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## **The Right to Read Behind Bars: Access to Books and Libraries in the Prisons in Bulgaria**

Milena I. Tsvetkova <sup>a,\*</sup>, Sashka Y. Andrekova <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski“, Bulgaria

<sup>b</sup> Ministry of Justice of Bulgaria

### **Abstract**

The actuality of the research is justified by the lack of serious scientific, social and politically engaged interest in the subject of books and reading among prisoners, which could reflect on the whole society, with negative consequences. This topic has been neglected even at state level in the former socialist camp. A comprehensive picture of the reading in the penitentiary establishments in the world is absent. There is no empirical study on the reading in the places of imprisonment in Bulgaria after the end of the totalitarian period (after 1989). A research interest of the library keepers and of the experts from the public libraries to the problems of the reading in the prison libraries is absent. The aim of the study is to answer the question what is the level of the readers activity in the prisons in Bulgaria and what are the perceived material needs of the prison libraries to meet the reading right of the prisoners. The subject of the study is the access to books and libraries in Bulgarian prisons and the accompanying risk of information discrimination of the prisoner – the feeling of intellectual isolation from the books, the world is reading. Subject of a direct interest is the right of happiness through reading and the opportunities for the welfare of the imprisoned reader. For the first time, a recap of the status of the prison libraries and the readers activity among prisoners in Bulgaria after the democratic changes of 1990 to 2015 is presented.

**Keywords:** right to read, prison reading, access to books in prison, prison library, psychology of readers, sociology of reading.

### **1. Introduction**

Do prisoners read in the prisons around the world? This question should be institutionalized and canalized into a long-term research, because it is known that the reading contributes to socialization, spiritual development, self-education and emotional intelligence, bears essential benefits for the intellectual, psychological and informational equilibrium of man. The thesis that reading is the best antidote to violence and aggression is widespread. Attempts to prove also the link between reading and health are done, which would mean that keeping the welfare and the health of the prisoners is most effective by encouraging reading.

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\* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: [milenaic@uni-sofia.bg](mailto:milenaic@uni-sofia.bg) (M.S. Tsvetkova),  
[s\\_andrekova@justice.government.bg](mailto:s_andrekova@justice.government.bg) (S.Y. Andrekova)

Issues of reading among convicts in prisons in Europe and America have been partially explored by L. I. Al'pern (Al'pern, 2004), V. Lehmann (Lehmann, 2000), L. E. Sullivan (Sullivan, 1996), M. Koryakin (Koryakin, 2010). But there is no overall picture of reading in penitentiary establishments in the world. This can be explained by the insufficient, often fragmentary and unsystematic approach to the study of the phenomenon reading in this specific field. Moreover, the research of the activities in the prison libraries in the socialist countries until the mid 90s of twentieth century was stiff from state, political and ideological dogmas.

For the period of democratic changes (after 1989) in Bulgaria, empirical research on reading in the places of imprisonment are not done. More seriously discussed, synchronized and updated is the regulatory framework to ensure the right of information and education in the places of imprisonment. But there is no interest in social, axiological, semiotic, biblio-psychologic, biblio-therapeutical aspects of reading in prison. The following topics are waiting their research: definition and typology of the category “reader prisoner”; qualitative and quantitative parameters of the reading among prisoners; content suitable for the reading of prisoners; reading and writing as step to freedom- the methods “redemption through reading” and reduction of the period of the sentence by authorship of books; reformatting of the libraries in prisons; initiation and creativity to new technologies to cluster projects with publishers, to promote the methods “living books” and “living libraries” to promote the dialogue and to reduce the prejudice against prisoners (Human Library Organisation. Human library, 2000).

The theme of the reader and the reading in prison in the countries of the former socialist camp is neglected even at a state level. Indicative is the example with Russia. In 2003 there was developed a “National Programme for Support and Development of Reading“, scheduled for 2007-2020, whose activities are aimed at consolidation of the efforts to promote reading among all circles of the Russian society (Mezhregionalnyi tsentr bibliotchnogo sotrudnichestva, 2007-2009). In 2007, on the basis of this program the Russian government develop a new, broader program of support and development of reading, with a planned budget only for 2008 of 262 million roubles (Vtoraya Vserossiiskaya konferentsiya „Natsional'naya programma podderzhki i razvitiya chteniya“, 2007-2009). But reading in the social environment, such as the prisons, is not subject to the program.

