

**Holas, Jakub – Večerka, Kazimír**

**Stát a občan v prevenci kriminality**

**GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS IN THE PROCESS OF PREVENTING CRIMINALITY**

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*SUMMARY*

The “Government and Citizens in the Process of Preventing Criminality” publication has been prepared based on a survey of public opinions by the employees of the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention Jakub Holas and Kazimír Večerka. The survey took place in November 2012. It was initiated by the National Committee for Preventing Criminality. The survey was conducted by the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention, which prepared the survey concept (including the research instrument) and assessed the collected data as well. The actual survey was implemented by the IBRS agency on a sample of 3,080 respondents throughout the entire Czech Republic.

The target population was the general population of the Czech Republic, 15 years and older. When selecting the sample, the quota selection method was used, taking into account the age, gender, education and population of the given community in a way that the acquired data are representative for the entire Czech Republic as well as individual regions. Based on a quota schedule, a total of 220 interviews in each region of the Czech Republic were conducted.

The research has especially strived to provide a certain current information base for the institutions represented in the National Committee for Preventing Criminality. This base should improve their preventive strategies for the next period.

The research included several topics, closely related to the area of criminal policies and especially in the area of criminality prevention. The first part of the study considers relations between citizens and the state authorities, which are involved in the process of securing safety of the citizens. This part thus elaborates on the degree of expectation of assistance from the government for addressing individual problems and on the questions related to the evaluation of the activities of the state authorities. A special attention was paid to the activities of the Police of the Czech Republic.

Satisfaction with the work of the police was assessed from many perspectives. Primarily, opinions of the respondents with regard to the policemen, in relation to their numbers, focus, equipment, character and communication qualities as well as their wages, were mapped. The survey also touched other questions, such as: To which extent should policemen be involved in preventive activities and, on the other hand, to which extent it is

suitable to include laymen in the professional police work? Respondents were also asked questions, objective of which was to determine activities of the police force that should be significantly strengthened.

Moreover, the respondents were also asked questions that mapped their trust in individual police bodies based on their willingness to actively participate in the criminality overseeing process. These questions focused on the issue of how the respondents would most likely react if they witness criminal activity – if and how they would cooperate with the law enforcement agencies, if they would report such criminal activity and if they would be willing to consequently testify as witnesses.

In relation to this topic, the second part of the questioning process included questions that were supposed to determine what kind of experience the respondents have with criminal activities, i.e. if they have been victims of a property offence or violent crime within the last year. These victim-focused questions, dealing with the past, were complemented by inquiries related to the degree of the respondents' concerns that they could become victims of a property offence or violent crime in a near future. The questions aspired to assess if, and to what extent, the respondents consider the Czech Republic to be a safe country.

Furthermore, the publication focused on the issue of criminality and its prevention. The entire presentation is introduced by a reflection on the sensibility of the perception of the causes of criminality by the respondents, respectively on the way the respondents assessed 25 theoretical causes, which could result in a long-term development of asocial or antisocial behavior of individuals. The publication also addresses the tendency of the respondents to relate criminal activities to certain groups of citizens.

A separate part of the study addresses prevention questions, once again, from various perspectives. The respondents expressed their opinions about the importance of various preventive programs, which are applied in the public sphere, as well as preventive measures, which they have applied in order to protect their lives and assets. The results of the research, which testify about the degree of the social distance between the correspondents and some public interest facilities (Romani cultural center, police station, home for seniors, drug rehabilitation center, etc.), are also very interesting.

Let us state some of the main findings of the research. It was demonstrated that the respondents are accepting a significantly greater responsibility for most matters that effect them (this is especially true when compared with the findings from 2005). The respondents consider topics related to the way of how they spend their leisure time and how families raise their kids, and topics about the responsibility to protect one' own health to be parts of the private sphere. On the other hand, the correspondents believe that the government shall be especially involved when it comes to securing adequate retirement conditions for

retired people. The respondents also expect a greater responsibility of the government when securing actual safety.

