Youth deviance and youth violence:

A European multi-agency perspective on best practices in prevention and control

(YouPrev)

Local interview studies: Experts' perspectives on juvenile delinquency and its prevention in selected regions
– Results from the German interview study –

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1   Introduction

In order to provide a multi-perspective picture of perceived problems in the field of juvenile delinquency and of attempts to prevent young people's crime and violence, expert interviews with relevant local actors were conducted in the two regions where the YouPrev school survey had been carried out. As a complement to the school survey, the aim of the local interview studies was to integrate expert views from different professions dealing with juveniles and juvenile delinquency into the local studies, in order to enable a profound analysis of the local conditions of juvenile delinquency and its prevention and control.

2   Methodology

Interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews based on an interview guideline (cf. Flick, 2009; Lindolf & Taylor, 2002). Topics of the guideline included experts' perceptions of characteristics of youth crime in the areas, preventive activities and approaches in the areas, perceived effects and efficiency of preventive approaches, and experts' recommendations on prospective strategies for prevention and control of youth crime. The interview studies addressed a broad, multi-professional sample; the sample was selected according to interviewees' assumed expertise and with regard to professional and institutional heterogeneity in order to provide a multiplicity of perspectives. Interview material was coded using the software MAXQDA (cf. Kuckartz, 2010) to conduct a qualitative content analysis (cf. Flick, 2009; Gläser & Laudel, 2009).

3   Sample description

20 experts were interviewed – ten in the urban and ten in the rural region selected for the local studies. The sample included three interviewees from the field of police (police officers particularly dealing with topics of juvenile delinquency and/or crime prevention), two judges from juvenile courts (one in each region), one school psychologist, and 14 interviewees from the field of social work. Social workers formed the largest part of the sample, but this group was heterogeneous with regard to institutional background and main fields of work, such as

- legal protection / court assistance service for juveniles,
- youth welfare / youth protection service,
- social work with delinquent juveniles,
- social work with juveniles in general,
- violence prevention,
- drug prevention,
- streetwork / outreach social work,
- probation service.

13 interview partners were male, seven were female. The mean age was 46 years (youngest IP[1]: 27 years; oldest: 63 years), and interviewees had on average 16 years of professional experience with the topic of juvenile delinquency or in working with juveniles. 13 experts were interviewed individu-

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[1] The abbreviation "IP" refers to the term "interview partner" in the paper.

ally, two interviews were conducted with two interview partners each (IP 10 & 11; IP 12 & 13), and one with three interviewees (IP 18, 19 & 20). The majority of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, only 4 were telephone interviews (IP 3, 5, 7 & 15). Table 1 gives an overview of the expert sample.

Table 1: Basic interview and interviewee data

Interviewee	Region	Profession	Gender	Month of interview
1	urban	Police	male	April 2012
2	urban	Social work	male	May 2012
3	urban	Social work	male	May 2012
4	urban	Police	female	May 2012
5	rural	Police	female	June 2012
6	urban	Social work	female	June 2012
7	rural	Social work	male	June 2012
8	urban	Social work	male	June 2012
9	urban	School psychology	male	June 2012
10	urban	Social work	male	July 2012
11	urban	Social work	male	July 2012
12	rural	Social work	male	July 2012
13	rural	Social work	male	July 2012
14	rural	Justice/court	female	August 2012
15	rural	Social work	male	August 2012
16	urban	Justice/court	male	August 2012
17	rural	Social work	male	August 2012
18	rural	Social work	female	September 2012
19	rural	Social work	female	September 2012
20	rural	Social work	female	September 2012

4   Findings

4.1   Perceptions of problems regarding juvenile delinquency in the research regions

The overall situation concerning juvenile delinquency in both the urban and the rural area is perceived as relatively calm compared to a number of other mostly metropolitan areas; experts report neither a high quantity nor a dramatic quality of offences committed by juveniles. Youth crime is not seen as one of the major problems in the research areas. Various interviewees consider a behaviour of youngsters "testing their limits" as normal for this stage of life.

