

Youth Drug and Crime Prevention Practices in Hungary as Reflected in the Opinions of Students and Professionals

Fruzsina Albert, Olga Tóth

Purpose:

In this article, we will try to compare how different actors view/experience current prevention practices of youth delinquency in Hungary.

Design/Methods/Approach:

We use both qualitative and quantitative data regarding the views of the professionals involved in working with young people and 14–17 year old students' opinions on existing prevention programs on youth violence and delinquent behaviour and their perceived effectiveness.

Findings:

The repressive approach, although increasingly important, is not considered very effective. The educational system seems to be the best framework for prevention, but also community development should be important, as useful free-time activities and locations for such are widely missing. Central policy making efforts could be useful to introduce elements of crime prevention (in the broadest sense) in the school curricula. There is a significant difference between the opinion of students and professionals regarding the role of teachers in prevention activities. While experts consider that teachers should play an increased role in prevention in the future, young people are often quite sceptical about these actors.

Originality/Value:

A unique feature of this article is that it brings together and can reflect opinions of the actors involved in prevention.

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Keywords: youth delinquency, crime prevention programs, efficiency, Hungary

Pristopi preprečevanja kriminalitete in zlorabe drog na Madžarskem skozi pogled dijakov in strokovnjakov

Namen prispevka:

V prispevku bomo skušali primerjati, kako različni akterji vidijo/izkusijo obstoječe pristope preprečevanja mladoletniške odklonskosti na Madžarskem.

Metode:

V prispevku uporabljamo kvalitativne in kvantitativne podatke, ki se nanašajo na poglede strokovnjakov, vključenih v delo z mladimi, in stališča 14–17 let starih dijakov o obstoječih programih preprečevanja mladoletniškega nasilja in delinkvence ter njihovo oceno o učinkovitosti teh programov.

Ugotovitve:

Represivni pristop, ki postaja vedno bolj pomemben, ni učinkovit. Izobraževalni sistem je očitno najboljši okvir za preprečevanje. Poleg tega bi moral biti pomemben tudi razvoj skupnosti, organizacija koristnih prostočasnih dejavnosti in zagotovitev prostorov za njihovo izvajanje, ki jih primanjkuje. Koristno bi bilo, če bi v načrtovanje politik vključili uvedbo preprečevanja kriminalitete (v najširšem pomenu) v šolski program. Obstaja veliko razhajanje med stališči dijakov in strokovnjakov glede vloge učiteljev v preventivnih aktivnostih. Strokovnjaki ocenjujejo, da bi morali v prihodnosti učitelji imeti večjo vlogo pri preprečevanju, medtem ko so mladi glede tega razmeroma skeptični.

Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:

Prednost prispevka je predstavitev mnenja različnih akterjev, vključenih v preprečevanje.

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Ključne besede: odklonskost mladih, programi preprečevanja kriminalitete, učinkovitost, Madžarska

1 INTRODUCTION

It is a very important characteristic of the criminal policy of a country to what extent, if at all, it focuses on and allocates resources to crime prevention, or the proper solution for criminal activity is considered to be in the hands of the criminal justice system. In the EU, crime prevention is defined as: "... all measures that are intended to reduce or otherwise contribute to reducing crime and citizens' feeling of insecurity ... either through directly deterring criminal activities or through policies and interventions designed to reduce the potential for crime and the causes of crime".¹ As it is pointed out in one Commission communication, "experience shows that an unbalanced focus on repressive measures leads to ever increasing costs for the criminal justice system, growing prison populations and recidivism

¹ EUR-Lex, 2001 (See Article 1.3).

rates. If well conceived and implemented, preventive measures can, to varying degrees, contribute to a considerable reduction of crime."²

In this article, we compare how different actors view/experience current prevention practices of youth delinquency in Hungary. In doing so, we use several sources of information collected using qualitative and quantitative methods within the framework of the *YouPrev* project during 2011–2012. Quantitative information on the views of various professionals involved in working with young people is gained from the Institutional and Expert Survey, and qualitative material from the Local Interview Study.³ Students' opinions are available from the School Survey carried out on a sample of 2104 14–17 year-olds in Budapest and in Veszprém County.⁴ Some additional local data collection has been conducted on the schools themselves, by having schools complete a data sheet with relevant school level data on the background of student populations (e.g., Roma, disadvantaged, high proportion of students commuting from a number of settlements, etc.), availability of extra services (psychologist, social worker, etc.) and some school-level information of prevention activities. In Veszprém County, we also received data from the public health authority where they offered such programs prior to our data collection.

