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Mobile banditry in the Netherlands from the Polish perspective

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Motto

König Heinrich

Soll ich euch erst der Drangsal Kunde sagen,
Die deutsches Land so oft aus Osten traf?

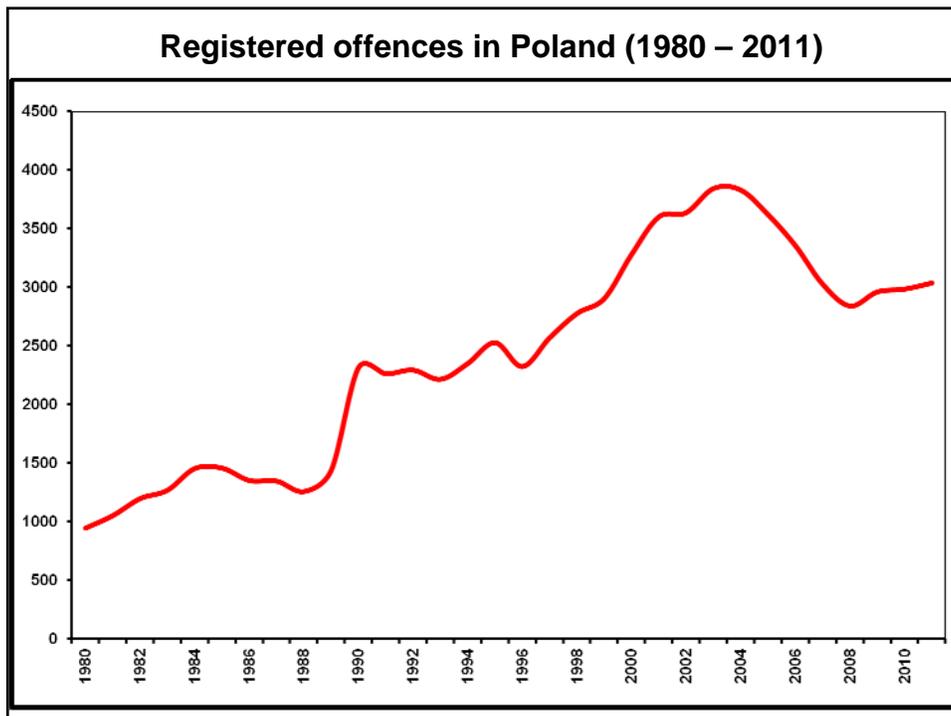
(Richard Wagner, *Lohengrin*, Act I)

Lohengrin

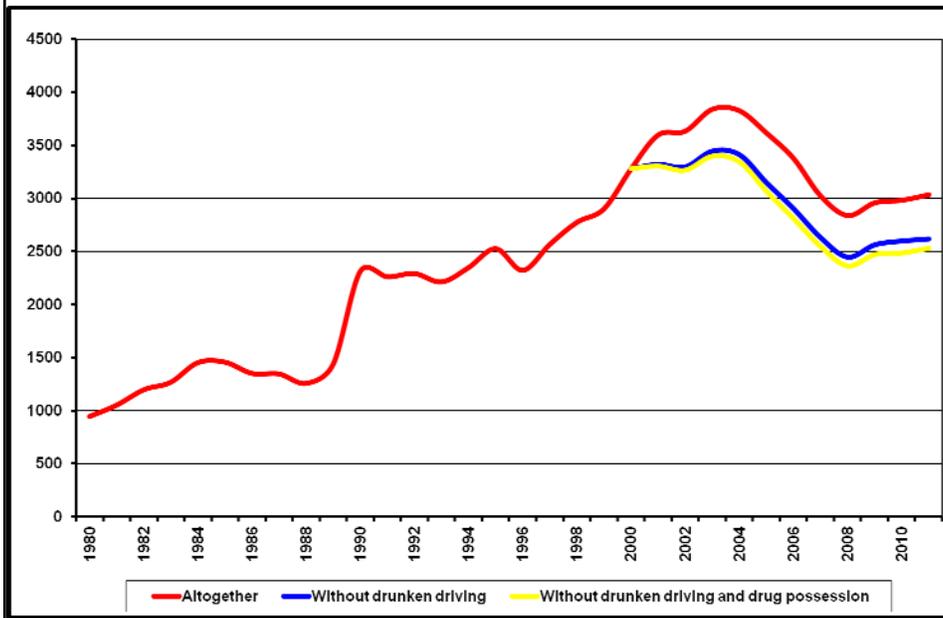
Nach Deutschland sollen noch in fernsten Tagen
Des Ostens Horden siegreich nimmer ziehn!

(Richard Wagner, *Lohengrin*, Act III)

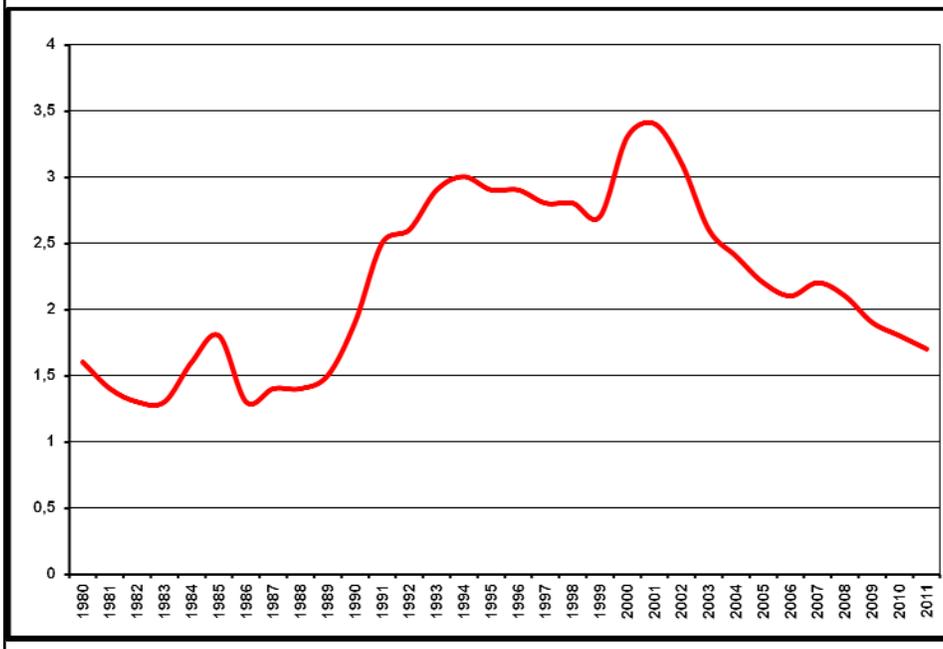
General information about crime in Poland since 1990



