

Social climate in correctional institutions and in the juvenile institution Radeče

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The social climate in correctional institutions is created by correctional workers and convicts. A favourable social climate is a basis for the wellbeing of convicts and workers and for the successful implementation of prison sentences. The social climate was measured in 2000 in 8 correctional and in one juvenile institution in Slovenia for research purposes, the Moos questionnaire (Correctional Institutions Environment Scale - Cies Scale form C), which measures nine dimensions of climate was used. In the examined institutions, questionnaires were completed by 71 to 100 per cent of convicts or institutionalised juveniles (altogether 412) and 67 to 100 per cent of correctional workers (altogether 335). Answers were processed by the SPSS program. The purpose of the research was to measure the social climate in 2000 and to compare it with the results of the climate measured in 1980, 1985 and 1995.

In the opinion of convicts and correctional workers, the climate in open correctional institutions is more favourable than in closed ones. Intensive supervision of convicts presents an obstacle to a favourable climate and to the treatment orientation of institutions. The climate is more favourable in rehabilitation-oriented institutions. Assistance to convicts depends more on the personality of correctional workers than on their professional qualifications. A low degree of autonomy of convicts is a strong impediment to the treatment orientation of an institution. Correctional workers consider the maintenance of order and supervision to be the primary task of institutions, while the rehabilitative orientation seems less important for them. In the majority of institutions, a favourable social climate is perceived more by correctional workers than by convicts.

The social climate improved in the 1995 to 2000 period in three and deteriorated in six institutions; and the same applies to the 1980-2000 period. The estimation of the climate was obviously too high in 1980, while in 2000 it seems more realistic. The attitudes of convicts have changed less in the 1980-2000 period than the attitudes of correctional workers, as far as regards the management of institutions and treatment of prisoners. What is equally characteristic for the 1980-2000 period is a constant increase in surveillance of convicts and a growing emphasis on the order and organisation of the institutions. There is a question, however, whether it is actually necessary to increase surveillance in view of the low social dangerousness of crime in Slovenia

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