

Short prison sentences: is it worth it?



18th Conference of Directors Prison and Probation Administration

How to manage the execution of penal sanctions

1. Whom to target?
2. Percentage of short prison sentences in European countries (selection)
3. Alternatives to executing short prison sentences
4. Tension between sentencing and execution practices
5. Execution practice using the examples of
 - England & Wales
 - Scotland
 - Switzerland
 - Germany
6. Outlook

“It is virtually impossible to do anything productive with offenders on short sentences. And many of them end up losing their jobs, their homes and their families during their short time inside.”

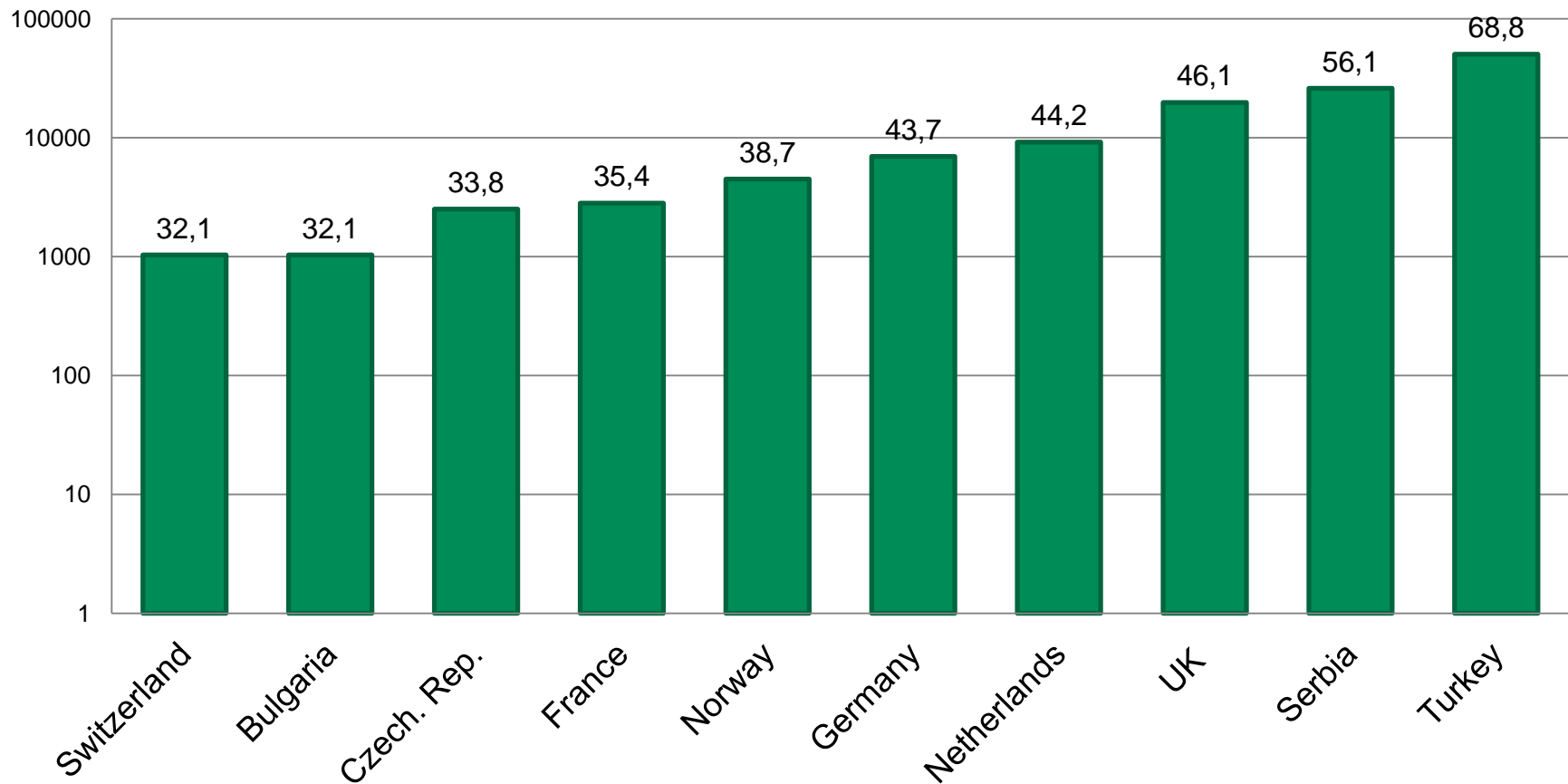
(Kenneth Clarke, former Secretary of State for Justice, UK)

