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Legal Knowledge of Estonian Youth.

Comparison of 1970s and 1990s

Legal knowledge is an important structural element of legal awareness besides socio-legal attitudes and behaviour patterns. A dominating role in ensuring a person's lawful behaviour is attributed to legal knowledge when placing it first in the list of structural elements of legal awareness, while on the other hand, the importance of legal knowledge is seen as the shaper of other structural elements of legal awareness (attitudes, readiness for lawful behaviour). Offenders are generally known to have better legal knowledge than law-abiding people. This is due to the peculiarity of the experience of offenders – they have more contacts with bodies of legal protection, from where they gain a great volume of legal knowledge. They also gain knowledge from contacts with criminals and actively seek legal knowledge by studying laws to learn how to avoid punishment. This does certainly not imply that offenders have a more developed legal awareness or that their high legal awareness makes them violate the law. Legal behaviour is influenced not only by legal knowledge, but also by attitudes and behaviour patterns. Otherwise stated, the lawful behaviour of an individual is influenced by the inner regulators of his or her behaviour – these are the social values and acting principles promoted and protected by legal norms that are accepted by the individual as subjective values.[*1]

Description of Study

The political socio-economic changes in Estonia have brought about changes in all the structural elements of legal awareness. The shifts that have taken place are the subject of the research "Youth and law in the changing Estonia: 1974–1998" financed by the Estonian Science Foundation.

In our study, we divided the structural elements of legal awareness in further detail as follows:

1) legal knowledge;
2) perception of ideal law (justice is the basis and the applicable law is compared with justice);
3) attitude to applicable law;
4) requirements for law;
5) attitude towards abidance by legal rules.[*2]

[1] S. Kaugia. Structure of Legal Consciousness. – Juridica International. Law Review. University of Tartu, I, 1996, p. 18.

[2] L. Auväärt, H. Dsiss, S. Kaugia, P. Kenkmann, E. Raska. Noorte õigusliku sotsialiseerumise uurimine üleminekul riigisotsialismist vabaturumajandusse (Materjale kordusuuringust) (Research in the Legal Socialisation of Youth in Transition from State Socialism to Free Market Economy (Materials from a repeated study). – Tartu, 1999, p. 13.

This article is focused on one part of the legal awareness of young people, legal knowledge, by comparing questionnaire results for the years 1975 and 1995. The comparison is possible because the present study is a repeated study based on the concept developed at the criminology laboratory of the Tartu State University in 1974. The first stage of the study was carried out in 1974–1977.

The contingent of both the original and the repeated study is made up of young people aged 15–18 from different groups:
1) secondary school pupils;
2) vocational school pupils;
3) offenders.

For the purposes of this study, offenders are young people with regard to whom a condemnatory judgement has been made or the measures provided in the Juvenile Sanctions Act[*7] applied (the offenders in this study are convicts of the Viljandi Juvenile Prison and pupils of the Kaagvere Reformatory).

Opinions on Criminal Liability

The questionnaire contained several sets of questions to find out about the legal knowledge of the studied persons. It should be explained that as the study mainly deals with the criminological aspects of the legal education of youth, it deals with the norms of criminal law applicable at the time of answering the questionnaire and knowledge of these norms.

The opinions of youth on the criminal liability of minors are quite important from the criminological aspect. It helps to find better solutions to the issues of criminal liability of minors by making better use of means of criminal law in combat against juvenile delinquency.

Two basic questions arise in this respect:
1) who is prosecuted, in the opinion of youth, for offences committed by minors (younger than 18 years);
2) who should, in the opinion of youth, be prosecuted for offences committed by minors.

The answers of the studied persons to these questions are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Who is prosecuted for offences committed by minors (%)?

No.	Answer	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
1.	Only the minor himself/herself	1975 1995	27.7 36.0	35.6 37.0	48.1 58.0
2.	The minor and his/her parents (caregivers)	1975 1995	53.1 44.0	50.0 45.0	40.7 31.0
3.	The minor and his/her teachers	1975 1995	0.2 1.0	0.4 0	0.7 3.0
4.	The minor, his/her parents and teachers	1975 1995	4.0 2.0	2.9 1.0	3.0 0
5.	Only the parents (caregivers) of the minor	1975 1995	14.4 16.0	10.4 15.0	6.7 4.0
6.	Other	1975 1995	0.6 1.0	0.7 3.0	0.7 5.0

[7] Alaealise mõjutusvahendite seadus (Juvenile Sanctions Act) – Riigi Teataja (the State Gazette) I 1998, 17, 264.