As the most common offence types, respondents primarily name property offences – like shoplifting and theft, and also robbery[2] – and mainly offences of low severity. *"Basically, it's about very ordinary thefts" (IP_04).* As further typical offences or deviant behaviour, experts mention e. g. anti-social behaviour, peace disturbances by noise, vandalism, bullying, or traffic offences.

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[2] Robbery would also be added to violent offences, not only to property offences.

Drug and alcohol consumption is addressed as a topic by most of the experts. Substance abuse is mentioned as a background factor of problematic and delinquent behaviour, and drug and alcohol-related offences – by comparatively small groups of youngsters – are seen as a problem to which relevant institutions should pay special attention.

Youth violence occurs at times, sometimes also severe violence. Violence is mentioned as the field with the highest public attention, and experts present youth violence as an important rationale for planning, organizing and conducting preventive activities. Some experts discuss a recent "catching up" (IP_12) of girls in terms of violent offences, but the vast majority of juvenile offences are and will be committed by males. Experts state that youth violence very often occurs spontaneously and is directed at random victims, rather than being planned by the offenders.

Victims – especially in case of violent offences – usually are from the same age group as the offenders, frequently they even belong to the offender's everyday peer group. In case of property offences and robbery, occasionally also persons considered as weak (younger juveniles, senior citizens) are picked as victims.

According to interviewees, most juveniles don't appear repeatedly as offenders. One respondent pointed out that criminal prosecution and court trials make impressive impact on most juveniles who are registered with criminal offences for the first time. There are a very small number of offenders who are registered as persistent offenders by the police; the situation regarding persistent offenders is not seen as a major problem in both research areas. However, those repeat offenders are accountable for a large proportion of registered crimes.

Offences very often are committed in groups. *"I think group dynamics play a very important role. That supports committing violence and crime" (IP_15).* "Groups" yet does not mean "gang activity" which does hardly exist in the areas. Usually the composition of groups changes quite often, and group offences occur rather spontaneously and dependent on opportunity structures.

Youth crime accumulates at places where young people meet, where they have opportunities for leisure activities that are interesting for them. Especially places where alcohol consumption and group dynamics come together are places where youth crime is common.

Experts describe a very high mobility of juveniles. Thus, hot spots of delinquency have become more fluctuating and are not necessarily linked to the places of residence of the offenders. This is amplified by youngsters' permanent accessibility via communication technology. One respondent suspected that juveniles could more easily make appointments to commit offences together.

Several experts also report problems related to information/communication technologies, especially cyberbullying as an increasing phenomenon. Apart from that, careless revealing of personal data and media content which may be harmful for juveniles are reported as significant media-related problems.

Asked for local differences with regard to youth crime, experts report some suburban/peripheral city areas where more problematic conditions can be found. But some experts are hesitant to label these as real "problem areas".

Experts state that offenders come from different social backgrounds. It is seen as a trend in the recent past that juveniles attending better schools in Germany's stratified educational system appear as offenders with tendency to rise – delinquency is not a domain reserved for youngsters from lower schools.

Sometimes offences occur out of boredom. As one respondent puts it: *"It's more out of boredom, out of a lack of daily structure, that's where the problems we see accrue from"* (IP_07).

Social conditions are clearly seen as contextual factors of delinquent behaviour of juveniles. These particularly include a lack of perspectives with regard to education and jobs, and marginalization / societal exclusion of juveniles. Some experts see a general disorientation of juveniles caused by a lack of attachment figures and role models.

Additional risk factors described by experts include problems concerning money (referring to the individual financial situation of adolescents and, in particular, their family/household), school-related problems, juveniles lacking knowledge about legal aspects and lacking awareness about wrongdoing, and a lack of social skills and conflict management skills of juveniles. Especially these last aspects – some juveniles' lack of awareness about wrongdoing and their lack of social and conflict management skills – are perceived as crucial aspects that plenty of preventive measures address.

