

# Prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence – a complex subject for evaluations<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence, i.e. the avoidance or reduction of delinquent behaviour, has increasingly gained in importance since the 1990s. The professional action of various actors such as, for example, child and youth welfare services, police and judiciary, is conceptually increasingly prevention-orientated – accordingly, a large number of (model) projects and programmes are being offered whose explicit aim is to prevent and/or reduce future delinquent acts by children and adolescents. This also applies to the standard practices of child and youth welfare services (especially for youth services in juvenile court proceedings) as well as for the police, judiciary and schools, who also partially pursue crime-prevention objectives.

With respect to delinquency prevention in childhood and adolescence, beyond situational or situation-orientated prevention measures (such as targeted urban planning, video surveillance, etc.) for person-specific prevention, consensus has grown that first and foremost educational strategies and approaches are required, in order to reach children and young people, to support them in their development, and thus also to counteract possible delinquency. In this perspective, the focus is not control, criminal sanctions or repression, but rather on the young person as an addressee, who should receive support for a "successful" life.

Against the background of the continuously growing importance of preventive concepts, the question of their (demonstrable) effectiveness also arises – especially when spectacular cases of juvenile delinquency and/or violence enter the public perception. Thus, pedagogically-orientated prevention and intervention strategies are repeatedly called into question, and instead an end to the "Kuschelpädagogik" (soft on crime) approach is demanded, as well as a "systematic crackdown" with tougher penalties.

The Arbeitsstelle Kinder- und Jugendkriminalitätsprävention (Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime) at the Deutsche Jugendinstitut e. V.<sup>2</sup> (German Youth Institute) has monitored the developments in the area of prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence over the last two decades, and constantly identified the necessity and importance of evaluation – both for the description and assessment of the measures, projects and programmes, as well as for further development of the subject.

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<sup>2</sup> The task of the Centre for the prevention of youth crime, established in 1997, is to observe the spectrum of child and youth crime prevention in the fields of police, schools, the judiciary, and, above all, child and youth welfare and to prepare it for professional practice, professional policy, and the public. The aim is to contribute to the prevention of child and youth crime based on own research activities. The work and research priorities of the Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime are adapted at regular intervals, and the current topics are taken up and processed. Different methodological approaches are used, such as literature research, on-site project visits, expert discussions, hearings, or document analyses, cf: <https://www.dji.de/youthcrime>.

Already in the first publication of the Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime, a literature documentation of work approaches to child and juvenile crime prevention, it was determined that there are almost no reliable evaluations for these approaches (Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime, 1998). Subsequent publications (e.g. Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime 2003, 2005, 2007, 2015) have confirmed this picture. Despite some progress (cf. also the contributions in Walsh et al. 2018, as well as the database "Green List Prevention" of the Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony<sup>3</sup>) and a variety of efforts, evaluations – and in particular, effective evaluations – are still the exception rather than the rule in child and juvenile crime prevention.

The following contribution by the Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime tackles the question of why the evaluation of crime prevention approaches is such a complex task. First, the specific subject of evaluation, "child and juvenile crime prevention", is in focus, since the subject itself gives rise to special requirements and difficulties for evaluation. Thereafter, the resulting consequences for the methodological approach, reliability and range of evaluations are developed, also with a view to the virulent question of the effectiveness of prevention.

## **2. Child and juvenile crime prevention**

Crime prevention projects and programmes are often aimed at children and adolescents. The reasons for this also lie in the special features of the phase of life youth: Young people find themselves in a developmental phase, in which they try out new things, and in which they also repeatedly take risks, to test social, normative but also personal boundaries – (slight) delinquency can be attributed to this "trying out" and "testing boundaries", and is thus a normal part of becoming an adult. From a criminological perspective, juvenile delinquency is ubiquitous, i.e. it affects almost all young people (especially males). Juvenile delinquency is episodic, i.e. it is mainly a temporary phenomenon in life which resolves itself, and which in most cases requires no institutional response to disappear again (cf. for example Dölling 2007; Dollinger and Schmidt-Semisch 2011; Feltes and Putzke 2004; Heinz 2003, 2006; Walter 2005). In addition, compared to adult crime, juvenile delinquency is rather more spontaneous and group-related. At the same time, it is often visible in public places, and causes slight economic damage. In this regard, young people are often equally the offenders and the victims of juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, a certain result of criminological penology research is that juvenile delinquency cannot be successfully combated with harsher penalties, such as deprivation of liberty, since these are associated with high relapse rates (cf. for example Spiess 2013). Against this background, it has also become standard practice in juvenile court proceedings to apply the principles "informal instead of formal" (in terms of completing the proceedings) and "non-residential instead of detention" (regarding the penalties imposed).