Another alarming fact is that public libraries do not investigate the category of readers in the prison, considering that many of the prisoners in the ordinary life have never been readers of a public library. This is not only a Bulgarian problem, but finding, displayed in the preface of the international “Guidelines for library services to prisoners” of IFLA (1995).

It is not raised for discussion and is not authorized another common problem. And it is not the formal right to read and access to libraries, but the risk of informational discrimination of the prisoner, his sense of intellectual isolation of the books the world is reading. It's about the right to happiness through reading and the welfare of the imprisoned reader. This study is devoted to this problem.

## **2. Purpose, objectives and scope of the study**

The object of the research is the access to books and libraries in Bulgarian prisons and the accompanying risk of informational discrimination of the prisoner, the sense of intellectual isolation of the books the world is reading.

Subject to direct interest is the right to happiness through reading and the opportunities for the welfare of the imprisoned reader.

The aim of the study is to answer the question what is the level of the activity of the readers in the prisons in Bulgaria and what are the perceived material needs of the prison libraries to meet the reading right of the prisoners.

Objectives of the study:

- to synthesize and update the international legal basis for the right to read in prison and on the access to books and libraries in the places of imprisonment (still no translation in Bulgarian);
- to present the first after the democratic changes in Bulgaria recap of the situation with the funds of the prison libraries (1990–2015);
- based on the analysis of the requests from all prison libraries in Bulgaria to establish the change in their material needs for the same period;

- to formulate recommendations for actions to support the welfare and the health of the prisoners by encouraging reading.

Conceptual clarification: to refer to the type of limited environment (lack of freedom) this study uses equal terms “places of imprisonment”, “closed institutions” (closed type of institutions) and “closed socially bad environment”; the term “penitentiary institutions” we accept as a synonym for prison facilities.

Limitations on the scope: beyond the scope of the study are the places of imprisonment as arrests and psychiatric institutions; not subject to analysis are also the literacy aspects of the penitentiary policies; out of the interest are also the internal penitentiary criminal acts under the influence of a read text and the use of a book as a crime subject (e.g. for a hiding-place of banned items and substances).

### **Right to read: legislation**

The international legislation for reading, books and libraries in the places of imprisonment has not been studied in complex and completeness. After an extensive desk research we have found that all relevant international documents concerning any aspect of the life of the prisoners in the world are adamant that everyone has the right to read and be informed, and the state should give him that freedom. Many and different organizations have compiled and formulated charters and lists of the human rights applied to reading and literacy. Others are related to the right to read at all – the constant presence of the right to universal access to information, speaks for this ([Barker, Escarpit, 1973](#))

“Everyone has the right to read” – so reads Art. 1 of the Charter for the book adopted in 1971. It states: “The Society is obliged to ensure that all people can enjoy the benefits of reading. Since a significant part of the world population has no access to books because of inability to read, governments are obliged to contribute to the eradication of the illiteracy. They are obliged to support the issuance of printed materials required for the acquisition and preservation of the reading habits. Publishers and distributors of books, in turn, are obliged to monitor whether the distributed via printed word ideas and information are consistent with the changing needs of the readers and society as a whole” ([Tsvetkova, 1972](#)).

In order to overcome the limitation of the human right to read of the unequal, programs for favorable conditions for access to reading of every citizen are created and specific policies, legal regulations and international documents about books and libraries are adopted. Among the major international documents for the prevention of the social deprivation and informational isolation from books and reading, are: “Standard rules on the equalization and equal chances for the people with physical and mental deficiencies” of the UN (1993) ([The Standard Rules of the United Nations on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities](#)), “Minimum standard for the treatment of prisoners” of the UN (1977) ([Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#)), “Manifesto for the public libraries” of UNESCO (1994), “Charter for the book” of UNESCO (1972), “Charter for the reader” of the International publishers association (since 1992) and many documents of IFLA (the International Federation of the Library Associations), the most common of them are the handbooks for “easy to read materials” and “library service for people with dyslexia” ([Tronbacke, 2001](#)). In the Charter of the reader as unequal are defined 5 types of readers: newly literate, minority language groups, immigrants, slow readers and readers with poor eyesight (Art. 4.2). In the Charter of the book are fixed 3 situations to limit the universal right to read: a significant portion of the world population has no access to books because of inability to read (Article I); in the world there is acute inequality in the publishing of books and many countries are deprived of their proper amount of reading material (Article IV); there are languages that still do not have writing (Article V).