It is well-known that socio-economic background and deviant behaviour are related, and since the transition, the poverty risk of children has increased continuously. The profile of the poor in 2009 showed that almost one third was age 0–17, whereas only 5% were older than 65 years. Half of the poor were living in completely inactive or unemployed households with zero work intensity, and more than 53% lived in villages, as compared to 1/3 of the total population (Gábos & Szívós, 2010: 74). At present, the poverty rate in households with children is nearly 50% higher than the overall rate for all Hungarian households, and is nearly double the rate for households without children. The proportion of children living in jobless households is the second highest in the EU (Gábos & Szívós, 2010: 73), and labour market opportunities have also significant regional differences. The risk of poverty increased in the 1990s by geographic location. Although the settlement type (villages) and/or the settlement size (small settlements) have always been risk factors for poverty, the risk of poverty and social exclusion in rural areas

² Commission of the European Communities, 2004.

³ *The professional background of the respondents in the Institutional and Expert survey was very diverse: sociologist, lawyer, therapist, psychiatrist, teacher, psychologist, economist, criminologist, police officer, mental health specialist etc. In the Local Interview study altogether 20 semi-structured interviews were prepared based on an international interview guideline in Budapest and in Veszprém County. We applied a multi-professional sample for the mostly individual interviews, which have been supplemented with a group discussion with selected experts and a group discussion with youngsters.*

⁴ *In all participating countries in YouPrev the aim was to select a rural and urban area for study. Budapest, the selected urban area, is the capital city of Hungary, with almost 2 million inhabitants (1/5 of the whole Hungarian population). It also hosts almost all institutions with a national scope as well. Veszprém County, selected as a rural area, is one of the 19 counties of Hungary and is situated in the region of Central Transdanubia, in the more developed Western part of Hungary. It has a total population of 358807 who live in altogether 212 settlements. It has 6 cities with a population of at least 10000 people. The biggest one, Veszprém, the county capital has almost 65000 inhabitants.*

increased dramatically during the 1990s. Today, we see that long-term poverty is mostly concentrated in rural areas and in the North-Eastern regions of the country (Vukovich, 2008). Poverty in large cities is far below the average, smaller towns around the national average, while villages are much more affected by poverty than any other settlements. Thus, regions with significant rural areas and many small villages are more extensively affected by poverty. Those living in villages are among the poor with a six times higher risk in 2009 as compared to a double risk in 2007, and the smaller the settlement one lives in, the higher the risk of poverty. While only 2% of those living in the capital city of Budapest are poor, 20% of those living in villages are thus classified (Gábos & Szívós, 2010: 71).

In Hungary, we have a clear hierarchy amongst secondary schools. After finishing primary school (at the age of 14), students may choose from three types of secondary schools. In vocational schools, few general subjects are taught, the stress is on the vocational training. The dropout rate is more than 30% in these schools with several students coming from lower educated, unemployed families. Vocational secondary schools teach general and vocational subjects equally. Some of these schools offer an outstanding level of education but others are similar to vocational schools. Parents with medium levels of education send their children to these schools. The secondary grammar school is similar to the German “gymnasium”; academic performance is the highest here, and it is the typical school for the children of highly educated parents. Students in various secondary schools differ not only by their family background and academic level of teaching, but by the school climate too (Róbert, 2010; OECD, 2010). Therefore, we find significant differences between students of different schools.

In our sample, urban schools and boys are overrepresented.⁵ One fourth of respondents are 8th graders, and are primary school students. We included more 9th and 10th graders as they are learning in various secondary schools and we supposed that the type of secondary school is one of the most important factors in young people’s behaviour. The mean age of our respondents was 15.5 years ($SD = 1.06$).

2 PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF YOUTH DEVIANCE AND VIOLENCE IN HUNGARY IN GENERAL

Regarding the variety of prevention programs for our target group, the most wide-scale and systematic information is available regarding drug-prevention, mostly prepared in the framework of international co-operation. Results show that in the target group, the programmes/services show a diverse picture. When comparing the objectives of school-based programmes to other programmes, it was found that out-of-school programmes generally operate with a lower number

⁵ During the data collection stage we realized that in some schools, especially in urban vocational schools many students were not able to finish questionnaire or they did not take it seriously. We asked persons who were responsible for data collection to gather more questionnaires from these types of schools. After data cleaning (throwing out unfinished or joking questionnaires) some overrepresentation remained.

of objectives. When compared to school-based programmes, a significantly lower proportion of out-of-school programmes use the methods frequently applied during school work, such as frontal lecture or visual demonstration (Bozsonyi et al., 2010).

As to health promotion programs for this age-group more generally, which often have specific crime-prevention elements as well, several types of programs are present, often in the school system (Kulin & Darvay, 2012). However, our knowledge regarding program offerings is quite sporadic, often based on local data collection or project data, but these all indicate that both methods applied by these programs or the theories behind them vary quite widely and show significant heterogeneity and often lack precise descriptions or evaluations regarding their effectiveness (Paksi et al., 2006: 8–9).