Youth crime is not seen as a problem of specific ethnic groups; respondents who referred to this topic generally stated that the crime rate among populations with migration background is not disproportionately high. Only one interviewee states that cultural characteristics play an important role, namely a discriminatory image of women in conjunction with a higher propensity to violence (what refers to the concept of violence-legitimizing norms of masculinity) and reluctance among migrants against state-run services.

Several experts describe the public perception of youth crime as problematic, which in their eyes is to some extent caused by a selective perception and dramatization of youth crime in media reports:

> *"Press, radio and television publicise single, severe offences. Fear of being hit by youth crime, by violence, by theft, by vandalism skyrockets. And in reality delinquency declines. That diverges particularly for me." (IP_08)*

4.2 Current state of prevention in the research regions

Experts see good, multifaceted structures of prevention both in the urban and the rural area, with comparatively sufficient financial resources. They perceive good cooperation between institutions; prevention is carried by all relevant stakeholders and institutions.

Although respondents describe deviant behaviour of juveniles as "normal" and episodic, preventive efforts are reasonable and necessary in their eyes to prevent juveniles from drifting into criminal careers.

Respondents stress educational and awareness-raising measures as important approaches conducted in both areas, giving information about consequences of offences – legal consequences, consequences for victims and also dangers of alcohol and drug consumption. Vandalism is another field mentioned as an object of prevention which is addressed in educational measures.

Drug prevention is one of the main focuses in both areas. Lots of agencies offer drug prevention and assistance for drug addicts, give information about alcohol and drugs at schools, and there are projects and awareness campaigns on a regular basis. Addiction is also addressed with regard to smoking and excessive use of media/internet.

Violence prevention is also characterized as multifaceted in both regions and covers physical as well as psychological violence. (Cyber-)Bullying thereby is also treated as a form of violence and covered by some prevention efforts. Violence prevention measures address different target groups and in-

clude primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention; there is early prevention work with children, targeting problematic groups (e. g. social work with fans of a sports club where violent acts occurred frequently), and working with juveniles who have already been delinquent. Some projects also deal with prevention of right-wing extremism.

As forms of prevention practiced intensively in the research areas, experts mention behavioural trainings, social training courses and group trainings. They are supposed to strengthen social skills and support better social behaviour among youngsters, and to improve their abilities to deal with conflicts and aggressions. Sports programmes were also mentioned by some respondents to have violence prevention as a (side-)effect, since they represent recreational and active pastimes as well as opportunities to learn and train cooperative behaviour.

Another focus of prevention is put on sexual violence, especially sexual violence by adults against children. Prevention here aims at strengthening self-confidence of potential victims and to enable them to stand their ground and to defend themselves against assaults.

Media education is mentioned as another field of action by some interviewees. It aims at reducing cyberbullying and to prevent young people from carelessly revealing personal data.

Victim-offender mediation helps to resolve negative consequences for victims and is also seen as an instrument of tertiary prevention by some experts with generally quite encouraging outcomes.

Leisure activities are mentioned as another key aspect. In this regard, especially youth centres that are open for all juveniles are mentioned. As a social worker from a youth centre puts it:

> *"What plays a very decisive role for us is creating opportunities for meaningful leisure activities for juveniles. To give them tasks they appreciate and they can grow with, challenges they can master for themselves and thereby develop." (IP_15)*

Besides these structures open to all juveniles, forms of outreach social work are mentioned that address especially juveniles in problematic situations, often juveniles and young adults who can't be reached at school.

Financial resources

The financial situation with regard to prevention is described as relatively well compared to some other areas in Germany. Still interviewees report difficulties regarding financial resources. They describe no dramatic financial straits, but limited financial means which are sufficient to provide comparatively manifold activities in the research areas, but don't leave much scope for additional measures and projects, especially those with innovative approaches.

Statements on financial resources differ especially between respondents who work in civil service and those from independent, non-governmental organizations. Respondents from civil service organizations refer to limited human resources as their most important problem, while for private organizations identifying funding sources for projects are at the centre of attention.

