

**Document Title:** "Safer City", Attention: Juvenile' and Attention: Danger as Programs of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention in Poland

**Author(s):** Katarzyna Pawelek

**Document No.:** 208032

**Date Received:** December 2004

This paper appears in *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, edited by Gorazd Mesko, Milan Pagon, and Bojan Dobovsek, and published by the Faculty of Criminal Justice, University of Maribor, Slovenia.

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KATARZYNA PAWELEK

## 'SAFE CITY', 'ATTENTION: JUVENILE' AND 'ATTENTION: DANGER' AS PROGRAMS OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION IN POLAND

*Juvenile delinquency appears to be the most dangerous of the phenomena accompanying political and economic transformations in Poland. What is especially alarming is a dynamic growth of delinquency and violence. Police data show that it is the adolescents who commit 40% of break-ins, 30% of assaults and thefts, and 20% of other particularly brutal crimes.*

*Empirical research initiated by social ecologists reveals an essential correspondence between crime and living conditions in large cities, where the crime rate is the highest in neglected districts of old housing estates. All this may be observed in Poznań - one of the largest Polish cities.*

*The 'Safe City' scheme has been practiced here since 1995. One of its aims is to prevent juvenile delinquency and crime in Poznań by means of activating local communities. The other two prevention programs - 'Attention: Juvenile' and 'Attention: Danger' were introduced by Poznań Police Headquarters in 1999. The primary aim of 'Attention: Juvenile' is to prevent juvenile depravation and crime. 'Attention: Danger' involves prevention and education, which aim at reducing demand and supply of intoxicants among the underage persons.*

*The paper discusses selected aspects of prevention programs implemented in different districts of Poznań and examines their efficiency in reducing the number of violent youth and preventing juvenile crime.*

### INTRODUCTION

Empirical research reveals an essential correspondence between crime and living conditions in large cities, where the crime rate is the highest in neglected districts of old housing estates. All this may be observed in Poznań - one of the largest Polish cities. The 'Safe City' scheme has been practiced here since 1995. One of its aims is to prevent juvenile delinquency and crime in Poznań by means of activating local communities. The other two prevention programs - 'Attention: Juvenile' and 'Attention: Danger' were introduced by Poznań Police Headquarters in 1999.

The hereby paper aims is to present selected aspects of juvenile delinquency prevention in Poland. The first section introduces the main trends and causes of juvenile delinquency in Poland at the turn of the 20th and 21th centry. The second part of my presentation is devoted to selected aspects of the prevention programs of juvenile delinquency implemented in Poznań.

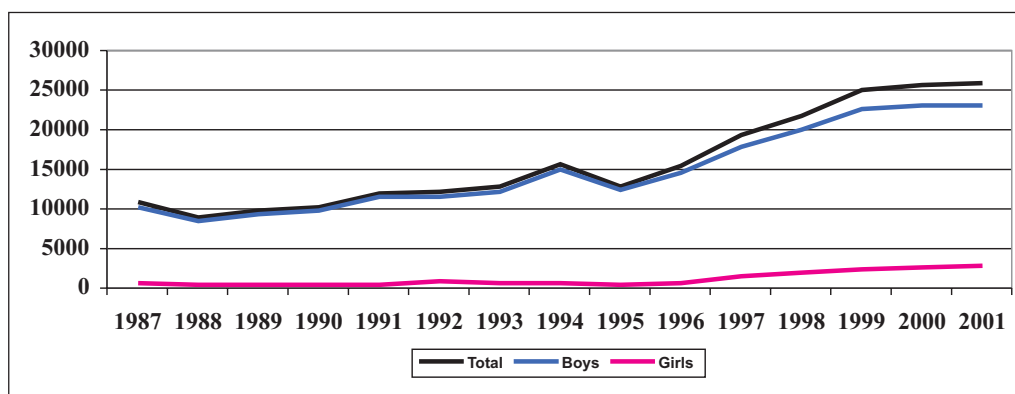
### JUVENILE DELINQUENCY: SCALE AND CIRCUMSTANCES

The late 1980s and early 1990s of the 20th century in Poland brought about transformations in such fundamental spheres of life as government, economy and society. Navertheless, apart from all the positive and desirable changes, the transformations were also followed by a wave of serious problems.

