

Psychology and law may seem quite distant fields of science. Nevertheless, they both share a common interest – both psychology and law deal with individuals and their behaviour. However, they analyse this issue from different points of view. Psychology and law most frequently meet when the perpetrator of a crime enters "the stage". However, it is equally interesting when psychology and law meet when lawyers are the primary subject of their interest - for example judges and prosecutors who on a daily basis make decisions concerning other people's lives. During a criminal proceeding lawyers encounter other trial participants - defendants and eyewitnesses - and constantly evaluate their testimonies. Such assessment ought to be based on psychological knowledge. Therefore, psychological knowledge is indispensable for legal professionals and essential to make adequate decisions concerning other people. The question is do legal professionals actually possess such knowledge and do they know how to use it in practice? The project entitled "*The influence of psychological knowledge on the decision-making process of legal professionals in criminal justice system*" will provide answers to those questions.

The project serves several goals which will be achieved due to numerous research methods. Firstly, legal professionals in almost every criminal case face eyewitness evidence. Their task is to assess whether eyewitness's testimony is credible or not. Judges conduct such evaluation when they deliver a judgement based on all evidence presented during trial. Prosecutors assess evidence credibility when decide which of the evidence gathered in the case support the indictment. When assessing credibility legal professionals actually evaluate whether the testimonies adequately reflect the authentic course of the crime. The eyewitness credibility assessment ought to be based on psychological reliability criteria. Are those criteria known to legal professionals? How do they evaluate the credibility of eyewitness evidence in court? What tests or criteria of credibility are used in practice? To answer these questions two methods will be used - the analysis of written reasons for judgement that are prepared by judges and in-depth interviews with both judges and prosecutors.

The fact that judges and prosecutors declare that they know and use psychological credibility criteria does not necessarily mean that they actually do so. This is the reason why an experiment will be conducted involving legal professionals. It is intended to verify whether selected credibility criteria have impact on the decision-making process in legal professionals when they evaluate the credibility of eyewitness evidence and make final decisions in the criminal proceeding. Therefore, the second goal of the project is to assess if the credibility criteria like the consistency of eyewitness statements and the eyewitness confidence determine the evaluation of eyewitness testimony.

Finally, the project will allow the analysis of psychological knowledge possessed by Polish legal professionals (judges, prosecutors) in the field of eyewitness testimony. Are the results of relevant psychological research known to legal professionals? What do they know about the limitations of human perception and memory, and the factors that might affect the reliability of eyewitness testimony? To find out the answers to these questions structured interviews with judges and prosecutors will be conducted, in which they will be asked about several psychological phenomena like for example weapon focus effect.

The realization of the project and achieving its goals is crucial, because the vast majority of criminal cases are based on eyewitness testimony evidence. Even though the forensic sciences have enormously developed throughout the years a standard criminal proceeding does not involve material evidence to the same extent as it involves eyewitnesses and their testimonies. However, human memory is fallible and the decisions made upon it can influence other people's lives for years. This is why legal professionals should be especially educated on how to face eyewitness testimony.