



DIDACTICS AND THE VIEWS OF STUDENTS IN LITHUANIA, UKRAINE, AND POLAND ON THE NECESSITY OF STUDYING CRIMINALISTICS DISCIPLINES

Henryk Malewski¹

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

E-mail: henryk.malewski@gmail.com

Egidijus Vidmantas Kurapka²

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

E-mail: egidijus@mruni.eu

Snieguolė Matulienė³

Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

E-mail: m.sniega@mruni.eu

Valery Shepitko⁴

Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Ukraine

E-mail: shepitkovalery@gmail.com

Mykhaylo Shepitko⁵

Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Ukraine

E-mail: shepitko.mykhaylo@gmail.com

Rafał Cieśla⁶

University of Wrocław, Poland

E-mail: rafal.ciesla@uwr.edu.pl

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Abstract. The paper is dedicated to the comparative research of the views of the students representing the universities of three countries in terms of usefulness (necessity) of studying the criminalistic disciplines for future legal professionals. The core of this research is a coordinated and unified questionnaire study of 758 students from three Universities in Lithuania (Mykolas Romeris University), Ukraine (Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University) and Poland (University of Wrocław). Modern pedagogics considers students to be not only future professionals, but likewise active participants in improving the didactic process. In recent decades, criminalistics has become increasingly important. This paper is a fragment of a broader study that is aimed not only at investigating the current situation in the criminalistic didactics of these countries in the run-up to the creation of a single European criminalistic space, but it is likewise aimed at future professionals, educators and managers of educational institutions, who are to implement this idea. The paper is not only a presentation of law students' views on expediency and necessity of studying criminalistics and other disciplines of criminalistic orientation important for their future professional activities, but it should likewise become a kind of guide to action for teachers and administration of universities, i.e. to improve substantive and organizational as well as methodological aspects of criminalistic didactics. The given technique of research of students' views can be successfully applied when addressing the problems of teaching other disciplines..

Keywords: criminalistics, legal sciences, criminalistic didactics, students' views.

¹ Professor of Institute of Statutory Education Law at Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania) (corresponding author).

² Professor of Institute of Criminal Law and Procedure at Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania).

³ Professor of Institute of Statutory Education Law, Dean of Public Security Academy at Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania).

⁴ Professor of Department of the Criminalistics, the Head of the Department of Criminalistics, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University (Ukraine).

⁵ Professor of the Criminal Law Department, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University (Ukraine).

⁶ PhD in law, researcher and lecturer, assistant professor at the Department of Forensics at the Faculty of Law, Administration and Economics of the University of Wrocław (Poland).

Introduction

The issues related to the improvement of legal professionals training are relevant for most countries, as the place and importance of the lawyers' activity in the current context are constantly being enhanced. Considering various aspects of this issue, the authors more and more often focus on the need to involve students in the didactic process (Mitrofanov, 2019, p. 114-123).

This paper is dedicated to a comparative research of the students' views in three countries (Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland) on the usefulness (necessity) of teaching a mandatory course in criminalistics to future legal professions. It is an interim stage (fragment) of a broader study (Kurapka, Malewski, 2019, p. 57-72) planned and aimed not only at investigating the current situation on the threshold of the creation of a single European criminalistic space, but is alternatively focused on future professionals who are expected to implement this idea. The usefulness of teaching criminalistics to law students has always been given consideration to; it was dealt with by the famous legal scholar Franz von Liszt, as well as the founder of scientific criminalistics Hans Gross and others back at the turn of XIX and XX centuries. Nevertheless, already at the second stage of criminalistics development (after the First World War) different theoretical concepts as for the content and structure of criminalistics began to appear in the main schools of criminalistics (German, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and East-European), along with frequent opposing views on didactics and the necessity of teaching it to law students. Quite strong was the concept of criminalistics as a purely police discipline, the echoes of which can be observed in some countries to this day. Therefore, in many of them, criminalistic disciplines are given close attention in law enforcement training, with a special emphasis on applied technical and criminalistic methods and techniques of detecting and collecting traces and other evidentiary information, as well as on traditional and natural-technical expert possibilities of their investigation. After the Second World War, European Universities increased their attention to civil law disciplines in legal training, which in itself is a natural result of the need to intensify economic processes and thus reduce the academic hours for the disciplines of the criminal law cycle. Some of the disciplines previously included in the legal training curricula were eliminated, while others became optional or studied only by students of criminal law specialization (Textbook of Criminalistics. Volume 1:General Theory, 2016, P. 416-451).

An exception was the countries of the Eastern European school of criminalistics, where these disciplines were taught not only in higher and special secondary schools that trained professionals for law enforcement agencies, but also in the law departments of universities. It should be noted that in these countries in the last decades of the twentieth century reforms were likewise initiated, which gradually displaced criminalistics and other disciplines of criminalistic focus from the legal training curricula. These trends were often explained by the existing practice in the West.

It is, however, to be noted that in the last few decades these negative trends have not only been suspended, but criminalistics has become more in demand as an academic discipline. In the meantime, the following questions began to arise: "What is the essence, content, structure and levels of criminalistics? Who should be the "consumers" of criminalistic knowledge? What kind of criminalistics should be taught to lawyers? What should be the structure and scope of criminalistics course for lawyers? Is criminalistics a required course for all legal specialties?" These questions created a need to verify the established in the XX century paradigms and seemingly unshakable conceptual guidelines of criminalistics and its didactics, as well as to harmonize them with rapidly changing realities of the modern global world, which requires a permanent research. Issues related to criminalistic didactics at the national level, especially in the countries of the Eastern European School of Criminalistics, have been raised and are being raised at different levels and in different contexts all the time.

Undoubtedly, this paper should serve as a stepping stone in a broader international integrated research of theoretical and applied issues of criminalistic didactics, establishing further prospects for its development, defining the general content and system of applied training models for different consumer groups (Waszkiewicz, Worek, 2021, p. 805-817). Such research should fit into the activities targeted at the creation of a single European criminalistic space. For the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that scientists of the Eastern European School

of Criminalistics study these problems to a greater extent. A well-known representative of the German school of criminalistics, Professor Rolf Ackermann (Ackermann, 2009, 2010), has repeatedly drawn attention to the above. We have likewise begun to study the views on these issues of the teaching corps, and in further research there will be made an attempt to establish certain correlations between the views of both the students and the teaching staff, to identify the overlapping vectors and the existing differences, as well as their causes.

The purpose of this paper is aimed not only at presenting the law students' views on the usefulness and necessity of studying criminalistics and other disciplines of criminalistic orientation so important for their future professional activities, but also the perception of these expectations by the teachers and managers of universities as a guide to action, i.e. to improve the content and organizational as well as methodological aspects of criminalistic didactics. The paper should become a kind of memorandum calling for the convergence and harmonization of the criminalistic didactic process, which will undoubtedly serve to create a single European criminalistic space. In addition to theoretical research, survey and comparative analysis methods were widely used.