When assessing the selected authorities and organizations, the respondents consider the traffic police to be the best, followed by police units that secure order. On the other hand, the respondents were deeply critical when asked about the work of courts. The research survey demonstrated that a positive perception of the Police of the Czech Republic has been growing in many areas. The biggest shifts were recorded in the area of an improved communication between the policemen and the citizens. The respondents also admit, more often than before, that the wages of the policemen are insufficient. From the perspective of preventive activities, the respondents expect that the Police of the Czech Republic should devote more time to inspecting hazardous locations and securing preventive supervision in the area of road traffic. People believe that Police activities should be most supported in the area of securing public order on the streets as well as in the field, as well as when dealing and determining violent criminality and property offences. At the same time, it is clear that, about a quarter century after the velvet revolution, a majority of the respondents do not approve assistance of laymen for regular police work. The respondents are willing to accept a certain smaller help of laymen for securing safety of children around schools.

When it comes to the possibility of being a witness to a property offence, two fifths of the respondents would be willing to notify the police bodies about such an offence under their own name. However, about one third of the respondents would do so only anonymously. Similarly, only every tenth respondent would be willing to offer his/her testimony spontaneously while almost one fifth of them would not be willing to do so under any circumstances. Generally speaking, the respondents are willing to testify in criminal proceedings related to a theft, which they would witness. Nevertheless, they would be willing to testify in this case only if requested to do so.

The respondents believe that criminal acts are especially caused under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. According to them, criminal activities are – probably as a result of the current frequency of discussions about this phenomenon in the public sphere – also related to institutional corruption and negative examples of politicians. Furthermore, the respondents also connect criminal activities with the phenomena that are closely related to poverty and to being excluded from the society (homelessness, unemployment, established ghettos). On the other hand, the respondents connect the divorce rate, which currently represents a significant social problem, with the criminality causes only rarely. Similarly, they do not see any correlation between the increase of criminality and the education system with its educational methods and personnel composition of the teaching staff (negligible impact of the school system feminization), secularization of the society or the consumer life style supported by aggressive marketing. It would be worth it to contemplate why the respondents connect antisocial behavior with disrespect to legal standards only rarely. When

comparing the results of the survey for determining causes of criminal behavior in 2005 and now, we can see that the current respondents permanently emphasize the poverty factor and significantly underestimate the violence showed in the media, which can represent a negative behavioral model as an integral part of people's lives.

The respondents were also answering the question, which preventive programs they consider suitable for further development. The most beneficial preventive programs for the respondents are programs that focus on the issues of unemployment and management of drug addictions. Since the last survey in 2005, the prestige of the above stated programs has increased. Programs that secure more policemen on the streets and that can improve safety on the streets (lighting, camera systems) enjoy continuous support of the respondents. Programs that focus on problematic youth enjoy a certain support as well. On the other hand, the least supported programs include preventive measures that focus on educational activities (printing flyers and preventively oriented information booklets), preventive activities of various churches, activities that lead to cultural and educational development of the Romani minority as well as theoretical research of criminality causes and conditions as the sources of targeted preventive interventions. Generally speaking, we can say that people do not sufficiently understand and value the real importance and objectives of individual prevention measures, are often under the influence of negative stereotypes and often emphasize, more or less hidden, repressive accent.

Most respondents believe that the current situation when it comes to households security against criminality is "average", i.e. the most common answers are related to such measures, which correspond to the necessary degree of caution (most respondents lock their building entry doors, do not let unknown people into their buildings or apartments, know the emergency police phone number, etc.). When comparing the information about this topic with the research survey in 2005, we can generally see that popularity of the technical security measures of households has grown for a significant part of the people (especially for the more educated part of the population). On the other hand, it seems that the actual active accumulation of preventive aids generally stagnates. We can state, to a certain extent, an optimistic hypothesis that alertness of the citizens has decreased also in relation to the perception that there are no serious dangers in the area where they live. In other words, based on the data from this survey, we can assume that the so-called moral panic, incurred in the society after the changes in the 1990's, has receded.

Translated by: Presto