

Summaries

Justitiële verkenningen (Judicial explorations) is published eight times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice in cooperation with Boom Juridische uitgevers. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to judicial policy. The section Summaries contains abstracts of the internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central theme of this issue (no. 5, 2011) is *Desistance from crime*.

Active maturation; explaining the crime drop in early adulthood

A.E. Bottoms

This article discusses some initial findings from the qualitative part of the Sheffield Desistance Study. The aim of the study was to explain the crime drop in early adulthood by tracking the progress of 113 young male offenders towards desistance from crime. The author stresses the importance of getting a better understanding of how criminal careers are shaped by the broader aspects of the experience of young adulthood. The findings are illustrated by four different case studies, followed by some theoretical reflections on the concept of 'active maturation'. This is clarified by a model categorising some of the processes that individuals go through as they start taking steps towards desistance.

Having a job leads to diminishing delinquency

V. van der Geest

This article is based on the author's recent doctorate thesis *Working their way into adulthood*, which analyses the role of employment in delinquent development in 270 high-risk males from age 18 to 32. Prior to age 18 all men had undergone residential treatment for serious problem behaviour in a juvenile justice institution in the Netherlands. Although recidivism is high, most juveniles desist in their mid-20s, and even high-frequency chronic offenders show declined levels of criminality around age 30. Why do some offenders desist from offending, while others continue? Part of this variation is explained by personality and background characteristics. Over and above these factors, employment is significantly related to a decrease in offending. This paper further analyses the relationship between employment and crime.

Desistance from criminal conduct; a qualitative longitudinal study of Moroccan and Dutch men with a criminal past

H. Werdmölder

This article is a first report on the longitudinal study of forty Moroccan and Dutch criminal men. The research was started in 1982. The author returned to the subject in 1988. In 2008, the author started a new research project with the same men.

The focus of this article is on the process of desistance. Ten men already ended their criminal period in the late eighties (the 'early desisters'). In between time, two of them relapsed. Nine men can be called 'late desisters'. They had many more obstacles to face in their re-integration, such as long-term employment and addiction to hard drugs. The combination of getting regular work, marriage and a permanent place of living is very effective in the process of desistance. But in the end, personal qualities, such as discipline, taking up responsibility and motivation, will be decisive.

What Works and What goes Wrong? Evidence-based policy in everyday practice

M. van Ooyen-Houben, C.N. Nas and J. Mulder

In the Netherlands a system of evidence-based interventions was set up, in which only behavioural interventions which meet the scientifically proven 'What Works' criteria can be applied to well-defined categories of offenders. An accreditation commission was installed by the ministry of Security and Justice to test behavioural interventions. One of the crucial elements of this evidence-based policy is that the interventions are carried out according to protocol and are applied to the target group by well-trained personnel. This, however, is a problem in practice. Reasons for the low intervention integrity lie among others in lack of support and lead in the organisation and low inflow of participants. The integrity problems pose a risk to the effectiveness of behavioural interventions. Literature suggests that a 100% compliance to protocols might be necessary nor desirable. Causes that lie in the organisation could be improved and the implementation process could be given some more time. Evidence-based policy is not that easy to carry out in daily practice. The future will show whether the goal of a reduction of criminal recidivism will be realized.

Art projects and What Works; stimulating desistance?

F. McNeill, K. Anderson, S. Colvin, K. Overy, R. Sparks and L. Tett

This paper draws principally on a literature review that explored the question of whether arts projects in prisons can support desistance from crime. The review, which aimed to connect the literatures on arts projects in prisons, on learning in prisons and on desistance from crime, was undertaken to support the evaluation of a major arts initiative in Scottish Prisons – Inspiring Change – which took place during 2010. A brief summary of the findings of the evaluation is also provided. The paper concludes that while it is unreasonable and unrealistic to expect arts projects to ‘produce’ desistance, there is evidence that they can play a vital role in enabling prisoners to imagine and to embark on the desistance process.

Family relations and criminal desistance; a new perspective for probation work

B. Vogelvang

Various criminologists describe family and partner relationships as forms of social capital. Also research shows that many delinquents say they have generally good relations with their family. Instead of focusing only on the delinquent’s individual responsibility and risk factors, probation work should pay more attention to the protective aspects of the former convict’s social environment. The author presents a framework, based on the work of the family therapist Nagy, that provides probation workers with the tools to involve the delinquent’s family members in the process towards desistance.