1. A Brief Review of the Research on the Problems of Criminalistic Didactics in Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland

Each of the above countries has its unique history, culture, science and experience with its neighbors. Education, including criminalistic didactics (after the third partition of the Rzeczpospolita in 1795 and until 1918, these countries did not only lack the statehood of their own, but the issues related to law enforcement and especially to the investigation of crimes were under the authority of the military-occupation structures. Therefore, one cannot speak of national models of criminalistics and its didactics in these countries before 1918), likewise possesses its own specificity. The history of creation and development of criminalistics is most closely connected with the functioning of law-enforcement and judicial bodies, which are necessarily important elements of the state mechanism. The authors seek to present to the reader in a very brief form the main features and some peculiarities of teaching criminalistic disciplines in the legal curricula of universities in Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland at stake.

1.1 A brief sketch of criminalistic didactics in Lithuania

Eugenijus Palskis (Palskys, 1995) wrote in his monograph about the process of law enforcement bodies development, formation of criminalistics and criminalistic didactics in Lithuania after the restoration of its independence in 1918. The Soviet period of development of criminalistics and its didactics in Lithuania, by and large, did not differ from similar processes in other Soviet republics. However, after restoration of independence in 1990, cardinal changes occurred in all spheres of the country's life. Lithuania, which had chosen the Western vector of development, had not only to restructure its political, administrative, institutional and economic, but likewise the legal system.

During this reorganization of all aspects of the state's functioning, the reforming of law-enforcement bodies and the training of experts to work in these institutions played a major role. During this period, Lithuanian criminalists faced both applied problems related to the process of detection, investigation and prevention of crimes and theoretical problems related to the choice of the development model for country's criminalistics, as well as no less important issues of training professionals for law enforcement and judicial bodies. In 1990, the Lithuanian Police Academy developed the concept and created a curricula of complex step-by-step training of professionals for police and other law enforcement bodies. It fit in and, in certain aspects, was even ahead of some guidelines of the Bologna process (Kurapka, Malevski, Justickis, 2005, p. 245-250). This three-tier innovative curricula provided for the training of law students (professionals) for law enforcement bodies with not only relevant legal, specialized and criminalistic knowledge, but alternatively skills. The novelty and originality of the curricula was that each stage presented a certain holistic completed cycle, allowing immediately after its completion, to occupy a certain law enforcement post and was (could have been) a "pass" to the next level of education (Malewski, 1996, p. 80-82; Kurapka, Malevski, 2001, p. 144-153; Juškevičiūtė, Kurapka, Malevski, 2002, p. 55-59; Malewski, 2004, p. 73-83; Kurapka, Malevski, Burda, 2004, p. 32-39; Kurapka, Malevski, 2005, p. 47-50). The first stage of training (the first course) was completed by a set of examinations that provided basic competence and primary qualification for law enforcement officers. The successful completion of the first training course made it possible to compete for the second-level training. Upon the completion of this level of education, the graduate was

conferred a bachelor's degree in the appropriate specialization and the right to assume an officer's post. The bachelor's degree made it possible to participate in the competition for the relevant master's degree programmes. Specialized bachelor programs "Law and Police Activities", "Law and Customs Service", "Law and Penitentiary Activities" were developed in response to practical needs, etc. These programmes included not only basic criminalistic courses but also a number of related criminalistic disciplines. The traditional law studies programme of Mykolas Romeris University (Mykolas Romeris University initially enjoyed the status of the Lithuanian Police Academy, which became the Lithuanian Academy of Law and evolved into the Lithuanian University of Law) has undergone many changes in recent decades (including the elimination of criminalistics from a number of compulsory subjects), although in recent years criminalistics has again become a mandatory subject for lawyers of all specializations. New disciplines for criminal law officers have likewise emerged, broadening the content of the basic course in criminalistic science. These disciplines are "Criminalistic Tactics" for bachelors, "Criminalistic Methodology" and "Criminalistic Science" for masters. Since 2020, the Mykolás Romeris University has opened a new specialization of the undergraduate law program "Law and Criminalistics", which has already been mentioned above (Malewski, Kurapka, Tamelė, 2021, p.10-38).

It should be emphasized that the current leadership of Mykolas Romeris University adheres to the chosen vector of development – the university continues to train professionals in such fields as law and management, public safety and others, which are required for the country's progressive democratic development (Spurga, Žalénienė, 2021, p. 228), paying close attention to the issues of security and rights of citizens, which is impossible without serious attention to the development of criminalistic disciplines and their implementation in the didactic process. At Vilnius University, criminalistics is taught to law students (at Vilnius University, lawyers are trained in a single five-year master's program) of all specialties as an optional subject and only students of criminal law specialties have compulsory criminalistics classes. Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, established with the support of the Lithuanian diaspora centered in the United States, not only became a successor of the university that had existed between the World Wars, but also implemented a number of innovations characteristic of the American educational system. For the first time in Lithuania, this university implemented a new training programme for lawyers in Lithuania: those who held a bachelor's degree in social sciences could obtain a master of law degree, subject to a one-year compensatory course, during which basic legal disciplines were taught in a concise manner. Issues related to criminalistic didactics in Lithuania (Malevski, 1995, p. 159-168; Malewski, 1996, p. 80-82; Kurapka, Malevski, 2001, p. 144-153; Malewski, 2004, p. 73-83; Kurapka, Malevski, 2005, p. 47-50; Kurapka, Malevski, Justickis, 2005, p. 245-250; Kurapka, Malevski, Kazemikaitienė, 2006, p. 106-115; Kurapka, Malevski, 2006, p. 244-245; Malevski, Juodkaitė-Granskienė, Nedveckis, 2013, p. 48-59; Malevski, 2014, p. 21-63; Malewski, Kurapka, Navickienė, 2018, p. 113-128; Kurapka, Malewski, 2019, p. 57-72; Malewski, Kurapka, Tamelė, 2021, p. 10-38). have been raised at different levels and in different contexts more than once. The authors have repeatedly raised the questions about the levels of criminalistic knowledge required by specialists in one field or another, the need to develop and implement modular training in the process of training professionals, which makes it possible to respond promptly to the needs of practice, has been likewise stressed. The authors tried to draw attention to the necessity of developing the concept of linking the basic criminalistic education with further training programs and acquiring new competences, which is already connected with the problematic of a broadly understood criminalistic policy. They were interested not only in the general problems of teaching criminalistics to lawyers and future law enforcement professionals, but also in particular problems related to the training of professionals (Malevski, Juodkaitė-Granskienė, Nedveckis, 2013, p. 48-59; Malevski, Kurapka, 2019, p. 393-398), including their master's theses, as a kind of element uniting criminalistic didactics and science with practice. This paper does not allow for a broad presentation of these studies and publications based on them, so we only refer to the main sources where they have been published. It should be emphasized that the issues of criminalistic didactics, as one of the main directions, were initially incorporated into conferences (congresses) organized by the Lithuanian Association of Criminalistics since 2000 under the general title "Criminalistics and Forensic Expertise: Science, Training, Practice", as evidenced by the term "training" in its title. Taking into account the importance of academic criminalistics, first, the representatives of Lithuanian Universities, and later, when the conference was held every other year abroad, scientists of leading universities from other countries were always actively involved in the organization of the above conferences.