1. Whom to target?

- Short sentenced prisoners have the highest re-offending rate of all groups of offenders
- They exhibit high levels of substance abuse, homelessness, poverty and debt
- Most of them are unemployed and do not even have a school leaving certificate or professional qualification
- There is little time to motivate and support these prisoners

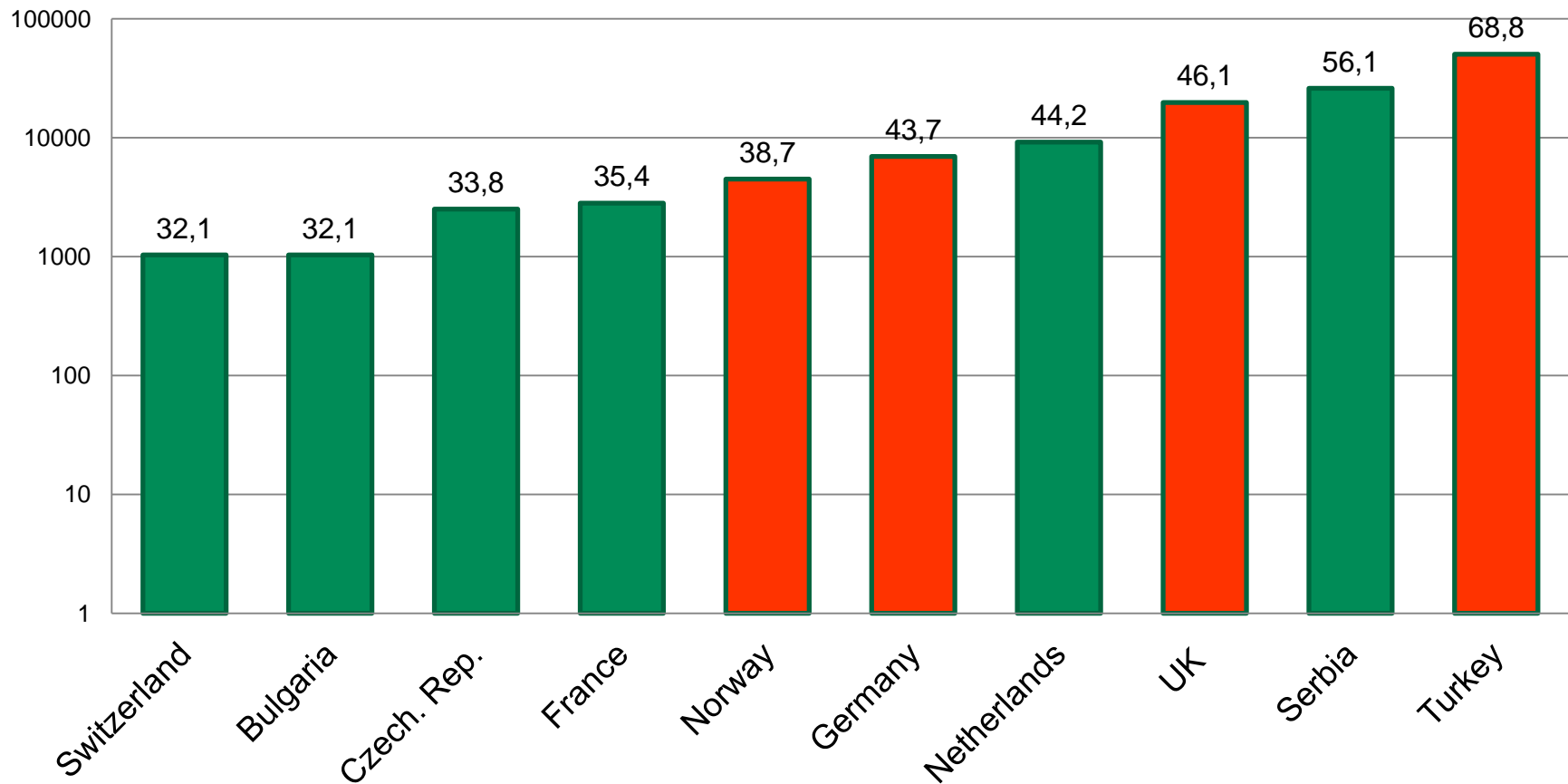
2. Percentage of short prison sentences in European countries (selection)

European countries with a high number of prisoners serving short prison sentences



