



ORIGINAL PAPER

**Recent Approaches to Criminal Policies in Romania:
Critical Overviews and Local Inputs**

Cristina Ilie Goga*

Abstract

The article, based on the analysis of social documents as the main research method, aims to study the development and transformation of sentences and penal policies in our country, during the Contemporary period. The undertaken study involves a research from two perspectives, a historical one that reflects the types of punishment and methods of their application, specific to each period and a judicial one that highlights the main normative acts which substantiated throughout time the criminal policies of Romania. The article will mainly mark the changes stipulated by the Criminal Codes and laws of execution of sentences.

Keywords: *Romania, punishment, criminal policies, contemporary period*

* Assistant Professor, PhD, University of Craiova, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, Sociology specialization, Phone: 0040766291455, E-mail: cristin_il@yahoo.com.

A stepwise analysis of the evolution of the punishment system is found in Jean Pradel, who identifies five stages: the stage of corporal punishment; the stage of imprisonment/ the classical school of criminal law; the stage of the first substitution measures of detention; the stage of development of alternatives to imprisonment; the stage of appearance of intermediate punishment - between probation and imprisonment (Pradel, 1995: 569-570). Globally analyzing in a previous study the history of the punishment system (Goga, 2015: 183-194), we made a phasing of it, managing to synthesize some features of every age, as it follows: 1. the Middle Ages (6th Century / Justinian Code – The second half of the 18th century and early 19th century): it is characterized by corporal punishment, torture and public executions; 2. the Modern Age (Early 19th century / second half of the 19th century – late 19th century): it is characterized by the predominant application of the penalty of deprivation of liberty, there appear most criminal codes that focus on imprisonment even for minor offenses, thus appearing an “experimental fever” in the organization of prison; 3. the contemporary Age (early 20th century – present): it is characterized by the emergence and development of substitution measures of deprivation of liberty. This period can be divided in other 3 sub-phases: a. the first half of the 20th century: it is characterized by the appearance of the first measures of substitution of imprisonment like probation and suspension of sentence; b. the second half of the 20th century: it is characterized by the development of alternative measures to the penalty of deprivation of liberty and the process of individualization of punishment, by developing the institution of suspension of sentence, etc. c. the end of the 20th century – present: it is characterized by the development of intermediate punishment, intensive probation.

The present study aims to analyze the evolution of punitive systems in Romania, during the Contemporary period. First, we must mention that about “Romania” we can talk starting from the modern period, the year 1862 is when, under the leadership of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the first General Assembly of Wallachia and Moldavia adopted the Proclamation attesting that “Romania” is the official name of the Romanian territory. Also, the first Romanian Constitution of 1866 has kept this name. However, the construction of the Romanian culture and identity is a long process (Niță, 2011: 62), shaped over thousands of years and thus when considering the history of Romania, we must investigate the history of the Romanian geographical region, found in Southeastern Europe, on the lower Danube basin (Șerban, 2014: 17-25), on south and north of Southeastern Carpathians and Northwestern Black Sea. The Middle Ages, in Romania, considering the punishment system, began in the 3rd century and lasted until the late 18th century. That period was characterized by a pronounced class character of the justice, the absence of *res judicata* (Chiș, 2012: 134-135), the predominance of cruel punishment, also in the detention system, which was seen as the forerunner of death (Dianu, 1900: 11-12). At the end of feudalism appeared the first written documents referring to punishment and their execution mode. In terms of punishment, the Modern Age began along with the first elements of punishment humanization, found in Organic Regulations of 1831/1832, which imposed the penalties humanization in the detention system (Chiș, 2013: 123-125). In 1864 the first Romanian Criminal Code was enacted, entering into force on 1865, along with the Criminal Procedure Code. The Criminal Code of 1864 distinguishes three types of offenses: *faults*, *crimes* and *contraventions* (Criminal Code, 1864, article 1). In 1874, came into force the Law on the regime of prisons. On 1st of January 1930, when the Law from 1874 ceases to have effect, there were 28 county departments of preventive prisons and 54 prisons (Gorescu, 1930: 48). The Modern Age period was characterized by the humanization of the punishment, the first elements of the institution of *release on parole*

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only for minors (Sorescu, 2015: 27), the appearance of legal regulations in terms of criminal law and criminal execution law and the emergence of a large number of prisons.

