

REPORT 13:

YOUNG PEOPLE IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW – THE CZECH REPUBLIC

This report is based on the results of two focus groups and six individual interviews in the Czech Republic on the experiences of young offenders. The discussions investigated the impact of detention on their lives. This report is a copy-edited version of material provided to the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre by Oxford Research International. The views expressed are the views of those who took part in these discussions. All those participating did so on a confidential basis. All names have been changed.

About the Focus Groups

The two focus groups were conducted in two reform schools for young offenders. **Focus Group One** (FG1) took place in Visnove, a village about 40 km from Brno in southern Moravia on 9 December, 1999. **Focus Group Two** (FG2) took place in Boletice nad Labem, a district of Decin. Both groups consisted of eight institutionalized males aged between 16 and 18. Five participants from each group had been transferred from detention centres into reform schools. The remaining three from each group had been transferred to their current institutions from other reform schools.

Focus Group One (FG1)

Location:	Reform School in Visnove, a village near Brno
Date of focus group:	9 December 1999
Details on selection of participants:	The director of the Reform School assisted in the selection of participants
Participants (name, age, gender)	Tomas, 17, Male Karel, 17, Male Marek, 16, Male Roman, 17, Male Vitek, 15 (and 10 months), Male Martin, 18, Male Libor, 17, Male Pavel, 16, Male
Start time:	10:30 am
End time:	11:44 am
Comments by facilitator on group dynamics:	Participants were uninterested in the discussion. Martin and Vitek dominated the discussion. The participation of Marek and Pavel was minimal. Others were passive and sleepy most of the time, they answered by nodding or with one-word answers.
Problems encountered:	No particular remark

Focus Group Two (FG2)

Location:	Reform School in Boletice nad Labem, a ward of Decin town
Date of focus group:	10 December 1999
Details on selection of participants:	On the recommendation of managers of several private companies
Participants (name, age, gender)	Jarda, 16, Male Marcel , 17, Male Jozef, 17, Male Milan , 17, Male Ivan, 17, Male Ales, 16, Male Jiri, 17, Male Adam, 17, Male
Start time:	13.00
End time:	14.35
Comments by facilitator on group dynamics:	Participants differed in activity during the discussion. Ivan and Milan were more active at the beginning of discussion than in its second half. Marcel and Jiri were not very talkative. Jarda, Jozef and Ales dominated discussion. Adam was shy. At the beginning of the discussion Jarda and Ales made fun of the discussion, but later they become cooperative and answered seriously
Problems encountered:	None

About the individual interviews

Individual interviews were also carried out with the following people:

- Petr, aged 19, male, a formerly detained young offender
- Jindrich, aged 18, male, a formerly detained young offender
- Jakub, aged 18, male, a formerly detained young offender
- Pepa, aged 52, male, a police officer responsible for young offenders
- Erich, aged 54, male, a police officer responsible for young offenders
- Lumir, aged 46, male, a police officer responsible for young offenders

A summary of responses from the Focus Groups

This report reflects the order in which topics were discussed, following the discussion guidelines on this subject

2.1 Attitudes towards detention

2.1.1 General conditions

Not surprisingly, participants were unenthusiastic about conditions in the detention centre, but also conceded that they were tolerable.

- *'In prison it was ok, similar to here [in reform school], except for going home for weekends.'* (Vitek, FG1)
- *'I was in detention for eight months. I had one roommate, there were two beds in the cell, we used to go to bed at nine...'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'It was not bad there, the cell was clean; we had a TV set as well. The beds were old, but mattresses were exchanged for new ones. It was like a foster home.'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

Only one interviewee complained about the heating system and sleeping arrangements during detention.

- *'I was in several detention centres and in only one case were conditions poor. There were very large dormitories there. It was hard to heat them. Beds looked like they were from World War II. Twelve beds in one room and nothing else.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

However, another interviewee actually enjoyed some home comforts during detention.

- *'Conditions were good. I always kept my cell clean and tidy. They noticed and as a result I was allowed to watch videos, visit the gym, or play table tennis more often. Then I got a cell with TV, radio and a shower...'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

2.1.2 Food

Almost all participants responded approvingly, at least by nodding, when they were asked about the quality and quantity of food provided during detention. Nevertheless, some made critical comments:

- *'I received food three times a day, but it was not very tasty.'* (Pavel, FG1)
- *'Food was distributed three times a day. Sometimes it wasn't enough. This didn't happen all that often.'* (Martin, FG1)

One participant had however, discovered a method of getting more food.

- *'If you gave something to the inmates who were responsible for distributing food, for example cigarettes, they gave you more food. If you gave them nothing, they gave you an ordinary portion.'* (Martin, FG1)

2.1.3 Access to health care

The individual interviews with detainees indicated that basic medical care was available during detention.

- *'There was access to medical care.'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)
- *'...You had to have a temperature to get full medical care. When you were sick you just got a pill.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)
- *'Yes, the medical care in the detention centre was good. In custody, there was a medical examination every two weeks. Apart from this, they did not care much.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

2.1.4 Organized activities

2.1.4.1 Education, vocational training

Almost all participants had been engaged in some sort of work as part of vocational training during their time in the detention centre. Nobody complained that they had been forced to do this. They explained that all detainees can choose a course during their stay.

- *'There were several alternatives which you could choose...'* (Vitek, FG1)

However, they said that choices were limited.

