

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCES

Simona Diblikova

Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention, Prague, Czech Republic



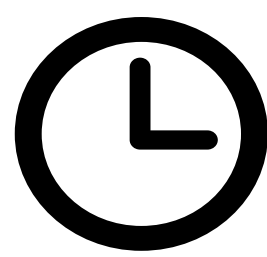
Introduction

The use of **family group conferences** (FGCs) in the Czech Republic is facilitated by the fact that the principles of restorative justice are one of the conceptual foundations of the **youth justice system**. The emphasis is **not on punishing the offender**, but rather on finding ways to enable him or her to **live in accordance with the law**, to **find a social outlet** and at the same time **avoid conflict situations related to the prosecution criminal activity**.

The **potential use of family group conferences** in dealing with crime of children and young people was **piloted** in the framework of the project **Probation and Mediation Service (PMS) "On the Right Path!"** in 2012-2015. In total, the **40 conferences** were held, attended by **47 offenders**.

Evaluation

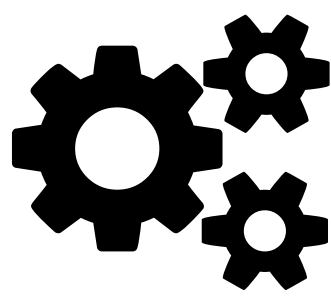
The main aim of the research was to evaluate the **effectiveness** of this restorative measure and to observe the **opinions** of both **victims and offenders**. The **evaluation from the perspective of the facilitators** was carried out **twice**, immediately and then three years after the conferences.



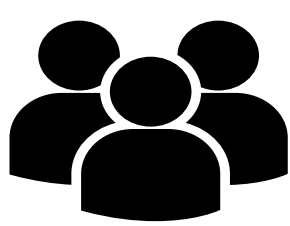
The research was carried out in the years 2018-2019



Recidivism was investigated over a **period of 3 to 4 years from of the FGC** (up to sample included all offenders who participated in the project between 2014-2015)



The **effectiveness of the FGC** was determined on the basis of two aspects, namely the **level of satisfaction of direct participants and recidivism of offenders**



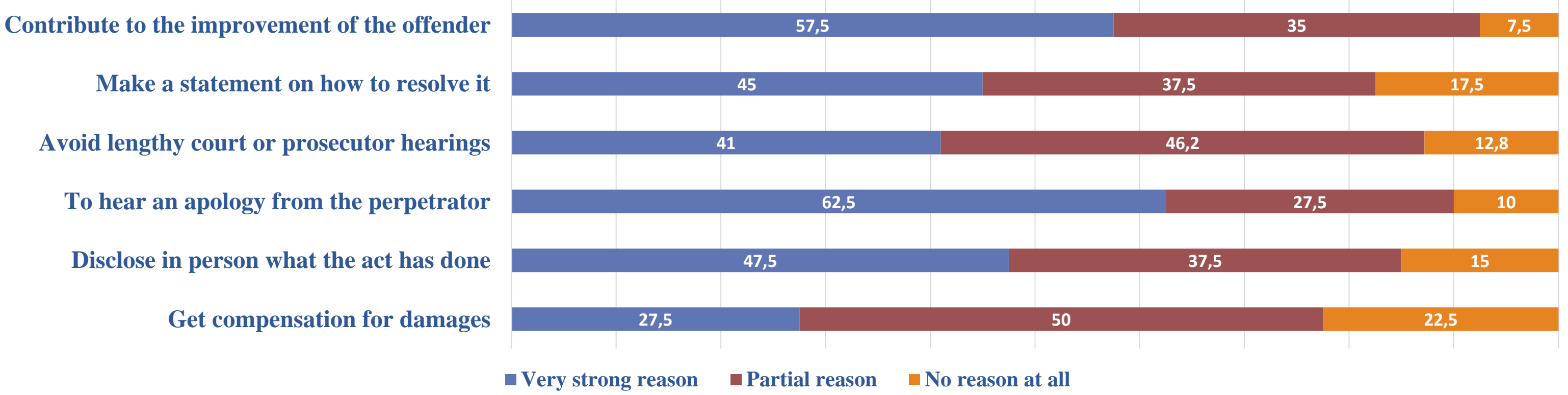
The subject of the analysis were **questionnaires** that **victims and perpetrators** completed both before the actual FGC and after the FGC

+

An **expert questionnaire survey** was held, aimed at on the views and experiences of PMS staff who worked in the project as **facilitators**

For most **perpetrators**, the strongest motive for participation was the **desire to personally to apologise to the victim** and to **reach an agreement with the victim on compensation**. Almost **80 % of the of offenders** also admitted that they **were motivated by the chance to secure to receive a lighter punishment in this way**.