The contemporary period in Romania is the one beginning, according to Constantin C. Giurescu in 1821 (Giurescu, 1946: 15), and according to Florin Constantiniu at the Paris Conference (1919-1920) (Constantiniu, 1997) and lasts up to the present. We consider the onset of the contemporary period in Romanian criminal law, starting with the year 1930, along with the entry into force of the Law of 1929 on the organization of prisons and prevention institutions, because in this act we find a more detailed description of the institution and application procedure of “conditional release”. The aforementioned law was the one that transformed the purpose of punishment, from isolation for the committed deed to redeem through moral (courses, religious assistance), intellectual (courses, professional training, conferences, music, etc.), physical (physical education in gyms, work becomes compulsory) education and specialization based on skills, thus giving the penitentiary institution a “deeply pedagogical character”. The prison’s purpose is that of giving society “unharmful people, physically healthy, who loved good and truth” (Gorescu, 1930: 37-40). This law provided the division of prisons into: forced labor prisons (for life or time period); hard labor ones; detention ones as punishment for murder; reclusion; correctional; of easy prison; detention as punishment for misdemeanors; agricultural and industrial colony prisons; stray colonies; county and health houses (Gorescu, 1930: 40). A great emphasis is put on maintaining prisoners in terms of hygiene, sanitation, food and free medical assistance (Gorescu, 1930: 43). At the same time, the law provides for the obligation of each county to organize in its capital the operation of a prison for people preventively arrested and majorly convicted to a police or correctional punishment up to 6 months or the convicted juveniles up to 3 months (Brezeanu, 2007: 272). Also, the law introduces the “noting” of prisoners so that, depending on the marks obtained and their behavior, they could switch to an easier sentence or even get parole (Gorescu, 1930: 43). By means of the Law on the organization of prisons and prevention institutions, in 1929, prisons have been classified into 81 units, as it follows: five 1st class Main penitentiaries and prevention institutes; three 2nd class Main penitentiaries; thirteen 3rd class Main penitentiaries; thirty-two 1st class County penitentiaries; twenty eight 2nd class County penitentiaries (Gorescu, 1930: 49-50). In 1936 it is published in the Official Gazette number 65 of 18th of March, a new Criminal Code. This legal document divides sentences in: “main”, “complementary” and “accessories” (Title III) and at the same time differentiate custodial sentences, into the sentences of common law and political sentences (Chapter III), as it follows: 1. “*Main*” sentences were: For “crimes” in common law: forced labor for life; hard labor for limited time from 5 to 25 years; hard prison from 3 to 20 years; For “crimes” in politics: heavy imprisonment for life; heavy detention from 5 to 25 years; rigorous imprisonment from 3 to 20 years (Criminal Code, 1936, article 22); For “crimes” in common law: correctional prison from one month to 12 years; fine from 2,000 to 20,000 lei, unless the law provides another maximum; For “crimes” in politics: simple imprisonment from one month to 12 years; fine from 2,000 to 20,000 lei, unless the law provides another maximum (Criminal Code: 1936, article 23); For contraventions: police prison from one day to one month; fine from 50 to 1,500 lei (Criminal Code: 1936, article 24). 2. “*Complementary*” sentences were: Civic degradation from 3 to 10 years, for crimes; Correctional interdiction from one to six years, for misdemeanors; Deprivation of parental power, in the cases prescribed by the law; Publication and display of conviction sentences, under the law; Fine, the maximum and minimum limits set for the fine as main sentence and only for crimes

(Criminal Code: 1936, article 25). 3. *Accessory sentences* were: Civic degradation; Correctional interdiction; Deprivation from parental power (article 26).