The vast majority of children and adolescents who display deviant behaviour only attract police attention once, or twice at the most. In contrast, a small group of young people have a bigger problem and exhibit delinquency more frequently: Between 5% and 10% of young people can be described as so-called persistent offender children and adolescents (also discussed under the keywords: repeat/intensive offender, multiple offender, "MIT"). Since this group is responsible for the majority of all criminal offences in their age group, it is of particular importance for preventive approaches. Persistent offender children and adolescents represent a special challenge for the participating institutions and for inter-institutional cooperation (cf. Holthusen 2015). Studies show that these are often young people

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Groeger-Roth et al. 2018.

with multiple problematic situations and/or complex problems, who have worked with a large number of institutions and their specialists over a long period of time (Meier 2015; Fischer and Hoops 2015). Their biographies are often characterised by disruptions and risks, which may be of institutional origin, among other things. Frequent school changes, different responsible persons at youth welfare services, and non-completion of measures are typical among such at-risk young people (Meier 2015). In addition, there is also a shortage in many places of structure and support for transitions, and particularly with the biographies of "difficult cases", the shifting of responsibilities between the institutions can be observed (keywords: "shifting, merry-go-round", Holthusen 2015). Especially in the case of frequent changes between specialists – and with complicated cooperation structures and requirements – information gaps, timing differences with passing on of information and the like can make the handling of multiple problematic situations in persistent offender young people significantly more difficult (cf. Holthusen 2004; Meier 2015).

As mentioned above, there is broad consensus among experts that first and foremost educational strategies and approaches are required, in order to reach children and young people, and to support them in their development. This applies in particular when young people (repeatedly) exhibit delinquency. Fundamental to this is understanding not to act repressively, but rather to work together with the addressees on the basis of situational and resources orientation, voluntary cooperation, co-production, participation and prevention (cf. Holthusen and Hoops 2015, p. 12). Key here – and challenging, particularly with a view to evaluations – is the requirement of a productive relationship between specialists on one side and the addressees on the other (cf. Holthusen and Hoops 2015, p. 13). In the framework of the measures, young people should not be understood as deficit-afflicted objects, but as actively-participating subjects, who are equipped with individual, positive resources, and together with whom – in a spirit of co-production – the offer can be structured, problem areas tackled and goals pursued. This principle of co-production in the framework of educational approaches (also including crime prevention) incorporates the development and conceptualisation of suitable offers (e.g. consideration of developmental, gender and culture-specific aspects), the precise structuring of the measure (e.g. constant consideration of the needs and resources of the addressee) as well as a negotiation process between specialist and addressee regarding joint goal-setting for the measure.

In practice, child and youth welfare services provide a wide range of services, offers and measures, with diverse educational approaches. Thereby, inspiration and support come from offers which form part of standard practice, but also from (innovative and) temporary (model) project educational processes, in the framework of which "diverse and differentiated cross-functional socio-educational processes are used, which have their roots in the classical trio of methods of individual case help, social group work and community work" (Holthusen and Hoops 2015, pp. 13). Normally, crime prevention is not the primary objective of standard offers from child and youth welfare services, but as already described, these can certainly have a crime prevention impact – as a desired side-effect. However, in other areas of standard practice, crime prevention can also explicitly be the goal: For example, if delinquency by children below the age of criminal responsibility is the reason for the Allgemeiner Sozialer Dienst (General Social Services) or Jugendamt (Youth Welfare Office) contacting the family. The problem situations can then be tackled on an individual case basis – i.e. very individualised and hardly formalised, but also in the context of social group work. An example of a group-related crime prevention approach is a permanently-established de-escalation training programme in a youth centre. Standard practice measures which specifically work towards crime prevention include youth services in juvenile court proceedings. They support young people throughout the court proceedings, and also advise the

juvenile court on possible sanctions and measures under the Jugendgerichtsgesetz (Juvenile Courts Act), with the aim of preventing future delinquency. In addition, it is determined whether further assistance should be initiated in terms of the Social Code Book (SGB VIII). However, in the context of crime prevention, the focus of attention is not usually on the standard offers of child and youth welfare services, but rather on the numerous project-based and often temporary projects and programmes for different target groups and age groups (e.g. anti-aggression training, dispute resolution projects).