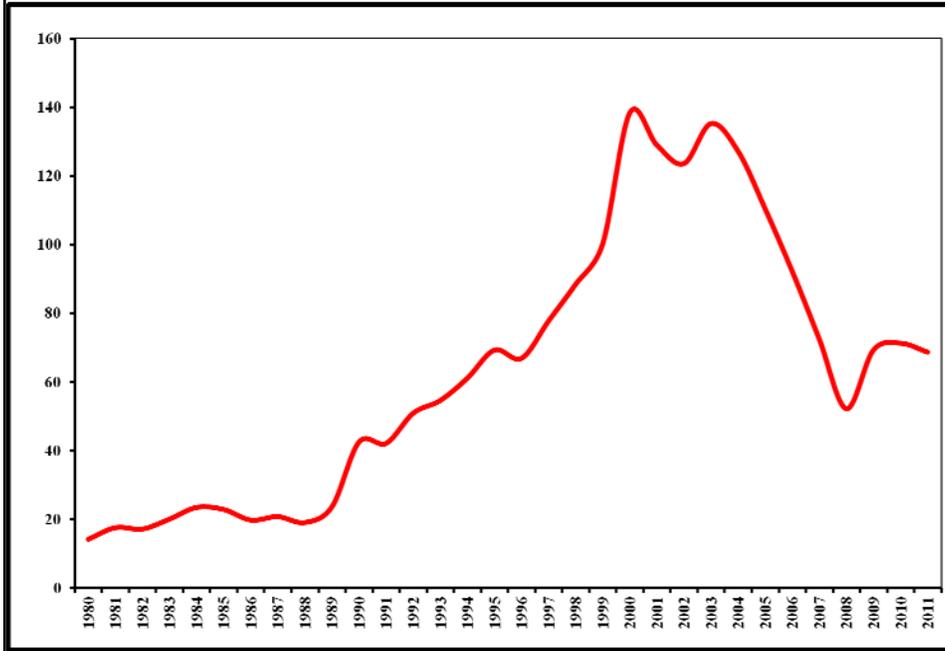
Registered offences in Poland (1980 – 2011)
 (altogether; without drunken driving; without drunken driving and drug possession)



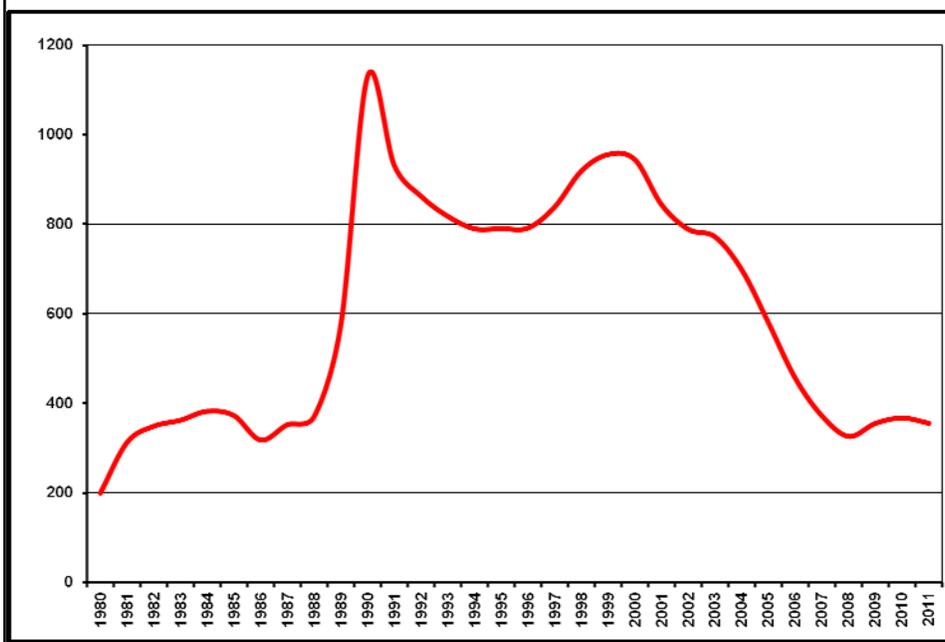
Homicide in Poland (1980 – 2011)