Code of Military Justice of Romania of 20th of March 1937, provided in addition to the penalties of the Penal Code also death penalty, as main punishment for murder and military degradation and dismissal, as accessory punishments. However, it is specified that death penalty is applied only in case of war and executed by shooting, and pregnant women were executed after birth (Military Justice Code, articles 453-454). However, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Romania dated 24th of February 1938 during the reign of Carol the second (Șerban, 2010: 143-152), provided death penalty in article 15, both for war and peacetime, “for attacks against the Sovereign, members of the Royal Family, heads of foreign state and state dignitaries in connection with the exercise of their entrusted functions, as well as cases of robbery with murder and political assassination” (Constitution of Romania, 1938, article 15). In 1968 it was published a new version of the Criminal Code in the Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Romania no. 79 bis of 21st of June. Compared with the previous Criminal Code, the legislative act of 1968 removes political penalties and those of common law. The Criminal Code of 1968 was republished twice, first in 1973 in the Official Gazette no. 55 of 23rd of April and again in 1997 in the Official Gazette no. 65 of 16th of April. Penalties of this code are divided such (articles 53-55): a. *Main penalties*: Imprisonment from 15 days to 25 years (from 15 to 30 years in the Criminal Code republished in 1997, thereby adding the “life sentence”); Fine from 500 to 5,000 lei (from 500 to 20,000 lei in the Criminal Code republished in 1973 and from 100,000 to 50,000,000 lei in the Criminal Code republished in 1997); b. *Complementary sentences*: Prohibition of some rights from one to 10 years; Military degradation; c. Confiscation of fortune, partial or total (repealed in the Criminal Code republished in 1977); d. *Accessory sentence* is the prohibition of some rights expressly provided by the law (article 53); e. *Death penalty* (Criminal Code, 1968, articles 54, 55) (is repealed in the later republished variants). Criminal penalties could be replaced by the court with administrative sanctions, but only under certain conditions. These sanctions were: reprimand; reprimand with a warning or a fine from 100 to 1.000 lei (amended in the 2007 version to the value between 100,000 and 1,000,000 lei). The criminal act committed by juveniles attracted punishment or an educational measure: reprimand; supervised freedom; hospitalization in a rehabilitation center; hospitalization in a medical-educational institute (Criminal Code: 1968, articles 99, 101).

Precautionary measures under the Criminal Code apply to persons who have committed crimes and are aimed at “removing a state of danger and preventing the acts to be committed under criminal law”. These measures are: “ordered medical treatment; medical hospitalization; prohibition to occupy a position or pursue a profession, a trade or other occupation; prohibition to stay in some places; expulsion of foreigners; special confiscation” (Criminal Code, 1968: article 111, 112). In the 1968 Criminal Code death penalty is found, provided “as an exceptional measure for the most serious crimes” and is applied “in the cases and conditions provided by the law”, except for persons under 18, pregnant women or women who had a child up to 3 years at the time when the offence was committed or the sentence was pronounced (Criminal Code: 1968, article 54). In the Code republished in 1973 death penalty was no longer provided, articles 54 and 55 being repealed, however the capital penalty being provided for certain crimes “against the state” (Criminal Code, republished 1973, articles 156, 162). In the 1997 republished Criminal Code death penalty does not appear, but it is introduced the “life imprisonment” penalty, and the maximum prison sentence is changed to 30 years. Moreover, in Romania, by

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Decree-Law no. 6 of 7th of January 1990, the death penalty which was “prescribed for certain offenses in the Criminal Code and special laws was abolished and replaced with life imprisonment” (Decree-Law 6, 1990, article 1).