One aspect which is of crucial importance to crime prevention – for both standard services and (model) projects – are the cooperation structures between the fields of action involved. The basic principle is that cooperation between different actors is essential and demanded at the interfaces of institutional responsibilities, for example if children and adolescents cause disruption at school (e.g. conflict resolution in schools), or if offences come to the attention of the police and judiciary. Overall, many positive steps have been taken in this regard over the last few decades – think for example of the cooperation between child and youth welfare services and the police, which was still largely ruled out categorically in the 1980s, and today is common practice (Feldes and Schilling 2015). On the one hand, current inter-institutional cooperation in the field of child and juvenile crime prevention takes place on a case-specific and event-specific basis, but – in common educational specialist practice – it is rarely structurally anchored. However, on the other hand, new methods of cooperation are also being tested – particularly in the context of model projects. It must be critically noted in this regard that numerous cooperative efforts relate only to temporary individual projects, and that permanent cooperation is the exception rather than the rule – simply due to the question of the further financing of such projects (cf. Holthusen and Hoops 2015, p. 22).

In practice, the term "prevention" is not infrequently used without due consideration, and sometimes almost in an inflationary manner, for example if projects are given the label of crime prevention, irrespective of their specific objectives (cf. Fischer and Hoops 2015). This includes many measures to promote the development of children and young people, such as support for minors who are pregnant, or language courses for children with a migrant background in child day-care centres (already according to Hoops and Holthusen in 2014). However, such approaches and/or projects do not explicitly pursue the goal of preventing crimes, but focus for example on teaching social skills, and therefore – according to the working definition stated below – do not have a crime prevention orientation. Although it is quite possible that such approaches or projects can have a crime prevention impact sooner or later – for example if the social skills acquired thereby also assist with conflict management – these are rather desired preventive side-effects, and not the specific goals of the above-mentioned approaches and/or projects. This conceptual blur is also discussed under the keyword "Entgrenzung" (blurring the line) (Lüders 2011; Holthusen and Hoops 2011). At the same time, there is often a shift towards earlier prevention – according to the logic that "earlier is always better". This is particularly problematic regarding child and juvenile crime prevention, not least because the (according to this logic ever-younger) target groups of crime prevention measures are thereby at least indirectly accused of potentially criminal behaviour. This is inevitably linked to the risk of stigmatisation, which in turn can trigger precisely those behaviours in children and young people which should be avoided (cf. Hoops und Holthusen 2014, p. 21). In addition, the danger may arise that ever-younger people are addressed with increasingly-unspecific measures, from which ever-fewer beneficial effects can be derived (also in evaluations) (cf. Fischer and Hoops 2015). It is important to bear in mind that prevention always relates to the future and/or the future actions of the addressees, but the associated "danger and risk forecasts provide no guarantee that the undesirable action will certainly occur, or can certainly be avoided

through prevention. This makes any prevention a fragile undertaking, with – measured according to the high expectations – a not insignificant risk of failure" (Holthusen et al. 2011, p. 23).

In light of this insight into daily practice, with its wide range of meanings of "prevention", without a "uniform or even cross-functional binding definition" (Holthusen et al. 2011, p. 22) and the associated above-mentioned problems of blurring the line and shifting forward, the Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime uses the following working definition: "Crime prevention" includes any programmes, strategies, measures and projects which have the prevention and/or reduction of crime as their primary goal, either through a reduction of individual delinquency tendencies, or a reduction of situational and social environment factors (cf. also Holthusen and Hoops 2011).

In summary it can be said that specific challenges are associated with "child and juvenile crime prevention", which are accordingly reflected in the complexity of the evaluation of crime prevention (in particular for impact assessments), if these are to be dealt with appropriately.

### **3. Evaluation of educational approaches to crime prevention**

Compilations on educational offerings and approaches to crime prevention (Centre for the Prevention of Youth Crime 2007, 2015; Walsh 2017) refer to a comprehensive and differentiated prevention landscape in Germany, with very different levels of complexity: However, there is consensus among the participants involved in the various fields of action that crime prevention should always be based on the best empirical knowledge that is available (see also Welsh and Farrington 2012). Evaluations are a central basis for this. Although the number of evaluations available in Germany has increased in recent years (as also documented in Walsh et al. 2018), only some specific areas of crime prevention have been evaluated, while large and also significant areas have hardly been systematically investigated. In addition – as with the term crime prevention – there are diverse interpretations of the collective term evaluation. For this reason, there now follows some terminology differentiation and sorting.

