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# The Impact of Covid-19 on Prisons and Penal Policy in Germany

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## ABSTRACT

In Germany, the situation of prisons before the outbreak of the Covid-19-pandemic was quite relaxed as the prison population was in decline and overcrowding not a problem. However, there was a special problem with fine defaulters, who comprise about 10% of the daily adult German prison population. Short-term prisoners in general are a problem resulting in a large influx of possibly infected people. Since March 2020 all German Federal states stopped (or reduced) incarcerating fine defaulters and some states went further, not executing prison sentences of up to one or even up to three years. The prison population dropped from about 77 per 100,000 inhabitants to 69. Prison conditions, however, worsened because of restricted contacts of prisoners with the outside world. On the other side, access to internet communication was introduced in order to compensate the lockdown of personal visits and of prison leaves. Since June some of the restrictions were repealed, as the pandemic was under control and almost no infections were observed for prisoners. Visits and prison leaves gradually are allowed again in a limited way. Further crime policy considerations to abolish or reduce fine default and other short-term imprisonment are discussed.

## KEYWORDS

Incarceration rates; prisoner reentry; prison experience; prisons; sentencing; Covid-19; Pandemic; Alternatives to incarceration; Early release mechanisms; Prison reform

## Introduction: the general situation in German prisons

Germany has operated as a Federal Republic since 1949. After the break of the East German wall and the transition of East Germany to a democratic society in 1990, West- and East-Germany were re-unified. With few exceptions, the legal system of West Germany was taken over for the whole country. The legislative competence for criminal law, criminal procedural law and penitentiary law was at the power of the central German Federal, not federal state level.<sup>1</sup> In 2006, a reform of the Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) changed legislative competencies for penitentiary law to the federal state level. Therefore between 2007 and 2015 the 16 federal states all had to pass substantive prison legislation (for the execution of prison sentences for adults, juvenile prison laws for 14–25-years old juveniles and young adults, pre-trial detention laws and laws for the execution of preventive detention, an indeterminate security and treatment measure for dangerous offenders).

The general sentencing policy in Germany is rather moderate and stable. Even at a time of increased violent crimes during the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a stable distribution of sanctions of about 82% of sentences against adults over 18 being fines (based on the so-called day-fine system), 12% being suspended sentences (probation) and 6% unconditional

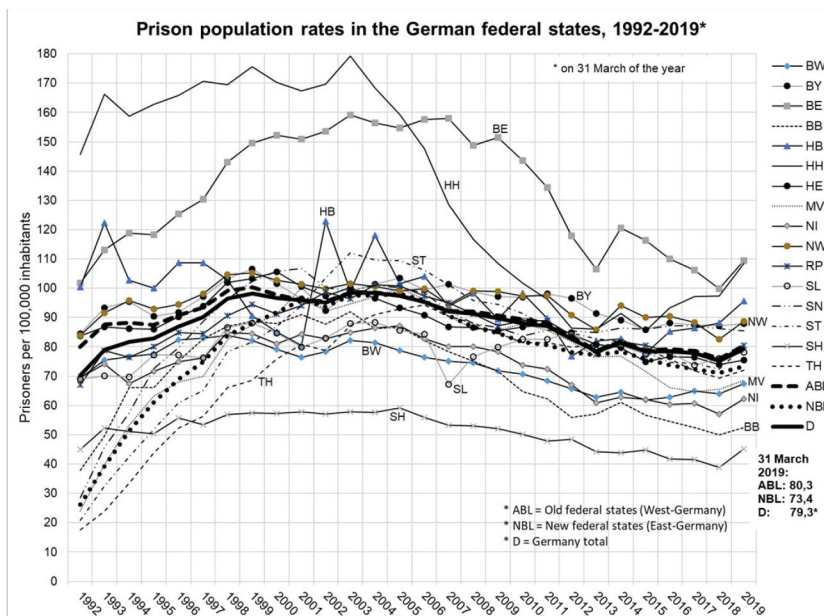
prison sentences. The average length of unconditional prison sentences is about two years. There is no evidence for a punitive turn in sentencing, although the legally provided penalties for violent and sexual crimes were slightly increased (see Dünkel, 2019).

Germany in February 2020 had an average prison population of 63,852 inmates, 13,137 in pre-trial detention (29.8%).<sup>2</sup> 45,062 served a prison sentence in prisons for adults, of them 4,773 (= 9.4%) were serving a substitute prison sentence because of not having paid a fine (fine defaulters).

