

## Summary

### Second measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners

#### Results and comparison between two measurements over time

#### Background, aims, and research questions

For the second time, the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) examined the situation of (former) prisoners regarding identity card, accommodation, income, debts, and care. These areas of life are the focus of the Comprehensive Approach to Aftercare Programme (*Programma Sluitende Aanpak Nazorg, PSAN*). The purpose of the PSAN is to ensure that former prisoners have accommodation, income, and a valid identity card on release from imprisonment through the co-operation among the Ministry of Security and Justice, the municipalities, and other co-operating organisations. Another purpose of the PSAN is to provide insight into any debts of the prisoners at the time that they are released, and that, if necessary, a plan for debt assistance has been developed. Finally, the prisoner's care need should be identified and, if the prisoner needs care, this care should be realised. By improving or stabilising the situation in these areas, the Ministry of Security and Justice, in co-operation with the municipalities, aims to reduce recidivism among former prisoners. The monitor of aftercare for former prisoners of the WODC<sup>33</sup> has been developed to identify the extent to which (former) prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions at the time they arrive at a Penitentiary Institution (PI), at the time of release from imprisonment, and after having spent six months in free society. In addition, it is the purpose of the monitor to describe how the situation in these five areas of life is developing during imprisonment and in the first six months after release from imprisonment. The third purpose is to describe the relationship between – on the one hand, problems in the areas of life and any changes in these problems during and after release from imprisonment, and on the other hand, various socio-demographic characteristics (such as gender and age) and characteristics of imprisonment (such as term of imprisonment and imprisonment history). These purposes have been translated into the following research questions:

- 1.1 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions immediately prior to imprisonment?
- 1.2 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions upon release from imprisonment?
- 1.3 To what extent do prisoners have an identity card, income, accommodation, debts and contacts with care institutions six months after release from imprisonment?

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<sup>33</sup> Weijters, G., & More, P.A. (2010). *De Monitor Nazorg Ex-gedetineerden: Ontwikkeling en eerste resultaten* [Monitor of Aftercare for Former Prisoners: Developments and first results]. Den Haag: WODC. Cahier 2010-4.

- 1.4 To what extent do problems in the different areas of life accumulate immediately prior to imprisonment, upon release from imprisonment, and six months after release from imprisonment?
- 2 To what extent is there a change in the problems in the different areas of life during imprisonment, and in the first six months after release from imprisonment?
- 3 Which sociodemographic characteristics and characteristics of imprisonment are related to the problems in the various areas of life and to the changes in the problems in the various areas of life?

As the second measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners was made largely in the same manner as the first measurement, the differences in the results between the two measurements were also the subject of research. The following research questions relate to this comparison.

- 4.1 To what extent did the situation in the five areas of life prior to imprisonment with respect to prisoners who were released from a PI in the second half of 2009 differ from that situation with respect to prisoners who were released in the second half of 2008?
- 4.2 To what extent did the situation in the five areas of life upon release with respect to prisoners who were released from a PI in the second half of 2009 differ from that situation with respect to prisoners who were released in the second half of 2008?
- 4.3 To what extent did the situation of prisoners who were released from a PI in the second half of 2009 differ from the situation of prisoners who were released in the second half of 2008, with regard to the element of having been able to keep or obtain an identity card, income and accommodation during imprisonment?

## Methods

In this second measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners, the researchers followed a cohort of former prisoners who had left a PI in the period between 1 July 2009 and 31 December 2009 and who had taken up residence in a Dutch municipality afterwards. Unlike the cohort from the first measurement, for the cohort in the second measurement the details of the situation in the areas of life could only be identified in cases of prisoners who had been detained for a term of more than two weeks. This is due to the fact that since May 2009 it has been possible to only report the element of imprisonment to the municipality of prisoners serving a term of less than two weeks. No information was consequently obtained about the situation of these prisoners in the various areas of life, as a result of which this situation remained unknown for the purpose of this research. This way of working was introduced, because, in practice, it was not always possible to interview prisoners serving a short sentence about their situation in the five areas of life. In respect of this group of prisoners, it was decided to merely report to the municipality that a prisoner is being detained and will be released soon. With regard to the prisoners who belong to the target group of aftercare policy, 25.7% were serving a term of less than two weeks.