### **3. Methodology**

In order to conduct the study of the level of reader activity in the prisons in Bulgaria and of the perceived material needs of the prison libraries to meet the right to read of the prisoners, we used the method of quantitative statistical analysis. The prisons in Bulgaria are 13, where one is for juvenile offenders and one for women. All are subject to empirical study.

The informational base of the study is a sustained collected documentation and targeted sophisticated business reports, as follows:

1. Generalized data for the libraries at 12 prisons and one reformatory from the Chief Directorate “Execution of Punishments” of the Ministry of Justice, Reg. №5042/1, Sofia, 15.05.2015, signed by the temporary assumed the post of General Director – Svilen Tsvetanov (from Sashka Andrekova, Chief Expert in Public Relations department to the Directorate “Public Relations and Protocol” at the Ministry of Justice).

2. General information for the equipment enquiries (material base) of the libraries in 12 prisons and one reformatory from the Chief Directorate “Execution of Punishments” of the Ministry of Justice, Sofia (from Sashka Andrekova, Chief Expert in Public relations department of the Directorate “Public relations and Protocol” at the Ministry of Justice).

3. Information for the put up convicts, defendants and accused in the 13th places of imprisonment for the period 2011-2015, prepared by the Chief Directorate “Execution of Punishments” at the Ministry of Justice and received on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015.

The empirical information from the libraries in the places of imprisonment in Bulgaria has its recapitulation in two comparative tables: for the library state (fund and readers) and for the material needs of the prison libraries (enquiries for equipment).

The overall picture of the reading in the 13<sup>th</sup> places of imprisonment in Bulgaria is determined by the ratio between the existing book fund in the prison libraries, the total number of prisoners and the number of readers among them (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Recapitulation of the ratio “reading prisoner – total number of prisoners in Bulgaria – total number of books in the prison library fund” (2015)

Places of imprisonment	Library fund	Total number of prisoners	Reading prisoners	
1	Sofia Prison	10 000	1362	230
	* Prison hostel “Kremikovtsi”	6000	–	150
	* Prison hostel “Kazichane”	4000	–	–
2	Belene prison	16 110	475	336
3	Burgas prison	11 000	705	50
4	Bobovdol prison	7050	472	60
	* Prison hostel “Samoranovo“	427	–	12
5	Varna prison	11 729	571	200
6	Vratsa prison	3659	471	220
7	Pleven prison	7800	393	127
8	Sliven prison	18 079	240	173
9	Pazardjik prison	10 500	595	115
10	Plovdiv prison	12 006	617	16
	* Prison hostel “Smolyan”	4430	–	10
	Prison hostel “Hebros”	2568	–	5
11	Lovech prison	9500	675	140
12	Stara Zagora prison	10 000	620	256
13	Reformatory “Boychinovtsi”	8600	42	70
	TOTAL	153 458	7238	2170

\* The data on the number of the prisoners (housed in the prisons and their hostels) in the Bulgarian prisons on 2015 is according information from the Chief Directorate “Execution of Punishments” at the Ministry of Justice. The total number of prisoners on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015 is 7238.

The quantitative analysis of the ratio “reading prisoner – total number of prisoners in Bulgaria – total number of books in the prison library” has ended with three conclusions.

First, the formal number of reading prisoners in Bulgarian prisons in 2015 is not so small – about 40 %, as 2170 of 7238 imprisoned have active reader’s files (see Fig. 1). Second, it is obvious the alarming statistics for the three prisons with the poorest reading – these are the prisons in Bobovdol, Plovdiv and Burgas. The ratio “library fund-number of reading prisoners” is in a serious dissonance: the larger number of books does not mean large number of readers. For example, in the prison in Vratsa at a small fund of 3659 library units, the reading prisoners are among the most numerous – 220.

