

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

Report on Portugal Nationwide Institutional and Expert Survey

1. Survey process and composition of sample

1.1. Survey process

In the context of the Daphne Project - Youth deviance and youth violence: A European multi-agency perspective on best practices in prevention and control – the Portuguese Nationwide Institutional and Expert Survey was mainly realized as a web-based (online) survey made available for all partners by the German Police University's. In addition to the web-based version, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire (along with an additional post-paid self-addressed envelope), as well a form version sent by mail, was offered to the experts in case they preferred this version.

The Portuguese survey was conducted between May 18th and October 9th, 2011.

1.2. Response rate and sample composition

In Portugal the questionnaire was sent to 355 potential respondents. Those respondents were selected on the basis of a detailed search for experts and relevant institutions; in this process we used the knowledge and contacts of the members from the Portuguese National Advisory Board. We tried to include in the sample professionals from different services and areas: researchers; professionals of local projects addressed to young people and crime prevention organisation; social services; correctional facilities; probationary services.

At first, the potential experts received an e-mail that announced the survey was soon-to-begin. It also gave information on the subject of the study and the survey and kindly asked for their participation. In some cases, key persons were used to introduce the survey and its aims and to make a direct appeal for collaboration.

After two months, a reminder was sent by email. In order to get a more expressive participation several telephone contacts were made addressed to some potential experts and to the key persons reminding our request of answer to the questionnaire.

The overall response rate of the survey was 22.5 % (80 participants of 355 invitations sent). There were several unforeseen technical obstacles that occurred during the realization of the survey. Different reasons could explain this response rate:

- Some of the participants couldn't access the online survey due to firewall restrictions.
- In some services the "contact person" was not so effective.
- The government change led to changes in the services and we could not identify the right "contact person" in due time. On the other hand some services were extinct or integrated in others without the appointment of the people in charge.
- The questionnaire is long and appeals to a reflective attitude to which in some cases people are not used to.
- Some of the potential respondents, mostly those who are working in local projects with

young people, do not assume that they are working on youth deviance and youth crime prevention either as experts

Of the 80 responses, 21 questionnaires were filled in online and 59 experts sent a paper version.

The professional background of the participants can mainly be described as practitioners (cf. Table 1) since those who work in research institutions (universities or not) represent only 5%. We can assume that there are also researchers working for police or crime prevention organisations but the short information that people gave about their current main fields of work makes clear the predominance of practitioners. In fact there are not many Portuguese researchers working in this area; on the other hand, they seem to be less open to collaboration with other researches.

Among practitioners there is a certain balance between those who are working in a control and correctional approach and those who work in a preventive perspective, as we can see in Table 1.

Table 1: Institutional Background of participating experts: “How would you describe your organisation/institution?” N = 80

Institutional Background	% (N)
Police	33.8 (27)
Crime prevention organisation	20.1 (16)
Correctional facility	18.9 (15)
Social service / welfare	12.6 (10)
School	6.3 (5)
University	2.5 (2)
Other research institution	2.5 (2)
Public prosecutor's office	2.5 (2)
Political party	1.3 (1)

In general the respondents are highly educated – more than 80% are graduate - and they have a diploma in diverse fields, such as law, military sciences, educational science, psychology, social sciences (cf. Table 1).

Table 2: Academic Background of participating experts: “What is your professional / academic background?” N = 80

Institutional Background	% (N)
Military Sciences	7.5 (6)
Psychology	26.3 (21)
Social Sciences	35.0 (28)
Sciences of Law	5.0 (4)
Educational Science	3.8 (3)
Others	8.8 (7)
No diploma	13.8 (11)

Of the 80 experts who took part in the Portuguese Nationwide Institutional and Expert Survey, 47.4 % (37) were male and 52.6 % (41) female¹. The group of respondents is relatively young: 48.7% as less than 40 years old; the average age was 39.21 years (SD = 9.12, Range 22–61).

