

Perceptions of confidence in Justice. Qualitative interviews in Lithuania

Evaldas Visockas

These are results of qualitative interviews in project JUSTIS. Interview was conducted during the meeting with work group which was gathered by NPLC for JUSTIS project purposes in Lithuania.

Work group:

- Ministry of Interior Affairs
- Police department under the Ministry of Interior Affairs
- National Courts Administration
- General Prosecutors Office
- Prison Department under the Ministry of Justice
- Public Opinion and Market Research company “Vilmorus”
- Law Institute
- Criminology Studies Centre of Vilnius University

Three themes were discussed in the meeting:

- Trust in the police
- Justification of police actions
- Fear of crime/insecurity

The whole criminal justice system was not covered in the discussion, as it was thought to be too broad. Only trust in the police was discussed.

Discussed questions:

1. What does trust in the police mean to you? What different things/elements does trust include?
2. How good job are the police in your opinion doing?
3. How do you justify the actions of the police? What makes police actions acceptable in your eyes? What kinds of actions are not acceptable?
4. What does fear of crime/insecurity mean to you? What kinds of thoughts or associations come to your mind from words such as 'fear', 'insecurity', 'worry', 'anxiety' etc.?
5. What kinds of things might affect people's fear of crime?

What does trust in the police mean to you? What different things/elements does trust include?

1. Personal safety – if I do not suffer from criminal offences, that means police works well, I can trust it
2. Fast help after incident
3. Qualified job
4. Kindness, willingness to help
5. Timely advices

What does trust in the police mean to you? What different things/elements does trust include?

6. Understanding that police will start acting after report
7. Attention will be shown even if the problem will not be solved
8. Seeing that police carries its duties
9. Not punishing for small misdemeanour, but warning – that contributes to confidence

What does trust in the police mean to you? What different things/elements does trust include?

10. Sufficient provision of police (technical, fuel for patrolling, interior and exterior look of police station, policemen salaries) – that means it is able to carry its duties and solve problems
11. Clear procedures and possibilities of complaints on illegitimate police actions
12. Police accountability to publicity
13. Popularity, leadership, carried policy of police authority

What does trust in the police mean to you? What different things/elements does trust include?

14. Police friendly background from the media, friends, relatives and other people.
15. Do people apply the police or try to solve their problems by other means?

How good job are the police in your opinion doing?

1. Do police explain reasons why something is forbidden to do now?
2. Do police explain essence of conducted procedures in order to make believe he works accurately, correctly and fairly?
3. Is the reaction for call immediate?
4. Do police get to the place quickly (for example where nuisance takes place)?

How good job are the police in your opinion doing?

5. Do police inform me, what was done concerning my report or application (not always is clear what is police doing in my case)?
6. Do police inform victim where to apply for damage compensation or other cases?
7. Do I see many violations of law (teens buying alcohol and others)? If it is so – police work is improper.
8. Capability to solve problems (for example police warned noise makers, but after police left, they started it over)

How good job are the police in your opinion doing?

9. How easy (difficult) is to get through to the police station by phone?

10. Do police question all possible witnesses when carries crime investigation?

11. Do police concern or takes care of suspicious situations which can be related with law violation?

12. How does police communicate with people? Do police officers talk to people?

How good job are the police in your opinion doing?

13. Do I know local police inspector? Do I know how to call him, where to find him?

14. Do police, show concern and help to find responsible and competent handlers of problems in problematic situations, when it is difficult to decide which organisation has to handle them. (Example: drunk man lying on the street, freezing to death and I am calling the police)

How good job are the police in your opinion doing?

15. How police react to reports of misdemeanours? Do they take any actions or offers not to pay attention, because the problem seems to police unsolvable (offers do not register a misdemeanour, because causer or lost property unable to find)
16. Do police encourage people report law violations?
17. Do police capacitate people to take part in crime prevention and control, explain them how get involved and what to do?

How do you justify the actions of the police? What makes police actions acceptable in your eyes? What kinds of actions are not acceptable?

1. Are the police actions proportional to violation? Example: you can be kept in lockup for 48 hours according the law for small violation.
2. Is the police acting illegitimately in some cases (drives a car without the light on, is speeding without necessity or without signal lights), but punishes others for the same things.
3. Do people feel persecuted – police does its job too diligent?

How do you justify the actions of the police? What makes police actions acceptable in your eyes? What kinds of actions are not acceptable?

4. Legitimacy also is shown by qualitative indicator of how many and what content complaints present about police work.

What does fear of crime/insecurity mean to you? What kinds of thoughts or associations come to your mind from words such as 'fear', 'insecurity', 'worry', 'anxiety' etc.?

1. If we speak about insecurity feeling, we must define it as insecurity from criminal offences, because insecurity feeling can arise from economic situation, health, etc.
2. Victim of crime feels anger because of loss rather than fear.
3. Fear is a short time emotion (I fear to go to dark backstreet, because something may happen to me). Anxiety about crime – long term emotion.

What does fear of crime/insecurity mean to you? What kinds of thoughts or associations come to your mind from words such as 'fear', 'insecurity', 'worry', 'anxiety' etc.?

4. Would I change living place if I feel not secure in this area.

5. Do I use self defence and security equipment (alarm, dog, grating, tear gas)?

6. Do I change my calendar because of possible crimes risk – when to go home, to go home by taxi or on foot?

7. Do I think which place is safer for car parking to avoid crime risk?

8. Insecurity feeling (not fear of crime) can be partially indicated by property insurance (how often insurance is used).

What kinds of things might affect people's fear of crime?

1. Confidence that police will come in time when you need help
2. Environment. Does it make impression of abandoned and uncontrolled?
3. Seeing police patrolling
4. Daytime
5. Staying alone
6. Distant police
7. Suspicious people round about

What kinds of things might affect people's fear of crime?

8. The further from habitual environment, the stronger feeling of insecurity
9. If I know neighbours, I feel safer (I feel safe in countryside, because I know almost everyone)
10. Possibility of wide view behind the window, entrance
11. Usually fear of crime is affects people differently depending on their age, sex, education, time spending habits.

Conclusions

- Themes “trust in the police” and “justification of police actions” overlapped
- Questions proved to be quite difficult: it is not easy to define what constitutes trust or fear, this is why concrete questions and examples are needed
- The interviewees talked a lot about what affects trust and fear; media and own experiences were considered essential

Lithuanian peculiarities and differences

- People judge the police very critically. This judgement is inherited from Soviet regime, when the police was used as repression tool.
- Confidence in police is relatively low in Lithuania.
- Police in Lithuania has image of punishing, but not helping institution.
- Provision of police and qualification of police officers in Lithuanian is relatively low.

Thank you

More information about project JUSTIS

<http://www.eurojustis.eu>



Centre for Crime Prevention in Lithuania

<http://www.nplc.lt/en>