At the end of February 2020, 47,855 out of 63,851 prisoners were accommodated in single cells (75.0%), 15,996 (= 25.0%) in communal cells (see below Figure 3) (mostly only with one other inmate).

According to the data collected by the International Center for Prison Studies in London (Birkbeck University)<sup>3</sup> for September 2019, Germany had the same prison population of 63,851 inmates as at the end of February 2020, which represented a prison population rate of 77 per 100,000 inhabitants. The prison population rate since 2004 (96 per 100,000) has declined by about 20%, and was stable since 2013,<sup>4</sup> although there had been fears that the refugee crisis of 2015 would contribute to an increase of the prison population. The world prison brief data for March 2020 reported a prison population rate of 71. The absolute numbers of prisoners further declined to 57,576 by the end of June, which would mean a prison population rate of 69, which – internationally compared – is exceptionally low (see Dünkel, 2017).

Despite considerable regional disparities, the downward trend is more or less uniform for all 16 federal states (see Figure 1). A particular big drop of the prison population can be observed in the federal states of Hamburg (since 2003) and Berlin (since 2009), which had a considerably higher-than-average prison population before (see for some explanations Dünkel, 2018).



**Figure 1.** Prison population rates in the German federal states, 1992-2019\*

The occupancy level at the end of February 2020 was 90%, which means that overcrowding (apart from a few closed prisons) generally was not a problem in Germany. Figure 2 reveals that in 2019 the general occupancy rate with 90% was identical, only in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg it was over 100%.

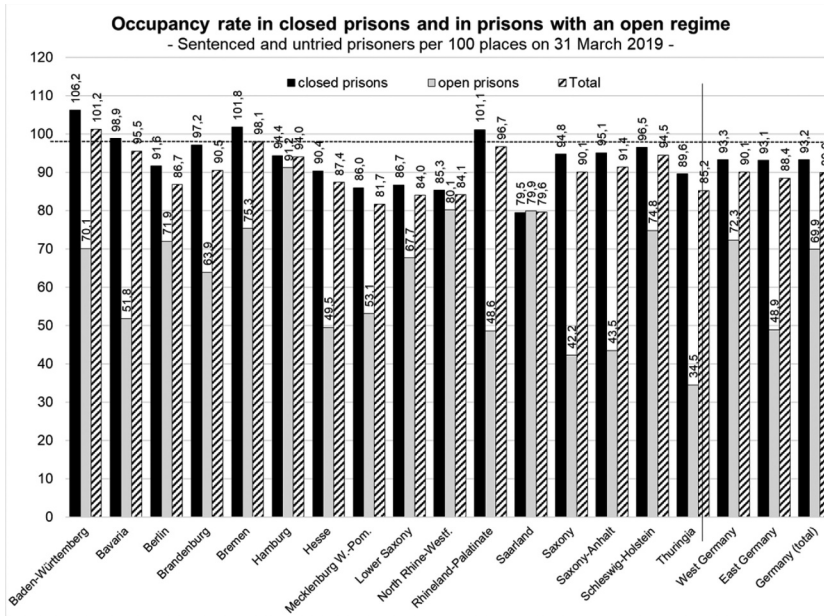


Figure 2. Occupancy rate in closed prisons and in prisons with an open regime -Sentenced and untried prisoners per 100 places on 31 March 2019-