2. Experts’ experiences with and views on youth crime prevention and control

In the second section of the questionnaire, experts were asked about their experiences with and assessment of measures of prevention and control regarding youth deviance and youth crime.

2.1. Target groups of activities in the field of prevention and control of youth deviance, violence, and crime

In the question “Who are the main target groups of current activities in the field of prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime?” the experts were asked to assess categories given and answer on a five-point scale from “1 = not at all” to “5 = very much”. The answers results were as in Table 3.

Table 3: Main target groups of preventive activities, 73 < N < 79, sorted by means

Target Groups	M	SD
Male adolescents between age 14 and 17	3.6	1.11
Youths from disadvantaged families/neighbourhoods	3.44	1.22
Female adolescents between age 14 and 17	3.22	1.12
People/groups at risk of becoming victims	3.12	1.28

¹ Two of the respondent didn’t give information about sex.

Boys up to age 13	3.1	1.15
Victims	3.05	1.36
Semiformal/professional agents of social control (welfare offices, schools, health system etc.)	3.04	1.14
Repeat offenders	2.99	1.22
Ethnic minority youths	2.99	1.25
Youths with substance abuse problems	2.97	1.15
Girls up to age 13	2.91	1.28
First time offenders	2.77	1.19
Young males (18-24 years)	2.76	1.24
Informal agents of social control (family, neighbours, peers etc.)	2.73	1.16
Formal agents of social control (police, criminal courts etc.)	2.69	1.08
Youths in care homes / in foster care	2.68	1.19
Young females (18-24 years)	2.46	1.11
Youths with mental health problems	2.21	1.12
Witnesses	1.97	1.13
Homeless youths	1.92	1.05

Therefore, from experts' experience, target groups of preventive activities are mainly young males, and females, aged between 14–24 years old and youths from disadvantaged families/neighbourhoods (cf. Table 3).

People at risk of becoming victims; boys up to age 13; victims and semiformal professional are other groups considered as involved in activities in the field of prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime.

From the experts' point of view the groups who are not considered in preventive approaches are witnesses as well as homeless youths.

2.2. Types of youth problem behaviour targeted by current activities

The second question in section two focusses on the main problem categories which are targeted by preventive activities. The question was “What are the main problem categories currently targeted by activities in the field of prevention and control?” Experts were asked to assess several

given categories on a five-point scale from “1 = not at all” to “5 = very much”. Additionally, there was space for the experts to add further categories.

Table 4 gives an overview on experts’ perceptions regarding youth problem behaviour targeted by preventive activities.

Table 4: Youth problem behaviour targeted by preventive activities, 71 < N < 80, sorted by means

Problem behaviour targeted	M	SD
School-related violence	3.54	1.03
School absenteeism	3.43	1.23
Bullying	3.41	1.15
Youth violence	3.33	1.19
Abuse of alcohol / legal substances	3.23	1.16
Abuse of illegal substances	3.27	1.12
Gender-based violence	3.01	1.20
Dating violence	3.0	1.22
Youth property offences	2.78	1.10
Sexual offences	2.71	1.07
Knife crime	2.55	1.08
Adherence to violence-legitimizing norms	2.4	1.06
Cyber crime	2.13	1.10
Use of violent media	2.14	1.10
Hate crime / violence against minorities	2.09	0.98
Political/religious extremism	1.42	0.69

According to the experts’ point of view (cf.

Table 4), the main problems of youth behaviour targeted by preventive approaches could be aggregate on four categories:

- Problems related to school (school violence; school absenteeism, bullying) – this could be linked with the focus on youths from disadvantaged families/neighbourhoods among which the school problems in general are very important;
- Youth violence in general;

- Abuse of substances (legal or illegal);
- Gender-based violence in a context of dating or not.

It seems important to emphasise that the problems mostly considered by the experts did not reach the 4 on a five-point scale.

