



**Youth deviance and youth violence:  
A European multi-agency perspective on best practices in prevention and control  
(YouPrev)**

**Delphi survey: Expert views on youth deviance and violence and its prevention and control in the coming decade**

**– Results from the German survey –**

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## **1 Introduction**

The aim of the YouPrev Delphi survey was to examine future societal changes and challenges and their implications for prevention and control of youth problem behaviour. Since any type of strategic planning necessarily presupposes assumptions on the future, the challenge is to put these assumptions on a basis as solid as possible. The Delphi survey undertook to go beyond the level of “implicit predictions” by including expert opinions and expert knowledge in a systematic and structured manner. The Delphi technique is a multistep interactive survey method using panels of experts (cf. Armstrong, 2006a; Häder, 2009; Powell, 2003; Rowe, 2007; Rowe & Wright, 1999; 2001); results of the first survey round are reflected and re-discussed with the same respondents in following rounds.

As the survey focussed on developments in the upcoming decade, the year 2025 was picked as time horizon for the respondents’ prospects. The survey was conducted in two waves. The first wave focused on anticipated changes and developments in society and in the field of youth crime. In round 2, core results from the first wave were summarized as a basis for new judgements and, additionally, experts’ recommendations for prevention in selected fields of juvenile problem behaviour were addressed.

## **2 Methodology**

The experts included in the sample have a broad range of professional backgrounds. Scientists from different relevant disciplines, police officers, social workers, experts from the fields of judiciary as well as crime prevention were included in the sample. They were partly recruited from the sample of a former project on assessing possible youth crime developments where a Delphi survey had already been conducted; also new experts from the different professional fields were added. The sample of the Nationwide Institutional and Expert Survey conducted in Workstream 1 (“Taking stock”) was also used to start building the Delphi expert panels, since many of the experts being able to give valuable information on the status quo coincide with those being able to give estimates on the future.

The response rate in the first round of the Delphi survey was low with only 19.6 % but improved clearly in the second round where 52 % of the experts that received a questionnaire took part and sent it back.

Technically, the surveys were mainly conducted via PDF-templates which were sent out by e-mail – alternatively, a paper and pencil version was available. The questionnaires consisted of a mixture of closed and open-ended questions; the information from open-ended questions was coded by the research team.

The time frame of the first round was from August until November 2011, the second round was conducted between February and April 2012.

## **3 Sample description**

The sample and the sample composition of Delphi rounds 1 and 2 differed not only due to a rather high dropout-rate (61.1 %). Also, a small number of experts who were not able to take part in the first round, decided to participate in the second round (in total 30 % of the Delphi 2 sample). 28 experts participated in both rounds.

Around 40 % of the respondents of the first Delphi round were police officers (see Table 1). The second largest group were researchers, who came from different professional backgrounds, mostly criminology, sociology, psychology, educational research, or law. Only a minority of other practitioners besides policemen responded to the enquiry – taken together, 14 persons from the fields of social work, crime prevention and judiciary sent their assessments back to the research team. For around 10 % of the sample, there was no information on professional backgrounds available.

**Table 1: Overview on sample composition, professional backgrounds of experts, Delphi round 1**

| Professional field   | N  | %    |
|----------------------|----|------|
| Police               | 29 | 40.3 |
| Social work          | 6  | 8.3  |
| Research             | 22 | 30.6 |
| Crime prevention     | 4  | 5.6  |
| Judiciary            | 4  | 5.6  |
| <i>Not available</i> | 7  | 9.7  |
| Total                | 72 | 100  |

In the second round with only 40 experts responding (see Table 2), the ratio of non-police-practitioners dropped slightly from nearly 20 % in the first round to 17.5 % in the second round. Table 2 gives an overview on the sample composition of Delphi round 2.

**Table 2: Overview on sample composition, professional backgrounds of experts, Delphi round 2**

| Professional field | N  | %    |
|--------------------|----|------|
| Police             | 22 | 55   |
| Social Work        | 1  | 2.5  |
| Research           | 11 | 27.5 |
| Judiciary          | 3  | 7.5  |
| Crime prevention   | 3  | 7.5  |
| Total              | 40 | 100  |

While the proportion of researchers nearly stayed the same as in the first round with 27.5 % in the second round, the participation of experts from police even increased compared to first round. Participation of experts from the field of social work decreased remarkably from first to second round, while only one expert from judiciary and from crime prevention dropped out of the sample.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Anticipated societal changes until 2025

The overall picture of developments in society and economy drawn by respondents is a rather pessimistic one: They expect more social inequality, a growing polarization between social groups and milieus, shrinking income, more precarious jobs; less government spending for social policy, education, and (crime) prevention. A minority of respondents voiced more optimistic views: They expect positive economic developments, decreasing social inequality, and advances in the field of (school) education.