While in the prison in Burgas, at one of the richest funds of 11 000 library units, the readers are only 50 and in the prison in Plovdiv, the ratio is even more alarming – at fund of 12,006 library units, the prisoners with active reader’s files are only 16. Third, optimistic fact is that only one penitentiary institution in Bulgaria violates the recommendation of the IFLA for a minimum library fund of 2,000 volumes and this is the prison hostel “Samoranovo” (a collection of 427 volumes). A negative fact is that 9 of the 15<sup>th</sup> prisons violate the recommendations of IFLA for the providing of books to one prisoner (for 1 prisoner at least 20 volumes) and support funds with smaller size. The fourth conclusion of the analysis is that the volume of the library funds can not be a factor for the reader’s activity because all prison libraries report for obsolete, outdated and subject to scrapping paper collections (see Fig. 1).

We will remind you that in the document “Explanatory Memorandum on the European Rules for the Prisons”, revised European version of the “Minimum standards for treatment of prisoners” from 1987, the predecessor of “European Rules for the Prisons” from 2006, there is an explanatory text to art. 82 which contain the following formulation: “The needs of the modern education in the prison require good cooperation (of the prison libraries) with the public libraries in order to provide to the prisoners a greater choice of scientific literature and fiction.” (Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules, 2006) The study showed that only two prisons in Bulgaria (or the administration only of these prisons mentioned this fact) – Lovech and Stara Zagora interact with public library.

**Table 2.** Recapitulation of the subjective assessment of the material and technical needs of the prison libraries in Bulgaria

	Places of imprisonment	New technologies	For reading
1	Sofia prison	—	Newspapers and magazines
2	Belene prison	Computer configuration with printer, multimedia projector	Legal editions, dictionaries, phrase-books, detective novels, love stories, politics
3	Burgas prison	Computer, multimedia projector, screen	Legal editions, detective novels, stories, history
4	Bobovdol prison	Computer configuration with color printer for the issuing of the prison newspaper, multimedia projector	Legal editions, sociology, psychology
5	Varna prison	Computer configuration with multifunctional device	Legal editions, detective novels, history novels, science-fiction, poetry
6	Vratsa prison	Computer configuration with multifunctional device	Detective novels, history novels, science-fiction, poetry
7	Pleven prison	Computer configuration with multifunctional device, multimedia projector, screen	Foreign language books, stories
8	Sliven prison	Computer configuration with multifunctional device, multimedia projector, screen, microphone, audio system, e-book	Detective novels, love stories, children’s literature, religious books

9	Pazardjik prison	Computer configuration with multifunctional device, multimedia projector, screen, microphone, DVD player	Detective novels, historic novels
10	Plovdiv prison	Computer configuration with printer for the issuing of the prison newspaper, multi-media projector, screen	Detective novels, science-fiction
11	Lovech prison	Computer, multimedia projector	Detective novels, history novels, love stories
12	Stara Zagora prison	Computer configuration with printer for the issuing of the prison newspaper, multi-media projector, screen	Self-knowledge, history, encyclopedias, foreign languages books, dictionaries
13	Reformatory "Boychinovtsi"	Computer configurations, multifunctional device with printer and scanner, CD player with speaker, multimedia projector, laptop	Children's books

\* The data in the Bulgarian prisons on 2015 is according information from the Chief Directorate "Execution of Punishments" at the Ministry of Justice.

After an analysis of the submitted equipment enquiries for the prison libraries in Bulgaria, we can make a generalization of the actual assessment of the administration in three areas:

- The value of the object "Library" in the structure of the prison becomes aware;
- The necessity of new information and communication technologies for the literacy, vocational and moral improvement of the prisoners becomes aware;
- The right to read of the prisoners and the importance of reading as an intellectual practice for everyone that could not be evaded becomes aware.

Concerning the needs of reading material in the prisons in Bulgaria, the following conclusions can be formulated:

- The analysis shows that, at the discretion of the administration, all prisons need fiction, except one – the Sofia prison.
- Again, at the discretion of the administration of the prisons, specialized publications for library reading (other than fiction) need only 6 of 13 places of imprisonment – these are the prisons in Belene, Burgas, Bobovdol, Varna, Pleven and Stara Zagora.
- Need of legal publications have only 4 of 13 places of detention in Bulgaria - these are the prisons in Belene, Burgas, Varna and Bobovdol.