In our research, *“small programs from small money”* is how an expert characterised a majority of existing crime prevention programs. Most actors active in the field perform state responsibilities, with crime prevention just a part of their job. A police officer respondent called the present preventive activities *“trying to put out fire”*, as there is a serious lack of resources, including human resources. Although there are police officers responsible for prevention, almost all of them have a number of other tasks as well. The fact that a number of prevention programs are realised *“from the enthusiasm”* of involved professionals, a number of programs arise. *“It is a problem that everything works on an interpersonal basis, not systematically.”* (interview with a probation officer)

Although the question regarding juvenile problem behaviours targeted by preventive measures pointed to broad categories and widespread behaviours, experts did not consider primary and universal approaches or measures targeted at strengthening protective factors as the ones emphasized. Approaches with a narrow focus on crime and those based on punishment and deterrence clearly dominate most, followed by situational and targeted approaches. Sadly, primary/universal approaches and measures targeted at strengthening protective factors are considered to be the least widespread in Hungary. Experts were in relatively strong agreement with regard to the importance of interagency cooperation and multi-professional approaches, still most experts have the impression that such cooperation is not a widespread common practice in addressing youth crime and violence.

From the experience of experts, target groups for preventive activities are mainly youth with substance abuse problems and those living in care homes/foster care, together with ethnic minority (Roma) youth. Groups who are not in the spotlight of preventive approaches are young females (18–24 years), homeless youth and witnesses. Only a small minority of experts indicated further target groups, such as victims of psycho-terror, young adults having left foster care, those under probation.

The experts also noted that sources of financing and funding in the field of prevention and control of youth crime, deviance and violence are the European Union, followed by non-profit organisations, foundations, and the Government. Private companies were regarded as least important by far.

Evaluation of prevention programs is a basic expectation. In earlier years, much criticism was formulated against the low level and the poor methodological grounding of program evaluations (Farrell, Meyer, Kung, & Sullivan, 2001; Gottfredson, 2001). Today in the USA and some European countries, frequency and level of evaluation process improved much (Taylor, Stein, Mack, Horwood, & Burden, 2008). In Hungary, we find a backlog in this activity. Almost 40% of the experts judged the status of evaluation of prevention measures in Hungary to be “extremely poor” and almost another third as “below average”. The judgment on program evaluation does not seem to be sector-specific. Answers to additional open-format questions⁶ on funding and commissioning of evaluation revealed that evaluation would be ideally very important but is still neglected too often. Some funding institutions consider evaluation as an important condition (especially in case of EU funded projects), but even the small number of experts having an opinion on the issue had doubts regarding the efficiency of evaluation as (if) it is carried out, although they think a good quality evaluation SHOULD be a prerequisite. Obviously, this must be related to the fact that no one knows of standards regarding evaluation; some consider that they are non-existent even at an EU level. Current evaluation is overwhelmingly negatively characterised as hectic, unprofessional, formal, lacking standards, and without professional monitoring. Others see it as almost impossible to carry out, especially to detect direct impact, or consider it would be disproportionately expensive to do so. Overall, experts perceive that there is no opportunity to measure effectiveness, to follow people “*they just disappear from the system*”. Most often the only way to gain some information on effectiveness is the feedback from teachers and participating young people (usually positive). However, some experts mentioned that maybe only the program implementation is bad and if so, effectiveness studies may be misleading, as the program as such might have been good.

Institutions register the number of people involved in their programs, and from this one may have a view about at least how big a circle of the target group has been reached. Of course the overlap between various programs/providers cannot be seen this way. Based on these, one can tell that there is still a significant proportion of the target group which is not at all, or only reached by very sporadic prevention activity; during the school year 2010/2011 police prevention programs in Veszprém County reached 19 settlements, 24 schools, 73 classes and approximately 1500 students. In Budapest, 360 students from 48 schools were exposed to the DADA⁷ program, and even so there are hardly any schools where the program can go on till its end. There is significant fluctuation among instructors. In 2008, the “School policeman” program was launched. “*On paper almost all schools have a policeman but*

⁶ The four following sub-questions of question 15 were:

- a) Who is funding and commissioning evaluation research in the field of youth crime?
- b) To what extent is evaluation a condition for project funding in crime prevention?
- c) To what extent are there standards regarding evaluation of measures in the field of youth crime?
- d) If you were asked to characterize the current status of evaluation of youth crime / youth violence measures in just one or two sentences, how would you say it?

⁷ The school crime prevention program of the Hungarian Police launched in 1992 on the basis of the American Dare program.

it is formal in almost all primary schools: just a telephone number ... There are not as many policemen as schools in the districts." (Interview with a police officer)

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

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

"There should be several programs at a community level, activities for young people for doing sports, culture: more attention should be paid for them ..." (probation officer)

"At schools after school programs should be organised for this age group: this activity has no prestige; the state should secure and finance this." (NGO representative)

Primary care services should have enough resources to concentrate even more on early intervention, as children come into the child protection system in almost "beyond recovery" condition. In child protection institutions, professionals should acquire further training to gain presently lacking skills to help these very problematic children. In correctional facilities in the future, complex institutional networks, as opposed to prisons, would be needed, with one organisation supervising the process from the beginning to real reintegration.