1.2 A Brief Sketch of Criminalistic Didactics in Ukraine

In modern conditions, the development of Criminalistics can be researched in three main areas: 1) development of University science (science in educational institutions); 2) development of academic science (within the activities of research institutions); 3) development within department subordination (forensic institutions, etc.). Criminalistics is also studied in the structure of the legal doctrine of Ukraine. The development of Criminalistics in Ukraine has European focus. Ukrainian scientists are researched the problem of Criminalistic didactics repeatedly.

History of Criminalistics in Ukraine originates back to 1899-1902, when Prof. H. Gross, who taught the criminal law using the knowledge of criminal psychology and samples from his practice, was employed in Czernowitz University (Austro-Hungarian Empire, now – Chernivtsi, Ukraine).

The introduction of foreign experience by Professor Oleksandr D. Kiseliov should be included in the real attempts to teach Criminalistics in Ukraine. From 1897 Oleksandr D. Kiseliov was awarded a two-year trip abroad, and in 1899 – made a trip to Paris to Alphonse Bertillon to study the method of identification. In 1910, for the first time in the Russian Empire, Oleksandr D. Kiselyov began to read / a course of Criminalistics.

Criminalistics in Ukraine was formed in different directions. The activity of Professor Leonid Ye. Vladimirov related to the forensic psychological and tactical direction. In 1872 he was elected as a professor at the Department of Criminal Law and Judiciary of the Imperial Kharkiv University. Professor Leonid Ye. Vladimirov's scientific interests were quite broad: the study of the nature and effectiveness of the jury trial; development of tactics for conducting defense in criminal cases; study of psychological features of criminals.

A significant contribution to the development of forensic psychology was made by a prominent lawyer, court speaker, Professor Anatoly F. Koni. His research interests: psychology of judicial activity, psychology of testimony of witnesses and victims, psychology of suicide. In 1890, the Imperial Kharkiv University awarded Anatoly F. Kony the degree of Doctor of Criminal Law without defending a dissertation (*honoris causa*).

An important area was the development of medical criminalistics. The fundamental works by Professor Mykola S. Bokarius laid the foundations for the formation of the subject of Criminalistics in Ukraine. Since 1905, Mykola S. Bokarius was teaching forensic medicine at the Faculty of Law of the Imperial Kharkiv University, conducting such independent courses as «Course of microscopic and microchemical researches of material proofs» (1909-1916), «Practical course of technique of forensic autopsies» (1907-1909). Since 1920, Prof. Mykola S. Bokarius was reading the course “Technique of Crime Investigation”.

Teaching activity in Criminalistics and disciplines of Criminalistics direction is conditioned by the development of science and introduction of separate subjects in educational process.

Ukrainian Universities has traditionally taught different disciplines: “Criminalistics”, “Forensic Psychology”, “Juridical Psychology”, “Forensic Accounting”, “Forensic Medicine and Psychiatry”, “Workshop in Criminalistics”, “Forensic Examination”, as well as other disciplines of Criminalistics, Psychological and other direction: “Crime Investigation Methodics”, “Methodics of Economic Crimes Investigation”, “Methodics of Investigation of Crimes in Economic Activity”, “Methodics investigation of Crime against Justice”, “Investigation of Corruption Crimes”, “Legal information and Computer Technology in Legal Activity”, “Fundamentals of Computer Science and Computer Technology”, “Criminalistic Knowledge in Prosecutor’s Activity”, “Special Knowledge in legal Activity”, “Psychology of Investigative Activity”, “Psychology of Judicial Activity”, “Psychology of Penitentiary Activity”, “Psychology of Investigative and Prosecutorial Activity”, etc.

In Ukraine, Criminalistics is a compulsory subject in the preparation of bachelors. Other criminalistic' subjects are usually taught in the course of master's training. At present, the educational process at the Ukrainian Universities in different disciplines of criminalistics direction is carried out in the form of lectures, practical classes and laboratory work.

The Criminalistics Department of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University (Kharkiv, Ukraine) pays considerable attention to the introduction of new forms and advanced teaching methods, information and computer

technologies into the educational process. The Criminalistics Department has developed computer programs, which are used during practical classes and the independent work of students. Databases have been created for the use of multimedia during lectures in the courses "Criminalistics", "Juridical Psychology", "Workshop in Criminalistics" and other educational disciplines, as well as handout illustrative material and test assignments (techniques) for practical training in various educational disciplines.

During the practical classes, students consolidate the theoretical provisions of respective academic disciplines; acquire skills for their practical application. They take place in the form of tasks, tests, panel discussion, simulations, conducting business games, applying scientific and technical tools in the field, and drawing up the necessary draft procedural documents.

The sections of the Criminalistics Department are equipped with modern equipment and provide students with mastery of skills in the application of scientific and technical means, methods and techniques of detection and investigation of crimes, as well as trial of criminal cases. In the computer rooms of the department, they conduct separate practical classes in Forensic Photography, Traseology, Ballistics, and Identification of Person by Appearance.

Innovative products developed by the staff of Criminalistics Department of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University can include the database "Investigator's Practice" and the information retrieval systems "Investigative Precedent" and "Profile of the killer". Employees of the Criminalistics Department developed an Automated Workstation of Investigator "Insight". Traditionally, in computer rooms, students are taught to make a computer-based composite using the proper software (the system "RAIPS-portrait"), which was once created by the department's staff.

Criminalistic laboratory, a photo and video lab, a video center, computer classes, methodological section, Criminalistics Museum and Criminalistics Ground were created at Criminalistics Department for quality education support.

The department has created a teaching and methodological complex on criminalistics: Teaching and Methodological Office (Museum) of Criminalistics, electronic publications (textbooks, dictionaries, directories), and training videos of its own production. In particular, an important methodological function is performed by Criminalistics Ground and Museum, on the basis of which practical classes and laboratory works are carried out. Criminalistics Museum is studying and teaching hall that exhibits objects (physical evidence) according to different types of crimes, unusual weapons of their commission, illustrates the unique ways used by criminals in the commission of crime, offers conclusions (fragments) of expert studies. This museum was created more than half a century ago. It is updated with certain materials and exhibits to the present. The number of exhibits exceeds one thousand units (as an objects of specifics criminal proceedings (cases).

In 2018, Criminalistics Ground of Criminalistics Department with fake crime scenes was equipped and opened, where students can acquire practical skills of conducting crime scene inspection (accident inspection, criminal explosion, railway accident, etc.), corpse examination, physical evidence, traces of the crime, etc. Criminalistics Ground is a specially equipped territory or premises intended for practical and laboratory training in Criminalistics in the field. Criminalistics Ground of Criminalistics Department corresponds to the world level. The total area of the Criminalistics Ground is more than 800 square meters.

Work on Criminalistics Ground is performed in conditions as close as possible to the real ones (field conditions). Students, under the guidance of teachers at Criminalistics Ground, carry out the tasks of practical direction: present investigative leads, search, record and pack physical evidence, detect fingerprints, shoeprints, vehicle tracks, use of weapons or explosive devices. During fieldwork, students draw up protocols of investigative (search) actions, formulate questions to forensic experts, determine the circumstances to be investigated, etc.