- *'In future, I would like to work as a bricklayer, but here in the reform school I'm taking a gardening course.'* (Marek, FG1)

Some participants complained that they had been kept in (pre-trial) custody for a lengthy period before getting the chance to attend a training (vocational) school.

- *'While I was in custody, I did not receive any vocational training. I could however borrow books from the library. Once in prison I started attending a training (vocational) school.'* (Vitek, FG1)
- *'I was in pre-trial custody for one year. You don't receive education there, but it was possible to order books and learn English, for example.'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

However, it was possible to work while in custody.

- *'In custody, they established a workroom for juveniles. You could go there once or twice a week for an hour.'* (Martin, FG1)

Participants in both the focus groups and the individual interviews also mentioned the positive as well as negative impact of detention on their education. Some believed that, if

they had not been sent to reform school, they would never have had the opportunity to receive vocational training.

- *'In a reform school, they offer training and education. I doubt I would attend school if I wasn't here.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview. A view shared by Jarda, FG2)

Others were more critical of the limited opportunities available to them. They said that in most cases, the courses run for no more than 2 years. Also, inmates only receive a certificate on completion of the course; no formal examination is required.

- *'When I wanted to attend a three-year course, I was told that it was impossible because of my age. I was about seventeen and I needed to finish it before being released. I was not interested in a two-year course. No employer will accept that anyway. In the end, I was working as an upholstery assistant and I was very good at it.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

Interestingly two interviewees, who had previously neglected school, now complained about the limited opportunities for education within the reform school. (Marek, FG1, and Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

On the other hand, young offenders are indeed faced with a difficult decision when considering a three-year course. Most are sent to reform school at the age of 17 and will leave before the course has been completed. It is rare that they will have the funds to finish the course once they leave the institution.

- *'If you want to get some education, nobody can deprive you of that right, but you are told that if you do not get a certificate before you are released, it is hard to finish it afterwards'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)
- *'There is no time for further education. I need to work because I need the money. When you come back from work at five you have no time for study.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

2.1.4.2 Recreational facilities, sports

Participants mentioned football, table tennis and workouts as their preferred leisure activities while in detention.

- *'I used to play football once a week.'* (Pavel, FG1)
- *'For example, there was a clubroom for table tennis, it was OK.'* (Ivan, FG2)
- *'In prison, we did standard team sports - I used to play football.'* (Martin, FG1)

2.1.5 Contact with family

According to participants, young offenders were allowed to receive letters and parcels during detention. Visits were also permitted, but that of course depended on the parents. Visits could be refused, or parcels could be withheld as a punishment for bad behaviour.

- *'My mother used to come occasionally – once in two months. She came to see my brother rather than me. Friends visited me more often.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

2.1.6 Access to information in detention

Participants appeared unaware of their rights during detention. Interestingly, most confused rights with rules.

- *'They only discuss the rules. What do you mean by rights?'* (Jarda, FG2)
- *'You are asked to sign up to the disciplinary rules when you enter prison ... you also have the list of rules displayed in each cell.'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'Nobody informed me about my rights.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

2.1.7 Safety and Punishments

There was a consensus among participants that they were not fearful of guards and other inmates. They also claimed that violence amongst inmates was infrequent. In fact, some indicated that they did have the opportunity to appeal against punishments, but criticised the bureaucratic nature of this procedure.

- *'You got the opportunity to explain yourself... but it wasn't really worth much'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'...at least, we were asked.'* (Roman, FG1)
- *'You were asked to sign that you agreed with the penalty.'* (Martin, FG1)

In both focus groups, participants mentioned the following punishments given when rules were broken.

a) Solitary confinement. However, most considered solitary confinement ineffective.

- *'... it just makes you more angry.'* (Jozef, FG2)

b) Disciplinary penalties

- *'For example you have a record for breaking rules. These records are then sent to the court when you are applying for discharge or probation.'* (Pavel, FG1)
- *'Visits were sometimes forbidden ... as a penalty for violation of the rules.'* (Martin, FG1, and Jarda, FG2)

c) Beating

- *'Sometimes we were beaten, but they do it in such a way that nobody sees it.'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'The guards in pre-trial custody were rough'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

No participants in the focus groups or individual interviewees mentioned violence and abusive behaviour among inmates.

- *'It is not like people think. The reality is not so bad, I didn't see any bullying in prison.'* (Ivan, FG2)
- *'You usually get a roommate of your own age. This avoids problems which come with age differences'* (Vitek, FG1)

Participants said that it was possible to complain about other inmates. For obvious reasons this rarely happened.

- *'... it was possible to complain to the director or to supervisors.'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

Participants judged complaining about other inmates as a devious act which would certainly not earn the respect of other inmates.

- *'Snitching doesn't get you anywhere; others will find out anyway. You must sort things out for yourself...'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)
- *'If you were the subject of abuse or bullying you could complain. You would be put in another cell and those who did it to you would be punished. But in the long run it would not help. The others would reject an inmate who did this. The fact that he was a snitcher would get around very quickly.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

Relations between inmates were based on an internal hierarchy with unwritten rules.

- *'It is up to you to set yourself up. That is the law of every prison. The stronger ones fare better, the weaker ones fare worse...'* (Martin, FG1)

A similar point of view was conveyed in individual interviews.

- *'You cannot show your fear, otherwise others will not respect you.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

2.1.8 Young offenders' suggestions for change

There was a general consensus that the most important change be made in the centre's recognition of the views of its detainees.