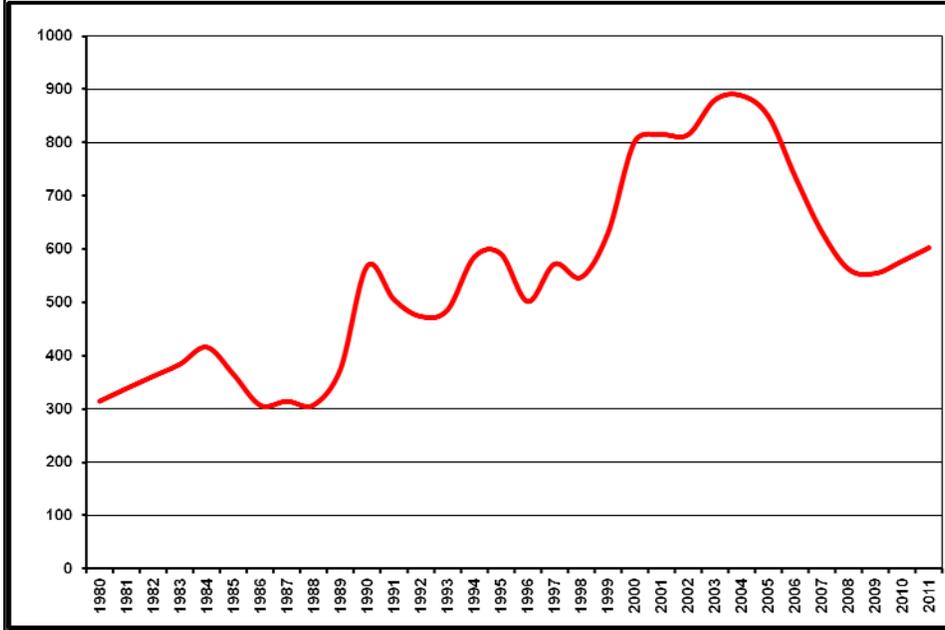
Robbery in Poland (1980 – 2011)



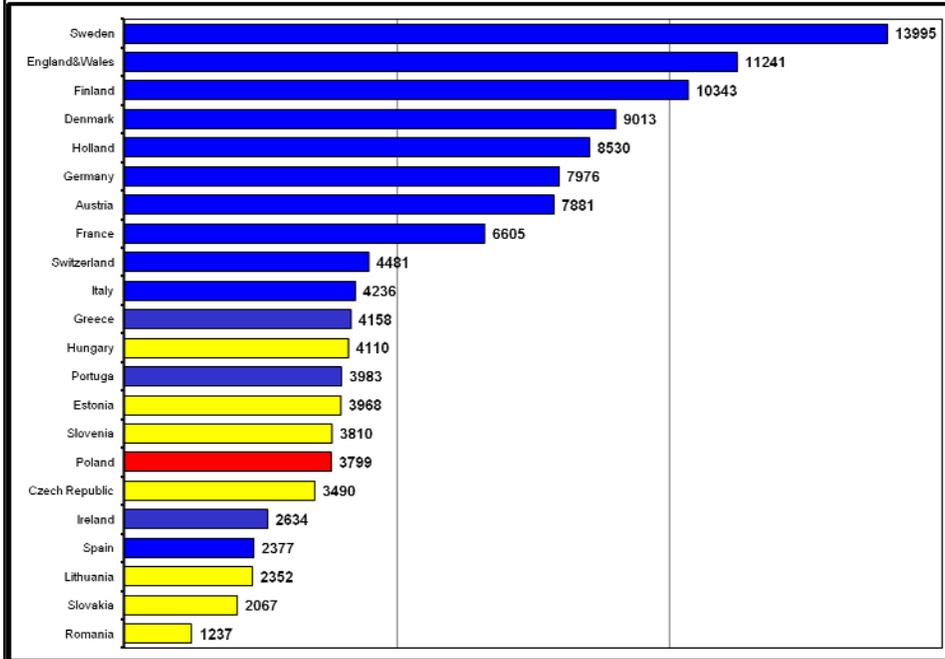
Burglary in Poland (1980 – 2011)



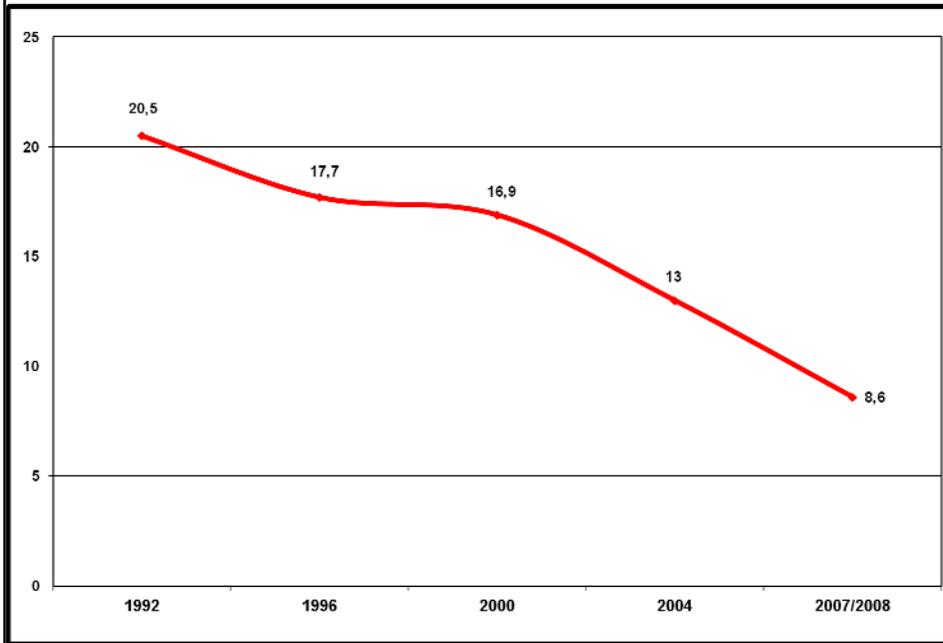
Simple theft in Poland (1980 – 2011)