Table 2. Who should really be prosecuted and punished for offences committed by minors (%)?

No.	Answer	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
1.	Only the minor himself/herself	1975 1995	56.7 73.0	52.9 69.0	61.5 75.0
2.	The minor and his/her parents (caregivers)	1975 1995	35.5 24.0	35.3 23.0	30.4 15.0
3.	The minor and his/her teachers	1975 1995	0.5 0	1.1 2.0	0 3.0
4.	The minor, his/her parents and teachers	1975 1995	3.5 1.0	4.0 1.0	1.5 1.0
5.	Only the parents (caregivers) of the minor	1975 1995	2.2 2.0	4.7 2.0	6.7 1.0
6.	Other	1975 1995	1.7 1.0	2.2 3.0	0 5.0

According to § 3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Estonia (CC), only the person guilty in an offence, *i.e.* the person having intentionally or by negligence committed an act specified in the Criminal Code, is subject to criminal liability and punishment. Criminal punishment is applied only on the basis of a court judgement. The same holds true for minors subject to criminal liability. Criminal liability of minors begins at the 15th and in exceptional cases at the 13th year of age (CC § 10). The respective age limits in the Soviet criminal law were 16 and 14.

Other answers may be correct in certain cases – but only if minors are induced or engaged in crime, which is a separate set of elements of a criminal offence (*cf.* CC §§ 202 and 17). As the question in the questionnaire concerned prosecution **only** for offences committed by minors (without any additions or clauses), only one answer can be considered correct: only the minor himself/herself is prosecuted for an offence committed by him or her.

In this view, the legal knowledge of young offenders is much better than that of law-abiding youth, and has improved in time when compared to the other groups (see Table 1). Two important shifts are revealed in comparing the two questionnaires:

1) According to the data of the second questionnaire, 58% of offenders know that only the minor himself or herself is prosecuted for an offence committed by him or her (only 48% of young offenders knew it in the 1975 study);
2) When compared to other groups, the offenders group contains the smallest number (4%) of persons who believe that only the parents (caregivers) of a minor are liable for an offence committed by the minor. The respective share of studied persons who think so is 16% in the secondary school group and 15% in the vocational school group. The share of youths who think that parents are responsible for the offences of minors has generally increased in the last years, but it has decreased among offenders (see Table 1).

The results meet our expectations, especially when considering that the offenders questioned were youths who had committed an offence and had been convicted – owing to their experience, they have a better awareness of legal matters than their law-abiding peers. Those young offenders whose offences have not been discovered and who hence have no significant contacts with bodies of legal protection can be expected to be more similar to law-abiding youths than to special vocational school pupils or juvenile prison convicts in respect of their legal knowledge.

The mistaken understanding of mainly law-abiding youth that only parents (caregivers) are prosecuted for offences committed by minors is alarming. It gives young people a sense of impunity and lessens their responsibility for their acts.

At the same time, the opinion that the minor himself **should** be prosecuted for his or her offence dominates in all groups of studied persons (see Table 2). The number of vocational school pupils and offenders who find that only the parents (caregivers) of a minor should be liable for his or her offensive acts is significantly smaller in the latest study. No significant change can be see in the answers of secondary school pupils: the share of this group who thought that only the parents (caregivers) should be liable for the acts of a minor

was 2.2% in 1975 and 2% in 1995. This suggests that secondary school pupils are the least willing to take responsibility for their acts, which is explained by the fact that these youths are more used to relying on their parents (caregivers), they have less experience in coping independently and less need to take their own decisions.

The results of the question of who young people think should be prosecuted for offences committed by minors show that in the opinion of youth, the liability of minors for their offences should be greater than they think it is. On the other hand, the liability of parents (caregivers) of minors for the offences of minors should be smaller than young people think it is. It can be concluded that the moral convictions of the youth generally correspond to the applicable criminal law.

The willingness of young people to take responsibility for their acts is certainly influenced by the severity of the sanction imposed for the offence committed.