Problems not considered are the political extremism and rarely those crimes committed against minorities, use of violence media and cybercrime.

2.3. Approaches taken in prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime

“Main approaches taken in prevention and control of youth deviance, crime and violence” were the subjects of the question following experts’ assessment of problem behaviour targeted by preventive activities. Again, experts were asked to assess several given categories on a five-point scale from “1 = not at all” to “5 = very much”. Additionally, there was space to add further categories. Table gives an overview of experts’ views of approaches taken in prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime.

Table 5: Approaches taken in prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime, 73 < N < 79, sorted by means

Approaches taken	M	SD
Measures with a focus on social integration	3.25	1.18
Secondary/targeted approaches (directed at at-risk populations)	3.21	1.04
Measures targeted at reducing risk factors	3.13	1.20
Measures targeted at strengthening protective factors	3.09	1.22
Measures with a broader focus on individual development	3.07	1.23
Tertiary/indicated approaches (directed at persons who have already become offenders/victims)	3.03	1.19
Primary/universal approaches (directed at anybody)	2.94	1.25
Victim-focussed approaches	2.87	1.26
Measures with a narrow focus on crime	2.85	1.02
Measures based on punishment and deterrence	2.77	1.16
Offender-focussed approaches	2.75	1.13
Situational approaches (reducing crime opportunities and rewards; increasing offenders’ efforts and risks of detection and prosecution)	2.63	1.04

Measures with a focus on social integration were the ones mostly taken by Portuguese experts (cf. Table 5) followed by secondary approaches directly at at-risk population as well as measures targeted at reducing risk factors, at strengthening protective factors and individual development. As said before this also seems to be consistent with the focus on young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods but gives the idea that youth deviance, violence and crime it merely a matter of poor families and poor areas.

2.4. Institutions and professions involved in prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and crime

“Which institutions and professions are involved in prevention and control of youth deviance, crime and violence?” was the question analysed below (Table 6). The scale used by the experts was the same (1-5).

Table 6: Institutions and professions involved in prevention and control of youth deviance, violence and control, 61 < N < 73, sorted by means

Institutions and professions involved	M	SD
Police	3.78	1.00
Educational system / schools	3.66	0.97
Social workers	3.44	0.88
Probationary service	3.41	0.98
Correctional facilities	3.36	1.19
Courts / Public prosecutors	3.35	1.16
Psychologists	3.28	0.99
Social services / welfare	3.22	1.07
Health system / health professions	2.94	0.94

The answers that were given point out to a broad range of professions and institutions involved that means that prevention of youth deviance is a matter which appeals to multiply responsibilities. Interesting is the place occupied by schools, once again consistent to the relevance of school problems. Additional institutions mentioned by experts were churches and non-governmental organisations.

2.5. Significance of interagency and multi-professional approaches

Using a five-point scale from (“1 = not at all” to “5 = very much”) the experts were asked about “the perceived importance and current status of interagency cooperation / multi-professional approaches in youth crime prevention and control in your country, region or community”.

Table 7: Importance and status of interagency cooperation and multi-professional approaches, 79 < N < 80

interagency cooperation and multi-professional approaches	M	SD
... are regarded as important in tackling youth crime / violence	4.01	1.00
... are common practice in tackling youth crime / youth violence	3.01	1.16

By the answers obtained the experts confirm the importance of interagency cooperation and multi-professional approaches in the field of youth crime prevention. However if this corresponds to a practice, this practice is not so common as the importance given to interagency cooperation and multi-professional approaches as a strategic principle.

2.6. Situation of financing/funding

To know about the state of financing and funding in the field of youth crime prevention and control was another concern of the questionnaire. Who provides financial resources for activities in that field and how do the experts judge the current status of funding were the questions asked. In the question which results are presented in Table 8 experts were asked to answer on a 5-point scale from "1: not at all" to "5: very much" with additional space for further categories. The other question (cf. Table 9) was to be answered on a five-point scale as well and consisted of three assessments, whether funding was "stable", "predictable" and "sufficient"².