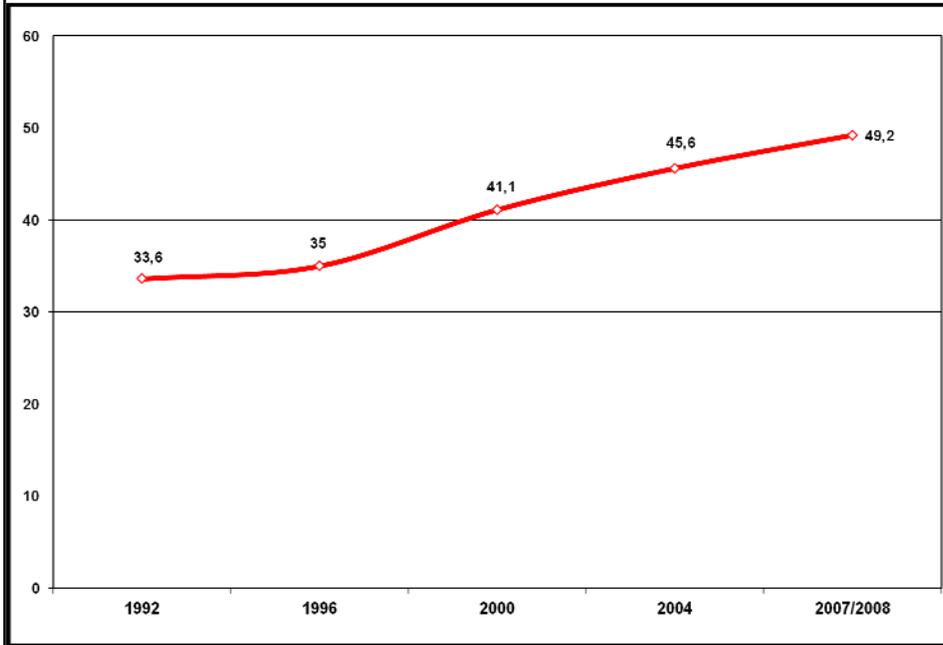
Registered offences rates in European countries (2006)



Victimisation prevalence rates – any offence (1992 – 2008)

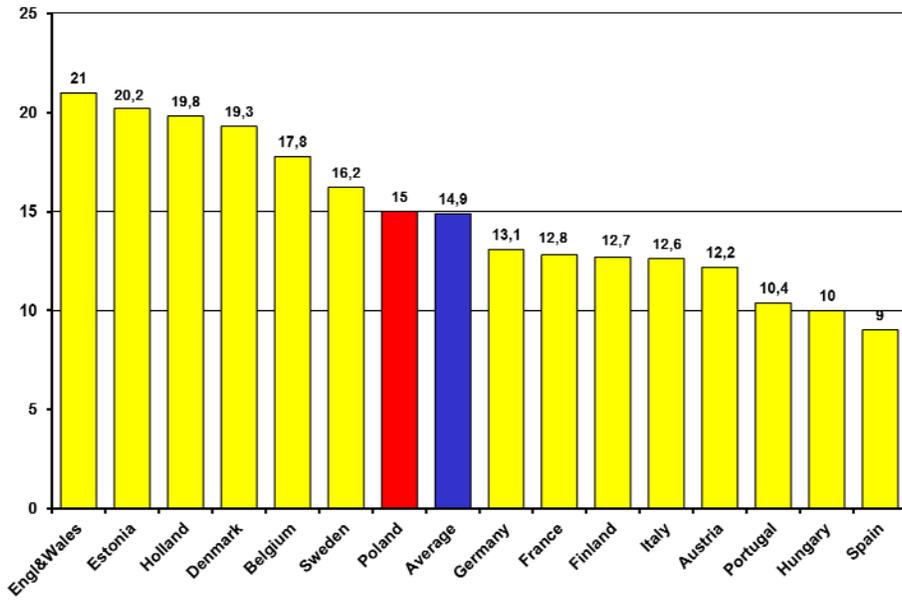


Reporting to the police (1992 – 2008)