The research group consisted of 10,838 former prisoners. These were mainly men (92.4%) and more than half of the group was younger than 34 years of age at the time of release. In addition, approximately 65% of the former prisoners was born in the Netherlands and nearly 90% of the former prisoners did not have registered

partners. Finally, it appeared that for nearly 65% of the former prisoners, this imprisonment had not been the first time to be serving time in a PI since 1996. In order to describe the situation of these prisoners in the five areas of life at the beginning of their imprisonment, we used the data kept in the Digital Platform for Alignment of Aftercare (*Digitaal Platform Aansluiting Nazorg, DPAN*). All prisoners who belong to the target group of aftercare policy are screened by the Social Services Employees (MMD employees) at the beginning of their stay in the PI. During this screening, the prisoners are asked about the situation in the areas of life as it was before imprisonment. The available information on problems in the areas of life is listed in a basic document that is used to inform the municipality as to where the prisoner will go to after release from imprisonment. The MMD employee closes the DPAN document at the end of imprisonment. The 'release document' includes several questions about the alleged situation upon release from imprisonment. This information is used to identify details about the situation upon release from imprisonment.

The municipal registers of six municipalities (i.e., Amsterdam, Assen, Eindhoven, Oss (and surrounding municipalities), Purmerend, and Spijkenisse) were used for the description of the situation of former prisoners in the areas of life six months after release from imprisonment. In total, approximately 11% of the former prisoners from the research group took up residence in one of these municipalities. Unlike the first measurement, in this second measurement it was possible to compare the information obtained from these municipalities. As a result of this, it is possible to provide a more reliable picture of the situation of former prisoners six months after release from imprisonment.

## Results

### *Representativeness of the available data*

The information about the situation in the areas of life was not available for the entire research group. In respect of 10.1% of the prisoners who had been serving a term of more than two weeks, the DPAN did not include any information about the situation in the areas of life. In 2008, this was still 18.9%. The prisoners about whom we did not have any information were detained relatively shorter than those about whom we did have information. In addition, the prisoners who had not been screened were more often females (16.4% of the prisoners who had not been screened were females compared to 7.6% out of the entire research group) and came, in particular, from PI Nieuwersluis. In the research period, this PI was facing staffing problems, as a result of which it did not have enough MMD employees to screen all prisoners. The proportion of prisoners that was born in one of the CEE-countries (countries in Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria) was higher among the prisoners who had not been screened than among those who had been screened. For approximately half of the prisoners born in one of the CEE-countries there was not any information available. A possible reason for this may be that it is not clear to which municipality these prisoners returned. The results are consequently not automatically representative for all prisoners belonging to the target group of aftercare policy.

### *Situation in the areas of life immediately prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment*

Below, the situation in the areas of life immediately prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment is given point by point for prisoners belonging to the target group of aftercare policy. This will be followed by a discussion of the individual changes in the situations of the prisoners about whom we have information regarding the situation in the areas of life immediately prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment.

- Prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment, 86.0% of the prisoners had an identity card.
- Prior to imprisonment, 72.4% of the prisoners had income, compared to 61.6% upon release from imprisonment. Prior to imprisonment 43.2% of the prisoners had income from work, 32.6% received social security payments, and 15.1% received invalidity benefits.
- Prior to imprisonment, 84.6% of the prisoners had accommodation, compared to 86.1% upon release from imprisonment. Prior to imprisonment, the majority of the former prisoners lived in a rented house or with family. Upon release from imprisonment, more prisoners lived with family and in temporary accommodations through social services than prior to imprisonment.
- Nearly three quarters (73.2%) of the former prisoners had debts prior to imprisonment. Approximately 30% of the prisoners with debts had a debt of € 10,000 or more.
- Approximately one quarter (27.8%) of the prisoners had had contacts with care institutions prior to imprisonment. In most cases, the contacts concerned care for addicts (53.1%) or psychiatric care (33.0%).

### *Accumulation of problems in the areas of life immediately prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment*

Prior to imprisonment, 84% of the prisoners had a problem in one out of the five areas of life. A total of 14% of the prisoners had problems in three or more areas of life. With respect to the prisoners who had a problem in one area of life, approximately one out of three (30%) had debts.

The accumulation of the problems upon release of imprisonment related to three areas of life, namely identity cards, accommodation, and income. Upon release from imprisonment, nearly half of the former prisoners had at least one problem in one of these three areas. Prior to imprisonment, 39% of the prisoners had a problem in at least one out of these three areas of life. During imprisonment, more prisoners consequently experienced the development of a problem in the various areas of life.