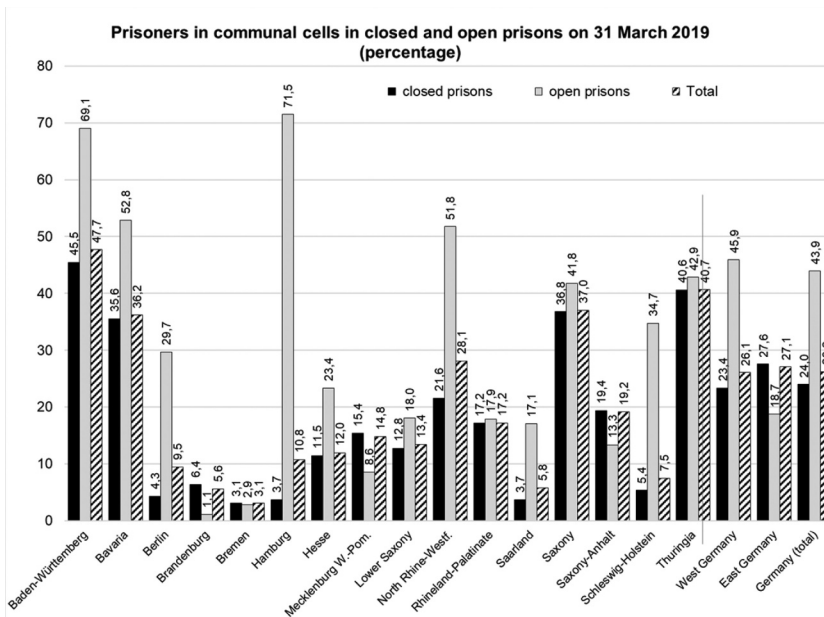


Figure 3. Prisoners in communal cells in closed and open prisons on 31 March 2019 (Percentage)

The situation has further calmed down due to the release and non-execution of short-term prison sentences since March 2020 with an occupancy level of 83.3%. At the end of June 2020, the occupancy rate was only 78.7%. Therefore, at the moment, overcrowding – even in the somehow problematic regions before the pandemic's outbreak (see [Figure 2](#)) – is no problem all over Germany.

One infection risk derives from accommodating too many prisoners in small and hygienically problematic accommodation. In Germany, prisoners in principle have a right to be accommodated in a single cell at night. This legal requirement is not totally met in all federal states and prisons. At the end of February 2020 75% of all prisoners (pre-trial and sentenced) were accommodated in single cells (47,855 out of 63,851) and 25% in communal cells (a year before, in March 2019: 74% in single, 26% in communal cells), again with large regional disparities (see [Figure 3](#)).

One month later after the prison population had decreased by 4,364 prisoners, which resulted from releases or non-execution of short-term prison sentences because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The proportion of prisoners accommodated in single cells increased from 75% to 77.5% at the end of March 2020.

The German prison system (as well as the system of community sanctions) is based on the rehabilitative goal or the principle of social reintegration (*Resozialisierung*). It is enshrined in substantive penal and penitentiary law and recognized with regard to the prison system by the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) as a constitutional principle based on the prisoners' right of preserving human dignity (Art. 1 of the Constitution, *Grundgesetz*) and the principle of the social welfare state (Art. 20 of the Constitution, see [Morgenstern, 2016](#); [Pruin, 2019](#): 150f.).

The principle of social reintegration requires a system of a graduated relaxation of the prison system including regular prison leaves and the transfer to open prisons at least in the last stage of executing prison sentences ([Dünkel & Rössner, 2001](#): 327 ff.; [Dünkel, 2018](#): 428 ff.). As a consequence of this orientation to reentry programmes, per day several thousands of sentenced prisoners are on temporary leaves (at the end of February 2020: 2,847, i.e. 5.6% of the population of 50,675 sentenced prisoners). The proportion of temporary absent prisoners dropped at the end of March to 1,761 and at the end of June to 1,654, i.e. 3.7% and accordingly 3.6% of all sentenced prisoners.<sup>5</sup> The impact of the pandemic with restricting prison leaves is quite visible by these statistical data.

Another pillar of the orientation to social reintegration is the transfer to open prisons, which are defined as facilities without physical hindrances to prevent escape (i. e. there are no walls nor grilled windows). The principle of a graduated opening of prisons is based on trusting prisoners, who naturally are selected according to their dangerousness and risks of escape.<sup>6</sup> At the end of February 2020, 15.0% of the 45,062 prisoners serving a prison sentence in prisons for adults, were accommodated in an open facility, against 8.8% of the 3,557 14- to 24-years-old inmates serving a youth prison sentence in youth prisons. End of March 2020 the proportions were about the same: 14.9% of the 42,177 prisoners in adult prisons, against 8.6% in youth prisons, were accommodated in open prisons.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the restrictions ordered by the prison administration are not visible as regards the transfer to open prisons, but it can be assumed that the restrictions concerning prison leaves that are typically concentrated on prisoners in open facilities during the main period of the pandemic has also influenced the practice in open facilities.

## Sentencing and execution of sentences-policies before and after the pandemic and the impact on prison population rates

The following findings about changes of executing prison sentences and of prison policies with regards to the Corona crisis are based on a research undertaken by Christine Morgenstern of the Department of Criminology in Greifswald (also: Trinity College, Dublin) in March and further inquiries in June/July by the author of this paper.