- *'Our points of view and complaints should be taken into consideration more.'* (Jarda, FG2)

Martin (FG1) felt that the evaluation system should aim to balance both positive and negative behaviour.

- *'... for smoking you get some points deducted. It would be fair to get some points added for something positive you do.'* (Martin, FG1)

- *'Solitary confinement should be shorter. For example 8 hours instead of 24.'* (Jozef, FG2)

2.2 Access to a supportive social environment

2.2.1 Family and parents

There were two distinct types of experience in this regard. One group had little or no contact with parents, while the second, despite some initial problems, had now re-established contact with home. It was clear from the discussions, that the main distinction was based on how good relations were before the young offender had been convicted.

None of the individual interviewees had contact with their parents. They had either never seen their parents since entering the institution (Jakub) or had had little contact (Jindrich and Petr). However, in the focus groups there was only one participant whose parents had cut contact with him.

- *'Currently, my parents are not in contact with me. They do not write me letters, and don't visit me. I have no idea where I will go from here.'* (Adam, FG2)

Some participants in the focus groups said that initially their parents had been upset by their conviction. However, after some time had elapsed, they were glad that their parents had forgiven them and were currently supportive.

- *'For my mum it was very hard, but later she came to terms with it.'* (Marek, FG1)
- *'My parents were disappointed, but they didn't abandon me.'* (Martin, FG1)

2.2.2 Friends

Most participants had received a certain amount of tolerance from their friends about their conviction. However, some mentioned that girlfriends were more affected by their criminal behaviour.

- *'... friends just accepted it.'* (Marek, FG1)
- *'I lost my girlfriend. She told me she could not trust me anymore, that they would put me in prison again and we would not be together.'* (Martin, FG1)

2.2.3 Employers

Most participants had not yet been in employment but imagined that they would have difficulties in securing work once leaving the institution. They explained that this problem would not be helped by current high unemployment.

- *'When you are applying for a job, the employer is interested in your previous record.'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'I think it will be hard to find a job.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

Participants felt that their best chance would be to contact relatives or friends.

- *'I have a lot of friends, so for me it should be no problem to find a job. For those inmates who don't have personal contacts, it could be a problem.'* (Jarda, FG2)

2.2.4 Police

Participants said that naturally police will monitor them more than others.

- *'If a car radio had been stolen, they [police] would look at the list of people who had already committed such a crime and would first check up on those people...'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'I come from a small town. When someone committed crimes, as I had for four years and the police knew him, then if something happened – theft or burglary - they would immediately come to him and kick his ass ... I've had such an experience, but I've never pleaded guilty and I am proud of it.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

Detainees would turn to family members for help or advice if they encountered problems in the future. Some also mentioned probation officers.

- *'First, I would turn to my mum, and if she would not help me, then I would turn to my probation officer.'* (Marek, FG1)

Others boasted that they needed neither help nor advice.

- *'I probably wouldn't turn to my parents. I can sort things out myself and I'm proud of it. I would not turn to probation officers either. They help you, but as I have said, I solve things myself. I think that everyone should.'* (Jarda, FG2)
- *'... I want to be on my own.'* (Milan, FG2)

2.3 Perceived effects of detention

Most participants claimed that detention had not changed their attitude towards committing offences.

- *'I don't think my attitude has changed. My experience has confirmed it. When I was discharged from a [previous] reform school on probation, on condition that I would go to school, I did not keep it up...'* (Marek, FG1)

Some even felt that their attitude had deteriorated.

- *'... it is even worse now.'* (Ales and Ivan, FG2)
- *'Prison has changed me, but in a negative way – I now know how to behave real bad.'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'He's right, in prison you learn things from others which otherwise you would never hear about.'* (Vitek, FG1)

Ivan (FG2) expressed a similar opinion:

- *'You learn how to do it better [...] for example, if somebody is arrested for damaging cars, he can learn how to steal a car in prison and even how to do it better...'*

There were even those who said that they enjoyed committing criminal offences.

- *'... I enjoy stealing, I like it.'* (Milan, FG2)

After a short discussion, however, they admitted that the fear of being arrested was a deterrent against re-offending.

- *'... but at least you think about it – be careful, you can end up in prison again.'* (Vitek, FG1)
- *'I am afraid of what will happen if I re-offend. This time I would lose a lot. My girlfriend is from a good family, and I would hurt her a lot if I am arrested again.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

Participants mentioned some factors important in the decision not to re-offend. Many were by no means beyond reform:

1. Their own will

- *'It was not the punishment which changed my attitude towards offending. I convinced myself that I'm afraid to go back inside, because this time it would be for a longer time, since I would be treated as a second offender.'* (Jakub, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)
- *'I have changed, I respect the law at the moment. Whether you will offend again depends on what kind of friends you meet and what they want. I would not do it again.'* (Jindrich, former young offender, male, 18, individual interview)

2. The significance of individual attention from important people

- *'It wasn't the detention centre, but the people who were there – the director and staff who influenced me a lot.'* (Petr, former young offender, male, 19, individual interview)

Some participants said that their only chance to make a fresh start and avoid re-offending was if they left their homes and moved away to meet new people and perhaps, find a new job.