Interagency cooperation

Interagency cooperation in the research areas is described as good by all respondents, by almost all of them even as very good and very close. Cooperation takes place not only in terms of general networking and exchange, but also as direct cooperation in concrete projects.

As important stakeholders of prevention, besides different shapes of social work (open child and youth work, outreach social work, juvenile court assistance, educational support, drug counselling, probation service, and other counselling services), especially schools, youth welfare service and police play the most important roles.

4.3   Perceptions of effects and efficiency of prevention activities in the research areas

Basically, respondents perceive most of the measures being carried out in the areas as rather effective, at least to some extent.

Lots of respondents discuss in detail the difficulties of measuring/evaluating effects of preventive measures. Evaluation is seen as important by most experts, but also as quite challenging. Methodological difficulties derive from the complexity of situations in which measures are implemented. Experts argue that there are lots of influencing factors and causal effects are quite imponderable. Additional concerns against evaluation are brought up when experts explain that policy makers might rather try to use evaluation to justify financial cutbacks.

> ”Our fear at the moment is that politics use [evaluation] to abandon programmes” (IP_10)

Still most respondents express a wish for good evaluation and scientific monitoring of prevention to be able to assess and improve the quality of preventive measures.

As mentioned, respondents are quite optimistic about the effectiveness of preventive efforts carried out in the research areas, which is attributed to factors that respondents see as criteria of good preventive strategies in general (see also chapter 4.5): especially good networking and cooperation between institutions, the multifaceted structure of preventive programmes in both areas and building trustful relationships with juveniles.

> “I think there're really no hard and fast rules. But of course, the more options there are available for juveniles, to find a point of contact, the better it is. That's why I always think multifaceted prevention is better. And that's why I think networking is so important.” (IP_03)

Respondents also mention some particular programmes which have been carried out in their field of activity and were accompanied by at least some (rather less elaborated) kind of evaluation suggesting that the programmes had been effective. Programmes mentioned in this regard included social training courses, social group activities, alcohol prevention, measures against theft and bullying in a school class, and victim-offender mediation. Addressing only offenders or only victims is seen as less effective than involving both victims and offenders and their social environment, such as their school class.

Experts hardly mentioned any preventive efforts that do not work or are regarded as dispensable. This corresponds to the key message expressed by many interviewees that the way preventive measures are carried out and the commitment of the persons involved are most important, more important than the sheer content of measures. Experts describe some adverse circumstances that handicap preventive efforts. These are e. g. circumstances that make it difficult to get access to juveniles and establish a connection, a trustful relationship with them. This problem refers to some young people being homeless or to very mobile youngsters who live in rural areas but are very often in urban places and commit offences there. One expert also states that some people with a migrant background have a tendency to mistrust state-run services and therefore some migrant juveniles are difficult to address with preventive efforts. Another problem is seen in the long period of time from the beginning of criminal investigations until court hearing begins, due to the excessive workload of

courts and public prosecutors. Under these circumstances, as experts argue, juveniles don't see a connection between their offence and the sanctions anymore or even have committed other offences in the meantime. They could even be motivated to continue as there have been no consequences.

4.4   Future challenges and opportunities for prevention in the eyes of interviewees

Future developments of youth crime anticipated by interviewees were quite similar to the views experts expressed in the Delphi survey conducted earlier in the course of the YouPrev project. An overall decrease of youth crime is expected and also reported as a trend for the recent past.

New technologies will create new opportunity structures. Offences related to information and communication technologies will become more important, especially cyberbullying, computer fraud and copyright offences. Some experts are worried because inappropriate and potentially harmful content will go on to be more and more easily accessible for juveniles. Another internet-related problem field seen by respondents is reckless revealing of personal data (that especially juveniles are prone to).

Some experts predict a decrease of gender differences related to youth crime and state that girls will "catch up" in crime rates. Especially bullying and shoplifting are named as offences where girls to an increasing extent appear as offenders.

