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**Summary of the doctoral dissertation**  
**entitled "*Enforcement of long-term custodial sentences*"**  
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Long-term custodial sentences play an essential role in the case of perpetrators of high gravity crimes, which pose a threat to the life and safety of others. Only when imposed to such an extent, they satisfy the sense of justice in the society, which expects a response and protection from the state. The problems associated with the enforcement of these penalties constitute a broad and complex issue, which is a challenge on the one hand, and an impulse to conduct further research on the other. Penitentiaryists more and more often raise the argument that the social rehabilitation goal of long-term imprisonment is difficult to achieve, and such punishment often comes down only to the isolation aspect. Therefore, there are many doubts whether these penalties are acceptable from the point of view of the development of humanitarian thought. It should be taken into account that long-term punishment brings together all the negative aspects that imprisonment in general entails. Although the problems associated with the isolation concern the entire prison population, they intensify in the case of long-term prisoners. Therefore, it should be ensured through undertaking appropriate actions that the longest sentences are served in a humane manner and give a real chance for the convict to return to the society. For this reason, it is necessary to deepen the reflection on the methods of their enforcement and to analyze the negative consequences of long-term isolation.

The issue of long-term imprisonment and the treatment of prisoners serving such sentences have been an object of keen interest for representatives of the doctrine for years. Moreover, the topic of life imprisonment is a constant element of scientific debate. Although there have been many valuable studies devoted to the subject of long-term penalties, and in

recent years active research has been carried out on the enforcement of the life sentence, it seems that there is still room for a comprehensive study *stricto* devoted to the normative analysis and the problem of all long-term penalties. The alarmingly growing statistics related to the prisoners serving the longest sentences undoubtedly make it necessary to examine the above problem in detail and to search for new ways and proposals for dealing with this group of convicts. There are still many doubts regarding the treatment of people subjected to extremely long sentences, and the world of long-term prisoners is an undiscovered part of the penitentiary space. It is also important that the life imprisonment has been a source of numerous challenges since its introduction. Although certain methods of conduct had already been developed during penitentiary work with prisoners serving long-term sentences, both psychologically and organizationally, it was a completely new and different punishment, which posed many problems to the Polish penitentiary administration associated with the situation of convicts serving it. In the coming time, as a result of a deep and extensive amendment to the Penal Code adopted in July 2022, significant changes will be introduced in the scope of long-term penalties. As a result, the Polish penitentiary system will once again face the challenge of implementing completely new, experimental penalties, i.e. penalties of twenty-five to thirty years imprisonment, as well as life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

The above became an impulse to write this dissertation. Its main goal is thus to present the issues of long-term imprisonment in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary way. The proposed solutions and critical remarks contained in the work may be helpful in the design of changes in the executive regulation.

Due to the extensive and complex nature of the issues, the structure of the thesis has been adapted in such a way as to enable a comprehensive analysis of the research issues. The work consists of seven chapters, it is preceded by an introduction, and the whole is crowned with conclusions that constitute a summary and conclusion. This division has become the starting point for considerations on the essence of long-term imprisonment penalties, as well as for analyzing the sense of their application, which is increasingly questioned on the international arena.

The first chapter thoroughly discusses the definitional context of a long-term penalty, and then presents the origins and functions of the longest imprisonment sentences. At the end, the chapter presents the separate codes associated with their adjudication. Difficulties associated with the imposition of a life sentence have also been taken into account. For this purpose, the relevant legal regulations contained in the Penal Code have been analyzed, and the views of the representatives of the doctrine have been presented.

The second chapter of the paper is devoted to a detailed presentation of the evolution of long-term punishment in Poland, broken down into individual time periods. The presentation is preceded by a synthetic history of imprisonment in the world, which shows the essence of this punishment and how its social rehabilitation values have developed over the years. The issue of the upbringing aspects of long-term punishment is an important part of this dissertation and has been later extensively discussed in various parts, therefore it seemed necessary to include this historical stage as well. The evolution of long-term punishment in Poland has also been analyzed from its beginnings to the current regulations contained in current criminal laws, i.e. the Penal Code and the Executive Penal Code. Finally, the dissertation presents the latest changes to long-term penalties, i.e. from 25 to 30 years of imprisonment and life sentence without parole introduced by the newest amendment passed in July 2022. Among numerous changes, the amendment provides for the extension of the upper limit of the term of imprisonment to thirty years, the abandonment of the penalty of 25 years of imprisonment and the introduction of a new form of the so-called life sentence without the possibility of parole. In this part, the indicated changes are thoroughly analyzed together with the presentation of the entire legislative process and the criticism they have been subject to among the representatives of the doctrine.

