broke contact.

A detailed analysis of own research and the research presented so far in Polish and foreign literature made it possible to distinguish three types of social situations of families of convicted persons. These are:

- 1) The social situation of a family focused on supporting the resocialisation process of the convicted person.

In families representing type I of the social situation when the family is focused on supporting the resocialisation process, the imprisonment of a husband/partner and father is a shock for the family, causing chaos in the fulfilment of family roles. Relations between family members become labile and the fulfilment of family functions is shaken. Family members who are left behind do not know how to act in this situation, and they are open to support and help which they seek during the initial period of imprisonment. These families define their situation as a crisis.

In this type of social situation, the respondents mentioned the negative changes in their economic situation. The inability to meet their own needs and those of their children gave rise to a state of deprivation and could lead to serious mental and physical health problems and the proper functioning of individuals.<sup>33</sup> The housing and financial situation does not merely have a stratification function. It determines an individual's place on the ladder of social life, but also leads to a sense of security. Instability in this area gives rise to a feeling of powerlessness and inability to act. In these families, housing conditions have definitely deteriorated after the arrest of the husband/partner. Only a part of the families could afford to stay in their current flat. Most often thanks to the financial help of

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<sup>33</sup> A. Szymanowska, *Więzienie i co dalej?*, Wydawnictwo Żak, Warszawa 2003, p. 33.

the immediate family, or in cases where the wife/partner of the convicted person worked professionally and received a fixed salary. In one of the surveyed families, their own flat meant converting the garage in the parents' home into an apartment, but they had to take out a loan to finish it (Case no. 7). In another family, the rented apartment was paid for by the mother of the woman participating in the study (Case no. 1). Rented flats were often in debt, and families had often been in arrears with rent or current charges before their husband/partner was imprisoned. The women and children were worried about the future. They were most afraid of losing a roof over their heads. Two of the surveyed families lived in tragic conditions, without furniture, with a gas cooker instead of an oven. The children in one of the families slept with their mother on a mattress, which was the only piece of furniture in the house. The family living in the garage was in constant conflict with the parents of the convicted person (the garage was part of their home), who disconnected their daughter-in-law's electricity and water supply when their son was in prison. The children in some of these families shared one room with their parents and did not have the conditions to do their homework or invite colleagues.

Shock, disbelief, extreme emotions, crying, were the most frequently mentioned reactions presented by type I families to the arrest of the husband/partner and father. Very often the wives/partners of convicted persons, instead of receiving support from their own or their partner's parents, met with resentment, shouting and lack of understanding. Family relationships of the surveyed women from type I families did not change over time. If they were positive before the husband's arrest, they usually remained so, and the family of the convicted person received support from the relatives. However, in the case of families where the reactions were negative, time only piled up the conflicts and worsened family relationships. The surveyed women from type I families, when describing their further relationships with friends and neighbours, often pointed out that, despite initial support or its declaration, after some time everyone returned to their own problems, forgetting their promises. If, on the other hand, reactions to the crime committed by the husband/

partner were negative, harassment, insults and ostracism intensified, sometimes forcing the women to change their environment.

- 2) The social situation of a prisoner's family which is in opposition to the convict's social rehabilitation process.

In families affected by imprisonment, family roles are also affected<sup>34</sup>, focused on the convict and his criminal "career". Interactions, both within and outside the family system, are characterised by aggression, a demanding attitude and closure. Families affected by imprisonment often live in an environment characterised by poverty, numerous social problems and persistent multi-generational dysfunctionality. In these families, crime is a way of life perceived as cleverness and an ability to find one's place in today's "unjust" world. The husbands/partners and fathers serve long sentences or are often in prison. As they say imprisonment is just an "accident at work", it is not treated as an extraordinary event, but rather as something that is constantly present in their lives. This type of family functions very well within the system of aid institutions and knows where to go for material and financial support. This is the main source of their interest. Members of these families are familiar with the principles of prison life.

It should be stressed that the feelings of the surveyed families concerning their economic situation were subjective, which was related to their cultural and social background. They usually had fewer needs and lower expectations concerning their lives. They described their current financial situation as good, which was contrary to their objective living conditions or their profession. In families affected by imprisonment which were in opposition to the process of resocialisation of the convicted person, every element of the new situation was perfectly organised. This also applied to the place of residence of the convicted person's wife/partner and children. Despite the arrest and imprisonment of the husband/partner and

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<sup>34</sup> This means that the roles played by family members are adapted to the living conditions in the criminal environment and prison. The members of these families have assimilated the norms, values and patterns of behaviour accepted in the prison community.