#### **3.1. Term and forms of evaluation**

In an everyday sense of understanding, evaluation means that something is assessed by somebody in some way, based on some – not always clearly defined – criteria; accordingly, evaluation in this sense is an integral part of everyday actions (cf. already Haubrich et al. 2005, p. 35). The professional and scientific understanding of the concept of evaluation is based on this everyday understanding of evaluation: As a professional practice and as a form of social scientific research, evaluations are characterised by a systematic approach, in order to describe and assess a subject of social reality, on the basis of empirically-gained information. Both the data as well as the conclusions and assessments derived therefrom must be comprehensible and valid and/or reliable.

Also in the case of scientific (outside) evaluations, the first question is whether it is an internal or an external evaluation, which in turn has consequences regarding the type of information that can be obtained in the framework of the evaluation, the validity of the results, and the required conditions and resources (Haubrich et al. 2005, p. 36). Although internal evaluations are not carried out by the project actors directly involved, they are done by the organisation or institution in which the project is located. In the case of external evaluations, the persons carrying out the evaluation are not linked with the organisation implementing the project. Both forms can be found in the evaluations of crime prevention (also in Walsh et al. 2018). Evaluations can also pursue different objectives: formative evaluations are intended to improve an ongoing project with their results, whereas summative evaluations

focus on the outcomes of a project (and possibly, the results determine whether a project will continue or not). Another important distinction is whether the processes in a project (what happens with the young people) or the results of the project (which effects can be observed among the young people) are the subject of the evaluation. Process and results evaluations can also be linked with each other; a link is necessary, if effects should be attributed during the course of evaluations. A process evaluation thus forms the basis and precondition for an effect-orientated evaluation, because otherwise it remains unclear what leads to which effects under which circumstances. The five-step model of Owen and Rogers (1999) shows the whole range of the possible forms of evaluations: From proactive evaluation, which already clarifies the framework conditions before the start of the programme, and if possible, improves the programme design, to clarificative evaluation, which refines the design during the implementation phase and reconstructs the implicit theory of the programme elements, to interactive evaluation for the improvement of a programme during its life-cycle, by providing information on the initial results of individual programme steps, to monitoring, which provides information about achievable results, right through to impact evaluation at the end or after the expiry of a programme.

The decision as to which type of evaluation makes sense, is also dependent on the "maturity" of a project. Innovative (immature) projects for instance, which develop and test new things in educational practice, can change during the course of the evaluation. Here, the formative aspect and the processes involved in the project are often in the foreground of the evaluation. If a project is mature and well-established, and the procedures tested and stable, then the results are more likely to be in focus.

### **3.2. Educational approaches to crime prevention as a complex subject for evaluations**

For the steadily-evolving field of crime prevention in Germany, different forms of evaluations are useful – depending on the project – to deliver information on improvement and further development of the specialist practice. As such, determining the effectiveness of crime prevention approaches is only one aspect.

Depending on the subject, designs of varying complexity are required for the evaluation of crime prevention. Evaluations are easily implemented in highly-standardised (mature) programmes, designed for example for use in school classes and/or with groups of school pupils (cf. Walsh et al. 2018, Chapter 5, p. 387ff). When preparing evaluations of these offers, not only can control group designs be incorporated well, but also the number of participants is large enough to obtain quantifiable results, and therewith make an assessment of the effects of a programme (cf. references to the programmes Olweus, FairPlayer, Coolness-Training and others in Melzer et al. 2011). However, by now it is primarily multi-level approaches and/or multi-modal approaches which are evaluated as particularly successful at crime prevention (cf. already Sherman et al. 1997). These present further challenges for evaluation, because they address not only young people, but also their parents and the professionals in schools, and/or the social work during leisure time. Characteristic of these programmes is that often different (problem) areas are "tackled" (for example, problematic alcohol consumption, bullying, physical violence, internet addiction), and at the same time, social skills and conflict resolution mechanisms are developed (cf. Walsh et al. 2018, Chapter 5, pp. 387). Through this combination of numerous activities for different target groups, however, the effects determined using a pre/post survey can no longer be assigned to individual activities (so-called "black box"), and it therefore remains unclear which elements have contributed to the desired effects, and which not, or which perhaps even had negative effects, but these were not visible overall.