- *'I don't want to offend, it just happens to me. Crime is a normal thing in our family. The police know us. It's like labelling. If I were to move, it would be OK. I would like to start a new life, somewhere far away from here.'* (Jarda, FG2)
- *'If you don't know where to go, if you don't have a job, then it is obvious that you will steal.'* (Jarda, FG2)

Some even preferred to remain within the shelter of the reform school.

- *'If you have a supportive environment, you wouldn't want to be back in reform school. But if not, sometimes it is better. A friend of mine told me that it was like being in a 'hotel' there and he would like to get back.'* (Petr, former young offender, male 19, individual interview)

2.4 Future plans

The long-term future was a difficult subject for participants. Most could only envisage their immediate future i.e. when they would leave reform school. Nobody appeared to have made any concrete plans but there were simple ideas of normality.

- *'.. we will see...'* (Pavel, FG1)
- *'... to live like other people.'* (Martin, FG1)
- *'.. to be free'* (Roman, FG1)
- *'... to have a family.'* (Libor, FG1)
- *'... to have a girlfriend.'* (Pavel, FG1)

2.5 Opinions of young offenders on juvenile crime

Some participants recognized the damage caused by crime to the community. Others were less concerned.

- *'Crime is not such a big problem. The majority of people are still decent. It starts to be a problem for society when people are afraid to walk in the street.'* (Marek, FG1)

2.5.1 Reasons for offending

The main reasons young offenders gave as to why young people commit crimes were:

1. To get money (but not because they are short of the basics)
 - *'I started because I felt that my family saw me as scum and good for nothing. Later I started enjoying it, I needed more money.'* (Petr, former young offender, male 19, individual interview)
 - *'You could make ends meet, but what kind of life is that? You can't afford a lot of things – entertainment, good quality shoes and clothes – you have to be very modest.'* (Jarda, FG2)
 - *'Young people want the things they see on TV.'* (Erich, police officer, male, 54, individual interview)
2. A need to gain the respect of their peers
 - *'Everyone wants to gain the respect of the others in the gang, others will follow ...'* (Jarda, FG2)
 - *'It is important what kind of friends you have. Once you have been part of a gang, you get bored with normal people'* (Martin, FG1) *'... you feel you are different.'* (Vitek, FG1)

3. Unhappy family relations. Some participants explained how the family had contributed to their offending; broken homes, lack of understanding from parents, lack of supervision, lack of time for children. In fact, one of the police officers interviewed recognized all these factors in the motivation of young offenders.
 - *'Insufficient control by parents, in other cases too much control...'* (Lumir, police officer, male, 46, individual interview)

Offenders themselves perceived the lack of interest from parents as a factor. They were less concerned about the effects of reduced parental supervision.

- *'You will do it no matter what your mother tells you...'* (Pavel, FG1)
- *'Parents don't care about their children, they don't pay attention to them ...'* (Marek, FG1)

4. Society at large

- *'There are no jobs, prices are rising, everything is expensive, what should people do?'* (Vitek, FG1)

2.5.2 Prevention of re-offending and juvenile crime

Most participants agreed that if there were more leisure activities available to them, they would be less likely to re-offend.

- *'... centres for leisure time, where you can have a lot of fun and do not have to pay for it.'* (Jarda, FG1)
- *'... to organize events for young people. I don't know, something interesting.'* (Martin, FG1)

One police officer supported these views:

- *'More money should be allocated to crime prevention and leisure time activities for young people.'* (Lumir, police officer, male, 46, individual interview)

The young offenders' views were also echoed by all the police officers interviewed.

- *'... too much time on their hands.'* (Erich, police officer, male, 54, individual interview)
- *'... they gad about the streets.'* (Pepa, police officer, male, 52, individual interview)
- *'... lack of hobbies.'* (Lumir, police officer, male, 46 individual interview)

Participants pointed out that stricter controls, particularly from the police, would only exacerbate the problem.

- *'When you are beaten by the police, you are going to get more and more angry and you will offend again [...] in an even worse way – you want to cause trouble and more work for the police. You want to get your own back.'* (Jozef, FG2)

Responses to individual interviews

1. Petr, aged 19, male, a formerly detained young offender

Location:	Centre for Social Prevention, Brno
Date of interview:	27 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender):	Petr, 19, M
Start time:	15.35
End time:	16.05
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. Tell me briefly about your family: do you live with family members? Whom? What do they do?

I do not. I am not getting along with my mother's partner. One of my brothers has been in conflict with the law as well, another is a drug dealer. I am not interested in what they are doing. I am not in touch with my father either. He has another wife, she doesn't like me. My father is working for a construction company, my mother is housewife at the moment.

Q2. How old were you when you committed your first offence?

The first – when I was eleven, twelve. I was fourteen when I was interrogated for the first time.

Q3. Did you do it on your own or with friends/siblings/adults?

I used to do it on my own. One offence I committed together with my brother.

Q4. How many offences had you committed before coming into contact with the police?

Too many.

Q5. Can you tell me why you started to break the law?

I started because I felt that my family saw me as scum - good for nothing. Later I started to enjoy it, I needed more money. It is good to have a lot of money which you can spend in two weeks. I told myself, why not?

Q6. How were you treated by the police?

Each time I was interrogated they 'blew my nose'. They thought I would plead my guilt, but I did not. I come from a small town. When someone committed crimes, as I had for four years and the police knew him, then if something happened – theft or burglary - they would immediately come to him and kick his ass ... I've had such an experience, but I've never pleaded guilty and I am proud of it.