Criminality and, especially, juvenile delinquency, appear to be the most dangerous of the phenomena accompanying political and economic transformations in Poland. The

influence of globalisation is evident here, as changes in the structure of commerce and finances, and of the means of communication and disseminating of information, favour creating an environment in which criminality crosses country borders (Report, 1999; Friday, 1996). During only one year (from 1989 to 1990) the total number of crimes increased by 60%. What is especially alarming is a dynamic growth of juvenile delinquency. Police data show that it is the adolescents who commit 40% of break-ins, 30% of assaults and thefts and 20% of bodily injuries considered to be particularly brutal crimes. At the same time, more and more is being heard about the juvenile delinquency, about the lack of esteem for authorities, for the values and various material goods, and, also, about the decreasing age of criminals (Siemaszko, 2000).

Juvenile delinquency may evolve especially successfully in cities due to the diminishing social control, people's mobility, weakening of social bonds - including the traditional ones between neighbors - as well as acceptance of unusual behavior patterns. It is confirmed by the accessible police and court data and it is on this basis that I present the following three diagrams:

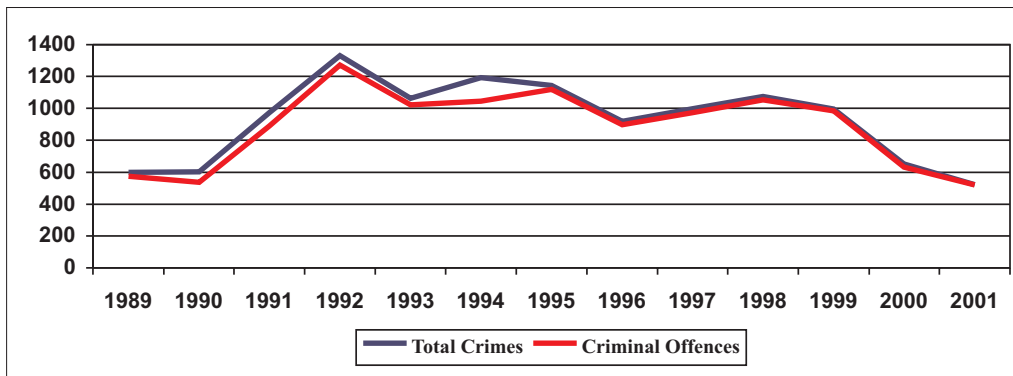


Source: data of the Ministry of Justice

**Diagram 1**

***Juveniles With Respect to Whom Educational or Correctional Measures or Penalties Were Adjudicated and Upheld by Common Courts with Respect to Punishable Acts (by sex ) from 1987-2001***

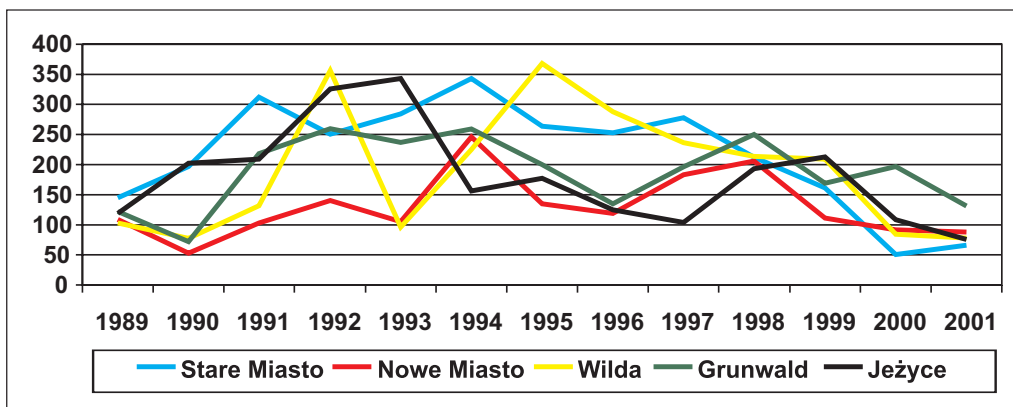
The analyses of the data concerning juvenile delinquency show that in the years 1987 to 2001 the number of legal court verdicts increased by 138%. Those tendencies concern generally the majority of the above mentioned penal acts. What matter of considerable concern is the growth of the number of crimes against life and health: from 455 verdicts of such a case in 1987 to 3718 in 2001. The growth includes, among others, murders: from 7 verdicts in 1987 to 14 in 2001; bodily injuries: from 289 in 1987 to 1350 in 2001; participation in assault and battery or in assault: from 145 verdicts in 1987 to 1704 in 2001. The cited data only affirm popular opinions concerning not exclusively the growth of delinquency but also its brutalisation. We should also note the increase in the number of offences against private property: from 6181 verdicts in 1987 to 18615 verdicts in 2001. This includes a rapid increase of judicial decisions connected with the number of assaults committed by the juveniles: from 410 in 1987 to 2100 in 2001.