Laboratory work in Criminalistics and the workshop in Criminalistics involve the use of the capacity of Criminalistics Ground, visual accessories and equipment, introduction of an individual approach to the students' tasks performance with the use of criminalistic techniques (scientific and technical means), computer technologies, materials and substances as well as obtaining relevant embodied results. In particular, today,

students studying the course of criminalistics perform twelve laboratory works: "Forensic Photography at the Crime Scene (test shoot)"; "Fingerprint Identification and Fixation"; "Examination of Weapons (Ammunition) and Gunshot Residue at the Crime Scene"; "Investigative Document Examination"; "Fingerprinting of Living Persons"; "Crime Scene Investigation (Training)"; "Interrogation Planning"; "Features of Forensic Experts Involvement"; "Planning a Homicide Investigation"; "Planning of Investigation of Theft"; "Planning of Road Accident Investigation".

Criminalistics training in University education covers: 1) harmonization of educational programs containing Criminalistics and Forensic Sciences; 2) recognition of Criminalistics and Forensic Sciences as compulsory disciplines at the bachelor's, master's and PhD; 3) conducting classes in specially created conditions and equipping classrooms with appropriate equipment, instruments and technologies; 4) the need for practical training in small groups (5-10 people) and the obligation to perform laboratory work; 5) the possibility of teaching Criminalistics and Forensic Science using the bases of practical institutions.

1.3 A brief sketch of criminalistic didactics in Poland

A brief analysis of the discourse on criminalistic didactics in Poland is advisable to begin with the information about the project of developing a Polish criminalistic bibliography, which is extremely important for both criminalistic science and practice in general. The authors of this idea back in the 1970s were Brunon Hołyst and Hubert Kołecki, but it has been implemented only in this century. As conceived by the organizers, the Bibliography was to consist of five volumes: the first one was to cover criminalistic publications of Polish (mostly) authors in 1918-1959, the second one in 1960-1979, the third one in 1980-1989, the fourth one in 1990-2000, the fifth one in 2001-2008. Based on pragmatic considerations, the authors of the project started work and published volumes 3-5 in 2008 and 2011. In the third volume of Bibliography (1980-1989), 45 items related to criminalistics didactics¹⁷ are indicated in the section "Teaching Criminalistics" (Polska bibliografia kryminalistyczna, 2008, p. 68-72). In the fourth volume of the Bibliography (1990-2000), 268 items related to criminalistic didactics (Polska bibliografia kryminalistyczna, 2008, p. 95-113) are mentioned in the section "Teaching Criminalistics". The fifth volume of the Bibliography (2001-2008) mentions 288 items related to criminalistic didactics (Polska bibliografia kryminalistyczna, 2011, p. 116-140) in the section "Teaching Criminalistics"¹⁹. In 2018, one book included bibliographic criminalistic sources 1918-1979, which was planned to be published in two volumes. The said book also included a section on "Teaching Criminalistics", in which several dozen publications directly related to didactics were mentioned. However, it should be noted that in a number of other sections, publications dealing with theoretical and methodological issues of criminalistics also mentioned didactics (Polska bibliografia kryminalistyczna, 2018, p. 55-58).

Looking at criminalistic didactics from a historical perspective, it can be stated that Polish criminologists also emphasize the great importance of forensic physicians, chemists and toxicologists for the formation of criminalistics (Janicka, 2016, p. 40). An example of this is the inaugural lecture of forensic physician Prof. Leon Wachholz at the Faculty of Law and Administration of the University of Lviv on October 13, 1894, in which he emphasized the importance of criminalistics for pre-trial investigation and justice institutions. As early as 1924, Wacław Makowski, a legal scholar and politician, proposed that criminalistics be taught as a compulsory course at law faculties. However, his proposals were implemented only after the end of the World War II, when Poland found itself in the Soviet sphere of influence, although in some universities criminalistics was taught as an independent subject already in the 1930s. Such an example is the course in criminalistics taught by one of Poland's leading criminalists, Władysław Sobolewski, not only for police school students, but also for law students at universities in Warsaw and Poznań. In 1946, the training of criminalistics began for law students at the universities of Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań and others. It was not until 1956 that the first independent Department of Criminalistics was established at the University of Warsaw (Gruza, 2016, p. 11-21). Its first Head was Professor Paweł Horoszowski, who was also the author of the first, published the year before, textbook on criminalistics. However, during this period, the reform of legal education set in and criminalistics became an optional subject, which could not but affect its advancement. The development of criminalistics at the University of Wrocław is linked to Włodzimierz Gutekunst, who began lecturing there in 1946. The intensive process of development of the Department of Criminalistics at the University of Wrocław began in 1981, when Professor Zdzisław Kegel became its Head.

Criminalistics in Poland is taught at civil governmental and non-governmental higher education institutions, in the system of law enforcement institutions, as well as during in-service training courses, which can be organised by various, including non-governmental, organisations. In Poland, it is not enough to have a law degree to carry out independent activities in certain positions (judges, lawyers, prosecutors, legal advisors and some others), but special professional training is still required, so called *aplikacja*, which lasts from one to three years, it is organized and delivered by the relevant bodies of legal corporations. One such example is the prosecutor's *aplikacja*, which is organized by the National School of Justice and Public Prosecution. This training includes 90 academic hours for criminalistics. The courses take a variety of forms: examination of criminal records, practical exercises with forensic experts and visits to forensic laboratories, etc. Judges are provided with training in criminalistics and forensic medicine. Attorneys are allowed hours for interrogation tactics during the pre-trial investigation. However, this area of criminalistic training for lawyers is not optimal and requires serious reform. In general, criminalistic didactics in this element also requires a new strategic approach, the development of relevant curricula and an increase in the number of academic hours.

Basically, it is a course of 30-45 classroom academic hours consisting of lectures and practical exercises. In non-governmental higher educational institutions, it is usually only a lecture course, which is natural, since hands-on classes require appropriate equipment and materials. In civilian institutions of higher education, criminalistics is taught according to the law, administration, and criminology curricula as well as according to the curricula for some areas of public safety, etc. It should be emphasized that the wide autonomy of Polish universities is reflected in a rather wide variety of legal training curricula, in which there is not always a place for criminalistics, which is justified by various reasons. Unfortunately, these negative trends persist for the time being. Although if criminalistics is listed among the subjects for students to choose as electives, interest in it still remains high. In addition to the basic criminalistics course, universities also teach specialized criminalistics subjects, such as "Criminalistics Expert Examination", "Document Crimes", "Virtual Crime Scene" (practical classes using Virtual Reality technology) and others.

A characteristic feature of Polish criminalistics departments has been and remains the complementary connection of science and didactics with practice. Usually, criminalistics departments have their own laboratories, and the staff is often engaged not only in scientific and pedagogical activities, but likewise in practical activities. It should be noted that the so-called postgraduate one- or two-semester study is common in Poland, which makes it possible for the applicants to obtain additional competencies that may be the basis for inclusion in the list of sworn experts. An example would be the Department of Criminalistics at the University of Wroclaw, which for many years has had training curricula in the "Handwriting Examination", "Questioned Document Examination", "Forensic Vehicle Examination", and "Forensic Archaeology". For graduates of non-legal training programs, the department runs a two-semester Criminalistics program. The laboratories available in the departments make it possible for the scientific and pedagogical staff to conduct forensic examinations (an example is the Department of Criminalistics at Wroclaw University, whose professors were and are sworn experts and conducted forensic examinations (handwriting examinations, technical examination of documents, polygraph examinations, forensic and archaeological examinations) on the instructions of courts and other procedural subjects).