The next chapter attempts to analyze the psychological effects of long-term isolation. Moreover, it describes the problem of adapting the convicts to prison conditions, as well as the phenomenon of prisonization. Undoubtedly, the prisoners serving long-term sentences, especially those sentenced to life imprisonment, are particularly vulnerable to experiencing difficulties related to isolation. This section shows that long-term imprisonment causes various ailments, such as: forced isolation, staying in the same harsh conditions, the need to undergo the phenomenon of institutionalization, the inability to choose one's social environment, social stigmatization, detachment from loved ones and refraining from sexual activity. It was also noted that the above-mentioned negative factors associated with long-term imprisonment have an impact on the mentality of officers working with the group of convicts in question. In order to complete the presentation, numerous reports from research on the psychological effects of long-term imprisonment have been presented. The chapter ends with conclusions from psychological research conducted by the scientists in Great Britain, the United States and Canada. These countries have been selected for comparative analysis primarily due to the fact that large number of studies on long-term and psychological effects of long-term isolation of convicts were conducted there. The analyses presented in this part of the work are based on foreign literature in the field of penitentiary psychology.

The fourth chapter of the dissertation discusses general standards of conduct with prisoners serving long-term and life imprisonment sentences, which arise from international and European law. The standards of conduct with convicts sentenced to these penalties, which emerged as a result of the law-making activity of the UN and the Council of Europe, have been discussed in detail. Dogmatic considerations have been supplemented with an analysis of the reports of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment on visits to selected countries that have ratified the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and then on visits to Polish penitentiary units. For this purpose, only the reports concerning the situation of persons sentenced to long-term sentences and life imprisonment have been selected. In order to complete the presentation, the next part of the chapter includes an analysis and description of the selected proceeding involving Polish convicts sentenced to life imprisonment, which were pending before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. In the first place, the general standards of enforcement of the life sentence established by the Tribunal over the years on the basis of complaints against all Council of Europe states have been presented. Then, an analysis of 23 cases of Polish life prisoners who lodged a complaint with the Strasbourg Tribunal against Poland has been conducted, including the description of the reasons for the violations of individual Articles of the Convention and the amounts of compensation paid.

The fifth chapter focuses on the aspects associated with the enforcement of the longest sentences and the differences resulting from the provisions of the Executive Penal Code for those convicts. In addition to the conditions in which they are serving their sentences, issues associated with the preparation of these convicts for release and the differences in applying for parole have also been analyzed. The return of prisoners to the reality of freedom after such a long time can be extremely difficult, which is why this part of the paper also presents aspects relating to post-penitentiary assistance provided to them. In order to present a full-scale issue, this part also demonstrates a statistical approach to long-term convicts based on the data from Poland and other Council of Europe countries. A separate part of the chapter also presents statistics from Anglo-Saxon countries, i.e. in Great Britain and the USA, because, as indicated earlier, the issue of long-term penalties is particularly present in these countries, and a record number of the prisoners serves these penalties in the United States. Finally, the chapter raises the issue of returning to crime among the group in question, as it is in fact the main factor determining the course of their effective readaptation.

The next chapter analyzes the social rehabilitation aspects regarding the enforcement of long-term imprisonment sentences with particular emphasis on the impacts conducted on the prisoners serving these sentences and the difficulties resulting from educational work carried out for such a long time. In this context, the programs for long-term convicts designed by Polish representatives of the penitentiary system have also been analyzed. The section describes the methods of searching for new ways of dealing with convicts in such a dimension, the proposals of programs and strategies of conduct implemented in Anglo-Saxon countries, i.e. Great Britain, the United States and Canada. It also points out the difficulties in conducting penitentiary work with specific groups of convicts serving long-term sentences, such as: women, juveniles, addicted convicts and convicts with sexual preference disorders, and convicts sentenced to life imprisonment classified as "dangerous". In order to highlight certain dependencies in changes in the behavior of long-term prisoners, the last part of the chapter presents the reports from research on the attitude of convicts to the committed crime, taking into account the issues of regret and guilt. One of the aspects of social rehabilitation that is subject to periodic assessment of the convict's upbringing progress is criticism of their own criminal acts.

The last chapter is devoted to the results of author's empirical research conducted in three penitentiaries: the Wołów Prison, the Rawicz Prison and the Prison No. 1 in Strzelce Opolskie. As part of this research, a demographic and social, criminal and penitentiary analysis of long-term convicts has been carried out. What is more, the questions were supposed to bring closer the specificity of the crimes committed, the length and number of sentences served, the most common reasons for conviction, the frequency of qualifying this group of prisoners as "dangerous" prisoners, as well as issues associated with their participation in systemic classes and maintaining contacts with the outside world. Particular emphasis has been placed on issues associated with the attitude to the penalty, as well as the perception of oneself and the system through the prism of the sentence served. The goal of the research was to find out the opinions of the convicts regarding the penalties imposed on them.

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