

# Application of Antonovsky's SOC 29 Life Orientation Questionnaire in post-penitentiary aid addressed to people over 60 – excerpts from own research

Zastosowanie Kwestionariusza Orientacji Życiowej SOC 29 Antonovsky'ego

w pomocy postpenitencjarnej skierowanej do osób po 60 roku życia

– fragmenty badań własnych

**Słowa kluczowe:** pomoc postpenitencjarna, wsparcie społeczne, skazani seniorzy, Kwestionariusz Orientacji Życiowej.

**Streszczenie:** Problem starzejących się osadzonych w Polsce z roku na rok wzrasta. Populacja ta charakteryzuje się pewną specyfiką, bowiem coraz częściej są to osoby dyskryminowane ze względu na wiek, odrzucone przed środowisko więzienne, schorowane i w większości nieprzystosowane do warunków wolnościowych, które diametralnie się zmieniają. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zwrócenie uwagi na dostępne formy wsparcia postpenitencjarnego dla osób powyżej 60 roku życia oraz ich realne wdrażanie w środowisku wolnościowym w odniesieniu do prowadzonych badań z zastosowaniem Kwestionariusza Orientacji Życiowej SOC 29 Antonovskiego.

**Key words:** post-penitentiary aid, social support, convicted seniors, Life Orientation Questionnaire

**Abstract:** The problem of aging prisoners in Poland is growing every year. Elderly prisoners are discriminated because of their age, they are rejected by other inmates, sick, and in most cases not adapted to the conditions outside the prison, which diametrically change with time. The purpose of this paper is to discuss available forms of post-penitentiary support for persons aged over 60.

The European population grows older with every year. According to data of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), in 1950 Poles aged 65+ constituted slightly over 5% in the scale of general population, 50 years later – 12.4%, and in 2012 – as many as 14%. Additionally, according to the CSO report, already over one million elderly people, after the age of 65, live in one-person household, which constitutes 30% of this age group. Scientists forecast that by 2050 the percentage of population aged 65 and more will increase about twice, i.e. from 15.8% in 2013 to 35.7%, and the increase of very old people (aged 85 and more), in the same period, will be almost

fivefold.<sup>1</sup> Referring to<sup>2</sup> the results of the report “Doing Time: the experiences and needs of older people in prison” that presents problems and needs of over 100 elderly people in isolation, it was clearly pointed out that institutional support is insufficient for this age group. There is no professional support, offer adopted to individual needs of persons aged 60+ (very often sick, excluded and lonely). Additionally, it was emphasised that discrimination and exploitation of elderly people by the group of young prisoners is a large problem. Most of the problems faced by older people in prison contribute to the emergence of feelings of fear, anxiety and alienation. Professor Norbert Pikuła draws attention to the fact that “experiencing old age is associated with experiencing many fears and anxieties. They result from the threat of a sense of security, lack of belonging and social acceptance, as well as fear of disability, pain, suffering, loss of fitness, addiction to the help of others, spending old age in a cheerful retirement home ...”.

Taking into account the above data, post-penitentiary assistance plays a particularly important role in preparation to life in freedom of prisoners aged 60+.

In Poland tasks and functions of post-penitentiary assistance are laid down in the following legal documents:

- the Criminal Executive Code (CEC) of 06 June 1997, chapter VII and X,
- the Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 01 December 2003 on the detailed scope and mode of participation of entities in enforcement of penalties, punitive, precautionary and preventive measures, and social control of their enforcement,
- the Social Assistance Act of 12 March 2004,
- the Regulation of the Minister of Justice of 22 April 2005 on the Post-Penitentiary Assistance Fund.

In line with the adopted norms and the applicable laws, post-penitentiary assistance should start already a prisoner is in a prison, and its main goal should be preparation of a prisoner to a re-adaptation process. Elderly people very often leave a prison and can count only on themselves. They do not have a family or workplace which frequently is the cause of homelessness. According to the research of Piekut-Brodzka, from 40 to 70 per cent of the homeless were in prisons, and most of them belong to the group of prison repeat offenders<sup>3</sup>.