Summarizing a brief sketch of criminalistic didactics in Poland, it can be said that there is no consensus on the need for teaching criminalistics to law students. However, most educators and students recognize that criminalistics is necessary in criminal law, but we should bear in mind that it can be useful in civil and administrative proceedings. The main problem lies in the accessibility of criminalistics to students, which requires the development of an appropriate system of training and professional development. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected various areas of life and has had a particularly negative impact on criminalistic didactics.

The article indicates only the main similarities and differences of forensic didactics in Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine, which were noted by the students of the three universities. This provides a basis for continuing the research on this issue, maybe in the future orienting it towards a common international scientific program.

2. Core research

The process of preparing the instrument, namely an anonymous questionnaire for a collaborative study of the students' views in the three countries was not an easy task. This was due not only to the preliminary study and

comparison of the higher education models applied in Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland, which have significant discrepancies, but also to the need to coordinate not only the basic questions, terminology, but likewise the qualitative preparation of questionnaires in three languages. The questionnaires developed by Lithuanian representatives, who were the initiators of this international study, were taken as the basis. After that, the questionnaires were translated into other languages and their contents were agreed upon. Initially, it was planned that the questionnaire would be conducted by contact method during the classes, which is important, because it makes it possible not only to increase the objectivity of the study (individuality, independence, minimization of extraneous influence, equal time, etc.), but also its quality. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19 pandemic, they had to conduct this study in a mixed version. Both full-time and part-time students took part in the research. These were not only students of classical bachelor's and master's law programs of universities in Vilnius (Lithuania), Kharkiv (Ukraine) and Wroclaw (Poland), but also students of law-related specialties (i.e., in Poland most universities have faculties called Wydział prawa i administracji", which clearly indicates a certain specificity. These faculties have two main curricula: "Law" and "Administration" (which is in the conformity with the Lithuanian legal specialization "Law and Management")). The questionnaire presented a traditional form, with the introductory part containing questions about the respondent, and the main part containing nine substantive questions. For us, the sphere of students' practical activity (real or future) was important, since it allowed them to express with more confidence their opinion about the necessity of criminalistics knowledge for this or that profession. One of the main questions that reflects the essence of this research is the following one: "What is the importance of criminalistics in your daily (future) activities" and another related question "Is criminalistics important in the training program for lawyers"? Specific and detailed questions for this research were then posted: "Is it necessary to differentiate the volume and structure of teaching the basic course of criminalistics depending on the legal specialty"; "Are you satisfied with the volume and structure of the criminalistics course"; "How do you assess the ratio of theoretical and practical components of the basic course of criminalistics being taught to you"? Considering that, in the opinion of the authors of this article, a law graduate should also possess some other specialized knowledge, not only the knowledge of traditional criminalistics, the following questions were also formulated for the respondents: "Is there a need for an independent course in criminalistic science in the law degree program" and "Is there a need for an independent course in forensic medicine in the law degree program"? Given that knowledge tends to lose relevance quickly these days, they posed the question "What are your views on the improvement of professional competence in the field of criminalistics"? The final question was "Are you familiar with the ideas and proposals for the creation of a unified European criminalistic space", which was intended to answer whether we are locked in "national apartments" or whether the idea of the creation of a single European criminalistic space has already become a driving force capable of uniting the efforts of not only representatives of criminalistics academic science, but also of the wider legal community.

The outcomes of the study were the answers provided by 758 respondents of three universities: 197 questionnaires of students from Mykolas Romeris University (Lithuania), 296 questionnaires of students representing Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University (Ukraine) and 265 questionnaires of students representing the University of Wroclaw (Poland). Answers related to topical issues of criminalistic didactics and trends of its development are placed in seven diagrams.

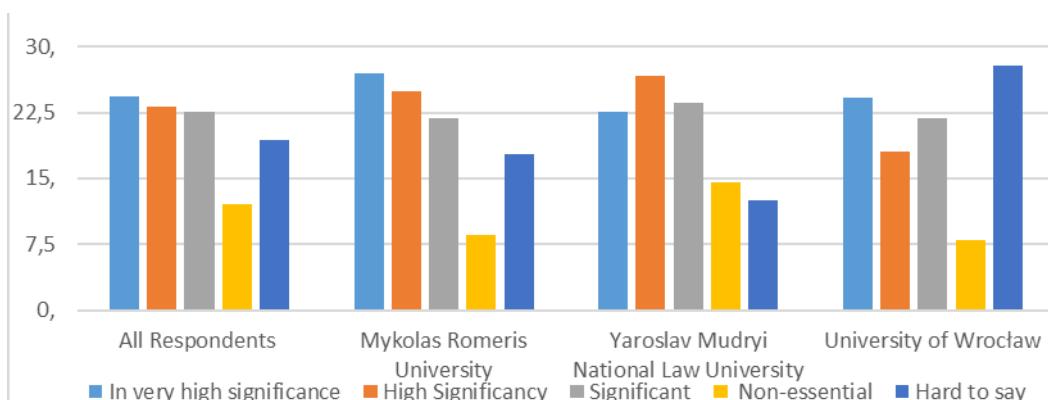


Diagram No. 1. What significance does criminalistics have in your daily future career / activities? (%)

Diagram No. 1 clearly shows a positive assessment of the significance of criminalistics as an important discipline for the future legal profession. This was emphasized by the majority of respondents (70%). The results of the survey showed that there were practically no significant differences in the assessment of the need and importance of criminalistic knowledge for the future legal professional activity expressed by respondents representing universities of the three countries. The study showed that there were likewise no significant differences on this issue among both master's and bachelor's degree students. This is all the more significant since we have similar results among students of classical legal specialization and a number of other areas (law and management, law and customs, etc.).

The answers to the second question about the necessity of criminalist training for lawyers (see Chart 2) clearly showed that 79% of all respondents said that criminalist training should be provided for students majoring in law, 14.5% said that it should be provided only for students majoring in criminal law, and 6.3% had no views about this issue. It can be noted that the opinion of Lithuanian and Ukrainian students on this issue was very close. Respondents from Poland were less categorical about the need to teach criminalistics to all legal specialties, although their result exceeded 68%.