Q7. In the place where you were detained, what were the physical conditions like?

Conditions were good. I always kept my cell clean and tidy. They noticed and as a result I was allowed to watch videos, visit the gym, or play table tennis more often. Then I got a cell with TV, radio and a shower...

Q8. Did you feel safe there?

I did. There was no violence among inmates in custody. Only once we were fighting, because someone was insulting my family. I don't like my family, but I don't like someone insulting my mother either. Then my brother came. He gets quite high respect from others. We were in the same cell.

Q9. Would you have felt able to complain if you were the subject of abusive behaviour? [IF YES] To whom?

It depends. When somebody was sentenced because he raped some girl, he was not accepted even by supervisors. Complaints about such inmates would not be taken into account substantially. If you were the subject of abuse or bullying you could complain. You would be put in another cell and those who did it to you would be punished. But in the long run it would not help. The others would reject an inmate who did this. The fact that he was a snitcher would get around very quickly

Q10. Did you receive information on your rights in custody? [IF YES] From whom?

In custody you get information on the rules. Nobody informed me about my rights.

Q11. Did you have access to news from the outside world?

Yes. I got newspapers, I watched TV.

Q12. Did you have frequent contact with your family (visits, letters, etc.)?

My mother used to come occasionally – once in two months. She came to see my brother rather than me. Friends visited me more often

Q13. Did you have access to education/vocational training?

When I wanted to attend a three-year course, I was told that it was impossible because of my age. I was about seventeen and I needed to finish it before being released. I was not interested in a two-year course. No employer will accept that anyway. In the end, I was working as an upholstery assistant and I was very good at it. If you want to get some education, nobody can deprive you of that right, but you are told that if you do not get a certificate before you are released, it is hard to finish it afterwards'

Q14. Did you have access to health care when you needed it?

Yes, the medical care in the reformatory was good. In custody, there was a medical examination once every two weeks. But beside that they did not care a lot.

Q15. In your eyes, has being in detention affected your family relationships, your education and/or your employment prospects?

Our relationship has stayed more or less the same as before. My mother needed my help only until my brother was released from custody. She always preferred him. I cannot finish school at the moment. I would have no money for living if I studied. And you cannot get part time work when you have a record.

Q16. Do you think that your punishment (detention and the duration of the sentence) was fair in view of the offence you committed?

I did not understand why I was sent to reformatory after I served my sentence in custody. Later I got the information that my mother applied for it.

Q17. Do you think this punishment had a positive effect on your attitude to the law and to respecting the law?

I am afraid of what will happen if I re-offend. This time I would lose a lot. My girlfriend is from a good family, and I would hurt her a lot if I am arrested again Not the reformatory, but people who were there – director, the staff influenced me a lot. I took the director as my father.

Q18. Do you think detention dissuades young people from breaking the law?

I don't know. It is up to them. If one wants to offend, one will do it again. If one has a supportive environment, one would not want to go back to the reformatory. But if one has not, sometimes it is better in reformatory. A friend of mine has told me, that he had lived there like in a hotel and he would like to get back.

Thank you very much.

2. Jindrich, aged 18, male, a formerly detained young offender

Location:	Centre for Social Prevention, Brno
Date of interview:	27 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender,):	Jindrich, 18, M
Start time:	16.15
End time:	17.04
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. Tell me briefly about your family: do you live with family members? Whom? What do they do?

I don't know what my parents are doing, or where my sisters are.

Q2. How old were you when you committed your first offence?

I was ten years old I think. We used to steal everything we wanted.

Q3. Did you do it on your own or with friends/siblings/adults?

With friends, with family members (adults as well as siblings)

Q4. How many offences had you committed before coming into contact with the police?

I cannot remember the number - many.

Q5. Can you tell me why you started to break the law?

I had to offend, otherwise I would have been rejected by the community where I was growing up.

Q6. How were you treated by the police?

They were calm at the beginning, then they started to shout at me. They used no violence.

Q7. In the place where you were detained, what were the physical conditions like?

I was in several detention centres and in only one case were conditions poor. There were very large dormitories there. It was hard to heat them. Beds looked like they were from World War II. Twelve beds in one room and nothing else.

Q8. Did you feel safe there?

I had to feel safe. You cannot show your fear, otherwise others would not respect you.

Q9. Would you have felt able to complain if you were the subject of abusive behaviour? [IF YES] To whom?

Snitching doesn't get you anywhere; others will find out anyway. You must sort things out for yourself...

Q10. Did you receive information on your rights in custody? [IF YES] From whom?

There is a disciplinary order, which is almost the same in all reformatories. I already knew the Rules. I need not ask. But in most cases it was up to supervisors, which rules were enforced in a particular reformatory.

Q11. Did you have access to news from the outside world?

No. I did not watch TV and I was not in touch with family.

Q12. Did you have frequent contact with your family (visits, letters, etc.)?

No, because nobody came to visit me, nobody wrote me a letter.

Q13. Did you have access to education/vocational training?

Yes. I started with a three-year bricklayer course. It was my fault that I did not finish it. Then I did a cook assistant course.

Q14. Did you have access to health care when you needed it?

Yes. However to get full medical care (special room, nursing) you had to at least have fever. When you were sick you got just a pill.

Q15. In your eyes, has being in detention affected your family relationships, your education and/or your employment prospects?

My family relations – I don't think so. In a reform school, they offer training and education. I doubt I would attend school if I wasn't here I see it quite hard to find a job.

