
Harsher prison sentences for murder? An impact evaluation of the legislative proposal

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Summary

- The study presents the estimated impacts of the bill to increase prison sentences for serious crimes on the numbers of prison inmates. The proposed increase in sentences would apply to wilful murders and to minors who commit the most serious crimes, including reducing the age of criminal responsibility for these crimes.
- Toughening criminal sentences for murders would lead to an increase in the number of prison inmates convicted of murder by 40 to 78 persons. Quantitatively, this is a relatively small increase given that the current number of convicted inmates is 20,800. It would, however, come at a time of long-term prison overcrowding and long-term decreases in the murder rate.²
- The proposed toughening for juveniles would affect an extremely small number of persons. In fact, in the past two years the police did not identify a single person who committed murder and was 13 to 15 years of age. The number of juveniles on whom the courts have imposed an unsuspended sentence of 5 or more years (and which the bill makes stricter) has been in the single digits every year in the past few years. Moreover their number has also been experiencing a long-term decrease, specifically from nine persons in 2006 to one person in 2015. The deterrent impact of the measure will highly likely be nil. It is thus possible to consider this part of the bill to be rather a proclamation.
- Our study supplants, to an extent, the regulatory impact assessment (RIA) which should accompany every bill aiming at a significant legislative change but which was not carried out for this particular bill.

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² More in „Does Prison Overcrowding Loom Again? Predicting the Prison Population in the Czech Republic“ (Dušek, 2015) http://idea-en.cerge-ei.cz/files/Predicting_Prison_Population.pdf