The use of logical models is methodically promising, in order to shed light on the so-called "black box" of the processes and developments within a project (see the related contribution of Yngborn and Hoops 2018). With the help of a logical model, the implicit logic of action of projects can be realistically and representationally described, whereby the effects can be made visible, and an evaluation enabled. In addition, this visualisation of processes contributes to the professional development of the specialists, regarding the design and the practical feasibility of the project. Furthermore, the use of logical models in preparation for an evaluation shows that the participation of specialists in the context of the creation of this instrument (which can be quite time-consuming) can lead to a sustainable use of the evaluation results (cf. Yngborn and Hoops 2018).

In contrast with highly-standardised programmes, when considering case-by-case offers from standard practice, the investigation of entire help processes and structures may be needed. Especially when it is not just typical petty cases of youth delinquency, there are very complex life situations facing severely at-risk young people (e.g. persistent offender adolescents, Meier 2015), with numerous interventions by various institutions. This results in consistent methodological problems for evaluations, regarding proof of efficacy. The central problem here can be identified as the attribution of observed phenomena. These can only be understood as effects, if it is possible to link them in a plausible causative relationship with specific interventions from practice. In particular, determining the effect and/or attribution of a single measure in difficult life situations – with partly (non-)simultaneous help and support services, and/or a number of different courses in succession, repeated non-completion and absent follow-up perspectives, but also times spent in juvenile custodial centres and often problematic private circumstances, and/or simply the influence of the social world in adolescence – is often methodologically difficult to achieve.

Decisive for the "success" of a programme/offer is its suitability (Meier 2015; Gabriel et al. 2007; Wolf 2007), i.e. the exact determination of the problem situations/requirements of a young person, and thereafter the choice of a suitable offer, in order to prevent non-completion. This suitability is an essential criterion for the success of an offer, and has to date received too little consideration in evaluations (Rätz-Heinisch 2005). It is therefore important – even in the often hardly-formalised settings – that the help processes and the biographies of at-risk children are considered, and the perspective of the addressees obtained (see also Gabriel et al. 2007).

For crime prevention, it is initially obvious to define upholding the law as the key success criterion. However, a more detailed look reveals that this criterion is associated with methodological challenges. How can upholding the law be reliably measured (also including unreported crime cases)? What period of time should serve as the basis? Will there be differentiation between various offences? If, for example, a teenager has completed anti-violence training, and thereafter commits no more offences in connection with physical violence, but theft offences instead, or is registered by the police due to other less serious offences (reported crime cases), then this can definitely be a success of the programme.

A different challenge is the question of the transferability of evaluation results to other contexts, particularly in the case of model projects and with so-called hardly-formalised educational settings (cf. Lüders and Haubrich 2007, p. 140). Model projects are often "immature" projects, which change and develop many times during the course of their testing, and thus cannot (yet) demonstrate standardi-

sation. In addition, with the transfer of exemplary trials into regular project practice, subsequent evaluations often reveal significantly lower effects. An explanation for this lies in the particularly outstanding dedication of all stakeholders in innovative model projects<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, the integration of exemplary approaches into existing standard practice frequently results in changes/adaptations to the offers, so that the results are not directly transferable. This is particularly significant for child and youth welfare services. At a different location, with different conditions, different cooperation structures and different problem situations – in other words, different contexts – the strict transfer of an approach can lead to very different results (cf. Holthusen et al. 2011, p. 24).

In order to do justice to the complex subject of child and juvenile crime prevention, orientation towards the standards of the DeGEval – Evaluation Society (Gesellschaft für Evaluation e.V.) is helpful, with the aim of ensuring the quality of evaluations and developing it further. They list the four fundamental properties of evaluations: utility, propriety, feasibility and accuracy (cf. DeGEval 2016). The standards enable trustful cooperation with the specialist practice, and thus create the preconditions for better data quality. The inclusion of all the persons involved in an evaluation provides an opportunity to appropriately evaluate a complex crime prevention educational offer. The DeGEval standards stipulate that all those involved in and affected by the evaluation subject or the evaluation itself should be identified in advance, so that their interests and information requirements can be clarified, and taken into account as far as possible in the design of the evaluation. Because an evaluation which involves the stakeholders and affected parties, and aligns itself with their information requirements and addresses their questions, has much better prospects of being accepted and actually used by them (DeGEval 2016). The inclusion of all persons involved also leads to more valid data.