### *Changes in problems in the areas of life during imprisonment*

The statistics regarding individual changes in problems in the areas of life were available for the areas involving the possession of an identity card, income and accommodation. The changes during imprisonment in the area of debts and contacts with care institutions could not be identified, because no information was available about the situation in these areas of life upon release from imprisonment.

- With respect to the prisoners who had had *an identity card* prior to imprisonment, nearly all prisoners (99%) had an identity card upon release from imprisonment. Out of the prisoners who had entered the PI without an identity card, 9.2% obtained an identity card during imprisonment.

- With respect to the prisoners who had income prior to imprisonment, 77.1% also had income upon release from imprisonment. In 2009, 22.0% of the prisoners who did not have any income prior to imprisonment did have income upon release from imprisonment.
- The changes in the area of life of *accommodation* are as follows. A total of 95.3% of the prisoners had accommodation both prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment. Approximately 35% of the prisoners without accommodation prior to imprisonment obtained accommodation during imprisonment.

*Relationship between background characteristics and problems in the areas of life, and changes in these problems during imprisonment*

Problems in all areas of life prior to imprisonment occurred more often among prisoners who did not have registered partners. As far as the area of life of identity cards is concerned, the longer the term of imprisonment, the larger the chance that the prisoner would obtain an identity card during imprisonment. The term of imprisonment also played a role in the area of income and accommodation. The longer the prisoners were detained, the larger the chance that the prisoners who did not have income or accommodation prior to imprisonment would obtain income or accommodation during imprisonment. On the other hand, however, we also found that the longer the term of imprisonment, the larger the chance that prisoners who had accommodation or income prior to imprisonment would lose this during imprisonment. In addition, we found that the older the prisoner was, the larger the chance that he would have income prior to imprisonment *and* after release from imprisonment. Prisoners born in Morocco or the Netherlands Antilles lost their income more often during imprisonment than prisoners born in the Netherlands. Male prisoners had accommodation less often prior to imprisonment *and* upon release from imprisonment than female prisoners. Female prisoners on the other hand had had contacts with care institutions prior to imprisonment more often than male prisoners. Older prisoners had had contacts with care institutions prior to imprisonment more often than younger prisoners.

*Comparison with the results from the first measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners*

For the aims of this research, the situations in the various areas of life prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment were measured in the same manner as in the first measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners. It was consequently possible to compare the situations in the areas of life of the two groups. The two research groups differed only in a few background characteristics. In 2009, the research group consisted of fewer persons who had been born in Surinam, the average term of imprisonment was somewhat longer, and, on average, the persons in the research group had been detained previously more often. The most striking differences between the two groups of prisoners regarding the situations in the five areas of life are described below.

- With regard to the extent of the problems in the areas of life of the prisoners and former prisoners, the differences between 2008 and 2009 were negligible. Only in the area of life of income is the difference worth mentioning. In 2009, 72.4% of the prisoners had income prior to imprisonment, 61.6% of the prisoners had income upon release from imprisonment. The difference between the situation prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment was smaller than in 2008, when 75.8% of the prisoners had income prior to imprisonment and 58.6% upon release from imprisonment.

- Compared to 2008, identity cards were kept nearly as often (approximately 99%), but they were obtained less often. In 2008, 14.9% of the prisoners obtained identity cards, in 2009, 9.2% obtained identity cards during imprisonment.
- A total of 77.1% of the prisoners kept their income during imprisonment. In 2008, 68.5% of the prisoners kept their income. In 2009, 22.0% obtained income compared to 25.5% in 2008.
- In 2009, the percentage of prisoners that kept their accommodation during imprisonment was approximately the same as in 2008, namely 95.3% in 2009 and 94.1% in 2008. In 2009, the proportion of prisoners that obtained accommodation during imprisonment was lower than in 2008. Approximately 35% of the prisoners without accommodation prior to imprisonment obtained accommodation during imprisonment, whereas – in 2008 – 40.8% of the prisoners still succeeded in this effort.
- With regard to the individual changes in the areas of life of identity cards, income, and accommodation, it is consequently striking that in 2009 the prisoners were more successful in *keeping* these things than in 2008. For prisoners who did *not* have identity cards, income or accommodation prior to imprisonment, efforts to ensure that they would have these things upon release from imprisonment were, however, less successful in 2009 than in 2008.