Source: data of Poznań Police Headquarters

**Diagram 2**  
***Ascertained Crimes Committed by Juveniles in Poznań from 1989 to 2001***  
***(total and criminal offences)***

Crimes committed by juveniles in Poznań in 1989 constituted 4,7% of all ascertained crimes (in 1999- 3,4%, 2000- 1,6%, 2001- 1,2%). In the aforementioned years 98% of crimes committed by juveniles are criminal offences. The juveniles' participation in violence was very large. They were the perpetrators or accomplices approximately in every fifth crime in the following groups: bodily harm, assault and battery, theft with assault, violence and criminal coercion.



Source: data of Poznań Police Headquarters

**Diagram 3**  
***Territorial Diversity of Ascertained Crimes Committed by Juveniles***  
***in the Districts of Poznań from 1989 to 2001***

Poznań is inhabited by 574 thousand residents. The city is divided into five fairly independent administrative units: Stare Miasto, Nowe Miasto, Wilda, Grunwald and Jeżyce. Each of them covers quite a widespread area.

*Map 1*  
*Poznań and the area around*



The data (Diagram 3) confirm the opinions about a growth in juvenile delinquency in the years 1989 to 1998 in the area of all Poznań districts: Grunwald (105%), Jezyce (62,1%), Nowe Miasto (89%), Stare Miasto (46,2%), Wilda (107,7%). The largest growth was recorded within the scope of ascertained crimes committed by juveniles. In order to analyze the data in the years 1999 to 2001 it should be noted that generally in the area of Poznań districts in 2001 there were registered definitely fewer ascertained crimes committed by juveniles than in the years 1999 and 2000. Most crimes were recorded in Grunwald, and then fewer respectively in Nowe Miasto, Wilda, Jezyce and Stare Miasto. The noted decrease of juvenile delinquency may have been ascribed to either an increased work of law enforcement authorities and the popularization of the prevention programs, or a decrease in work performance of the police (first of all crime detection rate), or the presented data may not be true in respect to juvenile delinquency in Poznań because after the administrative reform the police units were reorganized and the rules of recording statistical data were changed.

Actions carried out among youth constitute an important element of crime prevention. The starting point is to establish the risk factors conducive to crime. Although researchers are not unanimous which of them is the most significant one, the most frequently mentioned key aspects here are personal, family, school, socio-economic factors and peculiar features of a given community. What is also important is the macrosocial concept of criminal behaviors in which their relation to industrialization, urbanization and economic situation etc, is analyzed. (Siemaszko, 2000; Pytka & Zacharuk, 1998).

Furthermore, the nature of the reasons behind the growth of crime (adults and juvenile) in Poland is both material and non-material. The following factors are worthy of notice: the drop in effectiveness of police work, easy access to firearms, the increase of migration from abroad, unemployment and the accompanying negative phenomena (e.g. large poverty-stricken section of society), the increase in the number of valuable possessions, increasing social inequality, weakening of both formal and informal control (Siemaszko, 2000).

#### RESPONSES TO CRIME DELINQUENCY: CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAMS

For many years now, all over the world there have been carried out actions aiming at activating local communities in overcoming juvenile delinquency. The theoretical basis for these actions is ascribed to social control concepts (Blachut, Gaberle,

Krajewski, 1999; Siemaszko, 1993) and the concept of activation and development of local communities (Pilch, 1995; Wierzbicki, 1973).

A high level of safety may be reached by involving institutions and local leaders into action and by enabling inhabitants to defend themselves (Cielecki, 2000). Most of the participants of the victim studies admit that the crime threat prompted changes in their behavior and encouraged them to take preventive measures designed to minimize the risk of falling victim to crime (Czapska, 1998). The above-mentioned measures or preventive actions become individual and collective measures (Pawelek, 2004). The aim of individual measures (passive and active behaviors) is to protect oneself, one's closest circle of persons and home. Collective measures are taken by groups of people and are characterized by a varied degree of institutionalization – "from a spontaneous informal neighborhood group to community patrols keeping regular watch in the city and paid by police" (Czapska, 1998, p.361). The idea of creating different forms of neighborly help appeared in the seventies of the 20th century in the United States of America and rapidly spread across the European countries. In Poland, such actions have been carried out for several years already, both in large and small cities which participate in the 'Safe City' scheme.