Opinion of Youth on the Severity of Sanctions

From the viewpoint of the society, both excessive severity and excessive leniency of punishment may cause a sense of injustice and distrust of the criminal law. The severest term of punishment applicable for an offence has a decisive role in deciding on the severity of punishments. From the aspect of the sense of justice of people, the excessive severity of punishments provided by law is less dangerous than excessive leniency. The latter may cause people (including law-abiding people) to fear that state authority does not protect the life, health and dignity of its citizens against violent attacks with sufficient strictness. This in turn may cause people to take an extremely passive attitude in combating crime (for example, they may fear the revenge of criminals and persons close to the criminals and not report the offences committed against them or not make testimony that can reveal criminals, etc.). In extreme cases, such perception of the excessive leniency of sanctions may cause lynch law (especially where the victim or a person close to the victim is indignant at the excessive liberalness of the punishment imposed on the offender and has an actual lynch law opportunity (*i.e.* opportunity to take revenge).

To learn about the knowledge of youth about the severest term of punishment, the question was put separately with regard to minors and adults.

Table 3. The severest term of punishment than can be imposed pursuant to law for an offence is … for minors (%)

Alternatives:
0 – does not know, is not able to say, doubts, no answer
1 – underestimates
2 – knows exactly
3 – overestimates

Alternative	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
0	1975 1995	58.5 19.0	50.9 21.0	14.4 15.0
1	1975 1995	14.4 65.0	30.6 64.0	50.0 47.0
2	1975 1995	11.0 5.0	8.1 2.0	20.3 23.0
3	1975 1995	16.1 11.0	10.4 13.0	15.3 15.0

… for adults (%)

Alternatives:
0 – does not know, is not able to say, no answer
1 – underestimates
2 – knows partly (15 years or death penalty (was applicable at the time of answering the questionnaire))
3 – knows exactly (15 years, in exceptional cases death penalty)
4 – overestimates (more than 15 years)

Alternative	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
0	1975 1995	0 9.0	0 12.0	0 11.0
1	1975 1995	4.1 11.0	5.0 9.0	9.2 18.0
2	1975 1995	86.8 55.0	79.6 35.0	72.5 47.0
3	1975 1995	6.4 2.0	9.2 9.0	10.0 4.0
4	1975 1995	2.7 23.0	6.2 35.0	8.3 20.0

The data presented in Table 3 indicate that the number of offenders who can answer the question concerning minors correctly has increased over the years. The considerably poorer knowledge of law-abiding youth is evidenced by the fact that the number of young people who underestimate the severest term of punishment of minors is 65% of secondary school pupils (1975 – 14.4%) and 64% of vocational school pupils (1975 – 30.6%). This shows that minors perceive the current sanctions to minors as lenient. The tendency is opposite when speaking of adults – a significantly larger number of the studied persons have overestimated the sanction. The number of those who know the severest term of punishment of adults has substantially decreased among secondary school pupils and offenders; all three groups know the sanctions for adults mainly in part and are better informed of the punishment of minors.

The awareness of youth of the severest term of punishment applicable to adults for his or her crime is quite important from the criminological and criminal law aspect: today's minors are tomorrow's adults, and legal knowledge has both comprehensive educative and general preventive relevance for them.

Where Does Legal Knowledge of Youth Come From?

To find how young people obtain the most of their legal knowledge, we asked why they answered the previous question the way they did. The answers are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Why did you answer the previous question this way (%)?

Multiple choice answers:
1 – I have heard and read about it
2 – I have read about it
3 – I have heard about it
4 – I just think so

No.	Minors /adults	Year	Secondary school pupils				Vocational school pupils				Offenders			
			1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1.	Minors	1975 1995	18.3 15.0	3.8 2.0	42.3 31.0	35.6 52.0	24.2 10.0	2.1 2.0	35.6 33.0	38.1 54.0	23.0 32.0	11.5 1.0	36.1 32.0	29.5 35.0
2.	Adults	1975 1995	47.1 33.0	6.9 5.0	35.6 34.0	10.2 28.0	44.7 23.0	6.1 4.0	32.6 41.0	16.7 32.0	32.5 33.0	13.0 5.0	36.6 35.0	17.9 27.0

