



The Ministries

Strategy

# Reduced Recidivism to Crime

National strategy for coordinated reintegration after served sentences  
2017–2021





# Introduction

Proper return and integration into society after sentences have been served prevent outsidership, promotes participation in the workforce, and counteracts new criminality. Fewer crimes mean fewer crime victims and significant social profit. Serving a sentence in Norway shall occur in a manner that is reassuring for society, and that prevents new punishable offences. Nevertheless, many convicted criminals commit new crimes after having served their sentence. Reduced recidivism to new criminality is a joint responsibility across several sectors and administrative levels. The correctional services, cooperating agencies, and municipalities must therefore coordinate their remedies better, and accommodate for convicts to make an individual effort to turn their criminal careers around. The ambition is for more people to live crime-free lives!

The correctional services enforce punishments both in prisons and in society in general. Convicted prisoners serving a sentence have the same rights as others to health and care services, social services, training, work-related assistance, access to culture, etc. The sectors responsible for these services in society in general are also responsible during the execution of sentences. This guarantees equal rights to services. The correctional services cooperate with various administrative agencies to accommodate for initiatives during the execution of sentences. A precondition for succeeding in returning to a crime-free life is continuity and good coordination between the correctional services, various governmental administrative partners, county municipalities and municipalities. When this coordination does not work, backslide zones ("glippsoner") emerge, potentially preventing successful reintegration.

This strategy takes as its starting point knowledge of the convict's challenges with living conditions, insufficient administrative coordination, unclear distribution of responsibility, and shortcomings both in the existing cooperation agreements and in the current regulations within the field. Systematic work on counteracting backslide zones will help bring more people into education or work after having served their sentences, which in turn will reduce recidivism into crime and improve integration. At the same time, we need to improve our knowledge about factors affecting the risk of recidivism.

The initiatives in this strategy are primarily concerned with preventing recidivism after spending sentence time and society in general, so that inmates can live a future life without committing further crimes. Certain initiatives have a wider scope, and include all convicts, regardless of where the sentence is served. The strategy is primarily targeted at employees of the correctional services and concerned bodies. We hope the strategy also will be useful for others with an interest in correctional services and crime prevention.

The implementation of the initiatives in this strategy will be an important contribution to ensuring a safer everyday life, and making Norway a more inclusive society.



Bent Høie



Anniken Hauglie



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# Challenges among Inmates in Norwegian Prisons

In 2014, Statistics Norway (SSB) made a country-wide interview-based survey on living conditions among inmates in Norwegian prisons.<sup>1</sup> The survey shows that most inmates face challenges with living conditions in one or more areas. According to the survey, there is a clear correlation between the number of living condition challenges experienced by each individual and the degree to which they expect to be able to avoid committing new crimes upon release. A study the Regional Centre for Research and Education in Forensic Psychiatry (SIFER) made for the South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority shows that the prevalence of mental illness among convicts is significantly higher than among the population in general.<sup>2</sup>

- Only 56 percent of inmates can move into a residence they own or rent upon release. 20 percent plan to live with friends and family or in welfare housing, shelters, etc. upon release. 24 percent of the inmates have not clarified where they may live upon release.
- 34 percent have a job upon release, while 8 percent are in school. 58 percent are neither employed nor in school upon release.
- 40 percent state that they do not have enough money to get by upon release, and many inmates are in debt.
- In 2012, around 35 percent of the inmates had upper secondary education as their highest level of completed education. Only 13 percent of the inmates have started or completed higher education, compared to around 30 percent of other Norwegian citizens. 28 percent of inmates have only completed primary and lower secondary education.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost 65 percent of convicts in prison have issues associated with the abuse of alcohol, substances, or both. The study showed that only 35 percent had no abuse or dependence issues.
- 92 percent had signs of a personality disorder or a mental illness. The study also indicates that a much larger share of inmates than of the general population has lifelong mental disorders.

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<sup>1</sup> Revold, Mathias Killengreen (2015). *Innsattes levekår 2014. Før, under og etter soning*, SSB report 2015/47. Oslo, Statistics Norway, Oslo-Kongsvinger. Documentation memo. Inmates in custody, persons with expulsion decisions, and inmates under the age of 18 were excluded from the sample.

<sup>2</sup> Cramer, Victoria (2014): *Forekomst av psykiske lidelser hos domfelte i norske fengsler*. Kompetansesenterets prosjektrapport 2014-1. Regional Centre for Research and Education in Forensic Psychiatry for Southern and Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority. The population of the study consisted of female and male inmates with legally enforceable judgements.

<sup>3</sup> Jones, L.Ø., Asbjørnsen, A.E., Manger, T. and Eikeland, O.J. (2013). *Innsatte i norske fengsel: Lese- og skriveferdigheter og læringsforventningers betydning for deltagelse i utdanning*, The County Governor. Report no. 3/2013. The County Governor of Hordaland, Bergen.

# Coordination Challenges: – The "Import Model" and Administrative Cooperation

The correctional services are responsible for the execution of sentences. The sentence shall be executed in a manner that takes the purpose of the punishment into consideration, counteracts further punishable offenses, and is satisfactory for society.

The bodies that generally provide services for the population, are also responsible for offering their services to convicts and inmates. This is often referred to as an "import model" because services are "imported" to the correctional services from their respective bodies, as opposed to a model where the correctional services employ separate teachers, medical personnel, priests, etc.

The cooperation between the correctional services and the bodies providing services to inmates is referred to as administrative cooperation. Administrative cooperation is described in Section 4 of the Execution of Sentences Act:

*"The Correctional Services shall by engaging in cooperation with other public services arrange for convicted persons and persons in custody on remand to receive the services to which they are statutorily entitled. Such cooperation shall lead to a coordinated effort to supply the needs of convicted persons and persons in custody on remand and to assist them to adjust to society."*

If the correctional services are to execute its social responsibility, including preventing new criminality, other sectors must attend to their responsibilities for, among other things, health and care services, housing, education, work-related and social services. On returning to society after serving a sentence, coordination challenges may emerge. The coordination challenge is accurately described in the report by the Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (SIRUS) *Tilbakeføringsgarantien som smuldret bort (The guarantee of return to society that crumbled)*<sup>4</sup>:

*"One of the main challenges in organizing the release process is that the correctional services have the main responsibility for planning the return, but not for the follow-up. The correctional services' responsibility ends when the sentence has been served. A "backslide zone" emerges between the responsibility for planning and further follow-up of the plans after imprisonment."*

The Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Direktoratet for forvaltning og IKT, Difi) has in several reports<sup>5</sup> highlighted the coordination challenges of Norwegian administration. In the policy area of "execution of sentences", the Ministry of Justice and Public Security has the main responsibility, while other ministries have considerable authority in the reintegration work. The point of the coordination is to make the relevant ministries contribute to a common policy in the field.

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<sup>4</sup>Falck, S. (2015): *Tilbakeføringsgarantien som smuldret bort. Mellomkriminalomsorg og kommunale tjenester. Tiltaksbro, systematikk eller tilfeldighet?* SIRUS report 3/2015: 9. The Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research (SIRUS), Oslo.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g.: The Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (2014). *Mot alle odds? Veier til samordning i norsk forvaltning.* Difi report 2014:07. Oslo.