3 ACTORS AND PROBLEMS TARGETED IN PREVENTION WORK

From the experts' point of view, the major categories of youths' problem behaviour targeted by preventive approaches are substance abuse, primarily drug abuse but also the abuse of alcohol or other legal substances. General acts of violence committed by juveniles as well as school-related violence only rank 3rd and 4th respectively, with significantly lower means on the scale. Problems rarely targeted in prevention are political/religious extremism, adherence to violence-legitimizing knife-crime, and dating violence. From the experts' experiences, the primary institutions and professions involved in prevention work are the police, social work, correctional facilities, probationary service, and to a lesser extent social services/welfare. Professionals from the educational and school systems were ranked very low.

Having learned the experts' opinion on existing practices, in the Hungarian version of the survey we added two additional sections to acquire information about the experts' perceptions of current Hungarian youth problem behaviours and also on actors, who should be active in the field of prevention for youth delinquency. The four most important problem behaviours are identical with what is perceived to be the focus of preventive activities. However, there is no such agreement on

who IS or who SHOULD BE doing prevention for the young. Although at present, the police seem to be the primary agent among those institutions involved in prevention and control of youth deviance and violence, ideally it should be primarily the educational system (which is seen to have a minor role at present by the opinion of experts), together with the social/welfare system, which already plays a significant role in the field. This result can also be interpreted as a desired shift from repressive, controlling, punitive approaches toward a more general approach, which targets background factors of youth problem behaviour and is in line with other internationally discussed approaches which also consider that “schools have great potential as a locus for crime prevention”. They provide regular access to students throughout their developmental years, and perhaps the only consistent access to large numbers of the most crime-prone young children in the early school years; they are staffed with individuals paid to help youth develop as healthy, happy, productive citizens; and the community usually supports school efforts to socialize youth. Many of the precursors of delinquent behaviour are school-related and therefore likely to be amenable to change through school-based intervention (Gottfredson, 1997: 5.1.).

3.1 Drug and Alcohol Prevention Programs

Results of the school survey support experts’ opinions that it is drug-and alcohol prevention programs that reach most young people. 75.5% of students in Budapest and 83% of students in Veszprém County claimed to have gained some knowledge on substance use during the previous 12 months. Other nationwide surveys also indicate that schools play a primary role in drug prevention and health education more generally, which is well justified by the fact that more than half of adult drug users got into contact with drugs during their secondary school years or prior to that (Paksi et al., 2006: 6).

	urban students	rural students
primary school	88.3	82.6
vocational school	66.1	84.3
vocational secondary school	72.5	84.8
secondary grammar school	74.8	80.8
total	75.5	83

Table 1:
Ratio of urban and rural students who have received information on alcohol and drugs during the last 12 months
(*n* = 2014)

Of course it is obvious that such information could have been gained via the Internet or in youth clubs, and not with the aim of prevention. On the other hand, we may not err when we consider gaining information at least partly as an activity enhancing prevention, as 50.3% of students in the capital received such information on drugs and alcohol from his/her teachers, and 54.4% in the framework of school activity from other professionals (e.g. policeman, health specialist). This

proportion is even higher in Veszprém County, where 63.8% participated in prevention activities conducted by teachers and 67% in school but taught by other professionals. This quite significant difference may be explained by the fact that in Veszprém County, local institutions (police, local health authority, NGOs etc.) are very active as they organize many drug and alcohol prevention programs. They try to reach most students in the region regardless of school type. Based on students' opinions, the role of teachers and schools even today is a lot more significant, at least quantitatively, than what the experts suppose.

It is quite reassuring that information on drug and alcohol consumption reaches many youngsters. On the other hand, it is also very important what they learned from it. The effects of prevention programmes can be measured by the nature of information students gained from them.

Table 2:
Participant feels
that he/she has
learned ...

	% of respondents	significant differences from the mean value
new facts	64.4	rural vocational: 73.1
about health effects	63.7	rural vocational: 71 rural primary: 69.6
nothing new	29.5	urban students: 33.3 rural vocational: 37.5
made him/her curious about some drugs	15.2	rural vocational: 26.6
how to keep away from drug/ alcohol	53.2	rural primary: 65.5
how to help friends getting away from drug/alcohol	54.4	rural vocational: 63 rural vocational secondary: 61.4

It is impressive to note that two-thirds of the participants who have received information regarding substances mentioned that they have received new information about substance use and its health effects. Especially important is the information for rural vocational school students who are the heaviest substance users in our sample. Unfortunately, only 50% of students learned how to keep away from drugs and alcohol and also the same ratio learned something about how to help friends.

In Veszprém County, not only did more students participate in prevention programs or receive information on substance use at school, but this acquired information is evaluated more positively. As compared to one-third of the respondents in Budapest, only one-fourth consider having received no new information and also about 10% more indicated having heard new things on the health effects of drugs and alcohol, their characteristic features or how to get rid of them or keep away from them. At the same time, an unintended negative side effect of prevention can be increased attention of the young on certain new substances; this phenomenon affects 15% of them, regardless of the place of data collection.