Q16. Do you think that your punishment (detention and the duration of the sentence) was fair in view of the offence you committed?

Yes. I think so.

Q17. Do you think this punishment had a positive effect on your attitude to the law and to respecting the law?

I have changed, I respect the law at the moment. Whether you will offend again depends on what kind of friends you meet and what they want. I would not do it again.

Q18. Do you think detention dissuades young people from breaking the law?

I do not think so. If one starts to offend and enjoys it, one will do it again.

Thank you very much.

3. Jakub, aged 18, male, a formerly detained young offender

Location:	Centre for Social Prevention, Brno
Date of interview:	27 November 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender):	Jakub, 18, M
Start time:	17.20
End time:	17.48
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. Tell me briefly about your family: do you live with family members? Whom? What do they do?

I have never seen my family. My parents put me in a Children's Home after I was born. What is worse is that they have adopted another child.

Q2. How old were you when you committed your first offence?

I was fifteen.

Q3. Did you do it on your own or with friends/siblings/adults?

I did it with friends. I got into the wrong company. We robbed a car.

Q4. How many offences had you committed before coming into contact with the police?

It was first crime I committed.

Q5. Can you tell me why you started to break the law?

I needed more money (for cigarettes). I trusted my friends. I hoped the police would not find it out

Q6. How were you treated by the police?

The guards in pre-trial custody were rough.

Q7. In the place where you were detained, what were the physical conditions like?

Sanitary facilities were OK. It was not bad there, the cell was clean; we had a TV set as well. The beds were old, but mattresses were exchanged for new ones. It was like a foster home.

Q8. Did you feel safe there?

Yes, I did.

Q9. Would you have felt able to complain if you were the subject of abusive behaviour? [IF YES] To whom?

It was possible to complain to the director or to supervisors, but there was no reason.

Q10. Did you receive information on your rights? [IF YES] From whom?

In the disciplinary order, the rules are explained.

Q11. Did you have access to news from the outside world?

My contact with the outside world was rare. Friends did not write to me as I expected.

Q12. Did you have frequent contact with your family (visits, letters)?

See previous question

Q13. Did you have access to education/vocational training?

You cannot get education in pre-trial custody. But it was possible to order books and learn English for instance. (I was in pre-trial custody for one year)

Q14. Did you have access to health care when you needed it?

There was non-stop access to medical care.

Q15. In your eyes, has being in detention affected your family relationships, your education and/or your employment prospects?

No.

Q16. Do you think that your punishment (detention and the duration of the sentence) was fair in view of the offence you committed?

It was fair I think.

Q17. Do you think this punishment had a positive effect on your attitude to the law and to respecting the law?

It was not the punishment that changed my attitude toward offending. It is my decision, I am afraid to go back, because this time it would be for longer, because I would be treated as a second offender

Q18. Do you think detention stops young people from breaking the law?

I think so - the fear of being arrested.

Thank you very much.

4. Pepa, aged 52, male, a police officer responsible for young offenders

Location:	Police of Czech Republic - South-Moravian district administration
Date of interview:	1 December 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender):	Pepa, 52, M
Start time:	13.10
End time:	13.30
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. For how long have you been dealing with young offenders?

Since 1993 when I came here – to work at South-Moravian District Administration

Q2. Did you choose to work specifically with young offenders?

Yes		→ Go to Q3, skip Q4 and go to Q5
No	✓	→ Skip Q3 and go to Q4

Q3. [IF YES TO Q2] For what reasons?

Q4. [IF NO TO Q2] How did you come to take on this work?

I decided to become a police officer in 1974. I was working as a labourer before. In 1993 I was appointed to the position of chief and since that time I have been dealing with crimes committed by young people and on young people.

Q5. Which of the following aspects does your work officially cover:

Prevention (identifying/working with young people at risk)	✓
Investigation of offences	✓
Arrest	<i>Sometimes</i>
Interrogation	✓
Recommending pre-trial measures (remand in custody, bail, return to family...)	<i>Exceptionally</i>
Supervising pre-trial detainees	<i>No</i>
Making recommendations to the court regarding the sentence	<i>No</i>
Supervising or monitoring as a result of a court decision	<i>Exceptionally</i>
Supervising or monitoring once the sentence is completed	<i>Exceptionally</i>
Assisting with reintegration (e.g. helping to find a job)	<i>No</i>

Job description includes: prevention, investigation of offences, interrogation. Exceptionally also arrest, recommendation of pre-trial measures, supervising and monitoring as a result of court decision.

Q6. If they are not among your 'official' tasks, do you undertake any of the above aspects in an 'unofficial'/voluntary manner?

Yes		→ Go to Q7
No	✓	→ Skip Q7 and go to Q8

It is not my case.

Q7. [IF YES TO Q6] Which?

Q8. If they are not among your "official" tasks, are there any of the above (or other) aspects that you think should be included officially as part of your responsibility?

In my opinion in basic departments there should be some supervision of juvenile delinquents once the sentence is complete. There is no consistent monitoring after they come back from detention. If there is some, it is inconsistent.

Q9. Have you been given special training for any or all aspects of your work with juveniles?

Yes		→ Go to Q10
No	✓	→ Skip Q10 and go to Q11

Yes. It is continual training designed by policajným prezídiom. I attend it regularly. I don't see any problems in that.

