

Albert Fruzsina – Tóth Olga: Hungarian report on local interview studies

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Introduction

The aim the local interview study was to gain some specific insights regarding the context of the school surveys. This local approach intended to acquire expert views to accompany data from school surveys. Regarding the content, apart from local characteristic features of youth crime and delinquency, and the current state of the art of prevention, interviewees were asked to take future challenges and developments into account, as they perceive them.

Methodology

Altogether 20 semi-structured interviews were prepared based on an international interview guideline. We applied a multi-professional sample for the mostly individual interviews, which have been supplemented with a group discussion with selected experts and a group discussion with youngsters.

The expert interviews in Budapest were prepared in February and March 2012, in Veszprém county between December 2011 and April 2012. A group discussion with experts was prepared in Budapest in June and a group discussion with youngsters in May 2012. Our recruiting strategy was to interview as many experts from diverse institutional backgrounds who have been involved in youth crime prevention as we can.

Sample descriptions

Two regions were selected for the school survey and thus for the local expert interview study. **Budapest**, the selected urban area, is the capital city of Hungary, with almost 2 million inhabitants (1/5 of the whole Hungarian population). It also hosts almost all institutions with a national scope as well.

Veszprém county, selected as a rural area, is one of the 19 counties of Hungary and is situated in the region (NUTS III) of Central Transdanubia, in the more developed Western part of Hungary. It has a total population of 358 807 who live in altogether 212 settlements. It has 6 cities with a population of at least 10 000 people. The biggest one, Veszprém, the county capital has almost 65 000 inhabitants. In Hungary schools, especially from the secondary level up, and also a number of public institutions and services can only be found in cities, thus children from all types of settlements, older than 14 years, have to go to school in such places, commuting there on a daily basis or living during the week in school dormitories.

We tried to select an “average” region – unlike for example one from the North-Eastern part of the country, where social problems and thus criminal activity overbounds.

In Budapest we interviewed the following experts:

- the chief of the crime prevention department of the Budapest Police

- the director of the correction facility in Rákospalota, formerly in charge of the probation office
- managing director of Kapocs foundation (peer group support for delinquent youth)
- an official from the Department of Statistics and Coordination of the Ministry of the Interior, member of the National Board of Crime Prevention
- the professional director of Váltó-Sáv Foundation (active in educational and reintegration programs of former and current prison inmates)
- the director of Pince youth club Pesterzsébet
- the school psychologist of Mándi Iván Vocational school (with dominantly disadvantaged students)
- the head of a restorative justice program of the legal service of the municipality of Budapest
- the head of the of the department of probation officers of the municipality of Budapest
- a psychologist, an expert of crime prevention for delinquent youth, restorative justice

Expert group

- the expert group discussion in Budapest was recruited from the members of the Group for the Protection of Youth, a professional body that includes representatives from a wide range of institutions, e.g. the Budapest Police, schools, child welfare agencies, NGOs, Pedagogical Department of ELTE University etc. Altogether 26 people participated in the almost 4 hour long discussion on June 11th.
- several results of our study (the 1st round of the Delphi and the institutional and expert survey) was presented and discussed at the meeting in March of the Budapest Youth Council, which has 29 members, organisations directly providing wide scale services for young people, or representing young people in Budapest including a number of NGOs, church organisations, the relevant department of Budapest Police and child welfare services.

Youth group

- the 6 participants of the youth group were recruited by the school psychologist from the Mándi Iván Vocational School.

In Veszprém we interviewed the following experts:

- The chief of Veszprém County Police Department of Crime Prevention
- The responsible officer for youth crime prevention of the Veszprém County Police Department of crime prevention
- the director of the Child Support Centre of Veszprém
- the director of the Probation Services in Veszprém county
- 2 probationer officers having young clients from the Probation Services in Veszprém county
- The head of department of correction in the penal institute of Veszprém county
- the coordinator of the crime prevention working group of Veszprém county from the Public Guardianship Authority
- The professional director of *Drogambulancia*, an NGO dealing with those affected by substance abuse problems

- the director of *Várfok* Foundation, a youth information and advisory office, an NGO specialised in youth affairs
- regional chief district nurse from the Central Transdanubian Office of the National Public Health Service (ÁNTSZ) and her colleague responsible for school prevention programs

Expert group

- the expert group discussion in Veszprém was recruited from the members of the *Working Group for Family, Child and Youth Protection* of Veszprém county and was a day-long program on 25th of October.