The Table shows that concerning minors, more than a half of law-abiding youths (52% of secondary school pupils and 54% of vocational school pupils) have answered at random and therefore do not actually know the severest term of punishment prescribed by law. Of offenders, 35% answered, "I just think so" (*i.e.* at random). The proportion of those who answered so has increased in all groups when the two studies are compared. The same trend can be observed concerning terms of punishment of adults. The above Table shows that the dominant source of legal knowledge for all groups is information they have heard or read and heard somewhere. The number of those who had only read of the matter is the smallest. Heard information (heard or read and heard information) gives different knowledge to young people: on the one hand, it is a source of correct knowledge on the severest term of punishment of minors (offenders have relatively better knowledge of this) and adults, on the other hand, information thus obtained contains a large share of information that favours the underestimation of the prescribed severest term of punishment and therefore favours or can favour the sense of impunity in minors who are inclined to break the law.

The following Table is a review of the direct sources of legal knowledge of youth.

Table 5. Where have you obtained most of your legal knowledge (%)?

No.	Answer	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
1.	Unanswered	1975 1995	0 9.4	0 9.7	0 11.4
2.	From parents	1975 1995	0 4.9	0 5.2	0 5.1
3.	From several sources	1975 1995	0 31.4	0 26.0	0 26.6
4.	From the radio	1975 1995	11.3 1.3	11.8 1.9	2.4 2.6
5.	From friends	1975 1995	2.0 2.7	3.5 3.9	5.6 5.1
6.	From television	1975 1995	11.4 12.0	6.7 14.9	3.2 2.5
7.	From mother	1975 1995	7.4 1.3	5.1 3.2	11.3 1.3
8.	From films	1975 1995	1.8 0.9	2.0 0	0 1.3
9.	From a relative	1975 1995	1.1 1.3	1.2 1.3	0 2.5
10.	From school	1975 1995	33.5 7.6	41.6 9.1	46.0 8.9
11.	From father	1975 1995	4.3 1.1	5.1 1.3	8.1 2.5

12.	From legal literature	1975 1995	7.7 2.4	8.2 1.3	4.8 1.3
13.	From newspapers	1975 1995	6.8 18.0	5.5 8.4	1.6 3.8
14.	From sister/brother	1975 1995	0.1 0	0 0	0.8 1.3
15.	From magazines	1975 1995	1.1 0.4	2.0 0.6	0 1.3
16.	From other sources	1975 1995	11.5 4.7	7.3 12.3	16.2 22.8

As Table 5 shows, the relative share of some sources of information in the shaping of the legal knowledge of youth has greatly changed. While in the 1975 study, the share of secondary school (11.3%) and vocational school pupils (11.8%) who obtained information from the radio was relatively large, the respective shares in the 1995 study were 1.3% and 1.9%. No great change has taken place in respect of young offenders. Today, other means of mass media are more popular when compared to the radio, which is reflected in the results of this study. When compared to the 1970s, the share of those who obtained information from the television has increased both among secondary school and vocational school pupils, and has somewhat decreased among offenders. The relative share of newspapers as sources of legal knowledge has increased in all groups. The number of those who have obtained legal knowledge from several sources is the largest. Several sources of information are probably interpreted as several means of mass media, because many sources of information that were relevant for youth in the 1970s have now lost their importance: while the school had a large role according to the results of the first study (33.5% of secondary school pupils, 41.6% of vocational school pupils and 46% of offenders obtained the bulk of their legal knowledge from school), the role of the school in the legal education of youth is very modest now (the respective shares are 7.6%, 9.1% and 8.9%). Young people are less interested in legal literature: while according to the 1975 study results, 7.7% of the studied secondary school pupils, 8.2% of vocational school pupils and 4.8% of offenders received their knowledge from literature, only 2.4%, 1.3% and 1.3% of the studied persons mentioned this source of information in the 1995 questionnaire. Our legal system has substantially changed between the two studies and the earlier popular scientific books are now outdated, while not many new books have been written yet. The new books that have been written are not easily available to youth because they are expensive. The relative share of parents in legal education has decreased for the same reasons. Parents have also not followed all the changes and their legal knowledge is no longer adequate. That is why young people have to turn to the mass media. Thus, the main sources of the legal knowledge of youth are the main channels of mass media – television and newspapers – while literature, school and radio have lost much of their importance. One has, however, to be critical about the mass media as a source of legal information – media channels need not improve the legal knowledge of youth, as they often only describe offences. There is a danger that the growing generation will have rather incomplete legal knowledge that does not allow young people to adequately assess their own or their friends' acts.