#### *Situation of former prisoners six months after release from imprisonment*

It is not possible to describe the situation six months after release from imprisonment for each former prisoner. For the purpose of this second measurement, we obtained information from six larger municipalities, namely Amsterdam, Assen, Eindhoven, Oss (and surrounding municipalities), Purmerend, and Spijkenisse. In numbers of prisoners, this means that, for 11% of the prisoners who belonged to the research group, we obtained information about some areas of life six months after their release from imprisonment. On two points, the former prisoners from the municipalities are not representative for the total research group. Firstly, the group of former prisoners who had not been born in the Netherlands was overrepresented. This was mainly due to the large population of former prisoners from Amsterdam. Secondly, the imprisonment history of former prisoners about whom we had information about the situation six months after release from imprisonment was more extensive than that of the total research group. It is consequently not possible to generalise the data to the total population of former prisoners. They do, however, provide an indication of the problems in the five areas of life six months after release from imprisonment.

- Six months after release from imprisonment, 93.6% of the former prisoners had a valid identity card.
- More than 90% of the former prisoners had income six months after release from imprisonment. In approximately three quarters of the cases, the former prisoners received benefit payments.
- Out of the former prisoners, 81.6% had accommodation six months after release from imprisonment. Approximately half of the former prisoners with accommodation lived independently six months after release from imprisonment, and more than a quarter lived with family.
- Not all debts of former prisoners were known to the municipality. Out of the former prisoners, 43.6% had debts to the municipality six months after release from imprisonment.
- A total of 78.4% of the former prisoners had contacts with care institutions six months after release from imprisonment. A large percentage of former prisoners about whom we had information belonged to the Public Mental and Healthcare

(OGGz) group in Amsterdam, which has contacts with a personal case officer of the Municipal Health Service (GGD). The purpose of the GGD is to arrange care for this group; this explains why this percentage is rather high. If we disregard the care contacts of the OGGz population in Amsterdam, the data from four other municipalities showed that 60.8% (N=245) of the former prisoners had contacts with care institutions six months after release from imprisonment.

- Six months after release from imprisonment, one third of the former prisoners did not have any problems in the areas of life, one third had one problem, and one third had problems in two or more areas of life.

On the basis of this second measurement for the monitor, it was possible to provide insight into the degree in which the situation of former prisoners had changed in the first six months after release from imprisonment. By comparing the municipal data on the situation upon release from imprisonment with the situation six months after release from imprisonment, it was found that nearly every former prisoner had kept his identity card, income, accommodation and/or contact with care institutions. On the other hand, the former prisoners had also kept their debts. Out of the former prisoners who did not have accommodation upon release from imprisonment, 20.9% obtained accommodation in the first six months after release from imprisonment, 36.1% received income, 55.6% obtained identity cards, and 10.8% came into contact with care institutions.

### Limitations

The second measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners has a number of limitations which also played a role in the first measurement. The first limitation is related to the use of DPAN as data source. Both the information about the situation prior to imprisonment and the information about the situation upon release from imprisonment differs from the information kept by the municipalities. It is not clear which source is more reliable to describe the situation of the prisoners prior to imprisonment. It may be assumed that the information from the municipalities about the situation upon release from imprisonment is more reliable than the information from DPAN in that respect. In DPAN, the problems upon release from imprisonment are overestimated, because it appears to be difficult for MMD employees to indicate whether prisoners have identity cards, income or accommodation upon release from imprisonment. On the day of release, the MMD employees often do not know whether this has been arranged. The prisoner may, however, have planned appointments for the day of release or several days later to arrange these matters with the municipality.

Another limitation of the research is that it is not possible to report on all prisoners. We lack information about one group of prisoners, namely the prisoners who were serving terms of less than two weeks. This is due to the fact that since May 2009 in respect of prisoners serving a term of less than ten working days the MMD employees have only been required to report the element of imprisonment to the municipality. This means that, in respect of these prisoners, the situation in the various areas of life has not been identified. For this reason, the results of the research only relate to prisoners serving a term of more than two weeks. We consequently cannot draw any conclusions about prisoners serving a term of less than two weeks. They constitute 25.7% of the entire target group of aftercare policy. Furthermore, not every prisoner who had served a term of more than two weeks was screened by an MMD employee, nor was the DPAN document completed in full for every prisoner. At the first measurement, there was not any information avail-

able about the problems in the areas of life prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment with regard to 18.9% of the prisoners who had served a term of more than two weeks. At the second measurement, there was not any information available with regard to 10.1% of the prisoners. Although this is still a fairly large group, this is clearly an improvement compared to the first measurement. When the third measurement of this monitor of aftercare for former prisoners is carried out, we will be able to see whether this development has continued.