Findings

Perceptions of problems in urban/rural areas, key features of youth crime in the research regions

Background information:

As it is well-known, socio-economic background and deviant behaviour are related. As there are very significant regional inequalities in Hungary, these main national trends are worth mentioning here for better understanding. The economic activity status of the household and the educational level of the head of household are the most important independent determinants of poverty in present day Hungary. Ethnicity, age, household composition, the type of settlement, territorial segregation all have very significant, and often mutually reinforcing effects on poverty. The unemployment or inactivity of the head of household, together with age, type of settlement and ethnicity (being Roma) play an increased role in the poverty risk of the household when 2007 and 2009 data was compared. (Gábos, Szívós, 2010: 68-69). Before the transition, old people were most affected by poverty in Hungary. Since the transition the poverty risk of children has increased continuously, while that of those older than 65 years decreased. The profile of the poor in 2009: almost one third of them was aged 0-17, whereas only 5% above 65 years. Half of the poor were living in completely inactive or unemployed households with zero work intensity. More than 53% lived in villages (as compared to 1/3 of the total population) (Gábos, Szívós, 2010: 74). At present, the poverty rate in households with children is nearly 50% higher than the overall rate for all Hungarian households, and is nearly double the rate for households without children. The proportion of children living in jobless households is the second highest in the EU (Gábos, Szívós, 2010: 73) and labour market opportunities also have very significant regional differences.

The risk of poverty has increased in the 1990s by geographic location. Although the settlement type (villages) and/or the settlement size (small settlements) have always been risk factors for poverty, the risk of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas has increased dramatically during the 1990s. By now it turns out that long-term poverty is mostly concentrated in rural areas and in the North-Eastern parts of the country (Vukovich, 2008). Poverty in large cities is far below the average, smaller towns are around the national average, while villages are much more affected by poverty than any other settlements. Thus, regions with significant rural areas and a lot of small villages are more extensively affected by poverty. Those living in villages are among the poor with a six times higher risk in 2009 as compared to a double risk in 2007 (Gábos, Szívós, 2010: 71). Differences between settlement types increased even further between 2007-2009: the smaller the settlement one lives in, the higher is the risk of poverty. While only 2% of those living in the capital city of Budapest are poor, this concerns 20% of those living in villages.

Due to lower prices, acquiring a home is easier in villages and less developed regions, even if employment and earning prospects are limited there. There are two main types of small villages. Firstly, ageing villages, where the population decrease is continuous. Secondly, villages in which everyone who was able has moved away, so only the old and the very poor, mostly uneducated, unemployed young and growing population remained, with a lot of children, and high ratio of Roma. This tendency is discussed as ghettoisation (Havas, 1999; Ladányi, Szelényi, 2004; Virág, 2010).

Commuting as an important form of spatial mobility appeared in Hungary after the forced industrialisation process in the 1950s. After the transition economic processes decreased the chances of local employment and increased commuting even more: by 2001, 30% of the employed worked in a different settlement (Lakatos, Váradi, 2009: 793). Commuting affects children as well: although there are no child care facilities and primary schools in all villages, this is, in most cases, solved locally by school bus services to another village with the educational institution. In case of secondary education, however (for kids aged 14+), all the schools are located in cities so youngsters either commute there every day, or during the week live in dormitories.

As mentioned in the sample description, the region chosen for the rural studies is one in the better situated parts of the country, with indices closed to the national average, still the social disadvantages related to settlement type are observable.

Findings:

Several experts both in Veszprém and Budapest called attention to the fact that due to the deepening economic and social crisis, they perceive a worsening situation, a growing number of families have to face most severe existential problems (e.g. due to unemployment and/or significantly increasing, dominantly foreign currency loans but often utility debts as well) and related to that family functioning deteriorates, parents cannot adequately support their children or pay attention to them, so children are more stressed out and are more vulnerable to become either an offender or a victim.

The almost always mentioned general problem is (the lack of) communication within the family: parents and children often do not communicate at all, children cannot express their feelings, discuss their frustrations. Parents have no time for the kids, there is a lot of stress and conflict in the family, people have no hobbies, cannot spend their free time usefully.

“There are a lot of bored kids: if parents work a lot they may not have financial problems, but they have no time for the kids. If parents are unemployed, they are often not a good example for their children”.

“The source of info is the peer group or the media, including the Internet. Children are not taught how to select. TV is an electronic babysitter, widely used. Lots of parents let their child do anything, so they cannot learn how to handle conflicts, stressful events. It is hard to get to parents. Especially parents with problematic children do not attend school parents’ meetings, etc. There are rights but no obligations....”

“There is no space, no place, e.g. for sports, only if you can pay for that.”

In Hungary the school system is quite unable to make up for the social disadvantages of children, on the contrary, reinforces and reproduces them.¹ The school failures of these children are also a source of fundamental frustration. There is a problem with overage children who in fact has no real place to

¹ See the results of the PISA studies, <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>

finish their studies. There is a good number of young people who are illiterate and accomplished only 4-6 grades. They would need special, integrated schools.²

“Disadvantaged situation is inherited by young people and in fact no institution (school, family support centre, health care or children’s homes) can solve this problem, as they do not have the proper means for this. There are only the means of punishment, criminal law”.