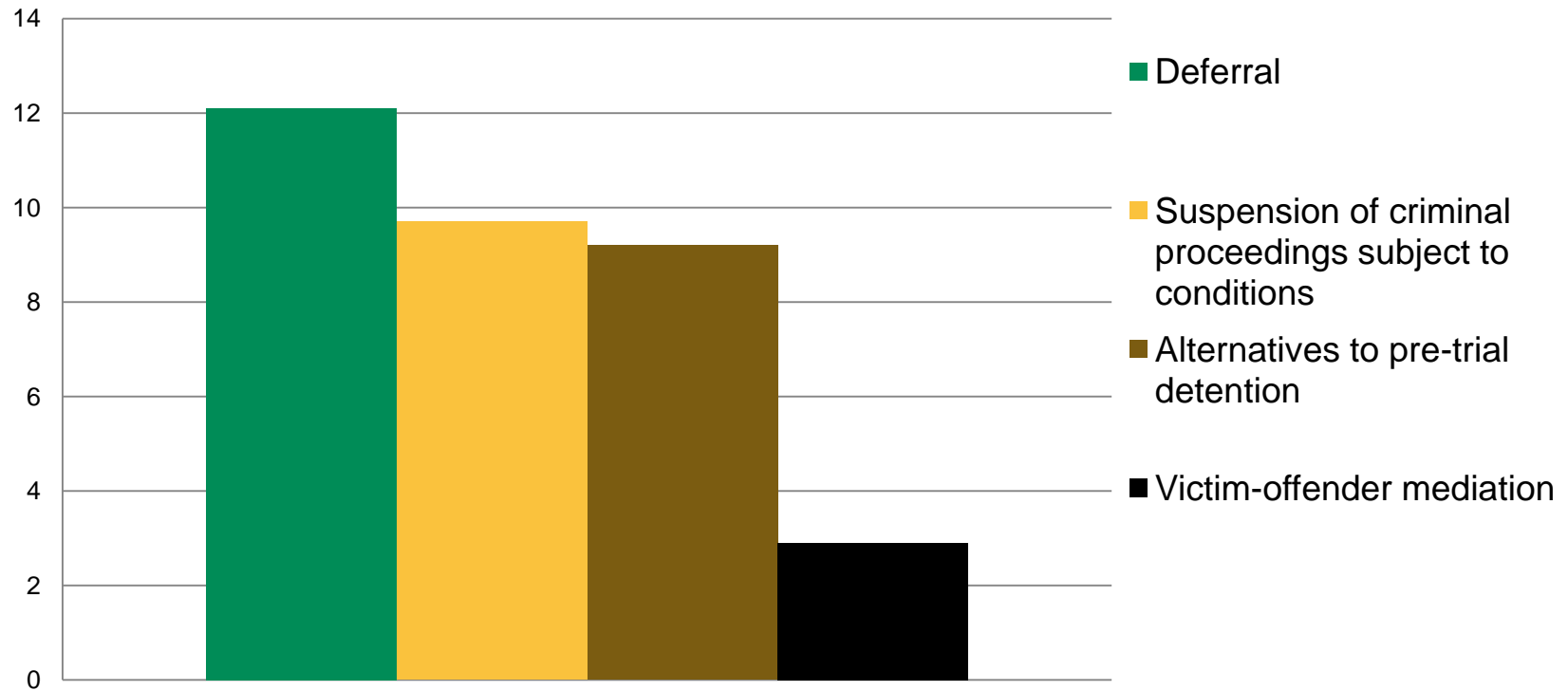
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