A last reservation with regard to this research is that the situation regarding the areas of life six months after release from imprisonment could not be described for every former prisoner. At the second measurement for the monitor, we obtained information from six larger municipalities. This means that we were able to obtain information regarding 11% of the prisoners who belonged to the research group with regard to some area(s) of life six months after their release from imprisonment. This does signify an improvement, compared to the previous measurement, but prudence is called for with regard to making a generalisation of the results that would include the total population. It is expected that more municipalities will be able to provide data for the next measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners, so that it will be possible to draw increasingly more reliable conclusions regarding the problems of former prisoners in the five areas of life six months after release from imprisonment.

### **In conclusion: looking back and looking ahead**

#### *The implementation of aftercare policy*

Now that the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners has been carried out twice, it is possible to see how things are. It is possible to make a comparison between the two measurements because the situation in the areas of life – identity cards, income, accommodation, debts, and care – prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment were measured in the same manner.

A comparison between the situation of prisoners who left a PI in the second half of 2008 and the situation of prisoners who left a PI one year later provides the following picture. Upon release from detention, the total group of former prisoners had income and accommodation slightly more often in 2009 than in 2008. Compared to 2008, the percentage of prisoners who had identity cards after release from imprisonment did not change in 2009. A large proportion of these prisoners, however, already had identity cards, income, and accommodation prior to imprisonment. These prisoners experienced the risk or undesired effect of imprisonment in that they lost accommodation and income during imprisonment. Compared to 2008, the extent of the loss of income and accommodation during imprisonment had decreased in 2009. Clear differences were noticed, in particular, with regard to income. In 2008, nearly a third of the prisoners who had had income prior to imprisonment no longer had any income upon release from imprisonment. In 2009, this was the case with slightly less than a quarter of the prisoners.

On the other hand, it appeared that a smaller proportion of the prisoners obtained identity cards, income or accommodation during imprisonment. These are prisoners who did not have identity cards, income or accommodation prior to imprisonment, but did so after release from imprisonment. This element of *obtaining* identity cards, income or accommodation was relatively less successful in 2009. In 2008, a larger percentage of the prisoners obtained identity cards, income or accommodation. In 2008, 14.9% of the prisoners obtained identity cards, 25.5% obtained income, and

40.8% accommodation. In 2009, the percentages were 9.2%, 22.0%, and 35.2% respectively.

#### *The monitor of aftercare for former prisoners*

As far as the methodology concerned, the monitor was improved on two points. DPAN has collected information about more prisoners. At the time of the previous measurement, we did not have any information about the situation prior to imprisonment or the situation upon release from imprisonment in respect of 18.9% of the prisoners. For this measurement, this information was lacking with regard to 10.1% of the prisoners.

The second methodological improvement concerns the situation six months after release from imprisonment. When carrying out the first measurement, we used data from three municipalities that could not be compared. During the second measurement for the monitor, we used data from six municipalities, and these data, moreover, *could* be compared. As a result of this, it is possible to provide a single picture of the situation of former prisoners six months after release from imprisonment.

A negative change was that the information in DPAN about prisoners who had served a term of less than two weeks was no longer reliable, because the only element about this group that was reported to the municipality in 2009 was the element of imprisonment. The situation of this group in the various areas of life is always, as a standard procedure, reported to the municipality as being problematic, without the performance of any screening of the prisoners by the MMD employees. This means that the problems of prisoners serving a term of less than two weeks are overestimated, and that the data are no longer valid. This is why this group was disregarded in this research.

#### *Third measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners*

In 2012, a report will be published on the third measurement of the monitor of aftercare for former prisoners. For the purpose of this third measurement, the situation in the areas of life prior to imprisonment and upon release from imprisonment will be described once again on the basis of data from DPAN. This system was replaced by a new improved version at the end of 2010. For the purpose of the third measurement, we will, however, follow prisoners who were released from a PI in the second half of 2010. This means that there will not yet be any data from the new DPAN available. With regard to the situation of former prisoners to be described six months after release from imprisonment, we hope in this third measurement to be able to use data from more municipalities, so that an increasingly more representative picture will be provided of the problems in the five areas of living of former prisoners, as observed at six months after release from imprisonment.