During the past years the number of crimes committed by young people has not increased, although its proportion to the whole population somewhat has. Crimes against property has increased, but with a shift toward more violent crimes, from theft to robbery, vandalism, major bodily harm. Recently experts perceive crimes to be more violent. As to theft, its types and quality has changed, e.g. stealing non-ferrous metals is very popular especially in the countryside. The number of those involved with drugs increased significantly. The numbers of those sentenced to public utility work also has increased. There are new types of crimes, e.g. related to the Internet. Blackmailing (more kids against one) is more frequent. Doing graffiti is also more frequent. Robbery in gangs, multiple crimes, repeated crimes are more dominant. School violence was also mentioned as more frequent, together with blackmailing, e.g. someone should give money or other valuables, or if not, (s)he is beaten up or something ignominious is put up on the Internet of the blackmailed person (e.g. a photo prepared by phone and manipulated etc.)

“Lots of theft and robbery start at school, students force one another. Attempt of murder is also quite frequent as a by-product of robbery. Often victims become offenders: someone wants to rob them and they have a knife, they cause a permanent injury and get into prison, depending on the scale of defence. Internet related crimes are clearly expected to rise, although legal regulations so far could not catch up with that....” (Budapest)

Substance abuse is growing, not only drugs which are very accessible, but also kids start drinking alcohol earlier than before. In the countryside drugs are more difficult to get, so often young people use drugs that are legal, e.g. sniffing chemicals.

“Some kind of a substance abuse is very frequent. Either alcohol or drugs.”

Girls are increasingly affected: *“Places are full of young drunk girls”.*

Often youngsters, even 18 year-olds do not get any money from their parents – so they take what they need. Experts blame partly the media, partly the general materialistic ethos *“you deserve it”* for the current criminal situation and expect a worsening trend in the future resulting from the widening gap between the rich and poor.

Some mentioned that the average age of committing the first offence is lowering from dominantly 16-17, and is now shifting toward 14. The background of delinquent youth is dominantly multiple disadvantaged families, unemployed, the poor, in bad housing conditions, with problems at school. Most of them have problems finishing primary school, often attending a number of such schools one after the other and school absenteeism is quite widespread.

“10% (of the offenders) are the exception approximately where there is a well-functioning family which can help reintegration after the first offence.”

Most offences are committed in one’s neighbourhood, often in a group, with lots of spontaneous elements in it. Most victims are from the peer-group, or old people. Young offenders generally know

² Such schools can only be scarcely found in the country, and are usually run by NGOs.

what they are doing is wrong but are often not aware of the severity of their deed and its consequences, the size of the punishment.

“Most robberies are committed in the local community or school – against a known victim”.

Although experts described part of the local situation in very general terms, in Budapest some additional offence type came out as more emphasised, such as prostitution.

“Last year prostitution became to the foreground: mothers frequently go abroad to work there for weeks as prostitutes and come back after several weeks. There is a lot in the youngsters’ surrounding, so it is natural for them, part of their lives and it is an attractive possibility: 100 000 HUF/month for being a cook versus 1,5 million for working like that. Boys also consider it to be normal, they see how it works.” (School psychologist, Budapest)

As mentioned elsewhere, service provision also has a very uneven regional distribution in Hungary. Although psychiatric care and the institutional background to treat substance abuse is quite insufficient nationwide, the situation is worse in the countryside.

“In Veszprém county there is only one child psychiatrist. There is no department in hospitals for child psychiatry. Regarding substance abuse, we also do not have the proper institutional background”.

There has been some criticism regarding the operations of the child protection system. Children living in state care/children’s homes are especially exposed to both becoming a victim and an offender, which was highlighted by several experts in both locations.

“The system of child protection is permanently changing...children are thrown from one place to the other”.

In *Veszprém county* experts perceived that the local situation regarding youth delinquency and deviant behaviour is close to the national average, and definitely better than in the more disadvantaged regions of the country (e.g. Northern Hungary). They consider reasons for it being the relative closeness of “the West”, more money, “better culture”, being “more developed”, having better opportunities for development. Within the county itself there are some smaller areas which may be worse regarding criminal activities including youth delinquency, due to the composition of the local population, e.g. some Roma families which frequently commit crimes in the Pápa small region³, some mentioned. (*“in the prison 80% of the youngsters are Roma from Pápa”*), but of course children from “good families” also commit crimes. The shore of lake Balaton is more problematic during the summer months with the touristic peak (with often non-local offenders), but also provides more opportunities from work and also for specific offence types. The highest case numbers are in Veszprém, but also the tools to handle them is the most widespread there.

Some, especially in Budapest question the trend to integrate children by all means: they think it could be more effective to deal with problematic children separately and with other methods. Some highlighted, that while the teacher/student ratio is very favourable in international comparison, it is very misleading, as other professionals, who should, in teamwork, support the work of teachers are almost completely missing, and with a worsening trend. (speech therapist, social worker, pedagogical assistant, child protection expert etc.)

³It is quite a serious problem in Hungary that social problems have been „exported“ to the countryside: in rural regions where people are not highly skilled and lots of job opportunities seized to exist, mostly old people remain in the villages, thus real estate prices decrease, which attract poorer people, often the Roma, from cities and other regions of the country, who can find no job there and also the local governments and services are quite poor as well and poverty is a serious problem, risk factors are more prevalent for criminal behaviour.