During imprisonment prisoners may count on a number of forms of support including among others employment in the area of a penal institution or in the conditions in freedom, improvement of qualifications, finishing education, participation in

<sup>1</sup> CSO Department of Demographic and Labour Market Surveys, Population forecast for years 2014–2050, Statistical Publishing Establishment, Warsaw 2014, p. 159

<sup>2</sup> translation “experiences and needs of elderly people in a prison”

<sup>3</sup> N. Pikuła, *Poczucie sensu życia osób starszych. Inspiracje do edukacji w starości*, Wydawnictwo Impuls, Kraków 2015, s. 43. D. Piekut-Brodzka, *About the homeless and homelessness: phenomenological, ethological, therapeutic aspects*, Christian Theological Academy, Warsaw 2000

cultural and educational classes. The period of preparation of convicts to life after release was specified in Art. 164 of the CEC where it was indicated that

Clause 1. The period up to 6 months before expected release on parole or before enforcement of a penalty constitutes, if necessary, time required for preparation of a convict to life after release, in particular for establishing contact with a probation officer or entities referred to in Art. 38 *entities cooperating in enforcement of court decisions*, Clause 1. This period is set by a penitentiary commission, with convict's consent. Clause 2. The period referred to in Clause 1 may be also set by the penitentiary court in a decision on granting or refusal of release on parole if it deems it necessary<sup>4</sup>.

In turn, Art. 166 of the CEC reads that Clause 1. Released convicts, having difficulties with finding employment, accommodation or receiving necessary medical assistance, are provided with ad hoc assistance.

Clause 2. Director of a prison releasing a convict provides the latter with relevant information on possibilities of obtaining necessary assistance. In case of a release of a person convicted of an offence set forth in Art. 197–203 of the Criminal Code, committed in relation to abnormal sexual preferences, director of a prison notifies about this a Police unit competent for the place of residence of the convict after his/her release.

Clause 3. A convict released from a prison who does not have sufficient own funds and does not have ensured sufficient livelihoods in freedom may be granted by a director of a prison a financial aid upon release in the amount up to 1/3 of the average monthly remuneration of employees or its relevant equivalent; own funds of the convict constitute funds on deposit or handed over in the mode of **Art. 126** *handed over to a convict upon release* Clause 1<sup>5</sup>.

Bearing in mind statutorily set time necessary for preparation of a person to leaving a prison mentioned in Art. 164 of the CEC, I firmly believe that preparation to life in the conditions in freedom should take place as early as from the beginning of imprisonment. It is worth taking systematic actions professionally and socially stimulating from the first moments of imprisonment which could speed up the process of reintegration and boost faith in the meaning of life and the possibility of change of life among convicts.

Professionalisation of actions for prisoners and their families is particularly visible in the provisions of the Fund of Assistance for Victims and Post-Penitentiary Assistance. The provisions specify in detail that money from the Fund within the scope of provision of assistance to imprisoned persons, released from prisons and remand and their family members may be allocated to:

1. covering costs of temporary accommodation or shelter in a homeless centre,

<sup>4</sup> Criminal Executive Code, the Act of 06 June 1997, Journal of Laws 2017.0.665.

<sup>5</sup> Criminal Executive Code, ...

2. a periodical additional payment for the current rent obligations, purchase of materials, tools, equipment and devices, and protective clothing and footwear necessary for implementation of programmes, covering costs related to specialist treatment or medical rehabilitation and obtaining disability certificates or certificates of incapacity for work,
3. covering costs of special transport, in line with medical instructions, or travel to the place of residence, learning, therapy, work, in particular unpaid work,
4. covering costs related to obtaining an identity card and other documents necessary for receiving assistance,
5. covering costs of specialist examinations required for qualifying to participation in the programmes referred to in point 5 as well as trainings and courses improving professional qualifications, and unpaid work,
6. covering costs of group accident insurance of persons qualified to participation in trainings and courses improving professional qualifications, in the programmes listed in point 5 and unpaid work,
7. promotion and support of initiatives and enterprises aimed at effective re-adaptation of convicts, educational and information activities, organising and holding trainings, organising and ordering scientific research concerning the situation of convicts,
8. covering costs related to the organisation and provision of assistance in kind in the form of: food or food stamps, clothing, underwear, footwear, cleaning and personal care products, public transport tickets, drugs, dressing and sanitary products, in particularly justified cases provision of cash considerations for the purpose indicated by a body granting assistance<sup>6</sup>,
9. Among assistance activities in the freedom environment prisoners may count on support of the Municipal Social Welfare Centre, Employment Offices, Voluntary Labour Corps and numerous non-governmental organisations, i.e. "Probation" Małopolska Association together with the Pro Domo Małopolskie Integration Centre (a special home for homeless men). "Social economy seems to be a chance for employment. The Act on Social Cooperatives of 27 April 2006 defines persons released from prisons and having difficulties with integration with the environment as one of the groups which may establish a cooperative<sup>7</sup>. The functioning of a social cooperative may constitute an effective tools combating marginalisation of ex-prisoners. Information on projects concerning the possibility of receiving subsidies for establishing a social cooperative is available both on websites of state institutions establishing them (Voivodeship Employment Office, County Employment Office, Social Welfare Centre, Regional Social Policy Centre), and non-governmental institutions"<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.rcpslodz.pl/admin/zdjecia/file/2014/2014-01-29-ZPS>, [date of access: 18/03/2017].