Knowledge of Youth of the Degrees of Crimes

The knowledge of youth of the degrees of crimes is equally important to their knowledge of the severest term of punishment prescribed by law. CC § 7² provides that crimes are classified as crimes in the first, second and third degree depending on the severity of punishment prescribed in the Criminal Code for committing them. According to the above provision of law, a crime in the first degree is a punishable act committed intentionally or by neglect, for which the Criminal Code prescribes more than eight years' imprisonment or the death penalty as the severest term of punishment[*7]; a crime in the second degree is a punishable act committed intentionally or by neglect, for which the Criminal Code prescribes not more than eight years' imprisonment; a crime in the third degree is a punishable act committed intentionally or

[7] Death penalty was an applicable form of punishment according to the criminal law applicable in 1996.

by neglect, for which the Criminal Code prescribes a fine, deprivation of the right to be employed in a certain position or area of activity, or detention.

It is important that the punishments prescribed for various offences be proportional with regard to each other and correspond to the legal awareness of people. This enforces the conviction of people that criminal law is fair. A situation where the punishment for some offences is excessively severe and for others excessively lenient favours a sense of injustice. Such a disproportion has an especially negative effect when punishment is excessively severe for offences that are not seen as serious by the majority of people, and excessively lenient for offences that the majority of people considers to be serious.

In this study, we tried to find out how well young people know the applicable criminal law, what offences are considered serious and what offences are considered less serious in their opinion, and to what extent their opinions are in accordance with the actual provisions of criminal law.

In the questionnaire, we asked the studied persons to answer which one of five specified crimes (intentional causing of serious bodily injury; theft of a person's personal property on a large scale; theft of a car; hooliganism together with acts of violence against a person; theft of state or national property on a large scale) is the most serious.

Changing of the criminal policy in the transition of the country from socialism to a market economy has caused changes in categories of offences. Differences between theft of personal property and theft of state or national property were not distinguished in 1995 (at the time of the second questionnaire), nor are they now (as opposed to the socialist period). The Criminal Code prescribes sanctions for concealed (§ 139) and unconcealed (§ 140) theft without specifying to the theft of whose property the sanctions are applied. In our questionnaire, we considered it necessary to make a distinction so as to learn about the attitude of young people to personal and nonpersonal (*e.g.* corporate, etc.) property and its theft.

To assess the opinions of youth concerning the above crimes, let us first briefly describe the relevant provisions of the applicable criminal law.

1) Intentional causing of serious bodily injury (CC § 108) – the severest term of punishment prescribed by law for this crime is up to seven years' imprisonment. This constitutes a crime in the second degree;
2) Concealed theft (CC § 139) – the severest term of punishment according to law is up to eight years' imprisonment (a crime in the second degree);
3) Unconcealed theft (CC § 140) – the law provides up to ten years' imprisonment as the severest term of punishment (a crime in the first degree);
4) Theft of a motor vehicle (CC § 197) – the severest term of punishment according to law is up to twelve years' imprisonment (a crime in the first degree);
5) Hooliganism (CC § 195) – the severest term of punishment is up to seven years' imprisonment (a crime in the second degree).

The legislator prescribes more severe punishments for the crimes it considers more serious and more lenient punishments for those it considers less serious. In assessing the severity of punishment, the severest term, not the most lenient term of punishment is generally decisive. This is because the punishment for a crime may not exceed the severest term of punishment prescribed by law for the particular crime, while the Criminal Code (§ 39) allows the imposition of a more lenient penalty than the most severe punishment applicable for the crime.

Where the severest terms of punishment applicable for different crimes are equal (concerning both the primary and supplementary punishment), it is presumed that the legislator considers the one for which the minimum punishment is more severe the more serious of the crimes.

Proceeding from these principles, we can present the following comparison of the seriousness of the above crimes in the 1970s and the 1990s.[*8]

8 The crimes are listed in the order of seriousness, ending with the least serious.

Table 6.