Current state of youth crime prevention in the urban and rural regions

Several experts feel the need for a very basic change in attitudes toward prevention so that it should be more acknowledged, but it will take a long time, although *“crimes are increasingly violent and organised, now 38% of street robberies are carried out by juveniles. The judges give more and more severe sentences, the age of criminal liability is decreased to 12, while they abolish jobs for child protection, there is going to be one child protection coordinator for 5 schools”*.

“There should be more” – this was a common comment from experts regarding prevention programs both in Budapest and the countryside. Although a number of organisations/institutions are involved in the field of crime prevention, several experts miss complex approaches and describe youth crime prevention as very sporadic and underfinanced.

“There are not enough preventive programs – although everything is prevention which aims to provide useful free time activities, or provide opportunities for young people to build trust with professionals.”

The term *sporadic* refers to the fact that often we talk about one-time events, frequently not even on a yearly basis, and series of preventive lectures. More systematic activity is quite rare although from certain aspects those would only be effective.

As to primary crime prevention, the “National Strategy of the Social Crime-Prevention” defines the tasks and obligations of the state institutions and the responsible institutions of the given activity. The state administration has to cooperate with professional chambers, associations and civil groups, NGOs and scientific institutions in order to achieve the goal. On the one hand there are several tenders, either at a national or local level, which ensure the possibility to run prevention programs in schools, cultural centres etc. On the other hand EU funds (e.g. Social Renewal Operative Program ÚMFT - TÁMOP 5.6.2) ensure the possibility to realize often quite complex crime prevention programs or model projects. Several institutions were established for the coordination of the crime-prevention activities, primarily for the professional control of the communal crime-prevention activities. Although the National Strategy of Social Crime-prevention was widely accepted by the interviewed experts, the thus far well operating National Crime-Prevention Board coordinating the community-based crime-prevention activities was reorganised by the new government and the activity of the new one is not well-known. Some experts noted that the strategy is very good, problems are with the implementation.

The problem with these, often very good project initiatives are multifold: usually managing such a project puts a huge, almost unbearable, mostly administrative burden on the main applicant organisation who lack the necessary management and financial resources for that and they often feel that even a very rewarding project is in fact a threat to their normal operations, even though it is almost the only way to run programs in cooperation with other institutions and carry out otherwise very needed but not financed activities.

“We could not survive another such project...”

“There should be some extra resources to write the project proposal and then to manage the project”.

These occasional, but successful programs with multi-sectorial cooperation, financed from EU funds should then become model programs and should be spread out. However, local or central normative financing rarely follows, and usually only those, if any, project elements can survive, which can be

somewhat inserted in the daily routine of the given organisation without external funds. Thus very valuable, needed and well-received initiatives die out. Just one example: there was a project providing alternative daytime services for delinquent youth (participants suggested by probation officers, by the schools) to help them get back to school. The whole project was based on restorative practices, informal and formal methods, with a focus on education, children at risk, families of offenders, including conflict management techniques, 4 hours of teaching daily and 2 hours of group sessions, with average 15 group members. Although the project was very successful in its outcomes and there were several promises to sustain the project and build in it the present system of provisions, finally, after years of trying, it did not happen. Thus the project leader looked for institutions where at least several elements of the restorative approach can be introduced and now works in the SOS children's homes, the Pedagogical Services of Budapest, in some youth centers and tries to promote the model in teachers' training and in several schools who are interested in it.

Another characteristic feature of prevention activities in Hungary is that various agents offer such programs (the police, NGOs, the public health services, probationary services etc.) and often their main arena are schools, but usually schools themselves can apply for such programs on a voluntary basis (and in fact there would not be sufficient resources to reach the whole target group in case all educational institutions applied). It means that if the director of the school is not interested in prevention, there is no prevention. Both in Budapest and in Veszprém county the organisations with preventive programs try sometimes to use informal contacts to get to certain schools, e.g. with the person responsible for youth protection at the school. In the countryside prevention programs get to small villages to a limited extent.

Nowadays and increasingly so, often several organisations cooperate, but usually for occasional events. *"These should be extended."* According to several experts, there should be centrally appointed coordinators to enhance such co-operations, thus far these are quite ad hoc. At the county level the law regulates that there should be a coordinator for child and youth protection. To operate a working group, such as the one which is operated in Veszprém county, is not a compulsory task, here the county crime prevention strategy established working groups for the various fields, including the *Working Group for Family, Child and Youth Protection* of the Crime-and Accident Prevention Committee coordinated by the Public Guardianship Authority. This working group has 35 member organisations, but less than 10 are active in fact. They work based on the National Strategy for Crime Prevention, with similar priorities. They have regular meetings, often thematic ones, with field visits. This activity generates further cooperation, they design programs together and according to the interview data work quite efficiently and enhance inter-organisational cooperation locally, but the number of NGOs involved is very low.