In the eyes of many respondents, economic and technological developments will entail that the labour market requires higher qualifications. This implies good chances for individuals with a higher education and job opportunities in new professional fields for highly qualified juveniles on the one hand, worsening chances for individuals with low qualification on the other hand. It is seen as a major problem that there is a considerable number of underprivileged youths with a low level of education and bad chances of participation. It was a controversial issue whether there will be more youth unemployment in general. On the one hand, demographic changes and the decreasing number of younger people lead to less youth unemployment. On the other hand, rationalization of labour and an increasing global competition are seen as factors that raise unemployment among juveniles. However, tendencies of the labour market – especially for juveniles – that most respondents agreed on, were more precarious jobs and more pressure to perform, both creating more worries about the future. Worsening perspectives were also seen especially for rural areas with a shrinking population.

### 4.2 Anticipated developments in the field of youth crime / youth violence

Generally, respondents expect a decrease in the volume of police-recorded juvenile delinquency. For the time up to 2025, 62.9 % of German respondents of Delphi round 1 anticipate a drop in the number of juvenile offenders registered by police by nearly 13 % in average ( $M = 12.70\%$ ;  $SD = 6.720$ ; Range = 4–40 %). While 20 % of the experts assume that the number of suspects will more or less stay the same, only a small minority of 16.7 % expect an increasing number of juvenile suspects, in average they assume there will be an increase of the number of young suspects of around 11.44 % ( $SD = 6.227$ ; Range = 5–20 %). The majority of respondents believe demographic change resp. societal ageing will be the reasons for the decrease in the number of offenses committed by young people in Germany. Accordingly, the anticipated overall decrease in the number of juvenile suspects matches the foreseen total reduction of juveniles in the age group 14–17 of around a sixth caused by demographic change in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2009).

Experts were also asked for differentiated estimations about the development of the number of male and female suspects for certain groups of offenses<sup>1</sup>. Figure 1 and Figure 2 give an overview of experts' estimates with regard to young males and young females.

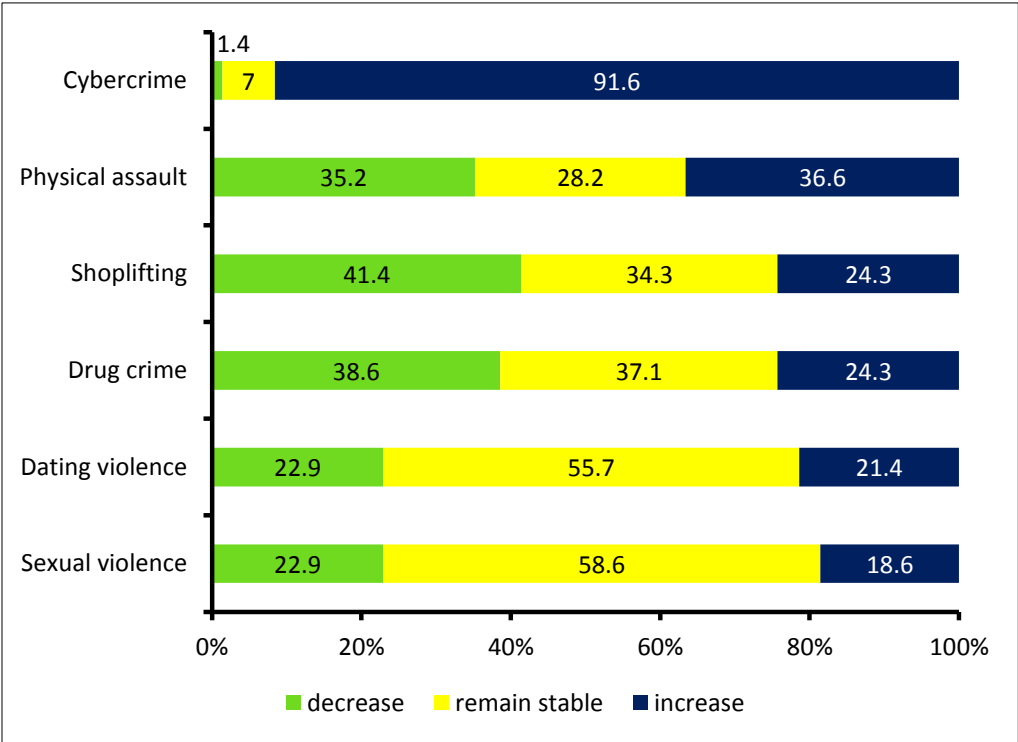
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<sup>1</sup>Question:

“Juvenile crime is a broad term. How do you expect the number of police-recorded juvenile offences to develop between 2010 and 2025 in the following fields of crime? Please provide separate estimates for boys and girls. Male 14-17 y. olds: Between 2010 and 2025, number of police-recorded offences will ...”