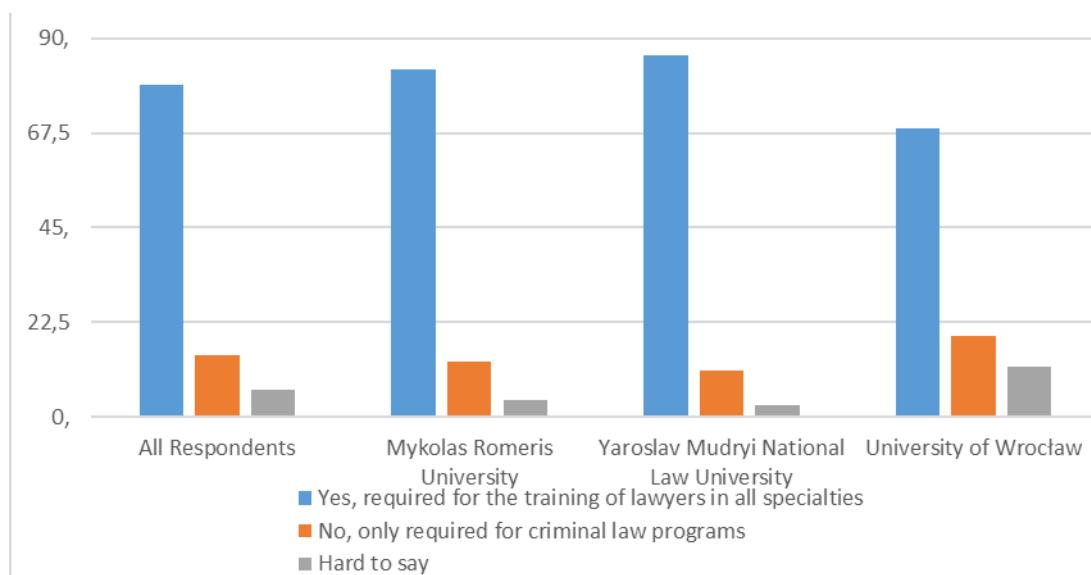


Diagram No. 2. Is criminalistics needed in a lawyer training program? (%)

The third diagram shows the answers to the question “Are you satisfied with the scope and structure of the criminalistics course”, to which a total of 52.6% of respondents answered positively. It should be noted that the students of Mykolas Romeris University are satisfied by the situation with the teaching of criminalistics and the students of Wrocław University are least satisfied with it. A reference should be made that about one third of the respondents indicated that the structure and content of the delivered criminalistics course satisfied them only partially, while 2.2% indicated that the course delivered did not satisfy them.

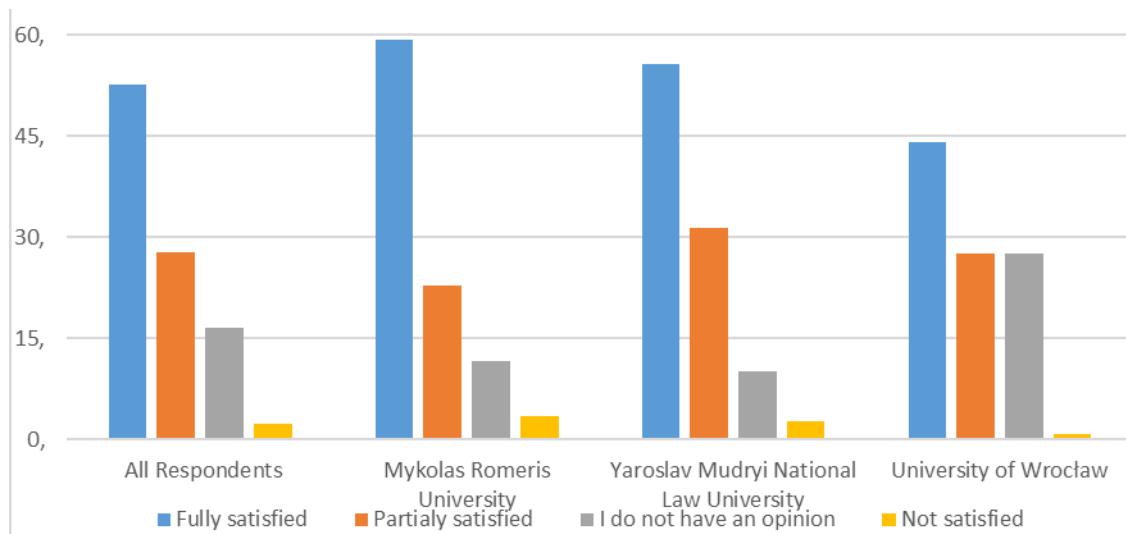


Diagram No. 3. Are you satisfied with the scope and structure of the criminalistics course? (%)

The main concern here is the balance between the theoretical and practical parts of the course (diagram 4). The balance between the theoretical and practical parts of the course delivered was indicated by 35.6% of all respondents, but we already find a significant difference of views on the issue in question, especially between Ukrainian and Polish students. 46.6% of respondents from Ukraine and only 20% of respondents from Poland expressed a positive opinion about the correlation between the theoretical and practical parts of the delivered course in criminalistics. An even greater polarization of views is observed on issues related to strengthening the theoretical component of the delivered criminalistics course, where 39% of students of Mykolas Romeris University expressed a positive opinion on this issue, noting that the implementation of the latest technologies in the didactic process is a complex and costly undertaking. Only 3.7% of Ukrainian and 2% of Polish respondents were in favor of strengthening the theoretical component of the criminalistics course. Accordingly, in these last two universities significantly more respondents support the necessity of strengthening the applied aspects of teaching criminalistics and strengthening the formation of practical skills. In our opinion, such differentiation of views can be related, on the one hand, to the available material resources and technical base at the universities, and to the certain views of the teaching staff on the essence of university education, which should not be limited to imparting practical skills and abilities, but on the ability to form practical skills on the basis of theoretical knowledge obtained in the future. It should be stressed, however, that Mykolas Romeris University is also introducing applied as well as interactive teaching methods. Mykolas Romeris University introduces applied as well as interactive teaching methods. A kind of bonus for Mykolas Romeris University is that it is located in the capital, where the main expert and criminalistic institutions are located. This makes it possible to attract the best trained practitioners to teach hands-on classes to students in master's degree programs, part of which are even held around these institutions.