Some, especially in Budapest called attention to the malfunctioning of inter-organisational co-operations, often due to communication problems or lack of openness, which is quite harmful. Often schools do not ask for help. Some challenged the idea of having problematic or more elite schools referring to the fact that even in elite schools there are lots of problems (maybe different ones), e.g. they receive requests from religious schools to come and have presentations for parents.

The formerly set up drug coordination forums (KEF), which initially, from lots of funding, worked very efficiently and promoted inter-sectorial cooperation now mainly exist only on paper. It is quite exemplary: good initiatives tend to fade away as time (and money) passes by. *"Things exist in theory, but in practice the system does not operate"*.

Some highlighted, that while the teacher/student ratio is very favourable in international comparison, it is very misleading, as other professionals, who should, in teamwork, support the work of teachers are almost completely missing, and with a worsening trend. (speech therapist, social worker, pedagogical assistant, child protection expert etc.)

NGOs play a lot more significant and also diverse role in Budapest, where there are more “problems” but also more options for solving them, and more resources.

The Public Health Authority (ÁNTSZ) seems to play a bigger part in crime prevention in Veszprém county than in Budapest, at least based on the views of the interviewed experts.

In villages there are sporadic prevention activities, usually in the local school, mainly by the police or the district nurse. 14+ children go to school to cities, where they can participate in prevention programs.

Those juveniles who need psychological or mental help may receive support, especially within the child and youth welfare system. The family support centers, the child and youth welfare assistants of the schools, the school-psychologist, the professional experts of the different child and youth welfare institutions in theory can give a special help to the youth in need. However, for example in Budapest, there is one school psychologist for 2000 very disadvantaged, problematic students of a vocational school which is a so called “inclusive school”, meaning that everybody must be accepted who applies and has not been accepted elsewhere, in another school. *“There is an awful burden on teachers, and there are enormous differences as compared to e.g. the 2nd district of Budapest.”* With 2000 students she can only listen to those who turn to her, her task is only to channel students to the proper provision, to psychiatrist (but they do not go). But even they do not provide psychotherapy, maximum medication, which she does not like either. So although in theory there is a support system for children at risk, in reality, due to lack of sufficient resources, its accessibility is very limited.

The Public Health Authorities run county-wide programs in Veszprém county as public health has an intersection with crime prevention. Their kindergarten programs are propagated through the National Pedagogical Institute. They run a wide variety of programs, at the library to reach children who are at home alone while parents are working, in state children’s homes. For secondary school students they have a program called “You are responsible for yourself”. Another program for the same target group, “Being cool or self destructive” can only be provided only occasionally, as this program needs some extra financing so they cannot run it continuously, only in case there are some extra financial resources for that. District nurses regularly visit educational institutions. Drug coordinators (drogügyi koordinátor) may also play a part in school health development but they are not present in most of the schools.

There are a number of programs provided by the police. They offer various programs for different age groups to the schools for which the schools must apply (on general youth crime prevention, law abiding behaviour. In case of acute crisis, at the request of the schools, they provide 2-3 courses. The police also apply for big project tenders either as a main or as a consortium partner. Very rarely there are central programs, e.g. the DADA or “Ellenőr” programs for which the police have its own instructor network, although very overburdened. There are county-level programs (which may later be spread nationally, like the Kindergarten Cop program) – in Veszprém county now a new program against partner violence (called “Szenvedélyes (v)iszonyok”). There are trainings for policemen to help them recognise that a child is at risk. There is secondary and tertiary preventive activity carried out by the police as well: the former is rather at request, e.g. in children’s homes, or in correctional facilities.

The chief prevention officer of the Budapest police believes in alternative ways of prevention such as scenic events with music for drug prevention. There is a new initiative in Budapest, the "Group Protecting Young People" whose expert members from several fields participated at a group discussion with us.

However new ideas may not work: *"Often foreign crime prevention methods are imported which do not work, e.g. the school policeman program – there are 13 prevention officers for the whole Budapest police: there are schools where they have never seen their policeman."* Or professionals have to face unexpected problems: *"There are basic problems: children even in Budapest often do not have a public transport ticket, they just cannot afford to come to our central programs, we have to go there."*

As to tertiary crime prevention, to prevent the perpetrator from committing crime again, there were several changes in the institutional background of the criminal justice and the legal background (e.g.: enlarging the possibilities of diversion) and there have been several programs with the financial support of the National Crime Prevention Board in the interest of the reintegration of juvenile perpetrators. A couple of new rules have been made, such as the modernization of the probation officer's system. *Probation officers* in Veszprém county have a main office in the county town of Veszprém, but once a week they have office hours in all the other cities in the county, in their regional offices in Pápa, Ajka, Várpalota, Tapolca. *Probation officers* in Veszprém county usually go the parents' meetings for 7-8. graders (13-14 year olds) or visit teachers' boards. They participate in discussions following the film screening of "Do not do it"⁴. With a former drug addict client they also hold presentations about drug use. If they have a presentation, they usually talk about how to become a fellow offender, a victim, what kinds of rights people have, what kinds of crimes result in what kind of punishment. For 1-2 groups a semester they hold a 3- hour aggression management or social skills development training. They also organise occasional programs, previously for example targeting kids committing offences in public spaces in Veszprém. At present they apply for funding for community/school mediation to train teachers and students to mediate problems in their community. The 2 participating school in Pápa and Ajka have 30% of their clients (targeting, exposure).