Concerning the needs of equipment with new technologies of the prison libraries, the following conclusions can be formulated:

- Need for new information and communication technologies have all Bulgarian prisons except one – the prison in Sofia.
- An interesting fact is that the library only of one prison – this in Sliven, has a request for "electronic book" (possibly e-book reader).

#### 4. Conclusion

As a result of the first study – reading in the conditions of forced lack of freedom is found that the average number of readers of the total housed in the prisons in Bulgaria at the end of 2015 is nearly 40 %. This is a very optimistic result.

The conclusion of the second study – for the passed enquiries for equipment for the prison libraries in Bulgaria, is that the ambitions of the administration of the prison libraries are extremely modest. The low hopes and expectations, and the small amounts of the enquiries are directly proportional. The reason is not probably in the satisfactory material provision of the libraries but in the ignorance of the enormous potential of the books and the reading for the fulfillment of the modern European philosophy for treating of criminals. Since this philosophy

focuses on the educational and qualification activities with prisoners, on their motivation and willingness to work and ease reintegration into the society, the prison libraries can be converted into areas for special attention to the right of information and reading into zones for modern technical literacy, for creative individual education and vocational training of the imprisoned.

We can formulate also, more general conclusions on the access to books and libraries of persons placed in a closed socially dysfunctional environment.

The first conclusion is that there are seven factors with negative impact on the active reading in the prisons: (1) Increase of the persons with primary and secondary illiteracy in the prison, which is linked to the lack of interest to the educational activities; (2) A growing number of young illiterate prisoners; (3) A large number of prisoners engaged in physical labor; (4) Reduction of the prison population; (5) Obsolete library; (6) Formal completeness of the library fund in the prisons. The main way to supply books are the donations but they are often sporadic act of “awakened conscience”, an instrument for demonstrative political action, casual gesture or a dole “out of pity”; (7) Poor quality of the donated books. Those donations are mainly from closed libraries in various state institutions, i.e. we are talking about old books with outdated content. The other kind of donations are from publishers whose generosity is associated with excess and obsolete specialized publications that cannot be interesting for the convicted.

The second conclusion is that any action (or inaction), which limits the fundamental right to read of the prisoners should be qualified as “*discrimination*”. And it is unacceptable under any international regulations concerning imprisoned persons.

The third conclusion is that there is actually *such a scientific category of “prisoner reader” and the knowledge for him is unjustly neglected and marginalized*. It was found that prisoners accept positively the practices of reading in prison and the education through books. The awareness that reading serious books is not an extra, but works in their favour to educate intensively and faster to change, is developed in the imprisoned.

The fourth conclusion is that *the prisoners managed to change their lives through reading*. Stimulating reading in the prisons decreases the percentage of new crimes since literacy gives prisoners more opportunity in life. It brings defendants confidence to be able to have control over their life outside the prison.

Let us remind what the main purpose of the prison regime under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Art. 10 pt. 3) ([Mezhdunaroden pakt za grazhdanskite i politicheskite prava, 1988](#)) is: The main purpose of the prison regime is *reclamation (correction of the behaviour)* and *social re-education* of prisoners. The attitude towards the convicts must be oriented precisely to these results – reclamation and social rehabilitation. The access to books and the reading contribute effectively to the socialization and re-education of the prisoner. Reading of books helps prisoners for their rehabilitation and reintegration into the society. Books which prisoners read provide them with options for fun, to improve their qualification and for self-acquaintance.

“Reading is *the best antidote for violence* in the cells and helps for socialization and re-education of the individual,” added the Italian president of the Regional committee for culture at the Regional council, Mario Kalidzhuri, who in 2014 proposed the program “Reading for redemption.” Prisons should put as their priority the reading because it is “exclusive antidote” for the aggression and leads to social and personal awakening ([Pisa, 2014](#)).

Reading is a *factor for the supporting of health* and observance of the medical and health conditions in places of imprisonment. The difficulties with the reading limit the understanding of the medical training materials or complicate the use of the systems based on self-definition, if they involve a written explanation. In July 2015 the charity trust “National Literacy Trust” announced their new motive for encouragement of reading – the link between the literacy, the reading and the health is found.