Victims' motives for attending the FG conference (% of respondents)



According **facilitators** - overwhelming majority of the FG conferences **without major problems**.

However, they also stressed that the FGC are **extremely challenging measures**.

Great attention needs to be paid to their **preparation phase**, especially with regard to the appropriate **motivation of the participants** and to their **familiarisation with the basic principles** of this type of case hearing.

The **recidivism of offenders** who **participated in the FGC** was examined in **2019**, based on data on any further convictions.

The **new criminal record** had **14**, i.e. **approx. 30 % of offenders**.

A more serious offence than that was committed by **6 persons**, a less serious offence by **5 persons** and an offence with the same penal rate by **3 persons**.

The **vast majority of FGC participants** were **satisfied** with this restorative measure, namely with both **its course** and **the outcome** achieved.

The **atmosphere** at the conference was perceived by both victims and perpetrators as **welcoming**, and the **work of the facilitators** as **highly professional**.

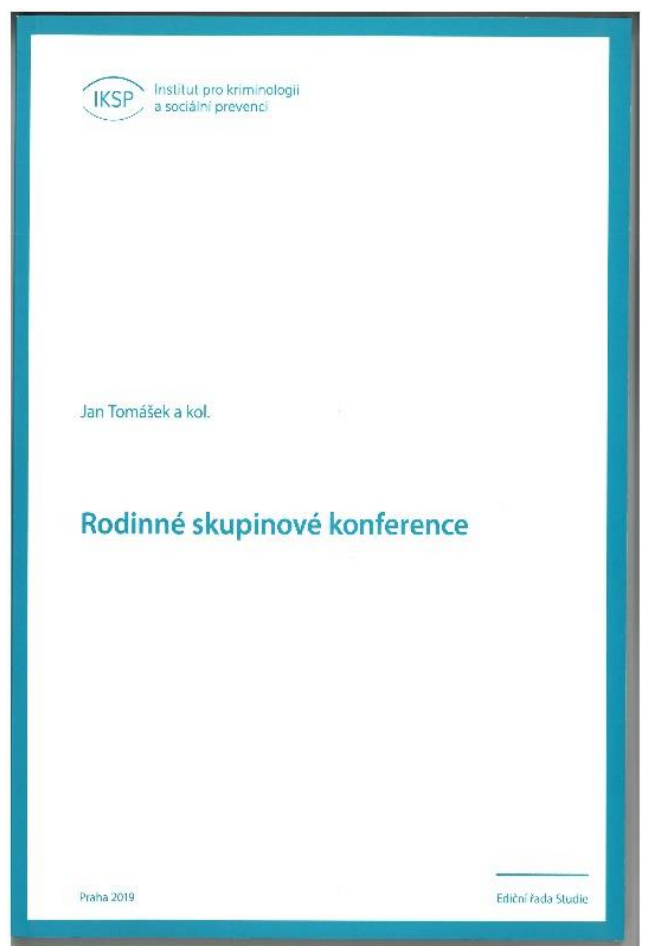
In almost all cases it was possible to reach a common agreement on how the perpetrator would repair the damage caused.

The results showed that the **FGC model is an effective way** of meeting the basic needs of victims of crime where appropriate.

The analysis of data on the **rate of subsequent recidivism** of offenders was also **relatively favourable**.

Further development of FGC

- **PMS staff should specialize** in this activity, recommended is to realize FGC **in pairs**
- **ensuring adequate conditions for the smooth running** of the conference is needed ↔ **selection of suitable cases**
- Project EU & PMS „**On the Right Path! II**“ 5/2016 – 8/2020 → **44 FGC**
 - aims** - developing innovative ways of dealing with youth crime and putting them into practice
 - **Youth offender teams**
 - **training of professional staff**
 - **promotion among judges, advocates & curators** of social and legal protection of children bodies



Contact: SDiblikova@iksp.justice.cz
www.kriminologie.cz

Publication with summary in English
www.ok.cz/iksp/docs/452.pdf