However, all their activity in the field of prevention is completely not financed, they do it only from enthusiasm. They cannot measure the effectiveness of their preventive activity. They usually cooperate with the district nurse, the school personnel responsible for youth protection, the GP, correctional facility, the guardian in children's homes. It is a major problem for them that they cannot offer work for young clients, in Employment Centers there are no affordable courses to acquire a good registered skilled training (OKJ). They also cannot offer services to help their clients to quit drugs or other substances. As these young people have no income, from the countryside they have no money to travel to Veszprém for the compulsory monthly meeting with the probation officer. Several young offenders are sentenced to public utility work - on the other hand, if the probation officer cannot get such a job opportunity for his client using his own social capital as the Employment Centre cannot help, then the punishment "expires". The Employment Centre has no legal obligation to provide such opportunities.

Pre-trial detention in Hungary can last from 2 days to 2 years, on average more than 6 months, over a year rare cases. In a correctional facility youngsters spend 1-3 years, the time spent in pre-trial detention contributes to this. After a year the correctional facility can propose to let young people

⁴ Ne tedd! a film for preventive purposes

leave the institution (just like free on probation). They consider attitude during time spent in facility and conditions awaiting them after leaving the institution. In a correctional facility, the child protection agenda is more dominant, a lot so than in a prison. In the former, the primary aim is to secure schooling which youngsters and they usually accomplish as many years in school as they spend in the correction facility. *“This is a measurable outcome. However, even these are not enough for success in the labour market.”* The other aim of correctional facilities is social skills competence. *“In our facility there are maximum 12-member groups with 2 welfare officers, their whole activity is tertiary prevention: reintegration and preventing reoccurrence of crime. A number of organisations (health care, NGOs etc) cooperate closely and regularly. Half of our kids come from some kind of a child protection institution.”* (Budapest, Correction facility)

The expert working in the *correction facility* in Veszprém county mentioned a serious problem in relation to the fact that from 14 years of age young people may get in pre-trial detention. Although there are some special correctional institutes for young people (Tököl, Szirmabesnyő, Pécs, Kecskemét), in Veszprém county (and also elsewhere) young suspected offenders get into the “normal” prison. Even if they can only be in the same prison cell with other young people (up to 21), as there are usually only 5-10, maximum 15 such young people in that prison, they can only be put into the same corridor with adult offenders where communication among them is possible, which is by far not an ideal situation. The other problem is that those in pre-trial detention are kept according to the rules of the most severe security level.⁵ The system does not operate properly, there are hardly any programs organised for this small group of young convicts. For young first time offenders alternative punishment forms would be significantly more effective.

For some reason the current legal framework forbids keeping contact with the family - esp. in case of young people but also with other convicts, family should cooperate with the welfare officer in the prison. Interviewed experts feel there is no institutional background for reintegration.

“There should be half-way houses where a new community and experts help to start a new life – it is not the child’s fault...”

In the prison welfare officers have small group discussions: prevention, literary therapy; probation officers visit the young offenders regularly.

“In the framework of a recent program police and other experts came 10 times for preventive group discussions. A new EU-funded program support labour training, personality development, and 3 months of training – but most of these programs depend on external financing, which is sporadic and incalculable. Also, often state institutions such as those in the penitentiary system are excluded from such programs. Like outside, inside correctional facilities also, teamwork of a number of professionals would be needed to promote reintegration.”

Formerly, 6-7 years ago, the prisons could participate in prevention programs by inviting students to visit the prisons. Now it is impossible due to new legal regulations which forbid those under 18 to enter. Some experts think that now it is too late for youngsters, the preventive effect cannot be utilised.

Experts widely agree, that

⁵ During the past 15 years the interviewee remembers 2 cases where the state has been sued for keeping youngsters in the same cell with adults and in a very closed institution. The ombudsman’s office also carried out an investigation, after which the ombudsman stated that the present state of pre-trial detention of under-age people in several cases violates a number of international legal agreements and the Hungarian law as well. For details see „A fiatakorúak fogva tartási körülményeinek ombudsmani vizsgálata by dr. Fogarassy Edit, http://www.obh.hu/allam/aktualis/pdf/fiatakoruak_fogva_tartasi_korulmenyeirol.pdf.