Release on parole is governed by the Criminal Code of 1968, being applied after the inmate “has executed at least half of the penalty in case of imprisonment not exceeding 10 years, or at least two thirds of imprisonment higher than 10 years”, and the convict “gives solid evidence of reformation” (article 59). The Criminal Code republished in 1997, partially amends the conditions of parole, so the terms imposed in the original form of the Code, apply this time for crimes of negligence, and the rest of the offenses must be executed “at least two thirds of the penalty of imprisonment not exceeding 10 years, or at least three-fourths biggest for prison higher than 10 years” (Criminal Code, republished 1997, article 59).

The institution of *conditional suspension of sentence* is found in the Criminal Code of 1968 and is applied if: punishment is “imprisonment of 2 years or fine, and for offenses against public property the penalty imposed is 1 year at most”, “the offender has not been previously convicted to imprisonment”, or the previous conviction is not considered recidivism and “it is estimated that the purpose of punishment can be achieved even without its execution” (article 81). In the Criminal Code republished in 1997 the conditional suspension of sentence conditions change in the sense that “the penalty imposed is imprisonment of up to three years or fine” and “the offender has not previously been convicted to imprisonment exceeding six months” (Criminal Code, republished 1997, article 81).

In the Code republished in 1973 we also find the institution of *suspended sentence under supervision*, applied if the court considers that the purpose of the punishment can be achieved without deprivation of liberty, by doing some work (on construction sites, in agricultural or forestry units, or in other socialist organizations), thus disposing “ordered correctional labor of the convict, for the duration of the applied sentence, if “the penalty imposed is imprisonment up to two years” and “the offender has not previously been convicted to imprisonment” (articles 86¹, 86³). In the Code republished in 1997, the institution partly changes its conditions, so, it disposes if “the penalty applied is imprisonment of up to four years” and “the offender has not been previously convicted to imprisonment exceeding one year”, except the cases not attracting relapse (article 86¹). We also find in the Criminal Code republished in 1997 the institution of *execution of punishment at work*, by means of which the court may dispose work “in the unit where the convict works or in another unit, with the unit’s written consent”, while the “sentence imposed is imprisonment up to 5 years” and if “the accused has not been previously convicted to imprisonment exceeding one year” except cases that do not attract relapse (Criminal Code, republished 1997, article 86⁷).

On 1st of January 1970, there entered into force Law no. 23 of 18th of November 1969 on the enforcement of sentences. The law stipulated that the rehabilitation of prisoners was done through work (paid except for housework), through training, retraining, through “cultural and educational activities, as well as through promoting and rewarding those who are persevering at work and give strong evidence of reformation” (article 5). Juveniles could “continue their general compulsory education and were ensured the opportunity to acquire professional training according to their level of schooling and skills” or could attend professional training courses (article 6). On June 29th 2004 it was published in the Official Gazette number 575 a new Criminal Code, which entered into force on 1st of September 2009. The 2004 Code differentiates punishments