According to the NGO, reading and literacy are key for people to look after their health and take preparatory and timely measures against various diseases. “Our studies show that intellectual level plays a fundamental role for people to take control on their health and protect themselves. Those who read and are interested, might avoid diseases and also to take treatments more correctly,” said Jonathan Douglas, director of the trust, who continues to work to promote reading by medical organizations as “Boots Opticians” ([Blagotvoritelna organizatsiya nameri vrazka mezhdur cheteneto i zdraveto, 2015](#)).

The ecological model of public health care supposed health to be understood as an overall concept, according to which the state of health is influenced by a complex of interrelated organizational, personal factors and environmental factors. This means that prisons are required to support health and the welfare of the prisoners and the staff through all its systems and structures. (Enggist, Moller, Galea, Udesen, 2014). And if the link between reading and health is actually proven, then the support of the welfare and health of the prisoners is most effective by encouraging reading.

### **Inference**

Our research hypothesis that access to books and libraries in prisons in Bulgaria is protected by numerous and ongoing global standards for encouraging of reading among prisoners was confirmed, as well that for the improvement of the prison library service. But the existence of regulations, methodologies and funded educational programs is not sufficient to answer the right and the will to read behind bars. What is needed is a managerial creativity to create added value to get dividends from the traditional educational and social-educational policies in the places of imprisonment. These efforts are particularly the most compelling towards closer and not localized satiation of the prison interior with books.

It is possible not only constructive but also creative approach to reading in the prisons in Bulgaria. The efforts of the managers can be focused on four areas:

I. It is imperative to translate into Bulgarian and promote key international acts that define basic concepts which the global community of experts responsible for books, reading, libraries and access to information and knowledge in prison used to work with. We have in mind the following seven untranslated documents: (a) Charter for the Reader adopted in 1992 by the International Publishers Association and the International Book Committee ([Charter for the Reader. Guidelines for Library Services to Persons with Dyslexia, 2001](#)); (b) A set of UN principles for the protection of all persons subjected to any form of detention or imprisonment, Resolution 43/173 of the General Assembly dated December 9, 1988 ([UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, 1988](#)); (c) UN Basic Principles for treatment of the prisoners, Resolution 45/111 of the General Assembly dated December 14, 1990 ([UN Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, 1990](#)); (d) UN Handbook for prisoners with special needs (2009) ([Atabay, 2009](#)); (e) UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of freedom, called the Rules from Havana ([United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, 14.12.1990](#)); (f) CPT Standards on the Treatment of Prisoners or Recommendations of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment – CPT ([CPT standards European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 2002](#)); (j) Guidelines for library services to prisoners, 3. ed. 2005 of IFLA ([Guidelines for library services to prisoners, 2005](#)).

II. The library fund of the prison libraries have to rethink completely and reformat, not only to be updated. It does not require much additional funding but project thinking and creativity. As the study shows, the cooperation with the local “civil” library is not an exception. In addition to traditional celebrations and holidays, it is perfectly possible cooperation and exchange of books and other information resources between the two institutions. Since this will benefit both parties. The active role of the publishers should not be depreciated too. We assume that many publishing houses in Bulgaria would accept the mission to donate books to prisons but at this moment there is lack of awareness and leadership for such enthusiasm. Besides good PR, it would bring them tangible benefits – periodical cleaning of the obsolete books and editions that inside, in the places of imprisonment, would be taken more than well. We are sure that many NGOs could be involved (as they do it in some places at the moment too) in a long-term donation policy for the libraries in the prisons

III. The responsible entities in The Ministry of Justice could think of improvement of the situation in the places for reading. As seen in the equipment enquiries and from the list of the most essential advantages for each of the libraries in the prisons, there are not required impossible things to make the places for reading stimulating and really attractive to the prisoners. Applying for European projects for interior decisions such as reader’s spots or book ennoblement of the entire prison environment is the right decision.

IV. The inward motivation of the imprisoned to use in the most useful way their compulsory stay inside is of key importance. But to feel the need to read, they should be encouraged also by the administration of the penitentiary institution. In this respect, it is advisable to draw experience from the Western European, American and Russian practice.