- Prevention should start with preparing children to be (good enough) parents and/or helping their parents to fulfil their parental roles. Several experts and both expert group discussions raised the point that while we need all kinds of certificates to perform certain tasks (e.g. repair a bike) no one deals with who and how are raising children – this should be a very important challenge to handle.
- The major arena for (esp. primary) crime prevention for the target group is the school system (as in Hungary any other locations, e.g. youth centres are practically missing – the situation is the least bad in Budapest), but its existence and scope is largely dependent on the school director (“whether he lets us work or not”).
- the necessary inter-sectorial, complex approach only works on an ad-hoc basis with huge individual/regional differences, and though the inclination to cooperate is growing and various organisations are starting to search contact with one another, there is space for improvement in this regard. Some experts mentioned that in case someone has an efficient programs, other envy it and do not act supportively. (*“Even NGOs working in the same field do not acknowledge each other”*)
- that correctional facilities at present only socialize young people for a criminal career,
- that a very significant proportion of experts working in various organisations do a good part of their preventive work in their free time, from their own enthusiasm⁶,
- financing is scarce and periodic and it has a number a limitations. Very good model programs seize to exist as sustainability should be achieved via state financing which hardly ever happens. Mainly due to political changes, everything must be started all over again all the time.
- restorative practices including mediation, which is a relatively new method in Hungary, are considered very positively.

Perceptions of effects and efficiency of prevention activities in the areas

“Small programs from small money” – as an expert characterised a majority of existing crime prevention programs. Most actors active in the field perform state responsibilities. Crime prevention is part of their job, they can do it in during their working hours.

In most cases efficiency of programs is not measured: on the one hand experts consider it very hard, almost impossible to determine the impact of such programs (especially the occasional informative lectures), on the other, they have no resources for that or follow-up is impossible for other reasons as well.

“With regards to drug prevention, efficiency is not measured, although it is barely possible: it would require follow-up for years for which we have no funds at all.”

“The informative presentations of school policemen or the public health authority have a lot more positive outcome than we would think.”

Overall, experts perceive that there is no opportunity to measure effectiveness, to follow people *“they just disappear from the system”*. Most often the only way to gain some information on effectiveness is the feedback from teachers, participating young people (usually positive). In case of the DADA program of the police, program effectiveness was measured via the knowledge of

⁶ which, taking into consideration to low wages in the public sector, is even more depressing.

information provided through the program. However some experts mentioned that maybe only the program implementation is bad and if so, effectiveness studies may be misleading, as the program as such might have been good.

The most frequent activity seems to be drug prevention, e.g. *“once a year, several 10th grader groups have to go into a big room, there is an invited speaker: it interesting, but with what effect, or at least they do not know how to measure it.”* The school psychologist thinks experienced panic attacks or feeling bad may warn them and start considering quitting.

Institutions register the number of people involved in their programs and from this one may have a view about at least how big a circle of the target group has been reached. Of course the overlap between various programs/providers cannot be seen this way. But based on these one can tell that there is still a significant proportion of the target group is not, or only reached by very sporadic prevention activity. E.g. during the school year 2010/2011 police prevention programs in Veszprém county reached 19 settlements, 24 schools, 73 classes and app. 1500 students. In Budapest, from 360 schools 48 asked for the DADA program - and even so there is hardly any schools where the program can go on till its end. There is significant fluctuation among instructors. The other police program “Ellenőr” (Controller) gets to 3 schools in Budapest. In 2008 the “School policeman” program was launched. *“On paper almost all schools have a policeman but it is formal in almost all primary schools: just a telephone number – e.g. in district XI. the phone rings on the table of the secretary of the chief captain. There are not so many policemen in the districts as many schools”.* The “Kindergarten Cop” program originated in Fejér county and is a national, cost effective program. All kindergartens get a package with a film and curriculum plus there is a half-a day preparatory training for kindergarten teachers. It is a 10-hour program. Although the police is part of the signalling system of child protection services, sometimes the police is not invited for years to a case discussion conference.

A police officer respondent called the present preventive activities *“trying to put out fire”*, as there is a serious lack of resources, including human resources, and although there are officers responsible for prevention, almost all of them have a number of other tasks as well.

The fact that a number of prevention programs are realised *“from the enthusiasm”* of involved professionals, a number of programs arise. E.g. regarding the wide spread police program “DADA”, in practice schools have to adapt to the schedule of the otherwise quite overburdened policemen. The prescribed frequency of the program is unknown to most teachers.

“It is a problem that everything works on an interpersonal basis, not systematically.”

The chief probation officer misses active and systematic cooperation with the NGO sector – it works a lot better in Budapest as there are lot more such NGOs in action there.

Future challenges and opportunities

A lot more should be invested into primary and secondary prevention, either at school or in the child protection system. E.g. in all schools there should be school social work, there should be a lot more prevention programs in the system for child protection. Results can only be achieved in the long term. Programs would be more effective if they could achieve cooperation with parents, the involvement of the family. If the parents do not cooperate there is no real chance for the kids to

avoid a criminal career. They even think prison is somewhere good, for many, it has no preventive effect...*"My brother quit drugs there, he can do exercise..."*

Crime prevention should be a more dominant activity of the police: the approach which most officers working at the crime prevention departments of national and local police should spread to other police departments as well: it would mean quite a basic change of perspective.