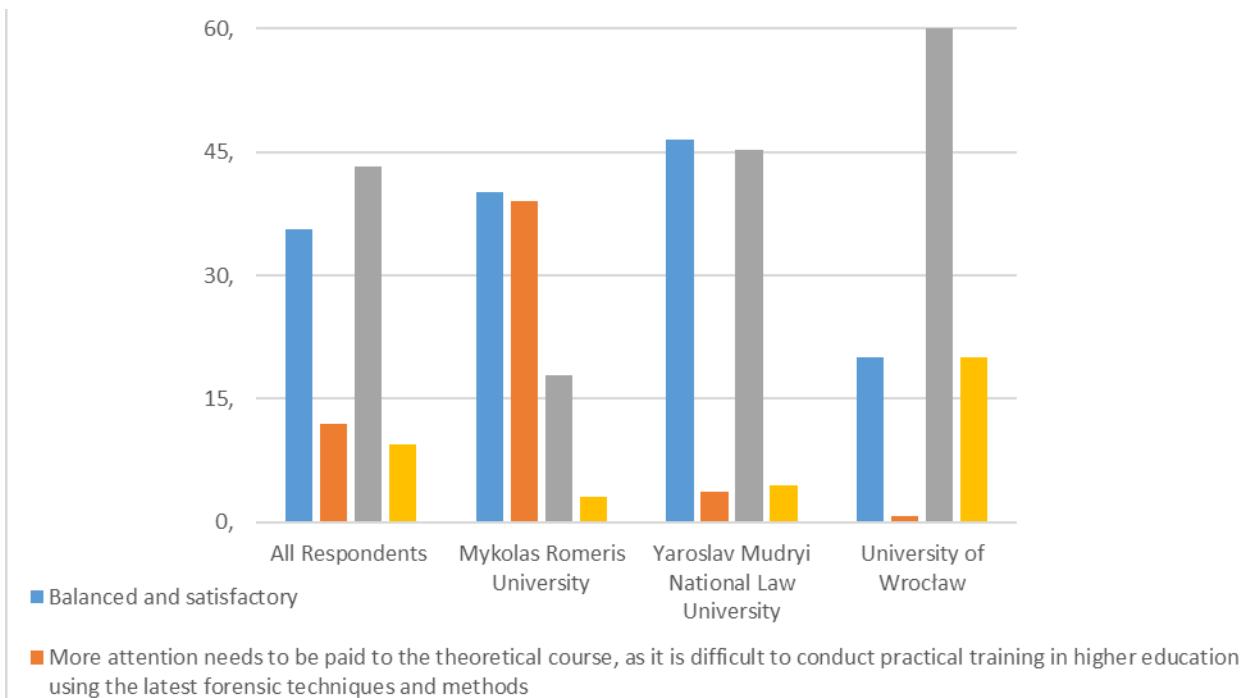


Diagram No. 4. Your opinion about the relationship between the theoretical and practical parts of the criminalistics course taught? (%)

In recent times, many universities, especially those providing training to law students, have likewise developed along with certain criminalistic disciplines specializations aimed at the training of experts, and this is not a matter of fashion but of trends driven by the needs of practice (Texbook of Criminalistics, 2016, p. 435-451). The results of the survey show that our students understand the importance of criminalistic science, support these trends, as we can see in the fifth chart.

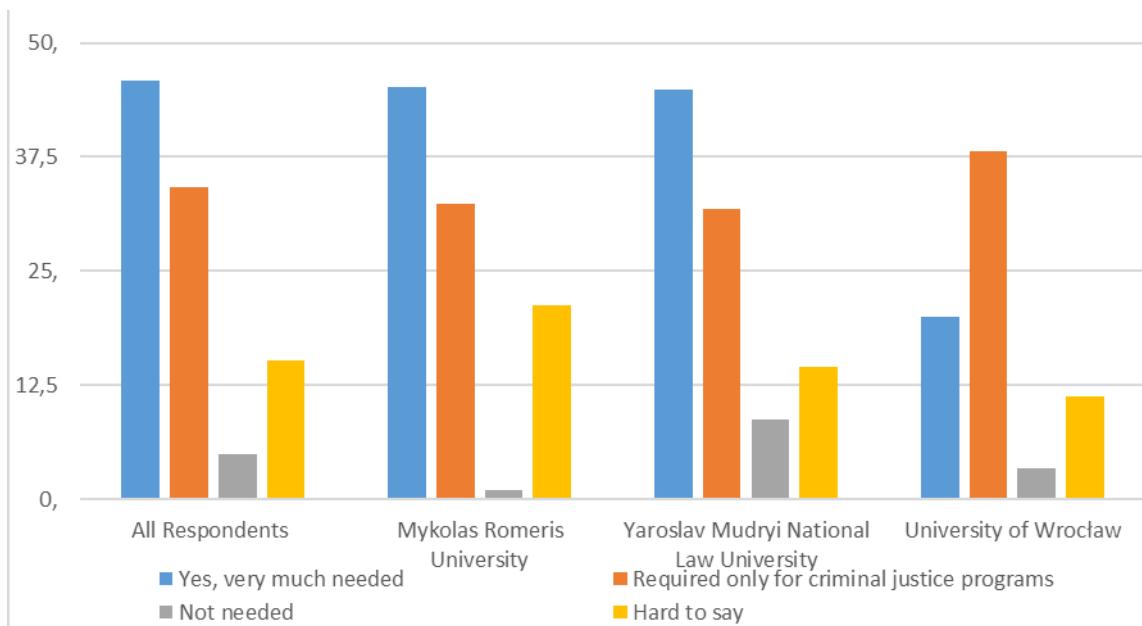


Diagram No. 5. Is there a need for an independent Expertology course in the training of lawyers? (%)

Students expressed positive views about the need to improve their professional competence (Diagram № 6). 53% of the respondents believe that it is necessary to constantly improve their professional level (both knowledge and

practical skills) by participating in various professional development courses, workshops, scientific and practical conferences; 34% believe that this requires a balanced set of activities and only 8.8% of respondents do not see the need for this, the remaining respondents failed to answer this question. Quite a high percentage of statements about the need for permanent professional development may be related to the efforts of the teaching staff of the three universities to involve their students in activities that are not directly related to the didactic process, but which can significantly expand the students' scopes and be useful for the future profession. This includes participation in student scientific societies and other non-governmental associations, inviting students to take part in international scientific and practical conferences, etc. According to the authors of the article, such student participation in such forms of activity is not yet comprehensive, but it makes it possible for them not only to go beyond the programs, but likewise to instill an interest in the independent search for new knowledge.