While these tasks remain unfulfilled, one unhealthy socio-economic atmosphere will continue to consolidate, marked by growth of poverty, alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution and with crisis in the family relationships. Particularly acute this is felt during the global economic crisis since the end of 2009. Quite often because of mental stress caused by unstable vital position, the social status, the weak foundations of the valuable system, the low intellectual potential, the ignorance, the lowered or opposite- hypertrophied self-assessment, many people have found themselves behind the bars. Simultaneously, in this situation many sensible, thinking and analyzing people kept balance. These were people for whom reading is an important technology for self-education, self-improvement, competitiveness and career development. They adapt, overcome the difficulties and even thrive, perhaps because reading has not only has information and recreation, but therapeutic and mental psycho-countervailing power.

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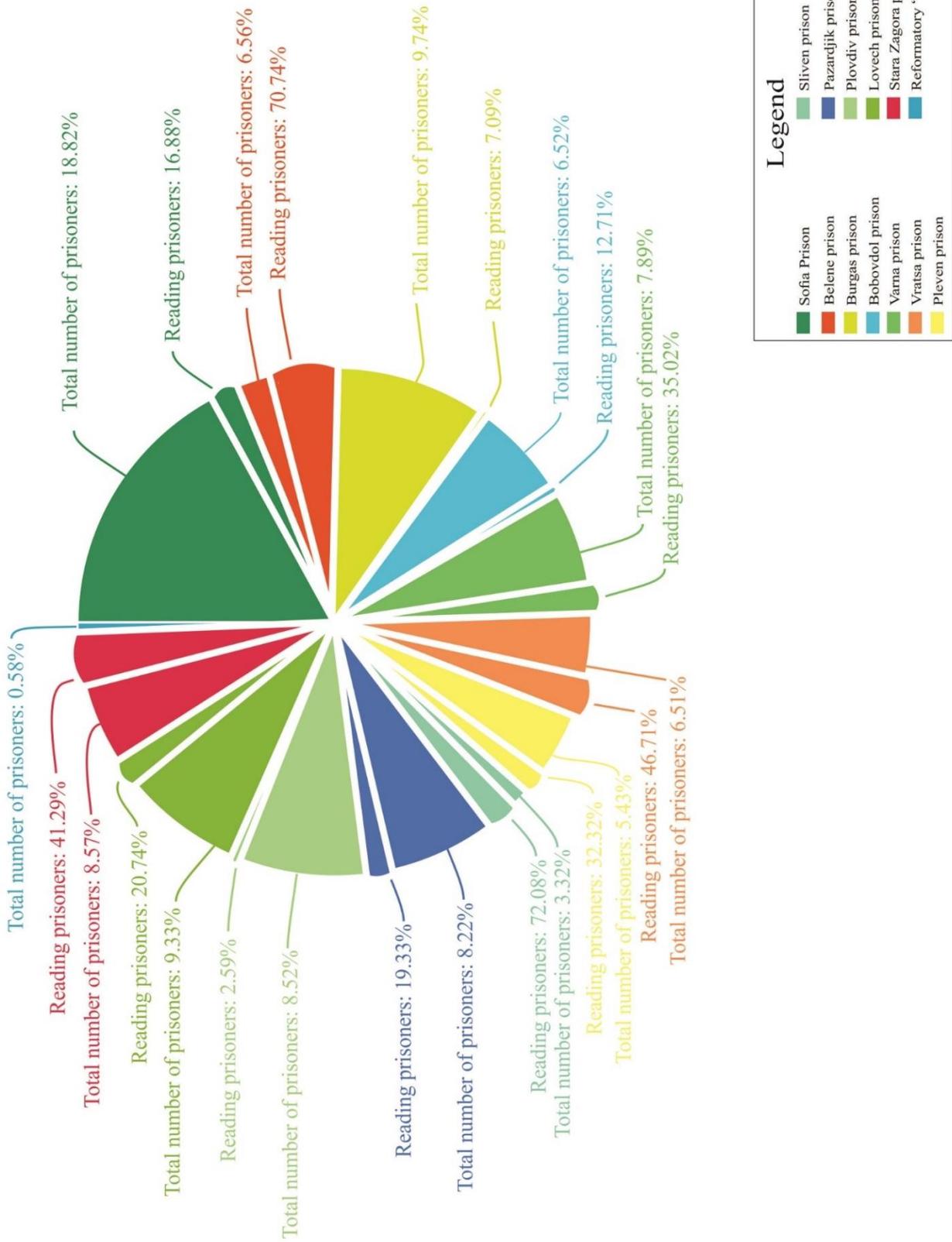