The 'Safe City' scheme was prepared in 1995 by the Prevention Bureau of the Police Central Headquarters. Its main objective was to establish a new model of relations between the police and local communities (*Bezpieczne Miasto*, 1995). The scheme in question includes several sub-divisions such as: 'Safe Home', 'Safe Car', 'Safe Business', 'Safe School', 'Neighborhood Watch', 'Safe Village'. Each of the presented sub-divisions is intended to realize a basic task: reduce crime committed by juveniles and adults, which should involve diminishing the sense of fear of crime and raising the level of safety and living standards.

In Poznań, The City Office and police put forward the initiative to devise and introduce the 'Safe City' scheme which was launched in 1995 and realized at different pace and time in particular districts. The participants of the proposed actions were police, city guard services, City Office, coordinating territorial self-governments (commune councils), schools and other educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and inhabitants themselves.

The other two prevention programs- 'Attention: Danger' and 'Attention: Juvenile' were introduced by Poznań Police Headquarters in 1999.

The 'Attention: Danger' scheme was devoted to the problem of drug prevention and was introduced in June 1999.

It involves preventive as well as educational and informational measures aimed at a significant reduction in demand and supply of intoxicants among the underage persons. As stated by the authors, the program is designed to foster cooperation between the departments of preventive and anti-narcotics services and the institutions of central government, self-government and social organizations performing the tasks included in the Act of April 24, 1997 on drug abuse prevention. Within the framework of the program the following have been planned: organizing meetings at schools (for teachers, parents, students), recognizing and assessing the risk of drug abuse and later drawing up maps of places which are particularly in danger, propagating help-line number, curbing criminal activity of drug dealers among youth, updating the data base concerning drug-related crimes and aspects like location of drug dens, dealers, places of illegal trade etc., popularizing the assumptions of the program in local media (*Program Uwaga Zagrozenie*, 1999).

In August 1999 the superiors of the Poznań police approved of the long-term plan of 'Attention: Juvenile' action. Within the framework of the 'Safe City' scheme, the City Police Department, in cooperation with the Local Court and other institutions taking care of juveniles, took decision to implement educational and custody program "for the juveniles who stay in the streets at night unaccompanied by adults.(...) This program aims at reaching the parents of children who reveal symptoms of being neglected and inviting them and other interested subjects to participate in common actions in order to protect youth from depravation" (*Plan długofalowych działań*, 1999) The 'Attention: Juvenile' program was to be realized in two stages. The first one referred to preventive measures taken at night, that is between 11 pm and 5 a.m. in Poznań. It involved checking documents of juveniles to establish their identity, holding them in the mode and in cases specified in the Criminal Proceedings Code and the Act of October 26, 1982 on the Standards of Conduct and Initiating Proceedings in Juvenile Cases, placing them – depending on the circumstances – into the social custody service, children shelter, detoxification shelter or escorting them to their place of residence. The second stage, called educational, was to be realized by organizing meetings in schools in Poznań, preparing a leaflet informing juveniles about possible dangers and popularizing actions in the urban community by means of mass media.

Within the programs 'Safe City', 'Attention: Danger' and 'Attention: Juvenile', information and education serve as dominant strategies. Those connected with the 'Safe City' scheme aim at situational prevention. Actions addressed directly to children and youth are of informational, educational and interventional character. Within the framework of prevention strategies cooperation with schools is more or less active which depends on the type of school.

Preventive initiatives ought to be realized for a particular community and with its active participation. My research, carried out in Jezyce district in Poznań in the years 1998-2002 (Pawelek, 2002), has shown that social leaders and representatives of institutions did notice the 'Safe City' prevention scheme but few of them got involved in it and were able to show examples of initiatives realized within its framework. The remaining ones have only heard about it. In the case of inhabitants it turned out that for more than 60% of them it is a wholly new matter – they have never heard of it. Furthermore, more than 75% of the questioned could not list any prevention programs realized nearby their place of residence. This particular group of respondents, in order to overcome deviant behaviors take up individual actions (active and passive) and, to a lesser extent, create groups of self-defense. Reasons for such a state of affairs may be observed in the lack of genuine learning and extensive knowledge on preventive initiatives in Jezyce, that is, in serious cases failure of information policy. Having no knowledge of the programs, inhabitants may not see its benefits. As a result, involving citizens into varied forms of preventing deviant behaviors is not so simple.