Despite the high participation rate and relatively positive evaluation, we cannot regard these programs to be effective enough, as substance use of both rural and urban students is extremely high. 60.6% of students were drunk at least once during the previous year, 42.8% the previous month, and the ratio of those 14–17 year-olds who were drunk more than three times during the previous month was 13%. The ratio of alcohol to drug consumption is especially high in vocational schools with low prestige. Substance use is a widely accepted leisure time activity and one-half of 14 year-old primary school pupils already started drinking or using some kind of drugs. Only one-third of our respondents indicated neither alcohol nor drug use of any kind. Concerning the high rate of alcohol and drug consumption in Hungary, prevention programs in this area need qualitative and quantitative strengthening too.

As mentioned above, experts consider that schools and teachers should play a more significant role than today in substance prevention activity. The question can be reversed: to what extent do students themselves consider school and teachers to be capable of keeping them away from substance use?

	no effect		low effect		high effect	
	Budapest	Veszprém County	Budapest	Veszprém County	Budapest	Veszprém County
primary school	26.6	25.5	61.1	57.1	12.3	17.4
vocational school	38.7	40.8	55.2	52.5	6.1	6.7
vocational secondary school	34.8	29.9	57.6	65	7.5	5.7
secondary grammar school	31.1	23.9	59.1	67.1	9.7	9

Table 3: How much influence can school have on keeping students away from alcohol or drugs? (%)

As opposed to the opinion of professionals, young people attribute low influence of schools in drug and alcohol prevention. One-third of urban youth and 29% of rural youth think that school has no influence at all on in keeping students away from substance use. Secondary school students and especially vocational school students in rural areas attribute low influence of schools. Previously, we presented data that alcohol consumption and drug use is the highest among them, and all of the professionals emphasised that prevention started at the earliest possible age can be more effective. This is supported by the fact that the impact of the school on substance use was evaluated highest by primary school students, at the same time the proportion of those who attribute no impact at all to school prevention is lowest among them. It seems that for the group of 16–17 year-old students and especially those who attend these low academic level and low prestige schools, it is too late for the school to keep them away from substance

use. These young people accept new information on alcohol and drugs but do not think that school could divert them from substance use.

3.2 Prevention Programs against Violence

School survey data support the opinion of professionals that prevention programs against violence affect a significantly lower proportion of students than programs against substance use. While more than 75% of students received information on drug/alcohol, only one-fourth of them participated in any kind of violence prevention. Having consulted experts, we suppose that real proportion of students who took part in these kinds of prevention programs is even lower. There are some classes where most of the respondents indicated that they participated in some violence prevention activity and we feel they were the ones who really experienced such a thing. In some other classes, only a couple of students stated that they received some kind of training against violence. However, prevention activities in schools typically target students of one class per occasion. It is unlikely that one or two students take part in it and the others do not.

Table 4:
Ratio of urban
and rural
students who
took part in
prevention
programs
against violence
(n = 2014)

	urban students	rural students
primary school	25.1	27.6
vocational school	23.4	35.2
vocational secondary school	16.1	18.7
secondary grammar school	30	17.4
total	22.6	23.4

Collectively, students in Veszprém County participated in such programs to a somewhat higher ratio than students in Budapest, and their targeting seems more efficient as well. While in Budapest, violence prevention affects secondary grammar school students to the highest extent, although they are least involved in violent activities. In Veszprém County, such programs reach the most at risk group of vocational school students to the highest extent.

Supported by expert interviews and workshops, we think that training that targets bullying and conflict management would be a very important part of school curricula. Not only students but adults as well are also unable to solve conflict situations without violence. This kind of prevention should enjoy the highest priority in Hungarian society. At the same time, our data indicate that the most frequent violence prevention program, conflict management training, affected a mere 11% of young people (to the highest extent, 15.3% secondary grammar school students from Budapest). Only 9% participated in programs targeting school bullying, this despite the fact that the ratio of cyberbullying is significant in Hungary, with 11% of boys and 19% of girls having experienced it so far. A

significant proportion of violence prevention programs take place in the school setting, other locations play only a very minor role in organising such activities.