<sup>7</sup> This provision arises out of Art. 2 of the above Act and Art. 1 of the Act on Social Employment of 13 June 2003.

<sup>8</sup> <http://criis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Formy-pomocy-dla-os%C3%B3b-opuszczaj%C4%85cych-zak%C5%82ady-karne.pdf>, [date of access: 20/03/2017].

The above forms of support play a very important role in the re-adaptation process since as it was emphasised by A. Kieszkowska "A convict's situation after leaving a prison is caused by changes in prisoner's personality and his/her life situation being the consequence of isolation"<sup>9</sup>.

### Reference to own research

When analysing the phenomenon of ageing of prison population in my research, I applied Life Orientation Questionnaire which helps respond to the question how prisoners aged 60+ see their future. The tool consists of three subscales concerning: the sense of comprehensibility, sense of manageability and the sense of meaningfulness. Each of the components differs in the number of questions, thus, the maximum and minimum score for each of them is different. 11 questions were used for determining the sense of comprehensibility from which a respondent may obtain maximum 77 points, and minimally 11 points. The sense of manageability is determined with 10 questions, where total number of points may amount to from 10 to 70 points. In turn, the sense of meaningfulness is surveyed with 8 questions, where the minimum score is 8 points, and the maximum score is 56 points. The maximum score obtainable in Life Orientation Questionnaire amounts to 203 points, and the lowest 29 points. The higher the score of respondents, the stronger their sense of coherence. The sense of coherence consists of three dimensions. The first one, a cognitive dimension, is the sense of comprehensibility resulting from this that a person perceives received information as ordered and cohesive, due to which he/she feels that he/she is able to understand what is happening and predict what will happen. The second dimension is a cognitive and instrumental dimension pertains to the sense of manageability – controllability resulting from the belief that he/she has access to resources necessary to deal with a situation.

The third dimension, having emotional and motivating nature, is the sense of meaningfulness referring to feeling that life has meaning, and it is worth committing to occurring requirements. Persons with the high sense of meaningfulness take on various challenges in life and are ready to make an effort to handle problems. Consequently, the sense of coherence is a set of beliefs about oneself, surrounding world and mutual relationships. The assessment of the Polish version of questionnaire SOC-29 shown a very high reliability of the tool. The questionnaire does not have norms, while an analysis is based on the comparison of average scores acquired by a surveyed group with scores of other authors. Obtaining a score up to 80 points by a respondent means that he/she perceives both the external world, and himself/herself, his/her emotions, needs and conduct as incomprehensible, unorganised, incoherent and unclear, and the future usually seems unpredictable to him/her. He/she is characterised by fear of the future and that he/she will not handle problems. He/she lacks motivation to act and is afraid that life may become unbearable. The

<sup>9</sup> A. Kieszkowska, *Methodology of work with a convict*, "Probation" 2009, no. 2, p. 2

score from 81 to 145 points is obtained by persons who perceive the external world and themselves, emotions, needs and conduct as not very comprehensible, rather incoherent, unclear and unorganised. They are unable to predict their future, it seems to them rather unpredictable and uncertain. They also have little motivation to act. Obtaining the score in the range from 146 to 203 points shows that a respondent perceives both the external world, and himself/herself, his/her emotions, needs and conduct as organised, comprehensible, coherent and clear. He/she does not fear the future, has very high motivation to act. He/she feels that his/her life has meaning, occurring problems are worth the effort and commitment to overcoming them. He/she perceives problems as challenges, and not piling up obstacles. Such an attitude of the respondent has a considerable influence on his/her mental resilience. Research of other authors confirm that persons with the high sense of coherence better handle requirements, adopt more active strategies of overcoming difficulties and are able to use possessed resources.