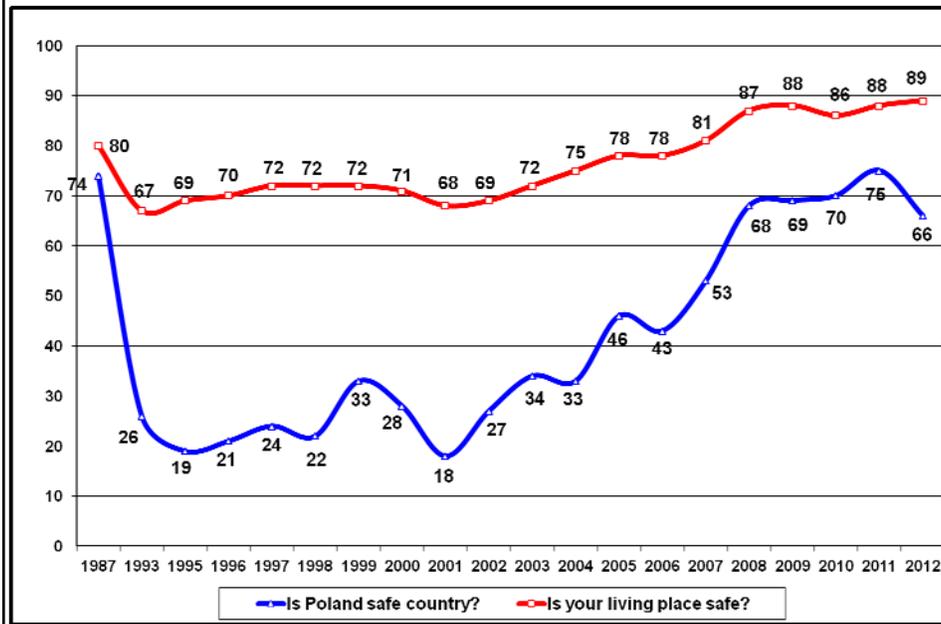


Victimization prevalence rates in European countries

ICVS 2004

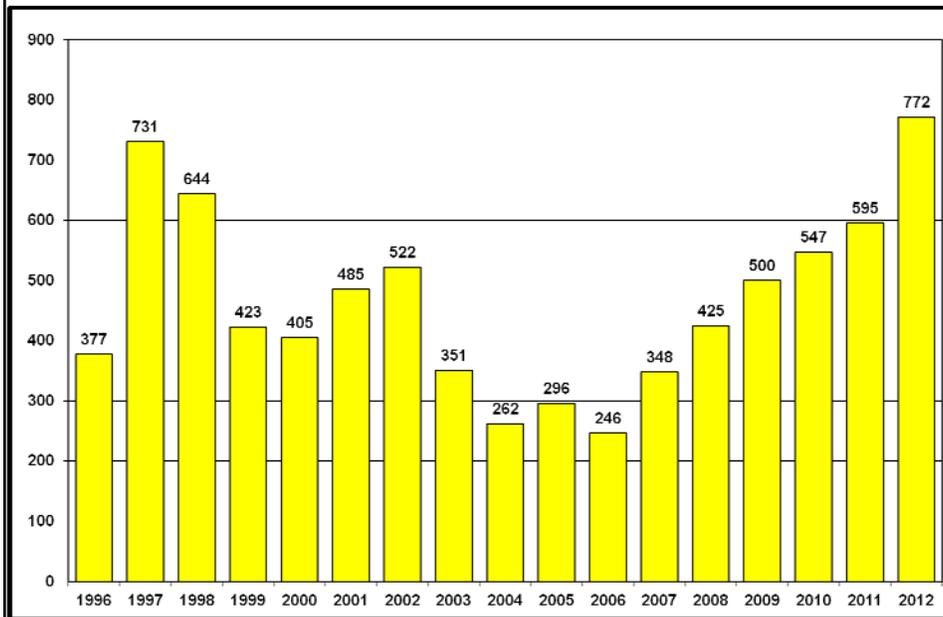


Assessment of safety in Poland and in neighbourhood of residence (1987 – 2012)

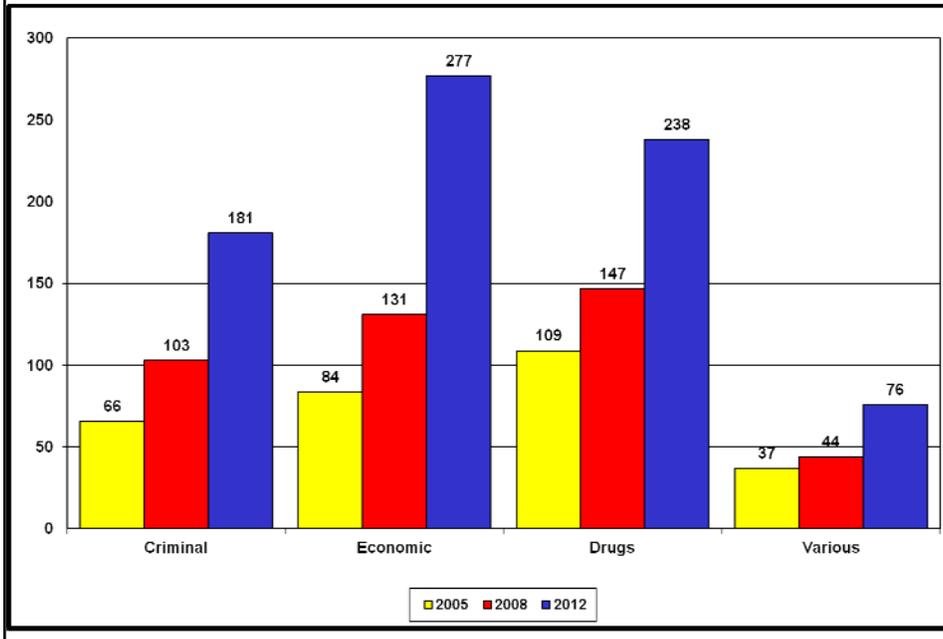


Data on organised crime

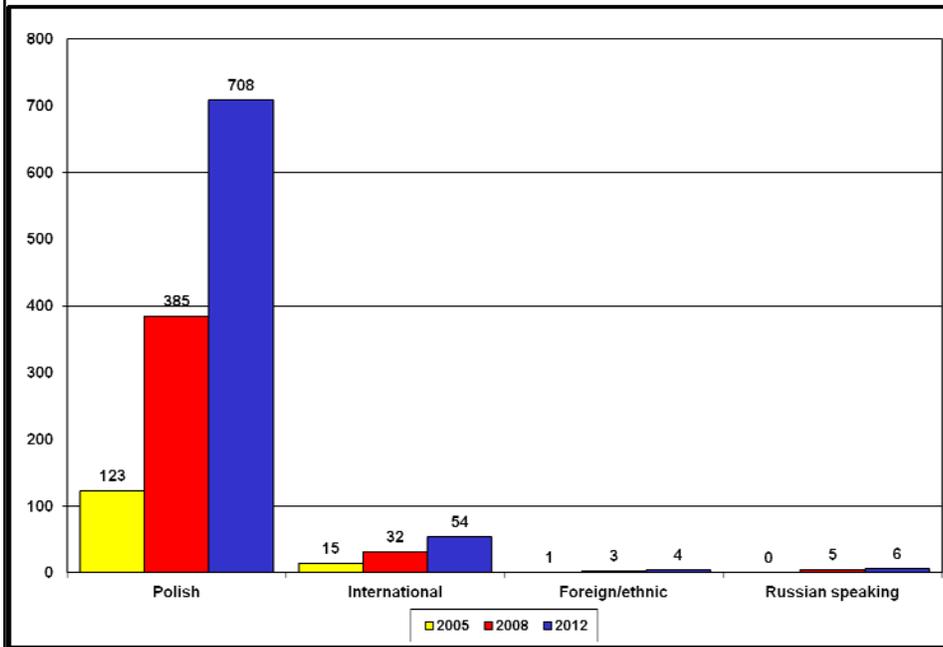
Number of criminal groups under investigation
(Central Bureau of Investigations data)