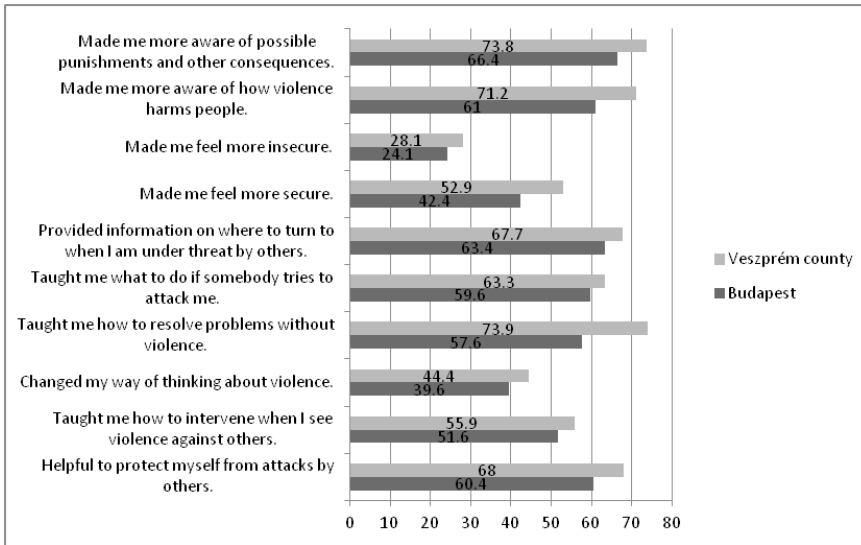


Figure 1:
What was the gained from violence prevention programs? (n = 520) (%)

Figure 1 indicates that violence prevention programs had an effect on most of those involved in them, and they learned valuable information on the various consequences of violent behaviour, and who to turn to in a given situation for help. Young people themselves consider the major positive impact of such programs to be to have acquired non-violent conflict management skills, which is also of paramount importance according to experts as well.

	no effect		low effect		high effect	
	Budapest	Veszprém County	Budapest	Veszprém County	Budapest	Veszprém County
primary school	9.5	10.5	70.2	69.4	20.2	20.2
vocational school	23	23.7	69.1	66.3	7.9	10.1
vocational secondary school	14.8	10.9	69.6	74.8	15.6	14.3
secondary grammar school	9.6	4.5	69.6	73	20.8	22.5

Table 5:
How much influence can school have on decreasing violent behaviour of students? (%)

If we compare Table 5 with the table on substance abuse prevention, one can see that school violence prevention programs are evaluated more positively by students, and that girls trust such programs more than boys. There is no difference at all between those who live in urban or in rural areas, or in Veszprém County or Budapest. Both urban and rural youth attribute a medium or slightly less than medium-level influence of schools in reducing students' violent behaviour. Primary school pupils and secondary grammar school students trust this kind of influence at the highest levels. As secondary grammar school students come from families with the highest educational level and social status, so the values of middle class families and schools point to the same direction.

3.3 Opinions on Criminal Behaviour and Prevention

Students can be divided into four characteristic groups regarding what types of crimes or other breaches of law they have committed so far. The sample distribution is presented in Table 6.

Table 6:
Distribution
of respondents
based on their
involvement
in criminal
activities, life-
time prevalence
(*n* = 2014)

	Budapest	Veszprém County	Total
Committed no crime/minor offence at all.	59.2	70.8	64.7
Only committed one or minor offence (graffiti, damaged something on purpose, petty theft etc.)	20.7	14.1	17.6
Committed crime against property (e.g. stole something from a car, stole a car, broke into a flat) AND committed crime against people (caused injury, engaged in group fight, robbery etc.)	5.4	4.1	5.5
Committed crimes belonging to ALL 3 above mentioned categories (minor offence, crime against property and people)	14.7	8.7	12.2

We compared student evaluation of prevention programs with the variable we constructed based on their involvement in different types of criminal activities. Both violent behaviour and substance abuse prevention programmes had similar rates of attendance when comparing the four student groups based on criminal activities. At the same time, one can find significant differences regarding the evaluation of such programs. Violence prevention programs are considered to be ineffective by 9% of those never involved in crime or minor offences, and 26% of those involved in all three types of offences. In case of substance abuse programs, these two opposite values are 26% and 47.6%, respectively. The more serious crime students have been involved in, the more sceptic (s)he is concerning the efficiency of prevention programs.

Those involved in (a number of) crimes obtained information on drugs and alcohol from the Internet, at youth centres or from someone else to a greater extent than others, and a lot less so from teachers and other professionals at school. Those

most involved in criminal activities participated to the lowest extent in conflict management training and to the highest extent in activities against bullying at school or in programs organised outside of school.

As referred to earlier, the Hungarian judiciary system recently made a major move toward repression. Experts called attention to the fact that severe punishment has high levels of support both among policy makers and the general public. In this regard, it is notable that members of the group most involved in criminal activities (who themselves can experience the force of law on their own skins) claimed to a significantly higher extent than all other students, that punishment does not keep them away from forbidden things entirely (18.8% claimed that compared to the sample average of 9%). On the other hand, those young people most involved in criminality considered improving their prospects to get a job to be a good method to the highest extent (54% compared to the sample average of 47.8%).

The importance of family background may be indicated by the fact that while 87.1% of those having not committed any crimes attributes a major role to parents, while only 68.5% of those having committed all 3 types of offences feel that way. The highest ratio of this latter group considers the role of teachers, social workers or the police to be unimportant in keeping young people away from forbidden things. For these young people, school is not a point of reference, in their case prevention activity at school is almost ineffective.

