



The AOOV Ten Vision Statements

Members of the Czech Association of Organisations Working in Penal Affairs (AOOV) have agreed on the following set of objectives and vision statements below, which form a route map for the direction of action of the AOOV.

1. That criminal justice policy should be designed to be effective in rehabilitation, the repair of disturbed relationships and to compensate for the harm caused

Changes in legislation and decision making at a national level should go down the path of mitigating criminal repression associated with a significant overuse of imprisonment. Excessive longer sentences of imprisonment are a major cause of prison overcrowding. There should be an effective alternative system of alternative sentences to imprisonment. Restorative community justice should be encouraged.

3. The imprisoned offenders should be encouraged to develop positive relationships with their family and the community

During their stay in prison, prisoners should have sufficient opportunities to maintain and develop positive relationships and ties with their family and their social environment. Families whose members are imprisoned need sufficient support and conditions to ensure that their exclusion does not increase and that they can maintain and develop ties with the prisoner. For this purpose, the required programs should be implemented, that deal with the negative impacts of the imprisonment of a family member and address disrupted family or other social ties.

5. Prisoners should have the opportunity to honour his social obligations

Remuneration of prisoners for work performed should allow them to pay their liabilities and create a sufficient financial reserve for the period after release. During the period of the sentence, there should be an offer of a systematic qualified help in dealing with problems of debt.(incl. Insolvency proceedings) and there should be no deepening of the debt burden. At release from prison, sufficient resources should remain to cover everyday living needs, and the continuous post-release support should include systematic debt counseling.

2. Prison should prepare prisoners for a safe return to freedom. It should also promote a participatory model of cooperation with prisoners, thereby reducing relapse

By the time of release, prisoners should understand the dimension of their guilt, be motivated to change and become aware of their human value, and their potential for re-inclusion in the community. They should leave the prison with a concrete plan for how their return to liberty will take place using the stability of their own family and surroundings or with the subsequent continuous support after release.

To this end, there needs to be a sufficient offer of professional treatment, psychological and social assistance programs, and education in prisons. Together, they should develop prisoners' strengths, target their individual needs, and identified criminogenic factors. Prison professionals and external organisations should cooperate together in their preparation for release. Preparation for release should begin immediately after entering prison and continue in the period after release.

4. That imprisoned offenders are systematically given the opportunities to increase their education, qualifications, and employability

The imprisoned offender should have the opportunity to develop their education, qualifications, and work skills during sentence. The offer of education and retraining should meet the current needs of the labour market. That jobs for prisoners should be chosen mainly to develop their work skills, qualifications, and health status. Employment should be adequately remunerated. Imprisonment should be a blend of restriction of liberty, treatment, therapy and education. Professional job counseling and pre-negotiation of employment should be part of their preparation for release. There should be an offer of training and employment based on the principles of social entrepreneurship for inmates who do not meet the required standards to enter the regular labour market at the time of leaving prison.



6. Prisoners should have the opportunity to address their substance dependence

Prisons should offer accessible, specialized programs and specialized drug-free wings to address addiction and provide substitution treatment. Prisons should have the necessary ancillary medical and psychiatric care facilities. The inmates should be able to take advantage of accessible health care, and as a result, the released person should have gained an insight into his addiction at the time of leaving prison, and is motivated to further address it, and has the opportunity to deal with it within the ongoing, after-care.

7. Those leaving prison have the opportunity to secure basic living needs and stabilize their living situation

Released prisoners should have the means to provide for the basic necessities of life. If the released person has to rely on benefits, they should be paid to him transparently and on time. This stabilization then serves as a springboard for (re)integration into society. There should be a sufficient supply of accommodation that will allow released prisoners without their own suitable housing to live in dignified and appropriate conditions. The imprisoned person should have a real opportunity to arrange accommodation before leaving prison.

8. A continuous and comprehensive after-release support programme should be available to all released prisoners.

There should be a comprehensive and continuous system of work with released persons, which will allow them to address a wide range of needs with which they struggle (housing, employment, addiction, relationships, finances). Continuous assistance should be based on an individual plan, which is created before release and is an extension of the professional treatment and therapeutic programs in prison. Continued support should be available immediately after leaving prison in all regions of the Czech Republic.

9. That all the organisations involved should work together

The state should create conditions for the involvement of a wide range of organisations (public sector, non-governmental non-profit organizations, employers, churches, and the community) and effectively motivates all these in long-term involvement in the issue of the penitentiary and post-penitentiary care.

Those involved in this work should cooperate with each other in order to provide regional and timely-accessible services. The core of continuous post-penitentiary work are social work and coordination of all involved.

10. That society should give the released prisoners a chance of a new beginning

The public should become interested in the issue of prisons and prisoners. Both the public and political representatives have the potential to support progressive changes in criminal policy and prisons. To this end, positive awareness and communication with the general public should be systematically developed.