Q10. [IF YES TO Q6] What kind?

The professional training - psychologists, psychiatrists giving lectures. Also training abroad (study stay). Everyone must take at least a basic level of special training. I see experiences of psychologists and psychiatrists dealing with youth as very important.

Q11. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of *the social and family background* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

First of all divorced parents, incomplete family – this is well known fact. The family economic situation plays a substantial role as well. Then, the social environment (where the young men is growing up) is important. Alcoholism goes with it.

Q12. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of the *personal situation* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

This is related to previous question. Single parent families, unfinished education (low level). They gad around the streets – a leader emerges, the gang arises and that is the starting point.

Q13. In your experience, what are the main factors that push young people to commit offences?

Influence of social environment, I think, – influence of peers who have got experience in offending already. Then economic factors as I have mentioned already.

Q14. What proportion of those young people whom you monitor are finally sentenced to a penal institution?

50% - 60% out of those who have come in contact with us are sentenced - in my opinion.

Q15. What proportion (of those you are monitoring) offend again following their release from such an institution?

I cannot tell, because we have no monitoring. But let say approximately 20%. But this is just a rough estimation.

Q16. What trends in youth crime do you see at the present time?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

Well, seriousness of offences, the brutality of juvenile offenders increases. The age at which they begin to offend is falling, in my opinion. And organized crime, which used to be very rare in the past, is starting to appear.

Q17. Do you have suggestions as to any additional or improved means that would help you, your police colleagues and/or other services to reduce youth crime?

I could have suggestions, but not concerning the police, because the police as a repressive body do not have a chance to influence young very much. However there are institutions which should focus on this problem. These bodies should be supported by the state financially. The specialists - psychologists, curators –should monitor and influence the young offenders.

Q18. What is your opinion about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the decisions and sentences currently being handed down by the court?

I cannot tell. I consider repression the last mean. The offender is punished but I doubt that the punishment would change his behaviour.

Q19. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used more?

I don't know. I don't feel competent to evaluate this.

Q20. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used less?

The sentences should be such as to avoid contact of young offenders with older ones. I mean, to separate young from older, more experienced, offenders. This works already, but only in theory. In practice it is difficult to keep to this because prisons are crowded.

Q21. Do you have any other comments regarding the way in which youth crime is being tackled in your country at the present time?

Recently almost nothing has improved. If the economic situation of families gets worse, then I don't imagine any improvement – juvenile crime will increase (unless there will be more job opportunities for young people).

Q22. In your opinion, what are the likely trends of youth crime in your country during the next five years?

I have no idea.

Thank you very much.

5. Erich, aged 54, male, police officer responsible for young offenders

Location:	Police of Czech Republic - South-Moravian district administration
Date of interview:	1 December 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender):	Erich, 54, M
Start time:	13.35
End time:	13.58
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. For how long have you been dealing with young offenders?

About 17 years.

Q2. Did you choose to work specifically with young offenders?

Yes	✓	→ Go to Q3, skip Q4 and go to Q5
No		→ Skip Q3 and go to Q4

Yes. I aimed at this.

Q3. [IF YES TO Q2] For what reasons?

I was interested in drug issues. It was a new problem in the seventies. Since 1975 it has begun to be an issue which put young people in risk.

Q4. [IF NO TO Q2] How did you come to take on this work?

Q5. Which of the following aspects does your work officially cover:

Prevention (identifying/working with young people at risk)	✓
Investigation of offences	✓
Arrest	<i>In some cases</i>
Interrogation	✓
Recommending pre-trial measures (remand in custody, bail, return to family...)	<i>No</i>
Supervising pre-trial detainees	<i>No</i>
Making recommendations to the court regarding the sentence	<i>No</i>
Supervising or monitoring as a result of a court decision	<i>No</i>
Supervising or monitoring once the sentence is completed	<i>No</i>
Assisting with reintegration (e.g. helping to find a job)	<i>No</i>

Prevention, investigation of offences, interrogation, in some cases also arrest.

Q6. If they are not among your 'official' tasks, do you undertake any of the above aspects in an 'unofficial'/voluntary manner?

Yes	✓	→ Go to Q7
No		→ Skip Q7 and go to Q8

Yes. It comes under prevention, which is among official tasks, but I do things above my duties in that.

Q7. [IF YES TO Q6] Which?

I give lectures on drugs.

Q8. If they are not among your 'official' tasks, are there any of the above (or other) aspects that you think should be included officially as part of your responsibility?

Q9. Have you been given special training for any or all aspects of your work with juveniles?

Yes	✓	→ Go to Q10
No		→ Skip Q10 and go to Q11

Q10. [IF YES TO Q6] What kind?

There are compulsory courses. A university degree is required here in our department. I was doing law. I also attended three courses given by lecturers from abroad – from DA, FBI and the Canadian police. In my opinion they were workshops or experience exchange rather than courses. It was quite good.

Q11. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of *the social and family background* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

I suppose broken relations in family. It need not be necessary in terms of divorce of parents. The family can look like everything is OK, but in fact there is no understanding among its members. Bad economic situation. Young people long for things presented by the media. They could feel it unjust that they cannot afford certain things the other peers could. They start to think how to get those things and could have the idea to steal them for example.

Q12. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of the *personal situation* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

Idle leisure time. If there are no activities to spend their leisure time in a constructive way, the probability of influence from negative social environment is higher.

Q13. In your experience, what are the main factors that push young people to commit offences?