Dangers are seen especially in processes of social exclusion and marginalization. Experts indicate that there are tendencies of growing social inequality and societal polarization, with some juveniles growing up in problematic conditions that foster criminality.

> "I would say – but I think prevention cannot provide this – it would of course be nice if the social conditions improved. Because I think that plays an important role with regard to crime." (IP_10)

Another aspect that is often discussed as a future challenge for the field of prevention is the status of prevention in criminal policy. According to interviewees, policy makers claim that prevention plays an essential role in crime policy, but this is not really reflected in the financial resources provided for prevention. Investments in prevention are made especially in the aftermath of spectacular violent incidents or as a consequence of an overstatement of events by the media or by politicians causing public concern about rising crime rates. It is stated that funding rather goes to big, visible projects instead of funding a diversity of approaches, and also that it is difficult for innovative approaches to find funding. Experts underline that continuous work and continuous cooperation is important. But lots of preventive activities they describe are projects and events that appear rather short-term and isolated. Most experts agree that a more continuous way of working would be reasonable. Moreover, it is seen as a future challenge to convince policy makers that good prevention saves money:

> "I think well implemented prevention in the end saves money for the state. If it's conducted effectively. And to conduct it effectively, certain financial resources have to be available." (IP_15)

4.5   Recommended approaches/strategies for prevention and control of youth crime

Asked how a promising strategy of prevention of juvenile delinquency should look like, experts very often refer to conditions they can hardly influence via their daily professional work.

As tendencies of growing social inequality and societal polarization are understood as important contextual factors of juvenile delinquency, measures that work against these processes are seen as reasonable. Experts see key causes of deviant and delinquent behaviour in a lack of perspectives and

opportunities for juveniles. Addressing these problems by creating inclusive and integrative societal conditions is perceived as prevention in a very broad understanding.

> *"On top priority I would place that this society must succeed to give the young generation confidence and assurance for the future." (IP_09)*

This corresponds with the aspect that experts very often describe prevention as a task for the entire society. As well, concrete working with juveniles should aim for giving them perspectives and strengthen their self-confidence and personality.

> *"I think it's very important to create perspectives. To give juveniles self-confidence, (…) to strengthen them in their development and empower them to live their life independently and in a legal way. That is, I think, the key issue prevention must achieve. I think a juvenile who is strengthened in his personality is a lot less prone to any form of crime." (IP_15)*

A majority of respondents stresses the importance of *early prevention*. Prevention should be carried out well before the age of criminal responsibility:

> *"In my view, prevention should take place already in kindergartens and primary schools." (IP_10)*

Experts point out that it's necessary to work in a multifaceted and holistic way, to provide measures and offers for all different kinds of target groups, and to tailor measures to specific groups.

One interviewee describes a number of "basic services" that should be carried out with regard to prevention – with violence, drugs, theft, bullying, civil courage, and internet as the most important aspects to address.

Building trustful relationships with juveniles is seen as a very important foundation for being able to have preventive and educational impact. Especially social workers state that it's important to take youngsters seriously and to address them as a person.

> *"I always see myself as a 'relationship worker'; from my point of view relationship is the most essential and important factor. No matter what kind of project, […] its success depends on the one who conducts it. On the person who is behind it, the person that is in contact with the juveniles and reaches them because of his/her authenticity and appearance. And gives them the opportunity to approach him/her, with other questions, too. That's why relationship is the most important factor for me." (IP_06)*

What is also stressed as important is continuity of preventive measures. Prevention should steadily be available for juveniles and accompany them, including a proper preparation and post processing of the key contents of the preventive measures covered.

As already mentioned above, the importance of good cooperation between different professions and agencies has been stressed by multiple respondents from both the urban and the rural area. In general, interagency cooperation is seen as an important aspect for successful prevention by all experts interviewed.