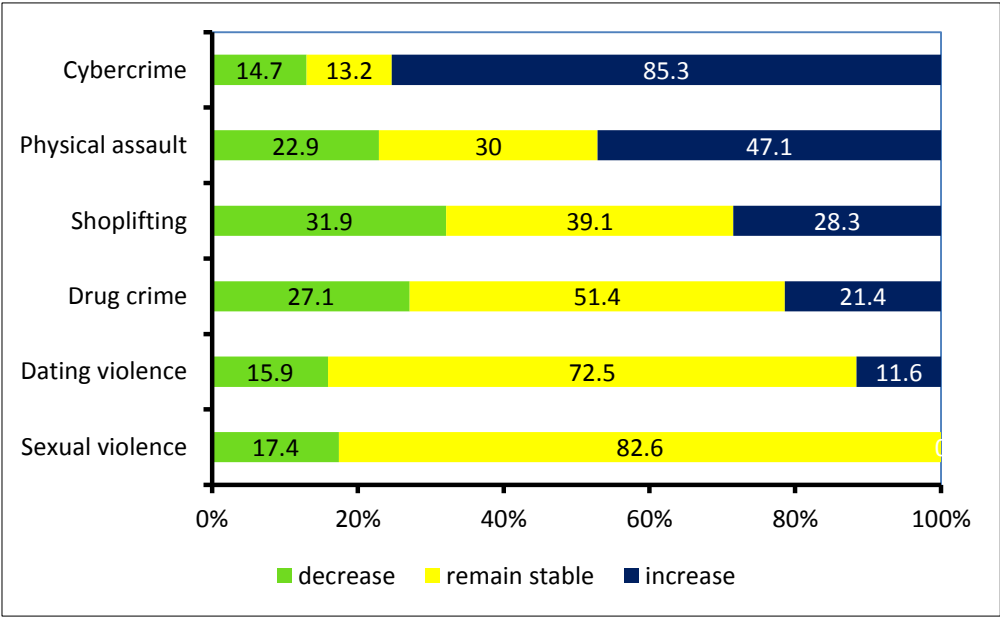
“Female 14-17 y. olds: Between 2010 and 2025, number of police-recorded offences will ...”

**Figure 1: Experts' estimates regarding the development of the number of male juvenile suspects in Germany until 2025, Delphi round 1, 70 < N < 71**



Experts expect largely parallel developments for the number of male and female suspects until 2025. For both groups (cf. Figure 1 & Figure 2), a majority of respondents anticipate growing numbers of suspects of cybercrime offenses and physical assaults – although the percentage of experts who anticipate a drop in the number of male juvenile suspects of violent offenses is nearly as high as the ones expecting an increase (35.2 % vs. 36.6 %). For 14–17 year old boys, there is a majority of experts assuming numbers of suspects of shoplifting and drug crime will decrease. Dating and sexual violence are mainly expected to remain stable.

**Figure 2: Experts' estimates regarding the development of the number of female juvenile suspects in Germany until 2025, Delphi round 1, 68 < N < 70**



The anticipated suspect numbers for shoplifting, drug crime, dating and sexual violence of 14–17 year old girls are similar, but show a larger accordance of experts, who in the majority expect this figure will remain stable.

In summary, no profound overall changes are expected in the field of youth crime during the next decade. Juvenile delinquency is still seen as widespread behaviour that is mainly episodic, and of low intensity. Increasing numbers of offences and new developments are mainly seen in the field of youth cybercrime (see chapter 4.3), i.e. delinquency in connection with communication and information technologies.

Increases of everyday types of juvenile delinquency, such as shoplifting or minor assault offenses, were predicted by some experts for youngsters with a low educational background.

Some experts also stated that the rate of juveniles with mental health problems will increase. This was often mentioned in connection with substance abuse. More crimes committed by (organized) groups or even gangs were also mentioned by a small number of experts.

Some respondents argue that numbers of female offenders – also regarding violent offences – might increase and there might be some “catching up” of girls, but still mainly boys will be the dominant group of (juvenile) offenders.

An increase in the use of weapons was assumed by a considerable number of experts in the first Delphi round. Other experts argue that it will rather decline due to a more intensive governmental control of weapons.

No profound changes in the modi operandi of offenses committed by juveniles were seen by the majority of experts. A common statement was that physical assault will rather be committed in groups and spontaneously. If offenses are committed rather alone and planned, these are more likely property offenses.