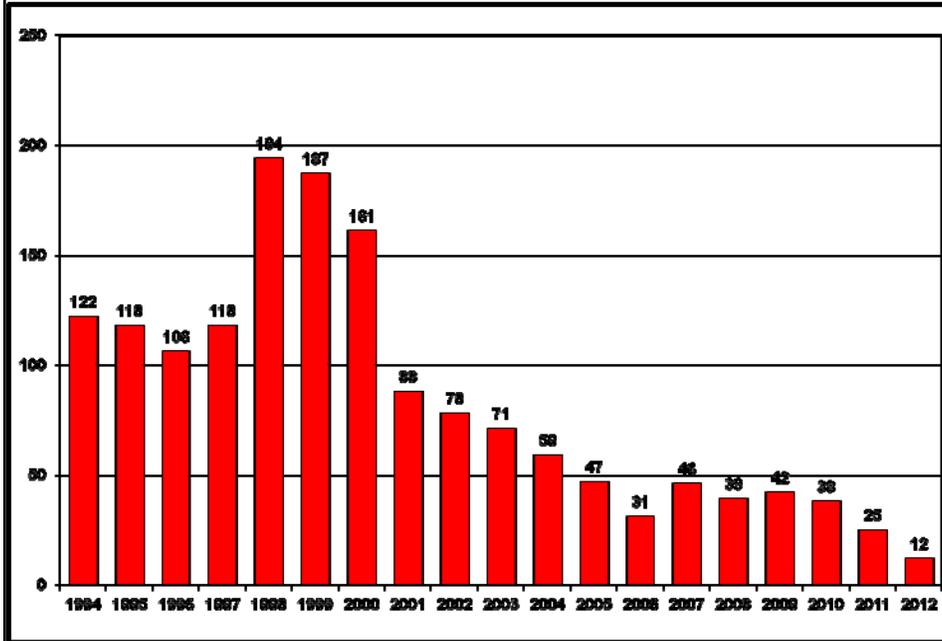
Criminal groups according to the main area of activity (CBI data)



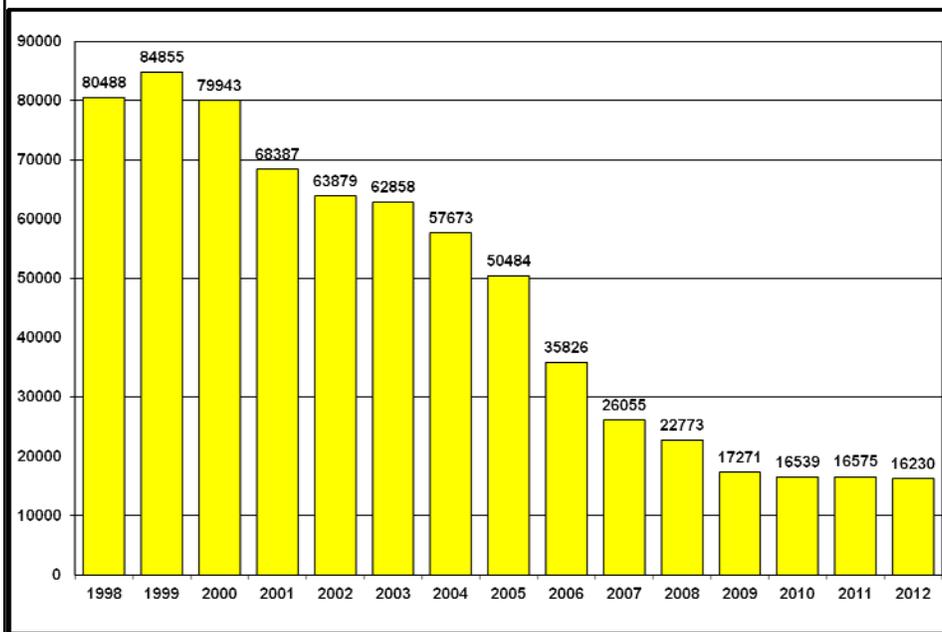
Criminal groups according to the members' nationality (CBI data)



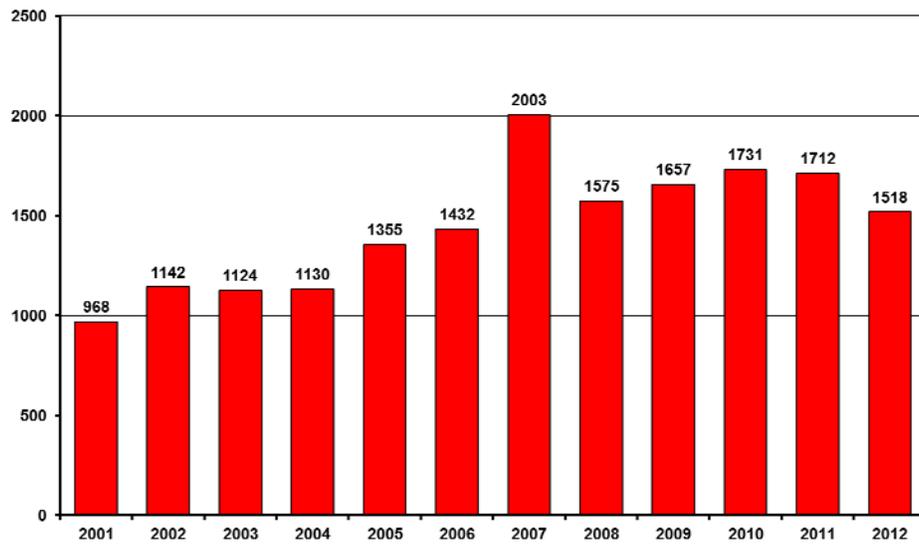
Explosions registered by the police as 'criminal terror'