School is perceived as the most important place of prevention, as it is the best place to get comprehensive access to juveniles. In the eyes of experts, schools should carry out primary prevention and try to identify and tackle developing problems of youngsters. Schools often don't have time and resources to pay attention to young people's problems. They should try to be a place where more social learning takes place. More social work and more social workers in schools are an important element that is claimed by lots of respondents. Improvements of the educational system – especially regarding the avoidance of social exclusion – and of schools' infrastructure are seen as crucial by

interviewees. Some experts criticize schools that only start preventive efforts after violent incidents or the like have occurred.

Regarding the growing role of new media and the internet, some respondents indicate that new media could not only be an element of juvenile delinquency, but also as a medium to address youngsters and to carry preventive efforts. Generally, it's important to reach juveniles where they spend their time (what also refers to the emphasis of schools as important places of prevention).

Strategies with a rather punitive accent were mentioned, too, but only sporadically and to a much lesser extent than pedagogical measures. The most important approach in this regard was seen in reducing the time passing between offence and criminal sanction.

> *"The time period between a new offence and conviction or court trial, that's where something must happen. This would also be preventive, because a lot of things can happen in the meantime. Sometimes it can take up to one, one and a half years after the juveniles have been delinquent until the court trial starts." (IP_18)*

In general the majority of interviewees attach only minor importance to repressive strategies, see rather low or counterproductive effects, and instead point out the benefits of educational measures.

Strategies and approaches that were seen as inefficient or counterproductive mainly reflect the opposite of recommended approaches: discontinuity, short-term measures and projects without proper preparation and post processing, preventive efforts coming too late in the life course and measures not suitable for their target groups.

4.6 Group differences with regard to perspectives on youth crime prevention

Differences between areas (urban/rural)

Experts report only moderate differences between urban and rural area. No big differences are seen in quantity and quality of youth crime. Respondents see a rather undramatic situation in both areas. Offences occur rather spontaneously in most cases and often emerge from group dynamics. For the rural area, more traffic offences of juveniles (like driving without license; tuning of vehicles) are reported by the interviewees.

Problem behaviour especially occurs at places where young people meet (public events, clubs, etc.). Consequently, some of the differences between areas depend on differences in infrastructure and leisure opportunities. Within the rural area, noticeable problems concerning youth crime can be found rather in the towns (the research area includes three towns with a population between 30.000 and 50.000 inhabitants and a number of smaller towns and villages).

Homeless youths were reported rather as a problem concentrated in the urban area.

For the rural area, experts describe a higher degree of informal social control – which has a mitigating effect on youth crime – as one of the most mentionable differences.

Some ambivalent differences were mentioned with regard to accessibility of juveniles with preventive efforts:

- In rural areas an early detection of problematic developments in the life courses of individual juveniles is easier – this again refers to a higher social control in rural areas. There is less anonymity; the community and the social environment are easier to overlook for professionals who work with juveniles.

- On the other hand, one expert states that juveniles from rural areas – and especially those juveniles with deviant behaviour – sometimes are difficult to reach. They commit offences often in different (and bigger) towns than the ones they live in. Different administrations are in charge, so the juveniles are hard to access for social workers and other stakeholders.

Experts predominantly from the urban area report an exaggerated public perception of youth crime, a dramatization of the topic in the media. A bad image of certain districts within the area is also predominantly reported by experts from the urban area. However, most of them see this image as undeserved and not reflecting the real situation in these districts.

Differences between expert views from different professions

Views and focuses of the experts from different professional fields who were interviewed here are very much in accordance with each other. The views on and recommendations for good prevention described in chapter 4.5 are basically shared by experts from social work and school psychology as well as from police and justice/courts. Experts from police and courts made some more positive statements about effects of some more punitive approaches, but in general their views did not differ too much from the views of social workers.

Naturally perspectives and measures differ according to the mandate of the different professionals. In any case police and also some branches of social work who deal directly with offenders or juveniles prone to delinquency because of one reason or the other, with the observation of potentially unsafe areas and suchlike, offer different concepts from social workers whose activities and targets needn't necessarily be called crime prevention in the first place.