Table 8: Experts' view on the situation of financing and funding in the field of prevention and control of youth crime, deviance and violence, 70 < N < 79

Who are the sources of funding and financing preventive measures	M	SD
(National) Government	3.56	1.08
European Union	3.21	1.15
Non-profit / voluntary organisations	2.80	1.12
Municipality	2.61	1.08
Charities	2.51	1.12
Foundations	2.07	0.96
Commercial enterprises / companies	1.58	0.71

From the experts' experience, sources of financing and funding in the field of prevention and control of youth crime, deviance and violence are mostly national governments and European Union. Interesting is the fact that municipalities, as a source for funding, are considered less

² on scales from e.g. „1: very unstable“ to „5: very stable“

important than non profit organisations. Private companies were regarded as least important.

The funding provided by those organisations was considered by experts as neither sufficient, nor predictable or stable, according to mean values in Table .

Table 9: Experts' views on the reliability of funding of preventive measures in the field of youth crime, deviance and violence, 73 < N < 76

Funding is...	M	SD
sufficient	2.26	0.86
predictable	2.22	0.84
stable	2.16	0.89

2.7. Political strategies with regard to youth problem behaviour

Following the question on the status of funding, the experts were asked “to what extent [they] would say there is a coherent political strategy of dealing with problems of youth deviance / youth crime / youth violence in [their] country, region or community”.

Table gives an overview of the experts' expertise on the existence of a coherent political strategy of dealing with youth problem behaviour.

Table 10: Experts' views on the existence of a coherent political strategy on tackling youth deviance, crime and violence, N = 80

Is there a coherent strategy?	N	%
no strategy at all	34	42.5
only partially	44	55.0
fully developed	2	2.5

The majority of experts (55%) think there only is a partially developed political strategy and for 42.5% there is no strategy at all.

Only 26 experts gave additional information about the political strategy. The major part of them point out the legislation (Lei Tutelar Educativa and Lei de Protecção de Crianças e Jovens) as the basis for the practice of several organisations. In parallel they mention the interdisciplinary, multi-agency and multi-institutional approaches and co-operation in tackling youth crime and violence. However some refer to the difficulties on a real and effective application of those concepts saying that many times they are not put into practice at all. The others mention different local programs and projects which, in fact, could only be understood as a political strategy on youth deviance, crime and violence in a very broad sense. Among those programmes we should emphasise the

“Programa Escolhas” (*Choice Programme*), a governmental programme specifically addressed (at the beginning) to youth deviance. However we cannot say for sure that this was a programme created in the context of a coherent and defined strategy because it shows as a result of a strong media pressure following a couple of violent incidents caused by youngsters

Others experts also refer the Plan to combat drugs and dependence included in the European programme.

Open-format questions were also asked about the characterization of the strategy and who is in charge of it. The answers were given by 53 and 52 people, respectively. The opinion of experts goes to an insufficiency of the strategy concerning prevention, means and tools and extremely dependent on “good will”. The main responsibility for the strategy implementation (the possible one) is accorded by the experts to the State through its different bodies.

2.8. Evaluation of measures in the field of prevention and control of youth deviant behaviour

The status of evaluation was the subject of question 15 in section two of the questionnaire. The wording of the question was “How would you characterize the overall status of evaluation in the field of prevention and control of youth deviant behaviour / youth crime / youth violence in your country (in your region/community)?”. Experts were asked to answer on a five-point scale (cf. Table 11).

Table 2: Experts' opinions on the status of evaluation in the field of youth deviant behaviour, crime and violence, N = 78

Status of evaluation is...	N	%
extremely poor	14	17.5
below average	34	42.5
average	27	33.8
above average	3	3.8
excellent	0	0

60% of the experts judged the status of evaluation in the field of youth deviance, crime and violence in Portugal as “below average” or even as “extremely poor”. No experts stated that evaluation was excellent and only 3 said it was above average.