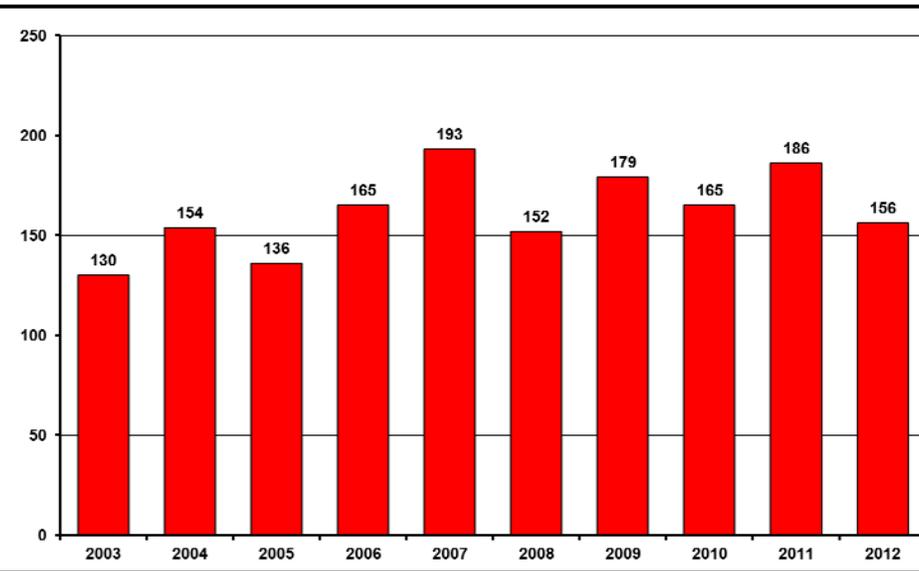
Number of car thefts registered by the police 1998 – 2012



Persons charged under Article 258 Section 1 or 2 of the Penal Code (membership in organised criminal group or criminal association) in the years 2001 – 2012



Persons charged under Article 258 Section 3 of the Penal Code (leadership of organised criminal group or criminal association) in the years 2003 – 2012



Discussion in the context of mobile banditism

Reasons for the recent crime drop in Poland

- General tendency for crime to decline in many countries in Europe and in the world.
- General improvement of economy and living conditions – most acute negative consequences of political, social and economic transformation seem to diminish since about 2000 – 2005 (but since 2009 consequences of the worldwide economic crisis appear);
- Demography (demographic high passing crime prone age);

Reasons for the recent crime drop in Poland

- Improved law enforcement effort;
- Improved crime prevention;
- Displacement or „export” of criminals and crime to Western Europe, including the Netherlands (???)

„Export” of criminals and crime

Does Poland or the entire Central and Eastern Europe, really „export” since 2004 its crime and criminals to Western Europe?

- Displacement due to expansion of criminal activity to countries giving more opportunities (motivated offenders, suitable targets);
- Displacement due to worse „working conditions” at home because of improved control effort and at the same time more „freedom” in the West (motivated offenders, lack of guardians);

„Export” of criminals and crime

- „What might appear the product of globalisation is in fact the consequence of state repression exporting the problem to other countries” (F.Varese, Report, p.34);
- Paradoxical negative effects of otherwise positive developments in Central and Eastern Europe;
- But not only there: „As a consequence of improved checks and insight into the working methods of these groups [engaging in car theft – K.K.] in Germany and Spain it would appear that they have transformed their working area to the Netherlands” (Report, p.46)

Changes in the organised crime phenomenon

„In all four countries we can distinguish between two categories of new criminals:

- a. former *nomenklatura* who used the new economic opportunities and corrupt networks to enrich themselves to an unprecedented rate;
- b. young and physically strong gangsters who used violence to engage in criminal activities such as extortion, kidnapping, hold-ups and money laundering.”

(Report, p.15)

Changes in the organised crime phenomenon

criminal groups engaging in economic crime

vs.

**criminal groups engaging in property offences,
extortion, violent offences, drug trafficking**

Foundations of the mobile banditry phenomenon

- „The large scale organized crime that flourished in the post-socialist period formed the basis for the contemporary phenomenon of mobile banditry” (Report, p.94)
- During the 2000s „large hierarchical criminal organizations from the 1990s were replaced by dozens of smaller networks of professional criminals” (Report, p.94)

Three phases of development in Poland

- **1990s** – dominated by larger, hierarchical groups constituting usually outgrowth of the criminal underworld existing before 1990: mainly people engaged in illicit currencies trade, often with links to security service;
- **1998 – 2005** – dominated by violent gang wars as rather cautious, and avoiding spectacular violence „founding fathers’ are being replaced by extremely violent „young wolfs”;
- **After 2005** – after most of surviving old leaders and „young wolfs” are either killed, or arrested and convicted during the years 2003 – 2007 large groups disintegrate and organized crime becomes more decentralised, dispersed;

Post-communist transformation

- „Corruption and extortion were the order of the day due to the fact that the transition process to free market economy had not been accompanied by effective regulation” (Report, p.94);
- Certainly, many things could be done better. But it is easy to be wise afterwards;