Due to respondents' age the largest group are persons in the range from 60 to 69, amounting to 84%. 14% of respondents were aged 70–74, while 4% were persons belonging to the group aged 75–84. The oldest respondent was 81 years old. The average age was 64.46. Age distribution was also examined among the listed age categories which demonstrated that all women taking part in the survey were in the category 60–69. The youngest woman was 61, the oldest 67 years old. Accordingly, the most represented age category in case of both sexes is 60–69.

Prisoners were residents of five voivodeships, whereas the largest group consisted of residents of Małopolskie Voivodeship – 54%, next, Lower Silesian Voivodeship – 16%, Silesian Voivodeship 12%, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship 4%, and Wielkopolskie Voivodeship 2%.

The conducted analysis of marital status of respondents shows that the most numerous group were married persons – 36%, while divorced persons amounted to 26%. 22% respondents declared that they were single, and 16% were widowers or widows.

In the population of respondents the most numerous group were persons with occupational education – 48%, that is 24 prisoners, next, persons with secondary education – 28%, and primary education – 16%. 8% prisoners had higher education.

The majority of respondents do not expect any post-penitentiary assistance. When prisoners expect assistance, they mainly want it to have a financial or material form. A statement of forms of assistance expected by prisoners was presented below. There were also answers stating that prisoners do not expect any form of assistance because they have where to go or means to live. One of convicts indicated a purchase of work tools which may demonstrate willingness to take up actions in freedom aimed at improvement of their current situation and attaining financial independence. Only in one case an answer concerning assistance of a probation officer, and support of a psychologist appeared. The given answers imply that convicts have knowledge of the possible forms of assistance.

15 respondents gave a negative response to the question about familiarity with institutional forms of support in the area of post-penitentiary assistance. After the analysis of data most answers coincided with information on the lack of information on forms and scope of support. However, in several cases despite provision of information on support to prisoners, they were unable to list institutions in which they will be offered assistance. Institutions and forms of support listed by prisoners present as follows:

- assistance with finding a job,
- Municipal and Commune Social Welfare Centres,
- Employment Office,
- Caritas,
- Brother Albert's Kitchens,
- probation officer,
- the Court.

The analysis of survey questions indicates that knowledge of forms of post-penitentiary assistance and support among prisoners aged 60+ is low, irrespective of whether they were covered by an Individual Influence Programme or not. Attention should be directed to the fact that there is an obligation to inform prisoners about forms of post-penitentiary assistance. Additionally, the analysis of questionnaire forms indicated that they often are unaware whether they were covered by the aforementioned programme. Most of respondents do not intend to use post-penitentiary assistance, and if they decide to benefit from it, they believe they should have a financial or material form. Giving a positive answer to the question about receiving information on forms of support and scope of post-penitentiary assistance does not determine familiarity with institutions offering support.

In own research, in the group of prisoners the average score of the sense of coherence is 136.04, which is illustrated by table 1 presenting average values and standard deviations in individual scales of SOC-29 in the general group of respondents. In the survey with questionnaire SOC-29 results of own research were referred to norms which present as follows:

- low score 51–100 points,
- average score 101–152 points,
- high score 153–191 points.

In case of subscales adopted norms are as follows:

1. Sense of comprehensibility
  - low score 11–33 points,
  - average score 34–50 points,
  - high score 51–71 points.
2. Sense of manageability:
  - low score 10–34 points,
  - average score 35–56 points,
  - high score 57–70 points.

3. Sense of meaningfulness:
- low score 8–28 points,
  - average score 29–48 points,
  - high score 49–56 points.

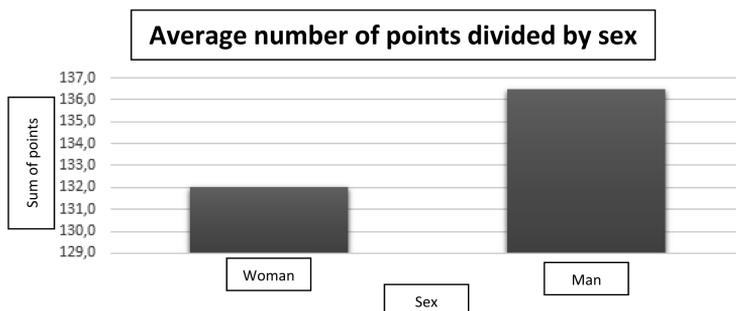
In this surveys the average scores of the level of the sense of coherence and its three components: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness were obtained among elderly prisoners. Standard deviation means that respondents differ in terms of the level of manageability and comprehensibility between each other. Standard deviation at 7.27 at the level of the sense of meaningfulness demonstrates low differentiation in the surveyed group in case of this component. Standard deviation of the sense of coherence was 19.67 which significantly differentiates respondents.

