The purpose of every criminal trial is to deliver a fair judgment after a fair trial. This judgment should inflict the righteous and just punishment only on a guilty person, while taking into account the legally protected interests of the victim and falling within a reasonable time from the initiation of proceedings. These goals must also be pursued by trials conducted in a special mode of the so-called plea bargaining. Plea bargain is a kind of settlement between the parties to the process: the public prosecutor and the accused, and, to some extent, also the victim, as to the resolution of the trial and the punishment to be inflicted. The agreement of the parties usually must be approved by the court. Consensual ways of ending trial significantly speed up the procedure, because the most time-consuming stage of it, i.e. evidentiary proceedings at the public main hearing is skipped. On the other hand, plea bargaining may pose some risks to the fairness of judgment, its reliance on actual and true facts of the case and loyalty to the defendant, who, by making a bargain, renounces many of his or her key procedural rights. Despite these risks, the importance of plea bargaining is increasing and they constitute the main remedy for undue delay of proceedings. It is therefore reasonable to conduct a study on the ability of plea bargaining mechanisms to establish equilibrium between the efficiency and speed of trial on the one hand and achieving just results in a fair trial.

The purpose of the research is thus to construct a desirable model of plea bargaining which would guarantee the balance between efficiency of criminal proceedings and the other goals of criminal process.

To draw this model, it is necessary to carry out the following stages of research. Firstly, the catalogue and the requirements of criminal proceedings' aims will be studied on the basis of relevant literature and jurisprudence. Secondly, the notion of the model is to be established, including enlisting factors that are relevant to its construction. Then, the current legal shape of plea bargaining in Poland and selected countries (USA, England, France, Germany and Italy) will be analysed. And lastly, taking into account all the studied models, a desirable (i.e. fitting Polish legal system and creating the highest probability of achieving the aims of proceedings) model of plea bargaining is to be established.

It is important to carry out the projected research especially because of the following reasons. Since the introduction of plea bargaining mechanisms to Polish Code of Criminal Procedure in 1997, they have become increasingly important and commonly practiced. Plea bargaining is an effective mean of struggling with excessive length of proceedings. Their development, however, must meet a barrier that is arising from the need to achieve all the objectives of the process, not only ending trial within reasonable time. At the moment the Polish regulation is doubtful as to the balance between procedural rights of the accused and the victim. Establishing necessary equilibrium may be helpful in possible reshaping the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure so that procedural rights of the parties and fairness of the judgment is guaranteed while effectiveness and quickness of procedure is maximised. Drawing an optimum model of plea bargaining is the most expected outcome of the project, which would be disseminated in a monograph in Polish, and article in English and the author's oral presentations on a national and international conference.