For the characteristics of victims of juvenile crime, also no profound changes are expected. Some respondents anticipate an increase in older victims of offenses committed by juveniles, due to de-

mographic changes. But still a large amount of offenses will be directed at other juveniles, as several respondents point out.

### **4.3 Information and communication technology and the changing face of juvenile crime**

In the first Delphi round, respondents indicated that developments in information and communication technology will have significant impact on extent and type of crime and that “cybercrime” committed by young people will be an increasing and more relevant field in the near future. Since cybercrime can include a wide range of offences, respondents were asked about this issue in the second Delphi round in more detail, using an open question format (“What are the main changes you expect with regard to juvenile offences linked to use of information and communication technology in the era up to 2025?”).

In the second Delphi round, respondents again predicted a general increase in the field of cybercrime. Mentioned most often was an increasing significance of phenomena of cyber bullying, followed by increasing copyright infringements and computer fraud. Another major problem is seen in attacks on privacy and personal data. This includes spying out of personal data and misuse of pictures, financial data etc., amplified by many juveniles handling their own personal data in a very incautious way, as some respondents point out.

Some additional fields of crime related to information and communication technology were mentioned by small numbers of respondents. For instance, some experts fear that more juvenile offenders could use the internet to arrange crimes that are committed in groups. It is also noticed that the internet allows for finding “partners” for acting out negative dispositions or attitudes that would have remained latent without the possibilities to find like-minded people via internet. Some respondents also warn that communication technologies could have a negative impact in the way that “spectacular” crimes like school shootings find imitators.

Respondents agree that the use of computers and new information and communication media will become even more important in the lives of young people. Some experts fear this movement will cause increasing internet/computer addiction and decreased social skills among juveniles. But some also express an opposite view: The competencies of juveniles in handling computers and the internet will generally improve, and as “digital natives” the majority will not be in danger to lose their “touch with reality”.

Some respondents state that the tendency of generally increasing cybercrime will be diminished by a greater extent of controlling measures, or that increasing cybercrime can still be averted via effective prevention measures.

### **4.4 Controversial issues**

Regarding societal changes expected in the upcoming decade, there were some controversial issues emerging from the first round. For the second wave of the survey, the topics of family cohesion, importance of family structures and migration and integration of migrants were picked as the most striking controversial issues to be discussed in more detail.

#### **4.4.1 Family cohesion / importance of family structures**

In the first Delphi round, divergent views regarding the development and importance of family structures and family cohesion became apparent. Some respondents expected a weakening of familial

bonds and a continuing societal trend towards individualisation. Others anticipated that there will be a renaissance of micro-social networks, including family. This was mentioned in statements like “family will become more important again”, often connected with the idea of a shrinking role of the state as a social policy and welfare agent. Some respondents assumed there will be some “return of traditional values” including values and attitudes linked to family life.

In the second round, respondents were asked about their opinion on these positions regarding the future significance of the family, and to give the most important reasons for their opinion in a few words. The majority of experts rejected the thesis of a “return of traditional values” and a renaissance of conventional family structures in the second survey round. Beyond that, respondents expressed multiple and divergent perceptions of the topics of individualisation and family cohesion.

Many experts discussed individualisation in conjunction with other societal – and mainly economic – developments. This was the category of answers that was mentioned most frequently in the second round of the survey. Globalisation, increasing economic competition, increasing labour market requirements for flexibility and mobility, and increasing amounts of precarious jobs are seen as the main conditions that go along with a societal trend towards individualisation. Experts from different fields, research as well as police, state that job mobility and precarious employment are in conflict with the stability of family structures. Several respondents criticize that competitiveness on the labour market and mental stress are growing. One expert points out that an increase in the number of mental diseases is linked to these developments. Lower social classes are more affected by economic instability – that’s why some experts see growing individualisation and weakening of familial bonds especially for the lower classes.

Some respondents expect growing individualisation rather for upper classes, understanding “individualisation” mostly in a sense of hedonism: Well-off people have more abilities to afford an individual, hedonistic lifestyle. For this group a small number of experts anticipated a shrinking willingness and commitment to be socially involved and contribute to society.

Regarding a “renaissance of micro-social networks”, different interpretations of this term and various ideas of how it could look like emerged in the second survey round.

- Some experts point out that a renaissance of micro-social networks does not necessarily go along with a conservative lifestyle because a pluralisation of ways of living and new concepts of “family life” is developing. Different forms of modern, “post-traditional” arrangements of living together are mentioned, especially forms of residential communities: Older people for instance will seek new models of living together, and in general residential communities could take over some functions of family structures.
- Additionally, family structures themselves – i.e. gender roles and parenting styles – are changing and developing. A changing division of parenting roles, especially in younger families, are seen by some respondents as a trend that contradicts the overall tendency of weakening familial bonds.
- A different form of “renaissance of micro-social networks” is seen by some other respondents. They anticipate a “retreat to family life” and to the private sphere by underprivileged people who are excluded from societal participation.