No.	1970s	No.	1990s
1.	Theft of state or national property on a large scale (five to fifteen years' imprisonment together with or without confiscation of property or part of property)	1.	Theft of a motor vehicle (three to twelve years' imprisonment)
2.	Hooliganism together with act of violence against a person (one to five years' imprisonment)	2.	Unconcealed theft (one to nine years' imprisonment)
3.	Theft of personal property at a large scale (up to five years' imprisonment)	3.	Concealed theft (three to eight years' imprisonment)
4.	Intentional causing of serious bodily injury (up to two years' imprisonment or up to one year's punishment with labour)	4/5	Intentional causing of serious bodily injury. Hooliganism (one to sev en years of imprisonment for both)
5.	Theft of car (up to one year's imprisonment or up to one year's punishment with labour or a fine of up to one hundred roubles or public reprehension)		

Data on the opinions of youth on what they believe are the most serious crimes according to law are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Which one of the listed crimes you think is the most serious according to law (%)?

No.	Crime	Year	Secondary school pupils	Vocational school pupils	Offenders
1.	Intentional causing of serious bodily injury	1975 1995	61.1 78.0	50.4 73.0	38 .6 67.0
2.	Theft of personal property at a large scale	1975 1995	1.0 1.0	2.2 7.0	3.0 4.0
3.	Theft of a car	1975 1995	0.2 1.0	0.7 2.0	0.8 3.0
4.	Hooliganism together with act of vio lence against a person	1975 1995	14.7 17.0	17.6 18.0	20.5 25.0
5.	Theft of state of national property at a large scale	1975 1995	23.0 3.0	29.1 1.0	37.1 1.0

As we see, the youths of all three groups believed both in the 1970s and the 1990s that the most serious crime according to law is the intentional causing of serious bodily injury. By the time of the second questionnaire, the number of studied persons who consider hooliganism the second serious after intentional causing of bodily injury has increased. While those questioned in 1975 correctly thought that stealing a car is a less serious crime according to law than the other listed categories of crime, those questioned in 1995 did not know to consider stealing a vehicle the least serious of the listed crimes.

The data presented suggests that the majority of young people consider personal crimes relatively more serious and property crimes relatively less serious than they are according to law (when compared to other

crimes). This points to the fact that young people value the life, health, honour and dignity of a person and consider it important that all these values be protected by law.

Conclusions

The results of the study confirm that the legal knowledge of offenders is better than that of the law-abiding youth. This in turn shows that legal knowledge in itself cannot prevent people from committing offences (crimes).

Despite the above, the legal knowledge of the youth should be improved more systematically and intensively, because the greater the accordance between the subjective behavioural principles of an individual and the legal norms he or she has accepted as knowledge, the more consistently lawfully he or she acts. The possibility that the acquired legal knowledge may require one to reassess his or her established behavioural principles should also be taken into account. A person can abstain from committing an offence by learning at what age and how severely he or she can be punished for it. Therefore, the young person should obtain legal knowledge before he or she commits an offence.

The study demonstrates the declining role of the school in the legal education of young people. This dangerous and somewhat unnatural tendency (the school should be a major socialising agent and source of knowledge for the school-age youth) is explained by the decline of the school as a social institution and the reputation of a teacher's job during the last decades, and also the change in curricula in market economy conditions: in the 1970s and 1980s a subject called "Fundamentals of Soviet Law" was included in the curricula to provide pupils with general knowledge of law and explain to them the necessity of adhering to the acceptable norms of behaviour in the society. The current school curricula do not contain a similar subject. The mass media (television, newspapers and magazines, and radio to a greater extent than it has so far) should undertake to fill this gap, as the answers of the young people studied showed that these are the sources from where they have obtained (by hearing and reading) the bulk of their legal knowledge.

In drafting norms the legislator should, more than earlier, take into account the sense of justice and the legal awareness of people (including youth). This would help to prevent (or diminish) the presently common sceptical attitude to the activities of legal protection bodies (including courts), because the law is believed not to protect the interests of common people, while the serious crimes of public servants in high positions are believed by the public not to be punished severely enough (*i.e.* in accordance with the seriousness of the crime).

The fairness of the legal system (in the above meaning) would help to improve the reputation of legal protection bodies in the eyes of people, this in turn would make young people more interested in law, which naturally would improve the level of legal knowledge of youth generally, not only offenders. This is an essential factor in ensuring lawful behaviour, because legal knowledge together with subjective regulators of behaviour constitute a precondition for the lawful behaviour of an individual.