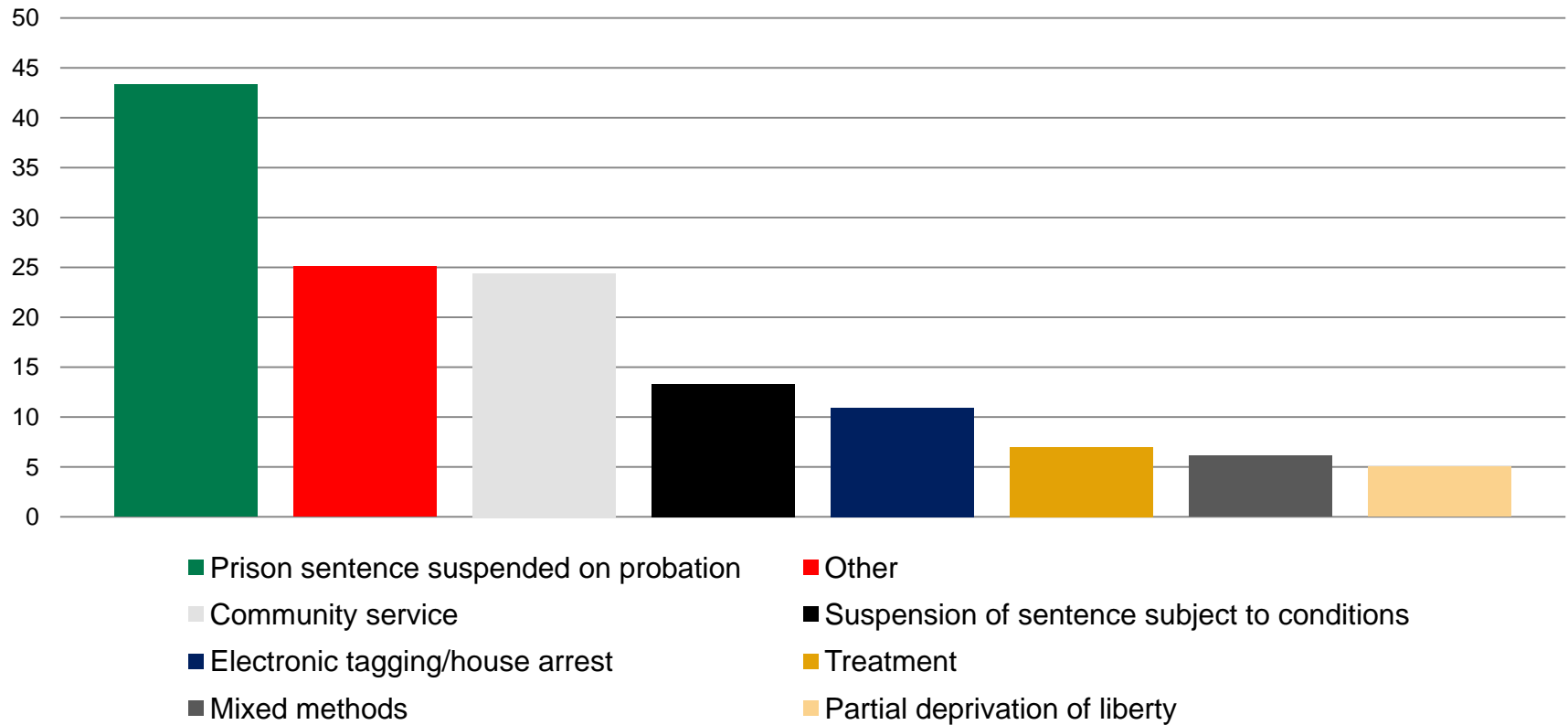
3. Alternatives to executing short prison sentences