**Table 1. Average values of questionnaire SOC-29 in the group of surveyed prisoners**

Scale	N	Average	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Sense of coherence	50	136.04	19.67	88	168
Sense of comprehensibility	50	48.58	9.11	24	67
Sense of manageability	50	46.32	9.63	26	64
Sense of meaningfulness	50	40.14	7.27	26	53

Source: Own study.

The below graph presents the average number of points obtained by respondents taking into account division by sex. The average score of surveyed women is 132 points, that is 4.5 point less than in case of men. At the same time, in both groups average scores of the sense of coherence were obtained.



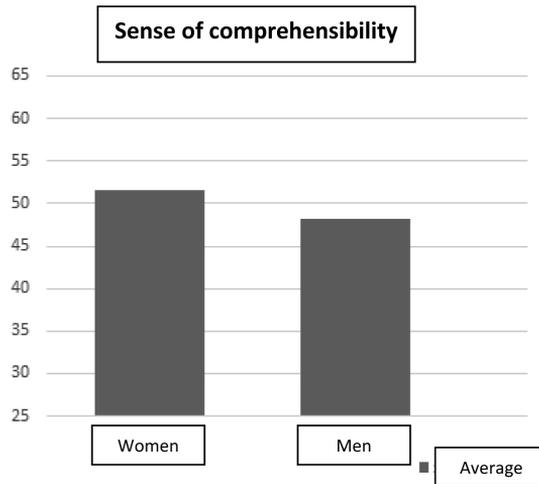
**Graph 2. Comparison of average scores of the sense of coherence of questionnaire SOC-29 divided by sex**

Source: Own study.

**Table 2. Average values of the sense of coherence of questionnaire SOC-29 in the group of respondents**

Scale	N	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Women's sense of coherence	5	132	96	158
Men's sense of coherence	45	136.5	88	165

Source: Own study.



**Graph 2. Comparison of average scores of the subscale of the sense of comprehensibility of questionnaire SOC-29**

Source: Own study.

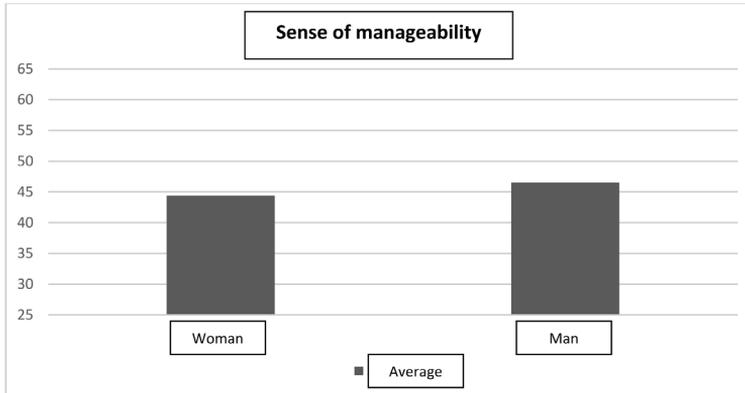
In case of the sense of comprehensibility the women's average score is at the level of a high score 51.6 point, while men's average score is lower and amounts to 48.24 point, i.e. it is average. Persons with the high sense of comprehensibility better plan actions in various life circumstances.

**Table 3. Average values of the sense of comprehensibility of questionnaire SOC-29 in the group of respondents**

Scale	N	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Women's sense of comprehensibility	5	51.6	38	63
Men's sense of comprehensibility	45	48.24	24	67

Source: Own study.

In case of both sexes the average scores of the sense of manageability correspond to the average scores. There is a high spread between the minimum and maximum scores. Persons with the high sense of manageability choose a possibility, from among several potential possibilities, which has the highest probability of success.



**Graph 3. Comparison of average scores of the subscale of the sense of manageability of questionnaire SOC-29**

Source: Own study.