father, the families did not experience housing or financial chaos. They were simply taken in by their extended family for the duration of the sentence, or their address remained unchanged, and the surveyed women had no problems with adapting to the new situation and knew how to obtain financial support. It should be noted that the accommodation conditions of these families were not particularly attractive, which was not a problem for them. Their homes were usually furnished with old equipment and old furniture. Against this background, the presence of new audio-visual equipment was definitely a surprise. These families usually live in districts with a bad reputation and reluctance from other city residents (e.g. Gołęcin in Szczecin, Bałuty in Łódź, Praga Południe in Warsaw). Their flats are often located in old tenement houses. In the case of two surveyed families (case no. 8 and case no. 15) there was no toilet in the flat. In families affected by imprisonment, relations between the neighbours and family friends continued to be friendly. Women, when asked what they would have done if they had met with harassment and abuse from their neighbours, reacted aggressively. Their social relations with their immediate surroundings did not change. However, they were supported by neighbours and friends, who also had problems with the law, and they were quite familiar with the institution of the prison. Type II families declared that they experienced support and help from at least a few people in the family. However, their contact with people from other social circles, or with representatives of institutions, such as schools, court guardianship, social assistance centres, prison services and the police, was characterised by reluctance, hostility and a demanding attitude. The surveyed women and children expressed negative opinions about the representatives of these institutions, complaining about their indifference and lack of kindness.

3) The social situation of a family focused on reconstructing its social environment.

The last, third type of families focused on the reconstruction of their own social environment is characterised by a reorganised system of roles and conflicting relations not only with the convicted

person, but also between the remaining family members. The performance of functions in these families remains correct or unbalanced depending on how much time has passed from the conviction of the husband/partner and father. The more time has passed, the more the previously disturbed functions returned to normal. The whole family system, in interactions, is distinguished by reluctance to the past and closure. These families break the bond with the convict, and their aim is to reconstruct the existing role system and relations. A frequent manifestation of this is, for example, the appearance of a new partner of the mother in the family, which intensifies the conflicts within the families. The period of imprisonment of husbands/partners and fathers in this case ranges from 5-year sentences to 25-year sentences or life imprisonment. The very act for which the convicted person is responsible, his or her behaviour towards the family and the social response to the situation are among the factors that determine the break-up of the family. Families reconstructing their own social situation change their living environment, break off contacts with distant family and friends in order to forget about the past.

In some of the type III families there is a clear improvement in the economic situation of the family after the imprisonment of the husband/partner. Even if the surveyed women claimed their situation worsened, it was not significant. They often said that they would rather have less money and reduce their expenses than live with an unwanted partner again. In this type of family, after the initial deterioration, the housing situation gradually improved as more time passed from the conviction of the husband/partner and father. Even if the current housing conditions were not favourable for the family, family members were still happy and optimistic about their situation in the future. This was probably related to the fact that women took up work and accumulated their own savings, which were to be used for renting a flat.

The social reactions to imprisonment in this type of family were similar to those of type I, which represented the social situation of families supporting the process of resocialisation of convicts. Lack

of understanding and support were most frequently mentioned. This did not change over time. These families often met with indifference from their social environment. Relations with close family members were similar: if, before the arrest and conviction, they were negative, the imprisonment of a family member only made them worse.

The wives/partners of convicted persons, regardless of the type of situation they represent, have also assessed how the economic situation and the reactions of those close to them influenced their own behaviour and the behaviour of their children towards their husband/partner. This was not insignificant in any of the families; on the contrary, it was important for maintaining the bond between the family and the convicted person. Satisfying basic material needs, having a job, having a roof over one's head and supporting and friendly reactions of loved ones help to maintain this bond. On the other hand, poverty, unemployment, ostracism, insults and aggression against the families of convicted persons contribute to its break-up. This is why the diagnosis of the economic situation and the social relations of families is so important. Families that function effectively provide support for the convicted person and are more willing to cooperate with prison educators and the judiciary with regard to the effects of resocialisation and readaptation.

## Conclusion

According to Alice Mills and Helen Codd, two important arguments, the humanitarian one and the pragmatic one, are in favour of organising support and assistance for families of prisoners.<sup>35</sup> The aim of the first one is to maintain family ties for the benefit of the families themselves, and the second is to promote the role of the family in the resocialisation of prisoners. However, these are not simple tasks. Contemporary subject literature relating to the eco-

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<sup>35</sup> A. Mills, H. Codd, *Prisoner's families*, [in:] *Handbook of Prisons*, Y. Jewkes (ed.), Willan Publishing 2007.



conomic situation and social interactions of such families indicates that they continue to experience the same problems that were described in the first research on "imprisoned families" in the 1960s. The impact on both the convict himself and his family is not a priority for the prison service, just like 60 years ago. There is a need for in-depth research that could help to understand not only the contribution of families to the social rehabilitation impact, but also their needs and problems, so that, working in parallel with the whole family system, the most effective support for the social re-adaptation process can be obtained.

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