Post-communist transformation

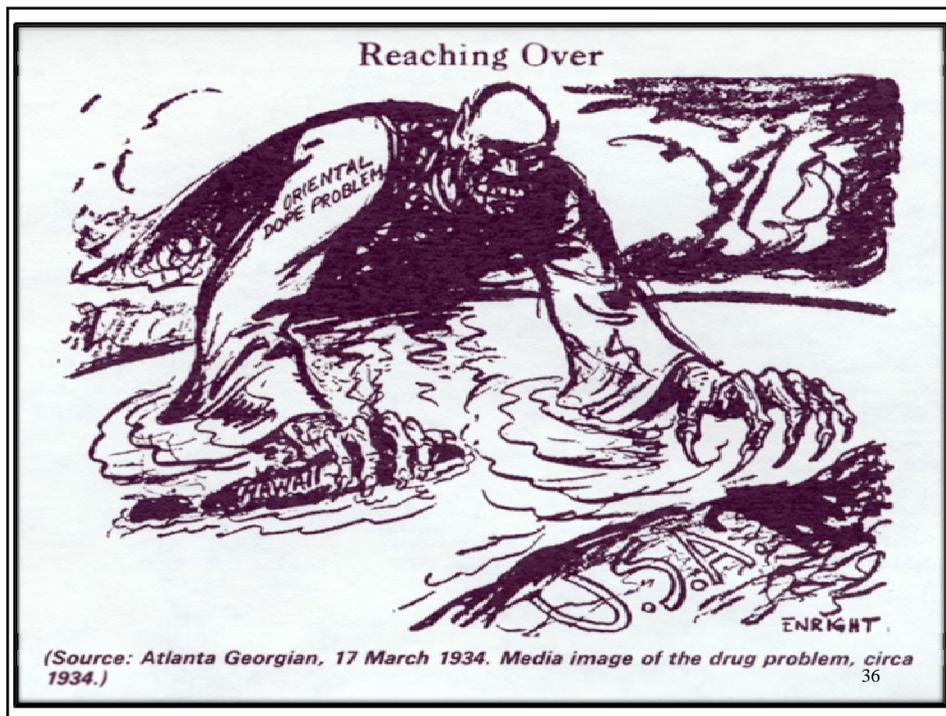
- What happened in Central and Eastern Europe after 1990 was an absolutely new experience of transformation from totalitarian, authoritarian system and centrally planned economy, to democracy and free market;
- Therefore it was absolutely incomparable with experience of other countries coming out of dictatorship (Portugal, Spain);
- „It was easy to make fish-soup out of aquarium. The reverse process is much more complicated”. (L.Wałęsa).

EU enlargement as causal factor

- „An enlarged European Union means not only more territory and a grater population, but also more crime and perpetrators of crime” (B. Gruszczyńska, Report, p.35)
- „Dutch shopkeepers for example were warned by their trade associations to stay alert and take preventive measures before 1 May 2004” (Report, p.36)

EU enlargement as causal factor

- But was it really justified to expect that on May 1st 2004 „eastern hordes” mentioned in *Lohengrin* start to overflow Western Europe?
- Was it not often the case of something tantamount to „moral panic”?



EU enlargement as causal factor

- For instance border controls were not abandoned on May 1st, 2004, and Poland entered Schengen area only three years later, in 2007; Bulgaria and Romania are still out of it;
- From that point of view of much greater importance could have been lifting of the visa requirement for most Central and Eastern Europeans, what took place already during the years 1990 – 1991;

EU enlargement as causal factor

- Perception of Central and Eastern Europe as lawless, crime and corruption ridden, mafia governed „black hole” („wild east”);
- This impression was very often supported by information coming primarily from Russia being applied to all other countries of the region;
- At the same time – like before 1990 – no one noticed that there were and are substantial differences between them, including differences what regards crime, organized crime, criminal justice system etc.

Why Holland?

- Holland has a problem with mobile banditry.
- But is Holland somehow specially targeted? Is Holland target to a larger extent than for instance Austria, Germany, Belgium or France?
- We don't know what is the scale of the problem in those other countries? We know that this problem became somehow especially conspicuous in Holland, although concerns about Polish auto-thieves, and burglars in Eastern Germany are also great.
- But for instance Romanian skimmers are considered by the Polish police to be a serious problem in Poland.

What is the scale of the phenomenon in Holland?

- „...the damage [by criminal perpetrators from East Europe] from shoplifting concerned about 206 million euros, and from shop-break-ins between 40 and 50 million euros” (estimates by *Detailhandel Nederland* for 2009, Report, p.44)
- How these estimates were achieved?
- What is the total damage by crime of that type in Holland?
- How it is known what proportion of this damage may be attributed to offenders from Eastern Europe?

What is the scale of the phenomenon in Holland?

- About 10% of burglaries are committed by mobile groups from the East (Report, p.47); this is substantial, but means that 90% are committed by someone else;
- About 10% of jewellers hold-ups are committed by East Europeans (Report, p.56); again it means that 90% are committed by others;

Why Holland?

- Why Polish thieves chose to operate in MediaMarkt shops in Holland, although they have identical MediaMarkt shops in any larger Polish city?
- Why they steal in cosmetics shops in Holland, although they have at their disposal absolutely comparable cosmetics chain shops with same assortment of merchandise in any Polish town?
- Why they steal cars in Germany or in Holland, although on the streets of any Polish city they have almost the same supply of potential targets?
- Why they engage in jewellers or bank hold-ups in Holland, and not in Poland?

Conclusions

- All politics is local (Tip O'Neill);
- Most crime is local (unknown criminologist);
- This may be not true any more: globalization means also globalization of crime, or at least its certain forms;
- This is inevitable, independently of developments such as EU enlargement;
- We must get used to the fact that crime becomes a mobile phenomenon;
- We must understand better potential causal factors contributing to that mobility;
- We must change our way of thinking about crime control to adjust to the above phenomenon;

Thank you for your attention!