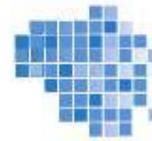




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# Reception of Criminal Justice in Lithuania

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MOKSLAS · EKONOMIKA · SĄNGLAUDA



EUROPOS SĄJUNGA

*Kuriame Lietuvos ateitį*

# The Problem

- In democratic societies, the purpose of criminal justice meets a common social interest shared by all society members, i.e., to live in a safe and supportive society, which guarantees appropriate level of security and respect for rights to all citizens, and which rests upon an equal and just application of the law to each and every citizen.
- Although tracing back to more than two hundred years in Western societies, the principles of criminal justice are not mechanically implemented in society and depend on various historical, cultural, geographical circumstances and global developments.
- In this light, criminal justice, its principles and performance results have always been and will continue to be the subject for professional, political and public debate. However, the debate has not always been fruitful and political decisions made – not always effective and reflecting modern scientific achievements.
- This is mainly because of the lack of effective communication links between criminal justice professionals and the general public, and an insufficient level of understanding to ensure the effective implementation of the goals of democratic criminal justice.

# The Definition of Criminal Justice

- Criminal Justice (noun): The system of law enforcement, the bar, the judiciary, corrections, and probation that is directly involved in the apprehension, prosecution, defense, sentencing, incarceration, and supervision of those suspected of or charged with criminal offenses. ([The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language](#), 4th edition Copyright © 2010 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.)
- Descriptions of Criminal Justice as a system, procedure, profession, discipline
- However, what is CJ as a form of Justice?
- Working definition: Criminal justice, in the most general sense, can be defined as a process based on legal, moral and ethical norms (including factors influencing the initiative of legal functioning, the legal forms of functioning, actors and their behavioral structure, etc.), during which it is established (revised, supplemented, etc.) what actions are considered a crime in a certain historical period and what criminal sanctions should be applied for a certain criminal conduct, and legal procedures, forms and methods for detecting crimes are defined along with practical conduct of private individuals, who enter or get involved into the process with the powers of government in the investigation or examination of offences and in enduring the sanctions applied.

# Research on RCJ

- Goals:
  - to analyze reception of criminal justice in professional, political, and public discourses
- Methodology:
  - Theoretical level:
    - Constructivists principles of phenomenological sociological tradition (A. Schutz)
    - Discourse analysis (M. Foucault)
  - Empirical level (triangulation):
    - Focus groups with representatives experts, decision makers, public leaders;
    - Representative survey;
    - Content analysis of Lithuanian media.
- Team:
  - Interdisciplinary team consisted of sociologist, psychologist, criminologist, economist, and lawyer from Vilnius University
- Supporters:
  - the research is funded by the European Social Fund under the Global Grant measure.

# Description the Qualitative research

- Three focus groups:
  - “Professionals” (Prof) (criminologists, lawyers, law enforcements officers)
  - “Well Informed citizen” (WIC) (politicians, journalists, business persons)
  - “People from the street” (PFS) (public leaders, NGO activists, teachers)
- Goal: to analyze, how the criminal justice, its societal goals and principles is understood in three different social cognitive groups
- Themes structure:
  - Attitude to the public discussion on CJ
  - Notion of CJ
  - Political aspects of CJ
  - Reception of CJ in society
  - The role of mass media

# Peculiarities of Discussions

Group/Themes	Attitude	Notion	Politics	Reception	Mass media
Prof's	Positive, stressing cooperation	Orientation in legal description, international aspects, neediness cooperation between theory and practice	Instrumental attitude to CJ, economic factors, educational possibilities, lack of political responsibility	Recognition of importance of relationship between professional, political and public areas, neediness of dialogs	High role in reception of CJ; political populism in media presentation, weak role of professionals
WIC's	Lack of constructive discussion between professionals and public at large	Reference to criminal laws, its implementation, competence and integrity	Usage of CJ as political mean, selectivity in application, absence of goals	Pessimistic attitude; alienation of CJ from society; CJ image as ineffective, corrupted institution	High role of Mass media in reception of CJ and its aspects; negative impact on society
PFS's	Neediness of deeper knowledge, cooperation	Difficulties in description, emphasizing of punishment, role of moral values	Accent on selectivity, safety, public interests	Optimistic attitude: CJ tries to turn to people; public participation in CJ	Mass media as only single source of information; criticism of sensational aspects

# Final remarks

- Presentation covers only one third of empirical research which try to measure contemporary RCJ in Lithuania. The results of quantitative survey now are in the process of analysis. The content analysis of the Lithuanian traditional and internet media is started only one months ago.
- However preliminary results gained from the three FGs already shows that RCJ is not homogeneous phenomenon, and its construction depend a good deal on such factors as common societal values, attitude to the professional CJ institutions, role of mass media, etc.
- Discussion also shows existing problems in communications between described epistemic social groups. On the one hand, decision makings procedures on the professional level are obscure for the ordinary people, on another hand professionals are rather seeking for “improving” knowledge of CJ of ordinary people, than trying to understand inners structure and self-validity of that knowledge.
- Researchers expect that further analysis of survey and media monitoring results help them to reconstruct multi-dimensial structure of RCJ in the society, and to proposed recommendation for better and more effective communication concerning CJ among various social groups.