The expert on teachers' education called attention to the fact that teachers often do prevention without (s)he or the students being aware of it. The Eötvös Lóránd University used to have an MA on school child protection, but it was abolished due to the new reform of teachers' training. The disappearance of these special modules is a problem, as realistically there will not be social workers in all schools due to lack of financing, so it would be good if at least some teachers would have expertise in this area. Teachers seem quite interested, but they cannot finance these kinds of trainings for themselves and the school management send them to other trainings. "Dobogó" program has some good elements for crime prevention— alternative pedagogical programs have some elements which should be transferred into mainstream programs.

The other very important point raised was that relevant, good experts and present and past good practices are not collected anywhere systematically, so even if someone (some school) is interested, it is not easy to find credible and good experts/programs. Formerly www.bunmegelozes.hu was such a webpage, but it is not updated any more. Although in English there is the webpage of the European Crime Prevention Network, but language may be a problem, and also, most Hungarian projects there are from the police (as the Ministry of the Interior is in charge).

The good practices of how the schools can keep contact with parents should be included.

Almost all experts emphasised the need for:

- early development programs for disadvantaged children, e.g. the Sure Start ("Biztos Kezdet") program
- prevention at school but not delivered by the teachers themselves: not only the presence of teachers, but other professionals at schools, most primarily social workers, school psychologists and their regular and significant contribution in the field of prevention is completely missing and would be badly needed. Also, prevention and mental health should be included in the school curriculum, but should not be a task of the teachers teaching other subjects. *"The best would be if it was part of the school curriculum...it should not be only drug prevention, but personality development, self-knowledge, conflict and stress management, and families should also be included, although it is a very hard task."*
- the extensive and substantial cooperation of various organisations/institutions from related sectors: NGOs, health care, police, probationary services, child protection services, schools etc.
- Regarding youth delinquency consistency, restorative techniques are ok, but short-term imprisonment doubtedly results in positive outcomes.

Prevention should start at the earliest possible age group, in socially disadvantaged groups e.g. "Sure Start" houses. At schools school and community social work should be part of the institutional framework, personality development, stress and conflict management and prevention should be part of the curricula. *"These tasks cannot be expected from the teachers, until it does not change, there will not be significant change."*

There should be more focused programs for 12-18 year old.

“Systematic solutions are needed. It is not enough if at school one lesson is given for prevention. School psychologists should be employed together with other experts. Both young people and their offenses are increasingly violent. Also more stress should be given to help victims.”

Recommended approaches/strategies for prevention and control of youth crime

Most experts, regardless of their professional background emphasised the need for broad approaches: e.g. personality development to be introduced into the compulsory school curriculum from the first years of education, development of conflict management and communication skills, preparing them to parental roles (to make up for the hiatus in existing family relationships), the transformation of the school system to be less frustrating for children, the deeper involvement of parents. The school system should by all means play a key role, even in providing quality free time activities, as there are no other agents doing this (apart from NGOs, but their coverage is very uneven regionally and can reach only a fraction of the target group).

Some experts would see the future in community building, through which increased community control could influence people.

“There should be several programs at a community level, activities for young people for doing sports, culture: more attention should be paid for them...”

“At schools after school programs should be organised for this age group: this activity has no prestige, the state should secure and finance this”.

Primary care services should have enough resources to concentrate even more to early intervention, as children get in the child protection system in almost “beyond recovery” condition. In child protection institutions professionals should acquire further training to gain presently lacking skills to help these very problematic children.

In correctional facilities in the future not prisons, but complex institutional networks would be needed, with one organisation who supervise the process from the beginning to real reintegration.

Group differences with regard to perspectives on youth crime prevention and recommended approaches

The interviewed youth group in the vocational school for disadvantaged children surprisingly consider repression and threatening to be the useful tools to prevent juvenile crime, but it may be because that is the only approach they have experienced. They found the couple of prevention programs they took part in mostly interesting, but quite ineffective in preventing real offenses.

Despite the heterogeneous pool of experts interviewed, we could not identify significant differences in their opinion: maybe the fact that they all worked and were quite passionately involved in the field of youth crime prevention is a unifying factor. Most differences resulted from either the specificities of their geographical scope (Budapest being a metropolis and the other is a county with smaller

settlements), or the organisations they worked for and thus the segment of the juvenile population they work with.

Summary and conclusions

Complex, systematic programs should be introduced from an early age, involving most children, possibly starting from/involving parenting. The currently even increasingly important repressive approach is not considered very effective, although consistency and things having a consequence is very thought to be important. Mediation, restorative approaches should be further stressed.

The educational system seems to be the best framework for prevention, but also community development should be important, as useful free-time activities and locations for such are widely missing. Central policy making efforts could be useful to put elements of crime prevention (in the broadest sense) to a part of the school curricula, available for all children, regardless of the commitment of the directors of their schools. The professional basis of prevention should also be strengthened: both regarding the numbers of such available professionals and their training. Crime prevention should be an integral part of the training of a number of professionals, e.g. teachers, social workers.

The involvement of the family and ways to improve the functioning of this social institution is seen as key in prevention.

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