**Alternative sanctions in per cent
- European average -
prior to a prison sentence**

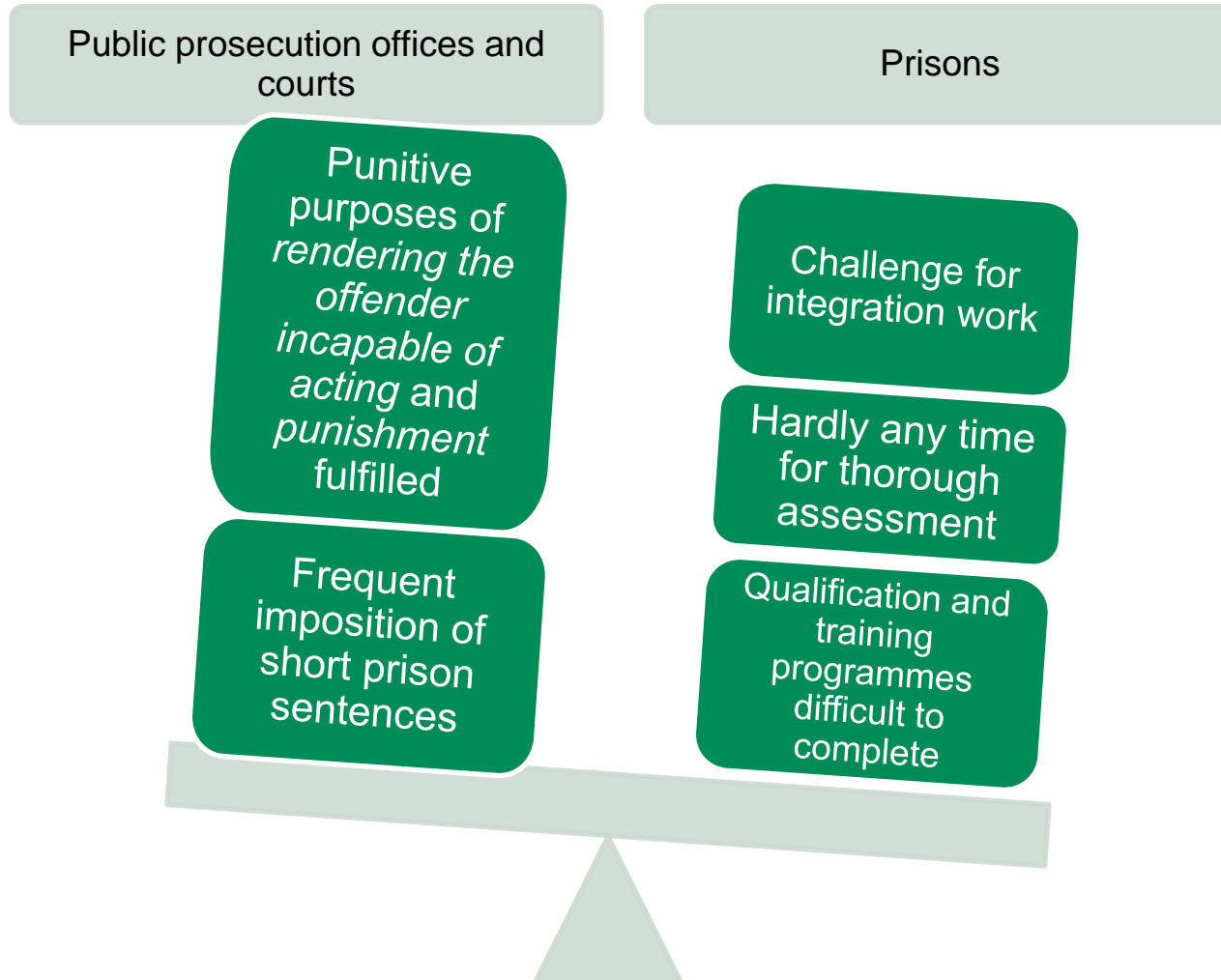


3. Alternatives to executing short prison sentences

Alternative sanctions in per cent - European average - prior to a prison sentence



4. Tension between sentencing and execution practices



Pathfinder Projects

- Reducing likelihood of recidivism by:
 - Modular interventions prior to release
 - Improving availability of services offered after release
 - Improving reintegration into the community

- Seven projects between 1995 and 2005 (carried out by the probation service and voluntary organisations)
 - Significantly improved communication skills as well as changes in attitudes and behaviour of clients as a result of the probation service's work (continuous monitoring and assessment using OASys for gathering and exchanging information)

"One-Stop" Throughcare Centre in Edingburgh

- Comprehensive and integrative preparation for release provided to convicts from the first day of imprisonment
 - Integrating prisoners through 12-week pre-release programmes
- Using expertise from different agencies, the prisoner's individual situation is considered and the need for action assessed
 - Drawing up a throughcare plan (with important steps for the duration of imprisonment and following release)

Pilot Scheme: Semi-detention

- Prison sentence is executed at certain times (evenings, nights, days off) while occupational activity is continued
- Key elements of the model: Intervention programmes (group discussions dealing with specific offences or problems), social activities, short leave and holiday, specific educational support and crisis intervention
- Follow-up studies show a lower rate of recidivism, which, however, is dependent on the complexity of problems experienced by each client (no specific preventive effect of semi-detention could be demonstrated)

5. Prison practice

- Germany (nine *Bundesländer*)-

New Prison Act entered into force on 1 June 2013:

- Binding introduction of a reintegration plan upon arrival in prison in the case of prison sentences of up to one year
- Simultaneous involvement of the probation service
- Involvement of external institutions at an early stage

Goals

- Moving away from prison plans towards integration plans
- Paradigm shift towards external orientation

Results

Increase in early release, constantly high number of transfers to open facilities

The prison system as an opportunity for binding integration plans

- Successful integration requires cooperation between prisons and community institutions
- Reintegration requires suitable points of contact for all problem areas, each of which is responsible for a particular part of the integration process
- Effective communication and cooperation structures are required in relations between the different bodies involved
- Need to monitor the integration process



**Developing an overall plan
for social rehabilitation in prison and in the community**

Thank you very much for listening.



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