This multitude of dimensions is a main reason why several experts point out that both developments – individualisation and renaissance of micro-social networks – are not mutually exclusive and can occur simultaneously. Additionally, some experts point out that developments can occur very differ-



ently in different regions, for instance in rural vs. urban regions or regions with disparate economic power.

A small number of experts think that new forms of living together, patchwork families etc. cannot substitute the functions of “traditional” family structures. To their mind, role models for children and juveniles are lacking and social norms and values are transmitted to a lesser extent. They see insufficient parenting as an important reason for problems with juvenile delinquency. Some respondents stay with the position that “family will become more important again” which had emerged in the first round. These positions are expressed mainly by experts from the field of police. One police officer for instance claims that juveniles do attach great importance to family and therefore the trend of individualisation will be inverted in the nearer future. The majority rather neglects these positions, especially regarding a “return of traditional values”. One respondent from the field of research states that a “return of traditional values” must be “wishful thinking of some individual older respondents”. Trends and developments that are seen by a considerable number of experts are an increase of single households (sometimes connected with ideas of growing social isolation and “escape into virtual realities”), and a weakening familial bonds in the sense that the importance of family as an agent of socialisation will decrease. Some experts argue that other – public and governmental – institutions therefore should take more responsibility. There were different anticipations of future governmental action in this field. Several respondents believe the state will tend to withdraw its role as a social policy and welfare agent, but opposite opinions were also mentioned.

#### **4.4.2 Migration / integration of migrants**

In the first survey round, there were controversial positions regarding a growing social divide between native Germans and migrant communities, especially in large urban or metropolitan areas. While some respondents anticipated growing “ghettoization”, others predicted advances regarding cultural, linguistic, educational, and vocational integration/participation of migrants.

In the second survey round, respondents were asked again to express their views on this dispute about migration as a future problem area. Both positions found some support. Many experts explained that the question of “ghettoization” vs. successful integration depends on the particular social situation of migrants and on socioeconomic conditions in urban and rural spaces. Some respondents explicitly state that both developments will occur simultaneously and there will be better conditions for integration of a majority, but “ghettoization” of a disadvantaged minority. One respondent adds that an increasing “ghettoization” – especially in urban spaces – might be a danger not only for people with a migration background, but also for underprivileged “native” residents, seeing rather a social than an ethnical polarisation of society.

Respondents stress two needs or conditions that support integration and social participation of migrants. “Integration is a medal with two sides”, as a respondent from the field of science puts it. Respondents emphasize the need to improve migrants’ perspectives and to welcome them. On the one hand, it depends on the integration efforts of the host, the offers made by “native” society. On the other hand, a number of respondents refer to the responsibility of migrants and state that also their motivation to accept and support integration offers is needed.

All in all, opinions about the situation of migrants and German integration policy continued to differ, echoing the dispute that emerged from the first Delphi round. Some respondents argue that integration policy in Germany has completely failed during the last decades; others describe the situation as much less alarming and expect that problems in the field of migration will be mitigated because cul-

tural, educational, and vocational participation of migrants – as already stated by a considerable number of respondents in first round – will improve.

#### 4.5 Preventive approaches in selected fields

A main topic of the second Delphi wave was experts’ views on prevention, their opinions about what can be done and what should be done in selected fields of juvenile problem behaviour.

##### 4.5.1 Substance abuse among juveniles

At first, experts were asked about their opinion whose task prevention of drug abuse among juveniles should be. They were asked to give their answers on a four-point scale from 1 “not at all” to 4 “fully”. Table 3 gives an overview on the experts’ perceptions of the importance of several actors or institutions in the field of drug abuse prevention.

**Table 3: Experts' opinions on the importance of certain actors or institutions in the field of drug prevention, sorted by means, scale from 1 = “not at all” to 4 = “fully”, Delphi 2<sup>2</sup>**

|                           | N  | Min | Max | Mean | SD   |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Parents                   | 40 | 3   | 4   | 3.88 | .335 |
| Schools                   | 40 | 2   | 4   | 3.30 | .758 |
| Social work               | 40 | 2   | 4   | 3.28 | .599 |
| Crime prevention councils | 40 | 2   | 4   | 2.67 | .797 |
| Municipality              | 40 | 2   | 4   | 2.60 | .709 |
| Police                    | 40 | 1   | 4   | 2.15 | .580 |

In the opinion of experts, persons or institutions being in daily contact with juveniles – parents and schools – are the most relevant preventive actors regarding juvenile drug abuse. Social workers are regarded as very important as well. Less significance is attributed to crime prevention councils, municipalities, and the police. This may partially be due to the relatively lower frequency and the specific nature of these institutions’ and professions’ contact with juveniles. The assessments of experts from different professional backgrounds<sup>3</sup> did not differ compared to the overall opinion of the sample.