As mentioned before, Germany is a federal state with 16 states (“Länder”) having all their individual Prison Laws. Therefore, we had to explore the (sometimes) different approaches in the 16 federal states’ prison legislation and practice. The sentencing practice of the courts is based on the (uniform) Federal Criminal Code. Regional disparities in sentencing practices are well-known. During the pandemic the courts were limited in their work and mainly dealt only with cases of alleged offenders being sent to pre-trial detention. Therefore, the influx of new admissions to prisons was reduced partly because of the fewer convictions during March to June 2020. Exact numbers are not yet available, but the prison statistics about admissions give some indication of the dimension: In February 2020 7,799 new incomers (*Erstaufnahmen im Strafvollzug*) were registered, whereas in March 2020 the statistics counted only 5,470, and in June 4,723 admissions to prisons (minus 39.4%).

One research question to the federal state prison administrations was if prisoners were released and which forms of prison sentences are not executed due to Covid-19 in order to diminish the risk of prisoners being infected. The results are unanimous insofar as all federal states declared to have stopped to order convicts to serve **fine default sentences** and most states released prisoners serving fine default sentences at the beginning of the crisis in March 2020. The reduction of the daily prison population serving fine-default prison sentences is clearly visible since March 2020. The absolute numbers of the daily fine default population dropped by 59% between February and June 2020, the proportion with regards to the prison population of adult offenders from 10.6% to 5.8% at the end of March (see Table 1) and further to 4.9% in June (= minus 53%).

Although all federal states had declared that fine default sentences would be not be executed, this policy until end of March was implemented in a rather reluctant way in

**Table 1.** Fine defaulters in the adult prison system in Germany (absolute numbers at the end of the month).

	Prisoners serving a prison sentence in prisons for adults	Of them: Fine default sentences	Percentage of prisoners in adult prisons
<b>2019</b>			
March	46.477	4.861	10,5
April	45.917	4.546	9,9
May	46.008	4.549	9,9
June	45.687	4.482	9,8
September	45.244	4.616	10,2
December	43.760	4.122	9,4
Average 2019	45.417,75	4.569,5	10,1%
<b>2020</b>			
January	44.720	4.664	10,4
February.	45.062	4.773	10,6
March	42.177	2.447	5,8
April	41.505	2.064	5,0
May	40.691	1.939	4,8
June	40.311	1.956	4,9

Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. In North Rhine-Westphalia, the decrease was under the average as well. In contrast, in Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania the fine default population dropped by 75% or more (see Table 2).

With the end of some restrictions of the lockdown since May 2020 outside prisons, some prison administrations started to slow down the non-execution of fine default sentences. In North-Rhine Westphalia only in March the numbers of fine defaulters in prisons decreased, but since April the daily fine default prison population reached the pre-pandemic level again. All other federal states kept their policy of non-executing these short terms of imprisonment, in particular Berlin, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania. They kept only those fine defaulters in prison who in addition had to serve another prison sentence.

Some Federal states went even beyond the non-execution of fine-default sentences by not executing prison sentences of up to 6 months (Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria), 12 months (Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia) or even up to 3 years (Berlin, Hamburg, Saxony).<sup>8</sup> Hamburg did not start to execute prison sentences of up to 3 years and interrupted the execution of sentences of up to 18 months. In some federal states, a decisive policy decision is unclear, but apparently, some states did not decide to release other short-term prisoners than fine defaulters. Different levels of occupancy rates and problems of overcrowding cannot explain the differences between e.g., Berlin and Bavaria, but a more or less punitive climate in penal and prison policy, which traditionally is more severe in Bavaria and more relaxed in Berlin.

The prison administration has not much influence on an early release after half or two thirds of the prison sentence (it is a decision of the Court for the Execution of Sentences, see §§ 57, 57a Penal Code, 88, 89 Juvenile Justice Act).<sup>9</sup> If the statements of the prison administration concerning the decision of an early release have changed in favor of granting more such releases during March and the following months in 2020 is unclear. The absolute numbers of releases after having served two thirds of the prison sentence between January

**Table 2.** Fine defaulters in German prisons for adults before and during the Covid-19-pandemic in comparison of the federal states (absolute numbers at the end of the month).