3.4 What Can Keep Young People Away from Forbidden Things?

To find capable persons who can influence young people is the crucial point of prevention. If school has weak influences on student substance use and violent behaviour, it is an important question to ask which institutions or persons would be suitable for that in the respondents' opinion.

It is obvious that respondents think that parents and friends are the most important actors in keeping young people from forbidden things. 82.6% of students consider the role of parents to be very important, and that of friends 68%; rural students attribute even higher importance to parents. The experts also stated that the role of the family and parents is outstanding in prevention work; effective crime and drug prevention is unimaginable without the support of family and parents. Respondents attribute medium influence to police and sport coaches in keeping young people from forbidden things. This reflects the fact that information both from students and professionals indicate that currently among institutional actors, it is the police who play the most prominent role in crime prevention and prevention of substance use. Students also evaluated the role of social workers (together with teachers) in prevention. It is important to mention that they know very little about social workers, and they do not realize that trainers coming from various NGOs can be social workers. These facts draw attention to the low efficiency of both teachers' and social workers' prevention work. It seems they should find new methods and curricula to improve their activity.

Students consider that listening to young people's problems is the best way to keep them from doing forbidden things, and the availability of positive activities in which to spend their free-time is considered to be very efficient. Better future job prospects and a good general education also play an important role in prevention. It is important to mention that the efficiency of punishment was rated the lowest; young people are expecting more empathy and prospects from the adult society and not more punishment so as to avoid forbidden things. There are significant differences between students from different school types in this regard. Punishment is considered to be effective regarding both boys and girls; two times more often by vocational school than secondary grammar school students (compare: vocational school male students 40%, vocational secondary school male students 30%, secondary grammar school male students 20%, vocational school female students 34.4%, vocational secondary school female students 22%, secondary grammar school female students 14.8%). Prospects to find employment is considered to be a significantly higher factor by vocational than secondary grammar school students (boys 56.8% vs 41.8%, girls 59.1% vs 46.8%). It may have two causes: on one hand, due to the nature of their education, vocational school students are a lot closer to the time when they have to find their place in the labour market. On the other hand, as the educational level of parents and children strongly correlate, and chances to find a job differ very much depending on the level of education, unemployment must be a more frequent experience in the families of vocational school students. However, it should be highlighted that regarding the importance of listening to their problems, there is no difference in students' opinions based on school types. Yet, girls as compared to boys consider this to be very effective (10% higher) in keeping them away from forbidden things.

3.5 Another Aspect: the Comparison of the Prevention Activity of Schools and the Opinion of Students Attending Them

In the framework of the school survey, data were gathered in 29 schools in Budapest and 27 in Veszprém County. Not only students from 8–10 grades were interviewed but the headmasters of the schools were also asked to fill in a data sheet on the school outlining the major characteristics of the institution (number of students, number of disadvantaged students, number of commuting students, preventive activities at school). Altogether, 49 schools provided data with the exception of 7 schools in Budapest. In the following section, we demonstrate how targeted or ad hoc the allocation of limited resources for prevention is. It would be most important to have prevention programs in schools with the highest ratio of at risk students. In addition, we try to compare information gained from the students and from the school management on prevention.

The schools have been divided into three groups on the basis of the ratio of disadvantaged students⁸ in them.

⁸ *The legal definition of disadvantaged students/children: who are entitled to regular child protection benefit on the basis of his/her family and social situation, which the notary of the settlement*

	Budapest	Veszprém County
low (–12%)	36.4	29.6
medium (13–25%)	40.9	37
high (26+%)	22.7	33.4

Table 7:
Distribution of schools based on the ratio of disadvantaged students in them ($n = 49$)

Our data indicate that in the countryside, the ratio of schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students is significantly higher. This is in line with the trends described in the introductory section of the article.

In Budapest, prevention programs reach more schools than in the countryside; only 5 out of 22 schools had no prevention program at all during the previous year. In Veszprém County, out of 27 schools, in 11 there were no prevention programs. At the same time, as indicated previously, prevention programs seem significantly better targeted there than in Budapest. Our data indicate that mostly those schools targeted are those in which most of the disadvantaged students attend. A good example for this is the prevention programs of the Public Health Authority⁹ in Veszprém County. Based on a list provided by them, one can see that from the 27 schools in the school survey during the school year 2011/12, only ten had programs. Seven out of these 10 schools have explicitly high ratios of disadvantaged students.

Data sheets completed by school directors also support regional differences. Altogether 11 schools in Budapest and 10 in Veszprém County had drug/alcohol prevention programs. In Budapest, these programs were not focused in schools with the most disadvantaged student populations while in Veszprém County more than half of such programs targeted the schools with the most disadvantaged students.

Based on the school data sheets, four schools in Budapest had crime prevention programs (none in the disadvantaged schools) whereas in Veszprém County there were eight, of which six were very disadvantaged schools regarding student populations.