#### ***Recommended approaches for social work in the field of preventing drug abuse among juveniles***

Measures that are most often mentioned by participants of the survey are measures related to educational work / awareness raising. These include advice/help for addicted youngsters, for vulnerable youngsters with problems, and also for parents, relatives, and teachers.

Important fields of work were seen in outreach social work respectively street work with young drug users, and in social work at schools.

<sup>2</sup> Wording of question: “In your opinion, whose task should prevention of drug abuse among juveniles be? Please indicate for each of the following institutions/persons to what extent prevention of juvenile drug abuse should be one of their tasks.”

<sup>3</sup> The group of social workers was not compared to the others in Delphi 2, because the N in this group was 1.

It emerges from the polled experts' responses that educational work should aim at strengthening juveniles' personality and essential life skills as well as provide information about drugs and consequences of drug abuse. Some respondents stressed that prevention should start at early ages.

A minority of experts additionally claimed drinking in public spaces and smoking in the facilities of social services should be prohibited.

Other approaches that were recommended by smaller numbers of experts included:

- offering better leisure activities for young people
- improving continuing education for social workers
- providing consumption rooms for drug addicts
- an overall expansion of successful existing programmes/approaches.

### ***Recommended approaches for police in the field of preventing drug abuse among juveniles***

Recommendations for police mainly refer to cognitive approaches (giving information / raising awareness) on the one hand and effective criminal prosecution on the other hand.

School is seen as the most important place to address young people. There were different opinions about how police should be an actor of drug prevention in schools. Some respondents recommended prevention lessons given by police officers, providing information about drugs, consequences of drug usage and legal consequences. Others believed that police should focus primarily on the last one of these topics – giving information about legal consequences to young people and provide knowledge and expertise for disseminators working with young people.

A special suggestion to improve police prevention work in this field requires a change in legislation: Police could be enabled to introduce specialized “prevention officers” who are able to give advice in schools, for parents etc. without being forced to initiate criminal prosecution if they get information about petty criminal offences. This could help them to build relationships with youngsters based on trust.

In general, cooperation with other agencies such as social work, schools, and municipality was seen as very important. The role of police was mainly seen in giving information about their findings (e.g. about hot spots, at-risk people etc.) to and sharing their experiences with other agencies, and in the transfer of young drug users to drug counselling and youth welfare services. Some respondents added the support of pedagogical projects as a task for police among other duties.

Effective criminal prosecution was the second aspect mentioned by lots of respondents. This includes prosecution of drug trafficking and high pressure on drug dealers, especially large-scale dealers, and the supervision of compliance with laws for the protection of minors in bars and shops. There were different opinions about how to deal with drug users. Some experts recommended that high pressure should be put also on drug users by the police and for instance public drug scenes should be eliminated immediately. Some experts recommended low pressure on drug users and stated that transfer to counselling services was more important.

#### **4.5.2 Youth cybercrime**

Experts were also asked to give their opinion on whose task prevention of youth cybercrime should be. Table 4 gives an overview on the experts' perception of the importance of several actors or insti-

tutions in the field of prevention of youth cybercrime. They were again asked to give their answers on a four point scaled from “not at all” to “fully”.

**Table 4: Experts’ opinions on the importance of certain actors or institutions in the field of preventing youth cybercrime, sorted by means, scale from 1 = “not at all” to 4 = “fully”, Delphi 2<sup>4</sup>**

|                           | N  | Min | Max | Mean | SD   |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Parents                   | 39 | 2   | 4   | 3.69 | .569 |
| Schools                   | 39 | 2   | 4   | 3.44 | .598 |
| Crime prevention councils | 39 | 1   | 4   | 2.69 | .731 |
| Social work               | 39 | 1   | 4   | 2.69 | .766 |
| Police                    | 40 | 1   | 4   | 2.50 | .716 |
| Municipality              | 39 | 1   | 4   | 2.15 | .630 |

Again, parents and schools are considered to be the most important persons/institution whose task should be to prevent youth cybercrime (see Table 4). The other four actors (crime prevention councils, social work, police and Municipality) are not seen as unimportant by the respondents of Delphi 2, but score a bit lower on the scale given. Expert’s views again did not differ by professional background – only the police was rated a little higher compared to the other groups by policemen themselves.