applied on natural persons from the penalties for legal persons. Penalties for natural persons are of three types: main, complementary and accessory. The main penalties are as it follows: main punishments for crimes and main punishments for offenses. *The main punishments for crimes* were: life detention; severe detention between 15 and 30 years. *The main punishments for offences* are: Strict prison between one and 15 years; Prison between 15 days and one year; Fine under the form of fine-days between 5 and 360 days, every day accounting between 100,000 lei and 1,000,000 lei; Community work, between 100 and 500 hours. *Complementary punishments for crimes and offenses* were: prohibition of certain rights from one year to 10 years and military degradation. *Accessory punishment for crimes and offenses* is to prohibit the exercise of all rights provided as complementary penalty” (article 58). For minors who are criminally responsible, the Code of 2004 provided approximately the same measures as the former Code, except for *release under strict supervision*, which is additionally introduced (articles 114, 115). Regarding the *precautionary measures* provided by the Criminal Code of 2004, they coincide with those in the earlier legislation, being extra added a new measure, namely *the prohibition to return to the family home for a specified period* (article 129). Furthermore, “the execution of main imprisonment penalties is based on the progressive system”, the convicts being able to move from one regime of execution to another and custodial sentences are executed in one of the following regimens: maximum security; closed; semi-open; open (article 60). The punishment of *community service*, could be imposed only with the consent of the defendant, “if the law provides for a felony imprisonment or strict imprisonment not exceeding 3 years” and thus “the court may sentence instead of imprisonment the execution of unpaid work community service, for a period of at least 100 hours and 300 hours maximum, if the law provides imprisonment or up to 500 hours, where the law provides strict imprisonment not exceeding 3 years” (article 70). The 2004 Code regulated the institution of *release on parole* of the convict to imprisonment, strict imprisonment and hard detention, establishing that it applies after serving a minimum of “two-thirds of imprisonment or strict imprisonment or three-quarters of severe imprisonment” and for minors after serving one third of the sentence (article 71). For prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment, release on parole applies “exceptionally, after the effective execution of 20 years of imprisonment” or 15 years for people over 60 years (article 72). The institution of *conditional suspended sentence* imposed to a natural person, was provided by the Criminal Code in 2004, the court being able to order the suspension if “the sentence imposed for an offense is imprisonment or strict imprisonment up to 5 years or fine-days”, “the perpetrator has not been previously sentenced to a custodial sentence unless the conviction” does not attract relapse (article 95). We also find the institution of *suspended sentence under supervision applied to a natural person*, ordered if, “the penalty imposed for the offense is imprisonment or strict imprisonment not exceeding seven years”, “the perpetrator has not been previously convicted to imprisonment or strict imprisonment or has been sentenced to imprisonment or strict imprisonment not exceeding 2 years, unless the conviction” is not relapse (article 101). Courts in Romania may also apply *suspended sentence under supervision* with the convict’s obligation to perform community service for a maximum of 300 hours (article 107).

Two new institutions introduced in the 2004 Criminal Code are: *waiving the penalty* and *postponing the sentence for a natural person*. If abandoning punishment, “the court may not apply any penalty to the defendant who had no criminal record, has covered the damage caused and has solid evidence that he can reform even without the imposition of a sentence” (article 108). Postponing penalty can only be applied for crimes “for which

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the law provides imprisonment or strict imprisonment for up to 5 years” and in the conditions fulfilled for waiving the penalty, described above. The effect of postponing the penalty, if the defendant had an adequate conduct, is the non-application of punishment (article 109). Law 275/2006 on execution of punishments and measures ordered by the court during the criminal trial has regulated the conditions for punishment enforcement in Romania, during October 2006 - January 2014. The law differentiates between *prisons* and *special prisons* (prisons for juvenile and youth; women’s prisons and hospital prisons) and emphasizes the separation of *preventive arrest sections*. There is also the distinction between enforcement regimes of custodial sentences, namely: maximum security regime; closed; semi-open and open (articles 1-74). The Penal Code of 17th July 2009, entered into force on 1st of February 2014, distinguishes between main, accessory and complementary punishments. *The main penalties* are: life imprisonment; imprisonment (from 15 days to 30 years); fine (“The fine amount is determined by fine-days system. The corresponding amount of a fine-day, between 10 lei and 500 lei, is multiplied by the number of fine-days, which is between 30 days and 400 days”. If the fine is not paid in bad faith, it is replaced by imprisonment, and if the fine is not paid for reasons not attributable to the convict, the fine is replaced by an obligation to perform free community service) (Criminal Code, 2009: Art. 53, 60, 61, 63, 64). *The accessory penalty* (“consisting of deprivation of some rights, from the time the sentence becomes final and until execution or the consideration as executed the deprivation of liberty penalty”) (article 54).