Federal state	10/31 2019	2/28 2020	3/31 2020	4/30 2020	5/31 2020	6/30 2020	Change February- March 2020 (Index 2/ 2020 = 100)	Change February- June 2020 (Index 2/ 2020 = 100)
Baden-Württemberg	564	543	128	88	82	125	23,6	23,0
Bavaria	667	650	555	350	268	248	85,4	38,2
Berlin	271	325	87	37	29	29	26,8	8,9
Brandenburg	156	175	22	15	14	23	12,6	13,1
Bremen	47	53	28	14	13	13	52,8	24,5
Hamburg	116	118	29	16	19	43	24,6	36,4
Hesse	388	391	166	94	92	92	42,5	23,5
Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania	105	78	17	14	8	13	21,8	16,7
Lower Saxony	346	358	289	178	135	125	80,7	34,9
North Rhine-Westphalia	1.092	1.089	688	1.013	1.021	1.001	63,2	91,9
Rhineland-Palatinate	192	206	91	67	63	44	44,2	21,4
Saarland	34	35	19	12	8	13	54,3	37,1
Saxony	279	336	105	54	58	71	31,3	21,1
Saxony-Anhalt	168	205	154	101	78	60	75,1	29,3
Schleswig-Holstein	90	78	24	11	18	19	30,8	24,4
Thuringia	123	133	45	30	33	37	33,8	27,8
Germany (total)	4.598	4.773	2.447	2094	1.939	1.956	51,3	41,0

and March 2020 increased from 421 to 498,<sup>10</sup> but a similar increase could be observed in the same period in 2019 as well. Therefore, there is no statistical evidence indicating some causal relationship, at least not yet.

### **Measures of the prison administration to protect prisoners from being infected**

All 16 prison administrations of the federal states in March 2020 took immediate actions for the protection of inmates as well as of staff members in prisons. At the beginning, there was a shortage of masks and hygiene materials, but by about mid-April this problem was solved. Due to the further reduction of the numbers of prisoners and of admissions to prisons all prisons disposed of prison capacities to establish quarantine areas and also to accommodate new prisoners in these areas for about up two weeks.

Other measures aimed to reduce the influx of new prisoners by the non-execution of in particular short-term prison sentences have been dealt with above.<sup>11</sup>

### **Covid-19 infections in prisons**

From March to End of July, only a few prisoners and staff members have been infected. Infected prisoners immediately have been separated in quarantine, no prisoner died because or in combination with the Covid-19-virus. Although complete data for all federal states are missing, the largest federal state, North Rhine-Westphalia, reported on 16 July 2020 that 11 prisoners had been infected, all have recovered. With regard to a total prison population of 15,307 in March 2020, this means a percentage of 0.07%. As far as data are available, most other federal states have registered less than 10 infections of prisoners and thus were practically not affected by the pandemic. In Bavaria, 13 prisoners and 28 staff members were infected by mid-May (average prison population in March 2020: 11,416, i.e. the infection rate was about 0.1%, in Berlin only two prisoners and in the small state of Saarland none.

The general policy is not to isolate the whole group of inmates, but only the ones who are positively tested with the virus.

As to infections of prison staff members, again North Rhine-Westphalia was reporting that 35 staff members were infected since the outbreak of Covid-19, 32 of them are recovered.

In general one can say that the German prison administrations were very successful in keeping Covid-19 outside of prisons.

### **Contacts with the outside world for prisoners during the pandemic**

All Federal states have restricted visits by suspending all visits with personal contact. Some prisons dispose of visitors' facilities with cutoff wheels (*Trennscheibe*, where prisoners can see their visitors, but are separated by a plexi-glass window). Some prisons have introduced such facilities. Visits of lawyers, particularly in pre-trial detention, are not restricted, but if possible also executed by cutoff wheels.

Most Federal states have introduced some compensatory measures such as video telephone calls (Skype etc.), but it is unclear if the compensation is more than a symbolic one for a few cases. A very positive example is that already before the appearance of the pandemic the state of



Lower Saxony had introduced individual cell phones in each of the prisoners' cells, which allows them to have phone calls every day with their relatives and friends. In open prisons prisoners were and are now allowed to use mobile phones. The regular amount of visits is between 2 and 4 hours per month and additional visits for family members and children.