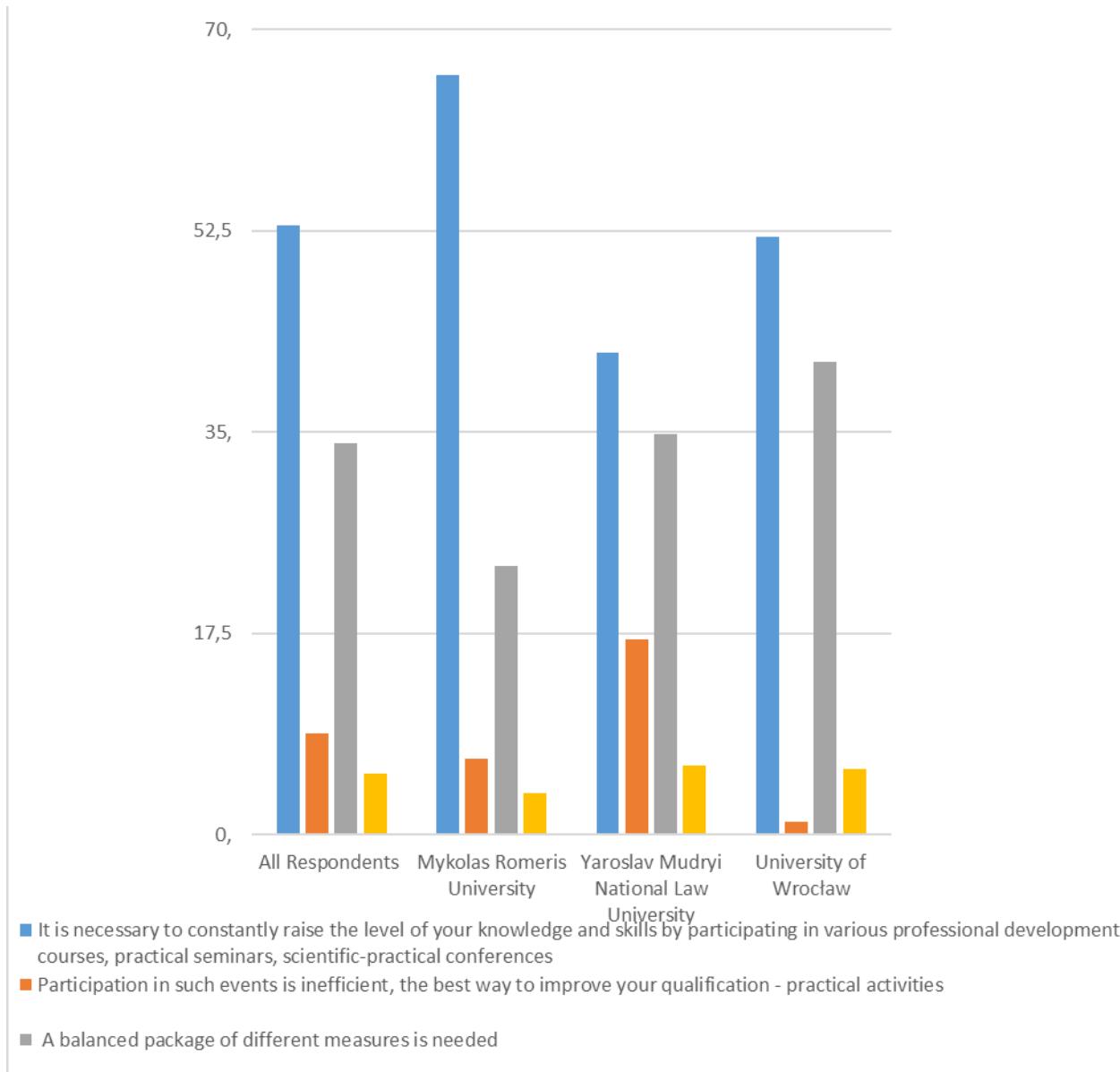


Diagram No. 6. What do you think about improving professional competence in criminalistics? (%)

Some concern may be raised by the information presented in Diagram No. 7, namely, the lack of students' interest in the ideas concerning the creation of a single European criminalistic space. Less than half of the students participating in the survey are aware of the above.

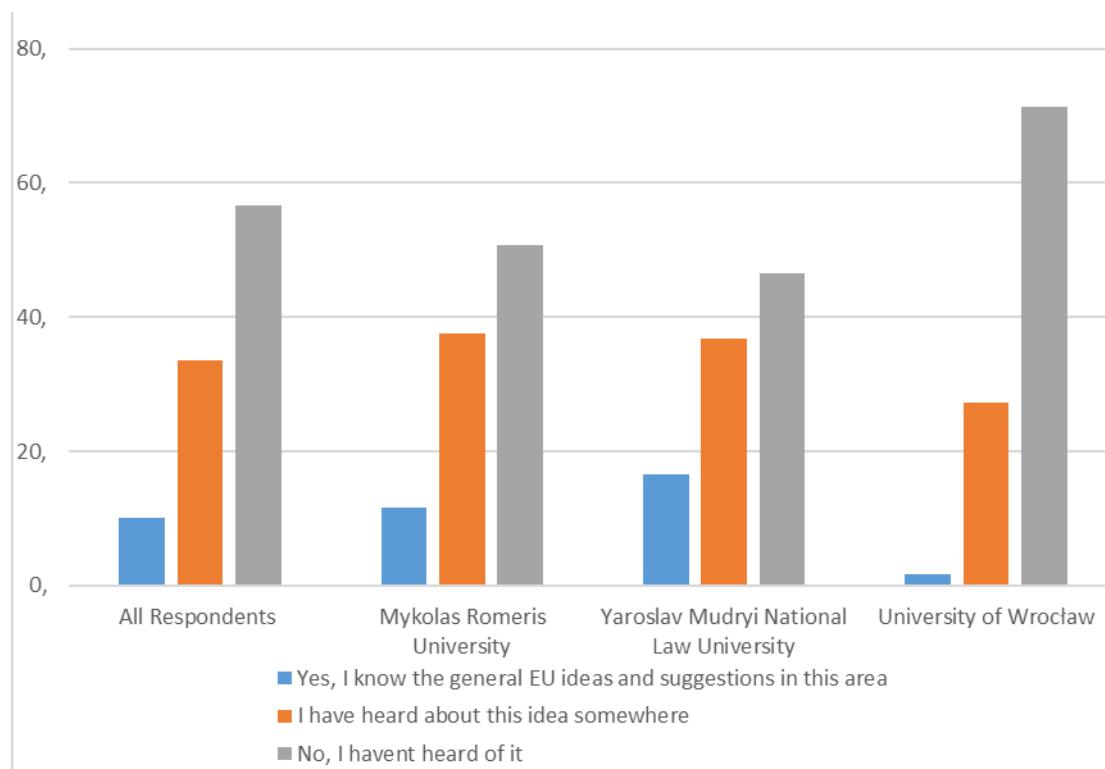


Diagram No. 7. Are you aware of any proposals and/or ideas for the creation of a common European forensic area? (%)

On the one hand, this may witness about the lack of attention to this issue on the part of planners and curriculum developers, and on the other hand, it may be due to a lack of attention to this issue on the part of public authorities and administration (Ackermann, Kurapka, Malevski, Shepitko, 2020, p. 355-366).

Conclusions

1. This paper is dedicated to a comparative study of students' views in three countries (Lithuania, Ukraine and Poland) on the expediency (necessity) of teaching a mandatory criminalistics course for future legal professionals. The empirical component of this research was a coordinated survey of 758 students of the three universities. The paper is an interim stage (fragment) of a more extensive study which is planned and aimed not only at investigating the current situation on the threshold of creating a single European criminalistics space, but likewise focuses on future professionals who are to implement this idea.
2. The paper is not only a presentation of law students' views on expediency and necessity of studying criminalistics and other disciplines of criminalistic orientation important for their future professional activities, but it should likewise become a kind of guide to action for teachers and administration of universities, i.e. to improve substantive and organizational as well as methodological aspects of criminalistic didactics. The given technique of research of students' views can be successfully applied when addressing the problems of teaching other disciplines.
3. The conducted study revealed that the overwhelming number of students – more than 70% – evaluated criminalistics as an important discipline for their future professional activities. Regardless of significant differences in the organization of higher legal education in the three countries, we note that there are no substantial differences in the questions of expediency (necessity) of teaching criminalistics in the answers of respondents representing the three universities.
4. The research showed that only half of the students (52.6%) are fully satisfied with the scope and structure of the delivered criminalistics course. The students of Mykolas Romeris University demonstrated a higher level of

satisfaction in their answers, while the students of the University of Wrocław expressed their views more critically. About one third of the students were only partially satisfied with the scope and structure of the delivered criminalistics course. Significant differentiation of students' views concerned the ratio of theoretical and practical components of the delivered criminalistics course. A sufficient balance between the theoretical and practical parts of the delivered criminalistics course was indicated by 35.6% of all respondents, but we already have a significant dispersion of views on this issue, especially when Ukrainian and Polish students are concerned.

5. There has recently been a growing interest in criminalistic science, which is increasingly taught at universities and not only to law students. The study showed that respondents were positive about this trend.

6. The majority of respondents positively assessed the necessity of constant involvement in improving their competence through participation in theoretical and practical workshops, advanced training courses, as well as scientific and practical conferences.

7. The lack of awareness among students of the processes concerning the creation of a single European criminalistic space may be a matter of concern, as less than half of the participating students are aware of the above.

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