8 people referred that they don’t know about this kind of evaluation - they don’t know about its existence; they don’t know who is financing or who ordered this evaluation. Those who answered referred to the Observatório da Delinquência Juvenil, coordinated by Cândido Agra; the Observatório Permanente da Justiça Portuguesa, coordinated by Boaventura Sousa Santos and the “Choice Programme” as the structures where evaluation is conducted.

2.9. Sources of information on prevention of youth problem behaviour

The last question of section 2 asks the experts where they “turn to in order to find quality information on prevention of youth deviance / youth violence / youth crime”.

26 of the experts who have been inquired did not give any kind of information about this and the others, in general, were very vague on the information provided. They mention that they keep themselves updated by attending conferences, exchanging knowledge with colleagues and specialized professionals, participating in working groups and taking part in continuing education. They also mentioned the use of databases, books, newsletters and webpages. The specified information given is as follows:

- Specialized websites:
 - <http://www.mai.gov.pt>
 - <http://www.dgrs.mj.pt>
 - International Network on Youth Inclusion

- Databases:
 - Databases of the National Committee for Children and Young People at Risk (*Comissão Nacional de Crianças e Jovens em Risco, CNCJR*)
 - Databases of the Ministério da Administração Interna (MAI) and the Relatório de Segurança Interna.
 - www.pordata.pt.
 - www.idt.pt

- Newsletters
 - Ousar Integrar (http://www.dgrs.mj.pt/c/portal/layout?p_l_id=PUB.1001.105).

3. Experts' views on effects and efficiency of measures in youth crime prevention and control

I. What works?

When asked for measures/programmes that can be regarded as “working” in the field of youth crime / youth violence, Portuguese experts came up with different programmes and approaches, some of them are national wide and others have a local focus.

Most approaches and programmes regarded as “working” can be grouped in the following categories:

- **Behavioural programmes targeted at preschool and elementary school children:** Programmes aimed prevention of early-onset behavioural problems fostering social and emotional skills. Several NGO and non-profit organisations implemented this type of programmes at a local level and oriented by local needs. These are not programmes included in a national approach.
- **Programmes targeted at school violence and bullying in schools:** The main programme in this category is the Governmental “Safe School”, a programme that involves special police agents outside the schools and trained auxiliary staff in schools’ playground.
- **Behavioural training programmes for adolescents:** These programmes usually aim at strengthening participants’ positive social skills, building a positive peer culture refusing at risk behaviours such as drugs abuse. These kinds of programmes are usually included in local projects carried out in the frame of the national programme against drugs addictions.

Also in this category we can consider the Programa Cuida-Te which intends to promote the emotional and social development in order to live a healthy life.

- **Programmes integrating multiple problem areas (education, employment, health, social skills) in disadvantaged neighbourhoods**

In this category we can consider two different groups:

- a) One specific targeted to young people, like the “Choice Programme” very much oriented for school and the social integration of youngsters from poor families, particularly those who have a migration background.
 - b) Programmes at a community level, including a systematic analysis of problems, strengths and weaknesses in a community, like “Contratos Locais de Desenvolvimento Local”.
- Regarding **legal approaches** a mention is made to the Local Committee for Children and Young People at Risk and to the Lei Tutelar Educativa in what concerns mediation.

Answers to the „what’s promising” - question showed considerable overlap with the previous one.

II. What doesn’t work?

With regard to „what doesn’t work“, the majority of the respondents seem to point out that “what work” at a certain level could also “not work” in practice, therefore the programmes referred to are the same. However they also mention some more strategic aspects that, in their opinion, do not function:

- Short-term measures stipulated by specific events.
- Measures designed and launched by a single institution, lacking a systemic perspective.
- Late onset measures (when criminal careers are already well established and the young person is well accustomed to a delinquent lifestyle).
- The publication of news about crimes with the presentation of videos.