In closed prisons, prison leaves have been stopped (day leaves of several hours and long-term leaves of several days). Also in open prison regimes similar restrictions have been introduced on the one hand, but also long-term leaves of two weeks or more (in some state jurisdictions up to 6 months long-term leaves are possible) are granted, but this concerns probably only a few individual cases. The lockdown of granting prison leaves and work release schemes in closed prisons negatively impacts the efforts for preparing release and of a systematic transition management. One of the key factors of social reintegration in the German prison system is the early preparation for release and contacts between the prison and aftercare services which aim at a system of through care as established in several Federal states such as Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania or North Rhine-Westphalia (see Pruin, 2019; Dünkel & Weber, 2019). This underlines the necessity of further going ("reduction-sit") crime policy considerations laid down at the end of the paper in order to minimize the negative impacts of the Corona crisis in prisons.

Since June in North Rhine-Westphalia prisoners are allowed to receive visits from one relative and in addition from their children. Similar regulations and relaxation of the lockdown measures are visible also in the other federal states. However, the plexi-glass window mentioned above is getting the regular form for visits.

### **The impact of Covid-19 in daily prison life: activities (work, reentry programmes, sports etc.)**

Other common activities (work, recreational activities) partly have been reduced. In case working facilities were closed the prisoners in consequence did not receive work remuneration. Instead of about 200–300 € earnings they received only a pocket money of about 40 €. Some Federal states, however, increased the pocket money up to 70% of the regular remuneration (e.g. Lower Saxony). In particular in pre-trial detention the situation is hard and can mean that prisoners are locked up for up to 23 hours per day in their cells. In prisons for sentenced offenders the time of joint activities with co-inmates has also been reduced, in particular team sports activities such as soccer. On the other hand, other sports activities were expanded (jogging, small group activities etc.). The prison administrations try to find a balance between necessary restrictions and calming down prisoners' anger at them by providing compensatory activities.

With regard to the very low infection rates, work activities since June/July are widely taking place in the regular form under considering the Corona protection measures such as wearing masks and keeping distance.

### **The positive side of the pandemic crisis: what could be kept for further developing prison conditions and the working situation of staff members?**

The pandemic had not only a negative impact on prison regimes and daily life in prison. Some of the new forms of communication via internet (Skype and other internet-based communication systems) have been proved manageable without increased security

problems. Such communication forms have also been used for court hearings (on pre-trial detention or early release). One should use the experiences with these forms of communication also in the future. Allowing prisoners skype or similar communication is in line with the aim to protect family life and to intensify relations with partners, children and friends.

As to working conditions for staff members, another good experience was allowing homework, at least for some administrative work, naturally not supervision tasks.

The pandemic has resulted in an interruption of executing short-term imprisonment, which – because of its detrimental effects on social re-integration (see Dünkel, 2020) and its negative impact on the prison management (with high numbers of incoming and released prisoners) – is a principally desirable development. We should, however, not just come back to reinstall the same situation as before the pandemic after the lockdown will be ceased, but think of creating possibilities to replace short-term imprisonment by alternative modes of executing prison sentences. In countries, such as Finland, Austria, England and Wales, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Scotland, Spain or Switzerland short prison terms or a short remainder of long-term sentences can be served under probationary supervision, by doing community service work in the community or by serving a specific term under electronic house arrest (see Dünkel & Weber, 2019: 408 ff.). In Finland – and most other countries mentioned – with sentences up to six months, there is a de facto forward of (early) release. The decision is made by the prison administration, i.e. the prison director. Introducing alternative forms of executing short prison terms can reduce the prison population considerably. It really replaces imprisonment and no other alternative sanctions (addressing the problem of net-widening).

For the moment an amnesty for offenders, whose execution of a short-term prison sentence was interrupted would be a feasible solution (see also Feest, 2020: 120f.; in North-Rhine Westphalia sentences of a maximum of slightly more than 4 months), as it is a particular high burden to serve a short prison term maybe after a year, when the offender e. g. has shown his or her social integration into work and family life.

## **Changes in criminal and penitentiary laws and perspectives for a reductionist penal policy**

The debate in Germany goes in two directions: Do we need reforms in Criminal and Penitentiary Law, for example, to criminalize noncompliance with pandemic induced restrictions? Should penitentiary laws ease the restrictions practiced during the pandemic? On the other hand, a debate raises concerns against the incarceration policy toward short-term imprisonment.

As to General Criminal Law (*Strafgesetzbuch, StGB*): No changes concerning the Corona-crisis are envisaged. Noncompliance with contact restrictions is not a punishable offense (there is also no demand for it), but it can result in an administrative fine and the amount of these fines have been increased in the last days (August 2020) after some collective events with people not wearing masks or celebrating parties without keeping sufficient distance. These fines can never end in substitute prison sentences.