Networking and cooperation between different professional groups are seen as important by experts from all fields. As stated above, interagency cooperation is described as very good by most of the experts – which does not mean there are no difficulties to overcome. As one interviewee describes it, policemen, social workers, and school psychologists have different "views of the world" which leads to communication problems, and their institutions have tasks that are sometimes opposite to each other – what makes cooperation not always easy. One social worker mentions that sometimes youth workers are taken a bit less seriously by other groups, but that the situation has improved and police is more and more willing to cooperate.

5   Summary and conclusions

In the eyes of the experts surveyed in the course of the local interview studies, youth crime is basically seen as ubiquitous behaviour that usually remains episodic and is – in most cases – of low intensity. At the same time, respondents see preventive efforts as reasonable, which should include primary prevention as well as prevention as reaction to negative individual developments. Important contextual factors of youth crime are seen in societal conditions, namely social and educational inequality. Furthermore, experts state that group dynamics play an important role for juvenile delinquency.

A higher social control in rural areas was reported as one of the most mentionable differences between urban and rural areas. Overall, experts described the situation in both areas quite similarly and didn't see major differences.

Experts report a broad diversity of preventive measures and approaches in the research areas. The existing range of preventive approaches aims mainly at the development of social skills and the pro-

vision of information/education about consequences of criminal offences and substance abuse. Also included are measures aiming at the prevention and reduction of victimization.

In matters of recommendations for preventive approaches and strategies, experts highlight the significance of:

- early prevention (before the age of criminal responsibility)
- school as the most important place to get access to juveniles, and school as a place of social learning
- supporting social integration
- supporting meaningful leisure time opportunities
- new media not only as media of offences, but also as media to carry preventive efforts
- interagency cooperation
- continuity in preventive activities
- preventive measures adjusted to specific target groups
- development of long-term social relationships with juveniles, and the relevance of authenticity and commitment of the persons who work with juveniles.

Experts express scepticism against or denial of punitive approaches. An exception is celerity, i.e. the need for a reduction of the time passing between an offence and the succeeding judicial sanction/penalty (which should also have an educational accent and be accompanied by pedagogic work).

The areas that were selected for the local studies feature comparatively good social conditions. Youth crime is not perceived as a dramatic problem, but as a relatively small problem compared to the situation in some other areas in Germany. Nonetheless experts mention processes of social exclusion and marginalization as important factors that foster juvenile delinquency and will present a big challenge for the future. As witnessed by their conceptualizations and propositions, the respondents seem to be aware of or at least sensible to the insufficiency of dealing with issues whose origins lie in social distortions on an individual level. They are sensitive to the shortcomings of a pedagogization of the consequences of marginalization, poverty and a general lack of chances (critical of pedagogization of societal problems e. g. Anhorn, 2010) and, accordingly, they do not offer simple solutions to the arising problems on an exclusively individual level.

Interviewees express a very broad understanding of the term prevention, with an emphasis on primary prevention. Lots of experts' statements show that delinquency prevention to a great extent is seen as a side-effect of social work in general. Although it is a positive aspect when social work has crime-preventing effects, it can be problematic when professionals see themselves in the position of having to justify their work with these kinds of effects. Prevention – as avoidance of unwelcomed developments and incidents – might be a problematic term to be used for lots of social policy measures. Holthusen et al. (2011) point out that concepts labelled as primary prevention could better be described as early promotion and support of children or health promotion. They state that by using the prevention term a possible negative development for all affected people is insinuated. Labelling all kinds of social services (including e. g. services that aim to promote social skills of children, offer leisure activities etc.) as crime prevention puts juveniles under general suspicion (Holthusen et al., 2011, p. 23), with all persons and institutions involved in prevention activities and promoting their necessity and legitimacy potentially contributing to this deficit-centered view of adolescence. For social services that don't have a direct connection to crime, crime-preventing effects should not become the main rationale to provide them.

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