Fig. 1. The ratio "reading prisoner – total number of prisoners in Bulgaria" (2015)

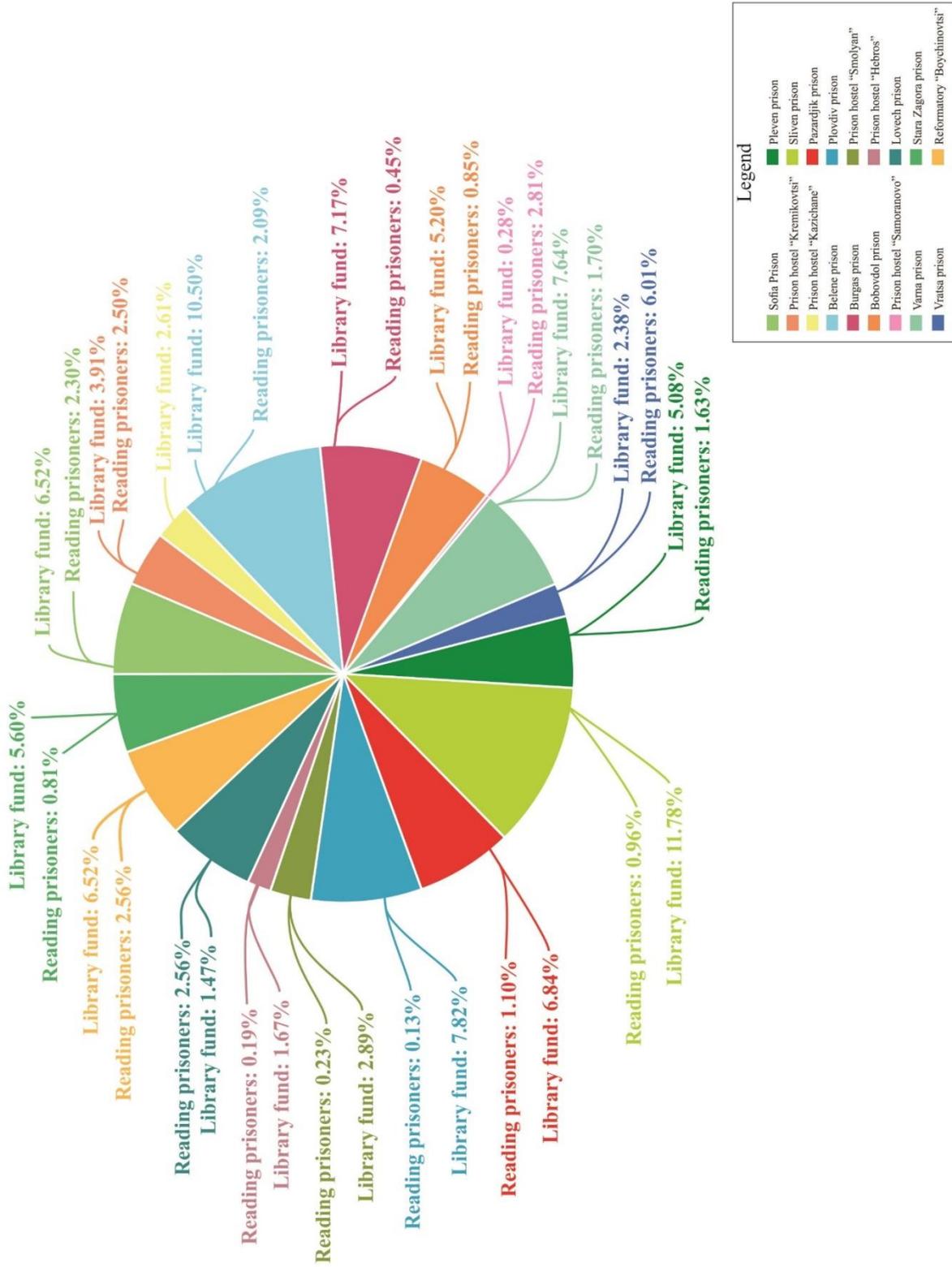


Fig. 2. The ratio "reading prisoner – total number of books in the prison library fund" in Bulgaria (2015)