***Recommended approaches for social work in the field of preventing cybercrime among juveniles***

With regard to preventive approaches recommended for social work, most respondents referred to cognitive approaches that aim to give young people information and raise their awareness about risks and dangers connected with the internet. Schools are most often named as the most important institution where juveniles should be addressed. A need for clarification of social rules and information about legal consequences of actions related to the field of cybercrime is another issue some respondents focus on.

One of the most important aspects is seen in the need to support media competences of youngsters. Several experts add that media competences of parents, teachers and social workers should be strengthened. Another aspect mentioned by several respondents is parental training, i.e. information and advice for parents about the issue.

Other approaches recommended by smaller numbers of respondents included:

- advice/help for victims of cyber bullying
- the enforcement of youth protection measures (to protect juveniles from harmful media influence)
- embedding new media into concepts of social work

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<sup>4</sup> Wording of question: “In your opinion, whose task should prevention of youth cybercrime be? Please indicate for each of the following institutions/persons to what extent prevention of cyber offences committed by young people should be one of their tasks.”

- offer leisure opportunities and facilities, and support “offline” social competencies of juveniles.

***Recommended approaches for police in the field of preventing cybercrime among juveniles***

Recommended approaches for the field of police also included mainly cognitive approaches. Most often mentioned were awareness/information sessions for young people, giving information about dangers (like for instance identity theft or computer fraud) as well as providing information and raising awareness of laws, legal consequences and consequences for victims.

Several experts see a need for stronger supervision of internet (providers, social networks etc.) by the police with regard to harmful content and also malware. One expert points out that this should be done by specialized police units. Specialisation of police officers and continuing education for police in the field of cybercrime is mentioned repeatedly as required approaches.

Another focus is put on interagency cooperation. Multiple experts emphasize the importance of good cooperation between police and other institutions in the field, especially schools and social work. As pointed out above for the field of social work, schools are seen as the most important institution where juveniles should be addressed. While some experts recommend information sessions in schools conducted by police, others state this should mainly be done by schools or social workers and the role of police should rather be to support these professions and provide useful information for them.

**4.5.3 School-related violence**

Being asked for their expertise on the prevention of school-related violence, respondents were again sure that all of the given actors or institutions are important (see Table 5). Again, they consider schools and parents to have the greatest responsibility compared to the other actors given. Only a small minority of experts thought it is not the task of social work, police or the municipality to prevent school-related youth violence. Experts’ views did not differ significantly by professional backgrounds.

**Table 5: Experts’ opinions on the importance of certain actors or institutions in the field of preventing school-related violence, sorted by means, scale from 1 = “not at all” to 4 = “fully”, Delphi 2<sup>5</sup>**

|                           | N  | Min | Max | Mean | SD   |
|---------------------------|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Schools                   | 40 | 2   | 4   | 3.85 | .427 |
| Parents                   | 39 | 3   | 4   | 3.64 | .486 |
| Social work               | 40 | 1   | 4   | 3.15 | .736 |
| Crime prevention councils | 39 | 2   | 4   | 2.67 | .737 |
| Police                    | 40 | 1   | 4   | 2.65 | .802 |
| Municipality              | 39 | 1   | 4   | 2.51 | .721 |

<sup>5</sup> Wording of question: “In your opinion, whose task should prevention of school-related violence be? Please indicate for each of the following institutions/persons to what extent prevention of school-related violence should be one of their tasks.”

### ***Recommended approaches for social work in the field of preventing school-related violence among juveniles***

The most important aspect experts claim for the field of preventing school-related violence is an expansion of social work at schools. Lots of respondents state that more social workers should be hired for schools, some state that every school needs social workers.

Programmes and projects against violence/bullying in schools or in cooperation with schools are viewed as recommendable by most experts. Some experts name special forms of courses and special forms of problem behaviour to be targeted (for instance anti-aggression trainings, social training courses, trainings against bullying, trainings to strengthen civil courage and intervention in situations where violence is witnessed), others more generally refer to “projects aiming at violence prevention”. A significant number of experts state that schools should especially implement evaluated programmes, some of them name specific programmes such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme or the German “EFFEKT” programme (Lösel et al., 2008; Olweus, Limber & Mihalic, 1999).

Some respondents state that for the prevention of school-related violence it’s important to create a good school climate in general, to support and exemplify non-violent communication and to create conditions that support a good social co-existence/interaction among pupils.

Again, experts in general place a strong emphasis on interagency cooperation between relevant institutions, such as schools, social services and police.

A minority of experts mentioned more punitive approaches: Violent offences should consequently be followed by sanctions/charges. One respondent (from the field of science) additionally recommended CCTV systems at schools.