The complementary penalties are: prohibition of some rights and military degradation; Publishing the sentence (Criminal Code, 2009: article 55). For minors who are criminally responsible, the current criminal legislation provides for two types of measures: *Non-custodial educational measures* (“civic training course; supervision; recording on weekends; daily assistance) and *custodial educational measures* (“admission in an educational center; admission in a detention center”) (article 115). The *safety measures* ordered by the court are “ordered to medical treatment; medical admission; prohibition of employment of a function or exercise of a profession; special confiscation; extended confiscation” (article 108). In the current Criminal Code we find, as in the previous code the *waiving of penalty* institution, but amended so that it applies when “the offense has a low gravity, given the nature and extent of the produced consequences, means used, method and circumstances in which it has been committed, the motive and aimed purpose” and “respect the person of the offender, the conduct previous to the offense, his efforts to eliminate or mitigate the consequences of the offense, as well as his means of reformation”. In case of waiving the penalty, the accused “is not subject to any disqualification, prohibition or incapacity that may arise from the offense” and the court is applying only a *warning* to the person (articles 80-82).

We also find the *cancellation of penalty* institution, amended, compared to the previous legislation, so that it applies when “the punishment established, including in the event of multiple offenses is a fine or imprisonment not exceeding two years”; if “the punishment provided by the law for the offense is less than 7 years and if the offender has not evaded criminal prosecution or trial or tried thwarting the truth or identification or the criminal responsibility for the author or participants”; if “the offender has not previously been convicted to imprisonment, unless it is not considered relapse or for whom rehabilitation intervened or the rehabilitation term has been fulfilled” and when “the offender has expressed agreement to provide unpaid community work” (articles 83, 90).

In the current Criminal Code, in order to apply the institution of the *suspended sentence under supervision* the following conditions must be met: “the punishment

imposed, including in the event of offenses is imprisonment up to three years”; “the offender has not been previously convicted to imprisonment exceeding one year, unless the cases” that does not result in relapse “or for which rehabilitation has intervened or the rehabilitation term has been fulfilled” and “the offender has expressed agreement to provide unpaid community work” (article 91). *Release on parole* applies to life sentence if “the convict has effectively served 20 years of imprisonment” and for convicts to prison, when “the convict has executed at least two thirds of the penalty, if the prison is not exceeding 10 years, or at least three quarters of the penalty, but not more than 20 years, for prison of more than 10 years”; the convict “is serving the sentence in open or semi-open regime”; “has fully complied civil obligations established by the sentence, unless he proves he had no opportunity to fulfill them” and “the court is convinced that the sentenced person is reforming and can reintegrate into society” (article 100). Since February 2014, the conditions for punishment enforcement, educational measures and other non-custodial measures ordered by the courts of law in criminal proceedings are regulated by Law 253 of July 19th, 2013.

The conditions of sentence and custodial measure execution ordered by the courts of law in criminal proceedings are governed from February 2014 by Law 254 of 19th of July 2013. The law contains some changes from the previous law, made to adapt to the new criminal regulations. The places of punishment execution are divided into “prisons” and “special prisons” (for youth, women and hospital-prisons), indicating at the same time the organization of “special sections for enforcement custodial educational measures” and “preventive arrest sections” in prisons (articles 11-14). Currently, in the prison regime in Romania there are forty-four units, distributed as it follows: sixteen prisons with open and semi-open regime; sixteen prisons with maximum security and closed regime; six hospital-prisons; one prison for women (including 6 women’s sections in other prisons); three detention centers; Two educational centers. In twenty three of these units there are preventive arrest sections (National Administration of Penitentiaries, 2015: 3). After studying the punitive system on Romania’s territory, we see that it fits in the overall characteristics identified for the three historical phases, noting an evolution of punishment from the corporal one in medieval times, to the intense deprivation of liberty in the modern ages, the Romanian state currently managing to update legal dispositions, in accordance with the current trends of European criminal policies, developing intermediate and alternatives punishment to imprisonment.

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/159/1.5/S/133255 Project ID 133255 (2014), cofinanced by the European Social Fund within the Sectorial Operational Program Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

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Article Info

Received: April 2 2015

Accepted: May 27 2015