The next question can be if there is a correlation between the fact that the schoolmaster claims to have had a prevention program in the school and how many students from that school claim to have participated in such program. We are aware that in case there is a prevention program in the school, not all students are involved in it, especially as they are most often done in a class framework. Thus, it may be that even if a school had prevention programs, the students interviewed in the school survey were not necessarily the ones involved in them. At the same, we suppose that the presence of such programs in the school increases the chance that students got acquainted with the idea of prevention and the management of the school considers prevention to be important. The following table shows the extent (if any) that a prevention program took place in the given school and what

evaluates.

⁹ Crime and substance abuse prevention is considered to be part of public health programs as well. Public Health Authorities employ district nurses (a system which works very efficiently from pregnancy to the end of school years) and a number of health educators.

percentage of students claimed to have participated in substance abuse or violence prevention programs.

Table 8:
Availability of
programs and
the average
number of
students who
participated
in prevention
programs
($n = 56$, the
number of
schools)

By headmaster Student took part in	There was some prevention program in the school ($n = 16$)	There was not any prevention program in the school ($n = 32$)	No data ($n = 7$)
drug/alcohol prevention – Budapest	79.5	44.8	70.5
drug/alcohol prevention – Veszprém County	84.3	79	
Drug/ alcohol prevention together	82	71.4	
prevention against violence - Budapest	24.4	11.4	15.2
prevention against violence - Veszprém County	25.5	17.7	
prevention against violence together	25	16.3	

Our hypothesis is supported by the data obtained. In schools which had any kind of prevention program, a significantly higher ratio of students claimed to have participated in such programs. This may be reassuring for those who do prevention: their work is not without effect.

4 CONCLUSION

When assessing measures and approaches of prevention and control, the majority of experts agreed that intervention should occur at an early age, aim at reducing risk factors and strengthen competencies, and follow a multi-professional approach. However, at present they see a dominance of one-time or very temporary programs which are not seen as very effective for this age group. The repressive, punitive tone of some approaches and the institutional focus on deterrence is also criticised.

Experts widely agree, that

- Prevention should start with preparing children to be (good enough) parents and/or helping their parents to fulfil their parental roles.
- The major arena for (esp. primary) crime prevention for the target group should be the school system.
- The inter-sectorial, complex approach should be applied on an organized, regular basis.
- A very significant proportion of experts working in various organisations do a good part of their preventive work in their free time, from their own enthusiasm.¹⁰

¹⁰ Which, taking into consideration to low wages in the public sector, is even more depressing.

- Financing is scarce and periodic and it has a number of limitations. Very good model programs cease to exist as sustainability should be achieved via state financing which hardly ever happens. Mainly due to political changes, everything must be started all over again all the time.
- In prevention work, restorative practices including mediation should be used, which is a relatively new method in Hungary, are considered very positive.
- There should be more focused programs for 12–18 year olds.

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

There is a significant difference between the opinion of students and professionals regarding the role of teachers in prevention activities. While experts consider that teachers should play an increased role in prevention in the future, young people are quite sceptic about these actors. This may be attributable to a number of factors, perhaps the most important among these is the rigid, hierarchic structure of the Hungarian school system. But almost as importantly, it may be the lack of necessary competencies in teacher training; teachers often do prevention without them or the students being aware of it. Eötvös Lóránd University¹¹ formerly had an MA in school child protection, but it was abolished due to new reforms in teacher training. The disappearance of these special modules is a problem, as realistically there will not be social workers in all schools due to lack of funding, so it would be good if at least some teachers would have expertise in this area. Teachers seem quite interested, but they cannot finance these kinds of training for themselves, and the school management finds it unimportant or does not have enough resources to pay for this training. It is another important problem that in Hungarian schools the number of well-trained experts apart from teachers, who could help preventive activities (school psychologists, district nurses, social workers), is very low.

The current, increasingly important repressive approach is not considered very effective, although consistency and things having a consequence is thought to be important. Mediation and restorative approaches should be further stressed. The educational system seems to be the best framework for prevention, but also community development should be important, as useful free-time activities and locations for such are widely missing. Central policy making efforts could be useful to put elements of crime prevention (in the broadest sense) to be part of the school curricula, available for all children, regardless of the commitment of the directors of their schools. The professional basis of prevention should also be strengthened, both regarding the number of such available professionals and their training. Crime prevention should be an integral part of the training of a number of professionals, e.g., teachers, social workers. The involvement of the family and ways to improve the functioning of this social institution is seen as key in prevention.

11 It is the major university in Hungary for training secondary school teachers.

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About the Authors:

Fruzsina Albert, Ph.D., is a senior researcher at the Sociological Institute of the Social Science Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and head of the Sociology Department of Károli Gáspár University, Budapest. Her major research interests are interpersonal relationships and social exclusion, the study of vulnerable groups.

Olga Tóth, Ph.D., is a senior researcher at the Sociological Institute of the Social Science Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her main research topics are family sociology, generations and gender issues.