Other approaches that were occasionally mentioned by experts included

- support, advice and information for parents
- peer-mediation programmes; victim-offender mediation
- continuing education for teachers / social workers
- early intervention in families (by social workers)
- social work especially aiming at integration of migrants / intercultural competencies.

### ***Recommended approaches for police in the field of preventing school-related violence among juveniles***

The most frequent category of statements on approaches for police in this field refers to the benefits of interagency cooperation, especially between police and schools. Recommendations for instance include

- participation of police in violence prevention programmes at schools,
- exchange of information between schools, police, and social services,
- “contact officers”, i.e. special police officers to be responsible for a certain school,
- coordination of intervention measures in case of violent offenses in cooperation of police, youth services, and schools.

The second category of measures that lots of respondents refer to are cognitive approaches that aim on giving information to and raising awareness of young people. Most of the experts recommending these approaches belong to the field of police themselves. Several of these experts mention preven-

tion lessons conducted by police officers in schools, and a special focus is put on giving information about legal provisions and consequences.

A small group of respondents from the field of science state that prevention of school-related violence should not be a task of police and that money for these efforts should rather be spent for more social work in schools.

Some respondents, mainly from the field of police, state that clear roles are necessary for police and social work and their tasks should not be mixed too much. An important task of police is also seen in consequent, suitable interventions in case of criminal offenses in schools, which also includes repressive measures.

As for the field of social work, implementation of evaluated/well-tried programmes in cooperation with other relevant institutions is recommended by several experts.

## **5 Discussion**

The aim of the Delphi survey was to examine possible future developments by integrating expert opinions in a systematic manner. Although Delphi surveys are an established technique for reducing forecasting errors (cf. Armstrong, 2006b), this methodological approach certainly cannot overcome the limitations of any attempts to really foresee the future. Forecasting of societal trends and developments is fraught with uncertainty because these trends are dependent on a multitude of (again hard-to-predict) conditions – as some of the respondents also pointed out in their answers. For a field like juvenile delinquency, where developments cannot be projected by assessing a set of well-known and predictable conditions, “looking towards the future” can only have the nature of assumptions and estimates. Some further limitations arise from the relatively low response rate which resulted in the fact that the sample of respondents was smaller than projected. The field of police is represented relatively strongly in the sample, since policemen were more willing to answer the survey. But it was not the aim of the sample construction to have evenly distributed numbers of experts from the different professional backgrounds.

Respondents see a high significance of social inequality, polarisation, and segregated societal groups for the development of juvenile delinquency in the upcoming decade. Thereby they address trends that are also discussed in social sciences (cf. e.g. Geißler, 2010; Hradil, 2005; 2007). Lots of statements about individualisation and desintegration – not only from respondents belonging to the field of science – are noticeably concordant with sociological theories of individualisation (cf. Beck, 1986; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1994) and academic discourse about phenomena of desintegration (cf. e.g. Dörre, 2006; Heitmeyer, 1994).

## **6 Summary and conclusions**

In the two waves of the Delphi survey, 72 (1<sup>st</sup> round) resp. 40 (2<sup>nd</sup> round) respondents from different professional fields (mainly research and police) have been asked about anticipated developments in society and in the field of youth crime, and about recommended approaches for prevention in selected fields of juvenile problem behaviour. In the eyes of most respondents, juvenile delinquency remains a phenomenon to be characterized as ubiquitous, transitory, and mostly of low severity. Numbers of juvenile offenses are expected to decrease due to the shrinking number of juveniles that

can be predicted for the upcoming decades. A field of anticipated changes regarding youth crime will mainly be driven by fast developments in information and communication technology, which create new opportunity structures for offenses like cyber bullying, copyright violations, computer fraud, and attacks on personal data.

Respondents express serious worries about societal developments in terms of growing social inequality and social polarisation, shrinking incomes, and the existence of marginalized groups having a hard time to get access to the labour market and to participate in society. At the same time, most of the experts' statements reflect the opinion that these issues can be influenced by political action, by social policy efforts. This also emerges in more optimistic statements that anticipate positive developments like declining social inequality and advances in the fields of education and integration. At the same time, lots of the recommended approaches for prevention in selected fields of juvenile problem behaviour refer to social policy and to the need of investment in social and educational work. Recommended approaches are mainly such that aim at supporting the competencies and social resources of juveniles as well as parents and teachers. A strong emphasis is also put on the importance of interagency cooperation in the field of prevention.

The results of the discussion within the framework of the Delphi survey indicate that efforts to prevent juvenile delinquency in the upcoming decades require the underlying goal to mitigate the polarization of society and to support the participation of disadvantaged societal groups.

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