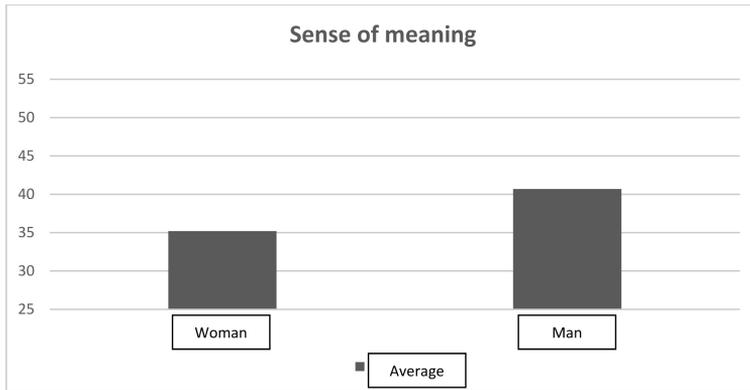
The below table presents average values obtained by surveyed women and men.

**Table 4. Average values of the sense of manageability of questionnaire SOC-29 in the group of respondents**

Scale	N	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Women's sense of manageability	5	44.4	33	55
Men's sense of manageability	45	46.53	26	64

Source: Own study.

Scores defining the sense of meaningfulness also are within the average values.



**Graph 4.** Comparison of average scores of the subscale of the sense of meaningfulness of questionnaire SOC-29

Source: Own study.

**Table 5.** Average values of the sense of meaningfulness of questionnaire SOC-29 in the group of respondents

Scale	N	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Women’s sense of meaningfulness	5	35.2	27	39
Men’s sense of meaningfulness	45	40.69	26	53

Source: Own study.

The analysis shows that age has slight influence on the level of coherence among prisoners. Persons within the age range 60-69 achieved on average 135.74 points, while respondents aged 70+ are characterised by the level of coherence at 137.6 point (more in: K.Gucwa- Porębska, Post-penitentiary assistance in the freedom environment for prisoners aged 60+, Publishing House of Pedagogical University, Cracow 2018).

To sum up, conclusions from surveys carried out by me are as follows:

1. The majority of respondents do not expect any post-penitentiary assistance. When prisoners expect assistance, they mainly want it to have a financial or material form.
2. The analysis of survey questions indicates that knowledge of forms of post-penitentiary assistance and support among prisoners aged 60+ is low, irrespective of whether they were covered by an Individual Influence Programme or not. Attention should be directed to the fact that there is an obligation to inform prisoners about forms of post-penitentiary assistance.

3. Most of respondents do not intend to use post-penitentiary assistance, and if they decide to benefit from it, they believe they should have a financial or material form.
4. The lowest sense of coherence was displayed by persons declaring willingness to use post-penitentiary. It may be the consequence of the feeling of impossibility to cope with life after leaving a prison without support.
5. The higher sense of coherence was noted among people who declared the lack of the need to use assistance after leaving a prison because they have stable housing situation and regular income.
6. In the result of analyses of individual cases it is possible to notice that most persons after leaving a prison will depend on assistance of institutions.
7. Forms of support offered in prisons considerably affect a change of life attitudes of prisoners and their perception of their future.
8. Reintegration programmes, the possibility of employment during imprisonment are factors having influence on quality of life of elderly people in the future
9. Health problems of prisoners, the lack of a flat and support significantly prevent independence after leaving a penal institution
10. Institutional forms of support give an opportunity to choose a path in life according to the applicable laws and social norms.
11. From among 50 convicts only 15, that is 30%, declared being covered by an Individual Influence Programme, whereas participation in the programme positively affects convicts as convicts who engage in activities offered by the Prison Service display a considerably higher level of knowledge and skills useful after leaving a penal institution, than convicts who do not participate or reluctantly participate in influence exerted by the institutions.
12. Education of local communities in the area of joint action during the process of social reintegration of prisoners – Seniors is necessary.
13. There is certainly a shortage of 24-hour support centres for elderly people leaving a penal institution
14. Age, health and criminal records make it impossible to become independent after leaving a prison.

Referring to the above statements, I believe that it is necessary to intensify even more post-penitentiary support activities for persons aged 60+ in penal institutions, in particular directing attention to the essence of individual and probation influence. Since "Probation as a means of rehabilitation on the basis of a society is based on the theory that the best method of reaching a goal, which is rehabilitation, is to organise criminal sanctions in a society in cases, where it is justified by functions of a penalty"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> A. Baładynowicz, *Probation, rehabilitation with...*, op. cit., p. 36.

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