Similar situation can be observed in the other districts which are lacking in the leading aspect of crime prevention, namely: authentic cooperation among institutions and participation of residents.

## CONCLUSION

Juvenile crime prevention seems to be a reasonable undertaking. Usually it costs less than attempts at reversing the consequences of crimes committed. Unfortunately, the realization of preventive programs – which, as I believe, is not only limited to Poland – often turns out to be difficult and involves overcoming many social and psychological obstacles. In some cases it may even evoke certain reservations. Among different



proposals for actions to be taken there may appear offers which constitute fragments of different programs, put together at random, without the in-built evaluation. Such careless treatment of preventive actions proves the low level of professionalism of their authors and may involve risk for the addressees. Let us consider the matter looking at the example of the 'Safe City', 'Attention Juvenile' and 'Attention: Danger' schemes. Their evaluation assumes the form of reports on content and statistics whose preparation is recommended by the superior units. Such a strategy makes an accurate assessment of the efficiency of programs virtually impossible because one may be tempted to present the results as a series of success.

I must also admit I see another threat in the fact that the Polish experience proves the nationwide diversification of social initiatives launched in order to increase the level of safety, secure financial means indispensable to implement the crime prevention schemes as well as deepen the involvement of all participating parties and support of self-governing administration. The cities offer diverse social and economic resources. It means that the centers which stand a chance of successful creation of a safe city and more effective handling juvenile delinquency are usually the more affluent centers where the self-government administration pays attention to the needs and initiatives of the residents and the policy of its authorities, and their decisions are understandable for the residents and reflect positively on their lives. The situation differs in the centers where the policy of authorities and their decisions are unknown or not understandable for their residents and where the sense of responsibility on the most affluent part of the local community who could theoretically be able to provide some material assistance in fighting against crime and securing general interest, very frequently ends in "minding one's own business" (Urban, 1997, p. 209).

The 'Safe City' scheme was proposed by the Police because Poland does not have a national crime prevention program. The aim of the scheme is not to reduce the responsibility of the law enforcement authorities for the public order or to shift the responsibility onto local communities. The police, even if best equipped and even in the highly developed countries is not capable of preventing deviant behaviors on their own (Wozniak, 1997). However, under the present circumstances in Poland one may get the impression that the police has been cast in the role of panacea of all evil. Hence citizens, local governments, schools and other groups have to understand that the police can not replace them in doing their tasks, especially those related to bringing up the youth.

The implementation of the the 'Safe City', 'Attention Juvenile' and 'Attention: Danger' schemes has been planned for many years. It is assumed that thanks to the programs numerous benefits will be achieved, such as increasing the sense of public safety, limiting juvenile delinquency and adult crime, reducing other pathological phenomena as well as teaching the society an almost reflexive respect for law and reacting to even the slightest symptoms of hooliganism and brutality. It is of an extreme importance to build mutual trust and establish social bonds. It is found to be particularly significant within local communities of large urban areas, which, due to their size, anonymous nature of social relations and great mobility, especially in reference to changing the place of residence, may foster deviant behavior.

Creating the plane of social co-operation assumed in the programs 'Safe City', 'Attention: Juvenile' and 'Attention: Danger' proves extremely difficult since it is conditioned by many factors and requires time. In Poland, the juvenile delinquency prevention actions oriented at and at the same time involving and activating local communities are necessary and they have found their place in the general model of crime prevention. In



the past years almost 1300 prevention programs were implemented in Poland. The initiatives were undertaken at various levels of organization: from small local communities, and middle-sized towns to large urban areas. It shows that we become more and more aware of the fact that preventing social pathology will prove effective only if local communities are skillfully activated and directed in the way allowing to work for the benefit of community.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Katarzyna Pawelek**, PhD, Adam Mickiewicz University, Faculty of Educational Studies, Department of Resocialization, ul. Szamarzewskiego 89, 60-568 Poznań, Poland, e-mail: katarzyna.pawelek@inetia.pl

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