Regarding educational opportunities for young people, it is not only in multiple problem situations that there is always the question of what the intervention constitutes in the long term, and where the areas of influence of the project lie; after all, when working with young people – as already mentioned in the text above – it is always about co-productive processes, i.e. the results are a co-production achieved between specialists on the one hand, and children, young people and adults on the other hand.

The prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence should also be understood as a co-productive performance, in other words, a process which is jointly determined by the specialists on the one hand, and the children or young people on the other hand. An example of this is the BMFSFJ model programme "Wirkungsorientierte Jugendhilfe" (impact-orientated youth services). In the framework of the evaluation of this model programme, it could be demonstrated that "youth services are effective, if they strengthen the participation of young people, and if they enable professional action, since specialist goal orientations and framework conditions which facilitate professionalism are crucial prerequisites for successful help processes" (Albus et al. 2010, p. 9). The success of the help process and/or the positive effect of the measure should ultimately be judged by whether or not the child and youth

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<sup>4</sup> Additionally, evaluation of model projects are sometimes "internal" evaluation by researchers, who also developed the program and implemented it. Though evaluation is also used for marketing. Critically on self-evaluation cf. Eisner and Ribeaud 2008, discussing three problems, going along with self-evaluation: the difficulty to replicate results on effectiveness; the problem of making decisions on the methodological design during the research process in order to promote a preferred outcome to that effect, that the results have a lower validity; as well as the question, whether research results are represented in a fair way to practice and public.

welfare services objectives – of strengthening young people and their families, and enabling them to live a self-determined life – have been met<sup>5</sup>.

A separate problem is presented by the unintended (side-)effects of prevention – which are neglected in many evaluations. The problems of observability and determining attribution of side-effects are present just like for the intended effects, and may be even more difficult to get a grip on methodically. However, if a prevention approach is to be assessed in the sense of an evaluation, then strictly speaking all effects, i.e. both the intended and unintended, should be considered and critically analysed (Holthusen et al. 2011, p. 24). An example of unintended side-effects are the consequences of self-stigmatisation by young people participating in programmes, also in the sense of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (cf. already Merton 1948).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence is characterised by diverse projects, programmes and also standard practices, which as subjects (some with considerable complexity) of evaluation research, each have their own inherent specific and methodological challenges (for evaluation of complex intervention in prevention, cf. also Robert Koch Institute 2012). Evaluation must be appropriate for the subject, depending on the project, programme or standard practice. Here it is important for the further development of specialist practice to use all forms of evaluation, and if necessary, to develop new methodological approaches. An exclusive focus on evidence of effect does not do justice to the subject-matter, because broad areas of crime prevention – such as innovative projects testing new ideas, standard practice in hardly-formalised educational settings, or complex interventions in cooperation with different actors – would then be excluded. For the further development of crime prevention, it is important to establish useful evaluation practice; this could include process evaluations, as well as impact analyses – insofar as the subject matter allows this methodically.

An examination of the development of crime prevention in Germany in the last twenty years on the one hand, and an examination of the evaluations available in this field on the other hand, shows that the instrument of evaluation is still too rarely used for further development of specialist practice. One reason for this is certainly the methodological challenges listed, and also the considerable financial resources required for subject-appropriate external evaluation design – beyond simple satisfaction surveys after completion of a measure. Against this background, for the foreseeable future the possibilities of meta-analyses, and reviews which focus solely on effects, are still severely limited. The unintended side-effects should be targeted more specifically as the subject of evaluation, also out of responsibility towards the affected children and young people, so that specialist practice can learn and evolve.

There is no "magic formula" – however, we should continue working tirelessly and pursuing the objective of generating professionally-relevant knowledge for the further development of specialist practice

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<sup>5</sup> According to this understanding, the evaluation of the model program (01.01.2006-30.04.2009) operationalised capabilities for young people, giving information on how effective assistance in raising young people (for legal guardians) has been (Albus et al. 2010, p. 9). For an effective Children and Youth service, especially soft measures were detected: e.g. perceived participation within the process by children/young people and their parents; the assessment of the quality of the working relationship between the young person and the practitioner; mandatory rules of practice as well as the quality of cooperation between the involved institutions (Albus et al. 2012, pp. 155).

– be it for model projects or for standard practice – through the expansion of evaluation and the development of an evaluation culture. In this way, evaluation itself can then contribute to the prevention of delinquency in childhood and adolescence.

## 5. Literature

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