As to Penitentiary Laws: No changes on that level are discussed, yet, all restrictions are based the existing prison legislation and on directives of the prison administration.

There is, however, a debate starting to what extent these restrictions are justifiable and probably court decisions will be released in the near future. Restrictions of visits and other contacts with the outside world may infringe substantive Penitentiary Law and also constitutional human rights of prisoners and their families. The prison administrations have recently reacted to these discussions by lowering the restrictions and expanding relaxations of the prison regimes.

The general crime policy question raised (mainly) by academics is: Should we not use the pandemic as a reminder that we incarcerate people who should not be in prison and instead could be sanctioned in the community? In Germany, the large number of fine defaulters is certainly an issue and the pressure of the left and green political parties increases. As in other European countries, fine default imprisonment could be widely avoided by alternative forms of executing fines and replacing them by community service or by abolishing fine default imprisonment at all by transferring the execution to civil law agencies (see Dünkel, 2019 with further references).

Many academics also take the opportunity to remind the decriminalization of soft drugs and of the possession for use of all drugs as well as of petty property offenses, which for recidivists may result in prison sentences (Dünkel, 2019, 2020; Harrendorf, 2020; Mohr, 2020). Germany has the largest proportion of short-term prisoners in Europe (see Dünkel, 2017: 642f.), mainly because of the fine default problem, but also because of many short-term prison sentences (although a law reform in 1969 wanted to ban them, see Dünkel, 2019). Therefore, the need of further reforms of criminal law and the criminal sanctions system is evident (Mohr, 2020).

## Notes

1. See for the development of the German prison system Dünkel and Rössner (2001), Dünkel (2018).
2. The statistical data on the prison population and the distribution of inmates in comparison of the federal states are taken from *Statistisches Bundesamt* (Ed.). Rechtspflege. Bestand der Gefangenen und Verwahrten in den deutschen Justizvollzugsanstalten nach ihrer Unterbringung auf Haftplätzen des geschlossenen und offenen Vollzugs (monthly statistics on prisoners in closed and open prison facilities), <https://www.destatis.de>.
3. See world prison brief: [http://www.prisonstudies.org/info/worldbrief/wp\\_b\\_stats.php](http://www.prisonstudies.org/info/worldbrief/wp_b_stats.php) (last access: 16 August 2020).
4. See for the German development in comparison to other European jurisdictions Dünkel (2017).
5. The absolute numbers of sentenced prisoners were 42,195 at the end of March and 45,715 at the end of June 2020.
6. It does not mean that only low-risk offenders are granted to serve their sentence in open prisons. Also medium- and high-risk offenders – at least in the very last stages of the execution of prison sentences –, should have the right to be transferred to open prisons in order to alleviate the transition process from closed prisons to an open environment and the after-care situation, see for that Dünkel in Dünkel, Jesse, Pruin, & von der Wense (2016): 91 ff.
7. At the end of June 2020 the proportion of prisoners accommodated in open prisons for adults was 14.4% and in youth prisons 9.2%, which underlines the statement that the pandemic had no visible impact on the strategy of furthering the reentry of prisoners by a graduated release and the transfer to open prisons. However, further statistical analysis is needed on the question of differential effects and on which offender groups were preferably selected.
8. North Rhine-Westphalia in the response to a Parliamentary Inquiry declared that prisoners who served a fine default or prison sentence of up to 18 months that ended between 20 March and 31 July 2020 had been released by interrupting the execution of the sentence according to §

455a Criminal Procedure Act (for organizational reasons). In total 1,051 prisoners were released, which corresponds to 9.7% of the North Rhine-Westphalian prison population in March 2020, see Parliamentary printed matter, *Landtags-Drucksache* 17/3468 of 8 June 2020.

9. See for the legal requirements in Germany and in comparison to other European jurisdictions Dünkel (2015); Dünkel and Weber (2019).
10. The absolute numbers remained on this relatively high level also in April to June 2020 (498, 506, and 471), leaving open the question of a pandemic induced more favorable early release policy.
11. Unfortunately, Germany does not report the measures taken against Covid-19 infections and other changes in prison life during the pandemic to the internet-platform Europris, although the Federal Ministry of Justice is a member of Europris, see <https://www.europris.org>.

## Disclosure statement

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