Young people admire action film heroes (gangster movies). They have difficulties in distinguishing negative from positive models. Negative ones appear positive to them.

Q14. What proportion of those young people whom you monitor are finally sentenced to a penal institution?

About 30%

Q15. What proportion (of those you are monitoring) offend again following their release from such an institution?

2/3 (60%). The majority of them believe that they were arrested because of bad luck and that the next time they will not be nabbed.

Q16. What trends in youth crime do you see at the present time?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

The way they commit the crimes is more sophisticated. Brutality is also increasing. Girls are involved in offending, but not directly. They have quite strong influence on boys in a gang.

Q17. Do you have suggestions as to any additional or improved means that would help you, your police colleagues and/or other services to reduce youth crime?

This is a question of money. I think more organizations dealing with young offenders would be helpful. But there should also be control of such organizations by the official bodies to avoid misuse of financial means. More attention should be paid to tertiary prevention.

Q18. What is your opinion about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the decisions and sentences currently being handed down by the court?

What surprises is that sometimes courts at the same level (e.g. level of district court) pass different decisions on the same or similar kind of crimes.

Q19. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used more?

Suspended sentences should be used more along with certain restrictions (for example in the case of drug abused youth - compulsory therapy). Decisions should be more in favour of victims.

Q20. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used less?

I have no idea.

Q21. Do you have any other comments regarding the way in which youth crime is being tackled in your country at the present time?

More attention should be paid to monitoring and tertiary prevention.

Q22. In your opinion, what are the likely trends of youth crime in your country during the next five years?

I suppose, crimes will become even more sophisticated and organized. This is obvious – one who steals cars will have no time to sell them.

Thank you very much.

6. Lumir, aged 46, male, a police officer responsible for young offenders

Location:	Police of Czech Republic - South-Moravian district administration
Date of interview:	1 December 1999
Interviewee (name, age, gender):	Lumir, 46, M
Start time:	14.10
End time:	14.24
Comments from facilitator:	No particular remark

Q1. For how long have you been dealing with young offenders?

For 4 years.

Q2. Did you choose to work specifically with young offenders?

Yes		→ Go to Q3, skip Q4 and go to Q5
No	✓	→ Skip Q3 and go to Q4

Q3. [IF YES TO Q2] For what reasons?

Q4. [IF NO TO Q2] How did you come to take on this work?

I was assigned to it.

Q5. Which of the following aspects does your work officially cover:

Prevention (identifying/working with young people at risk)	✓
Investigation of offences	✓
Arrest	✓
Interrogation	✓
Recommending pre-trial measures (remand in custody, bail, return to family...)	No
Supervising pre-trial detainees	No
Making recommendations to the court regarding the sentence	No
Supervising or monitoring as a result of a court decision	No
Supervising or monitoring once the sentence is completed	No
Assisting with reintegration (e.g. helping to find a job)	No

Prevention, investigation of offences, arrest, interrogation.

Q6. If they are not among your 'official' tasks, do you undertake any of the above aspects in an 'unofficial'/voluntary manner?

Yes	✓	→ Go to Q7
No		→ Skip Q7 and go to Q8

Q7. [IF YES TO Q6] Which?

Education - seminars.

Q8. If they are not among your "official" tasks, are there any of the above (or other) aspects that you think should be included officially as part of your responsibility?

Q9. Have you been given special training for any or all aspects of your work with juveniles?

Yes	✓	→ Go to Q10
No		→ Skip Q10 and go to Q11

Q10. [IF YES TO Q6] What kind?

Communication, methods of interrogation.

Q11. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of *the social and family background* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

Incomplete family, lack of time for children.

Q12. What features seem to be particularly characteristic of the *personal situation* of the young offenders with whom you come into contact?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

Insufficient control by parents, in other cases too intensive control. Unfavourable social conditions.

Q13. In your experience, what are the main factors that push young people to commit offences?

They have no hobbies, nobody cares about them after class. The leader of the gang becomes a substitute for their family.

Q14. What proportion of those young people whom you monitor are finally sentenced to a penal institution?

I cannot tell.

Q15. What proportion (of those you are monitoring) offend again following their release from such an institution?

I cannot tell, because some I deal with again, others not.

Q16. What trends in youth crime do you see at the present time?

INTERVIEWER PROBES IF NECESSARY:

Increased brutality, increased number of crimes.

Q17. Do you have suggestions as to any additional or improved means that would help you, your police colleagues and/or other services to reduce youth crime?

I think decreasing the age of criminal liability from 15 to 14, would help. More finances should be allocated to prevention and leisure time activities for young people.

Q18. What is your opinion about the appropriateness and effectiveness of the decisions and sentences currently being handed down by the court?

It takes quite a long time until the sentence is passed by the court.

Q19. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used more?

Suspended sentences along with specified measures for a given period of time.

Q20. Is there one or more type of decision/sentence that you would like to see used less?

In the case of young people – imprisonment should be used less.

Q21. Do you have any other comments regarding the way in which youth crime is being tackled in your country at the present time?

It is being tackled in a repressive and not in a preventive way. There are bodies responsible for prevention, but in my opinion, these are sometimes more interested in money than in youth.

Q22. In your opinion, what are the likely trends of youth crime in your country during the next five years?

I expect the increase of aggressive behaviour in offending, and a higher rate of crime related to property (stealing etc.)

Thank you very much.