

Interrogation & investigative interviewing: how much is the approach changing?

Prepared By JustGroup, Ukraine

Note for the readers:

The first source: [JustTalk Discussion Paper](#) (UKR), prepared specially for the [JustTalk discussion on investigative interviewing](#) (recording of the stream is available in ENG). This document was specially translated for COST.

1) Ukrainian criminal procedure legislation currently uses the term "interrogation." At the same time, Ukraine is in the process of transitioning toward the concept and practice of investigative interviewing, in line with international standards and best practices.

For reasons of legal accuracy and consistency with the existing legislative framework, this document may refer to the term "interrogation." Such references should be understood as corresponding, in substance and intent, to the principles of investigative interviewing as promoted throughout this document.

2) Some information in this document may have been updated for accuracy and clarity and therefore may not fully correspond to the original Ukrainian version of the document. This may include, *inter alia*, statistical data and figures, which have been revised to reflect the most accurate and up-to-date information available at the time of publication.

Transformation of criminal justice in Ukraine: changing the philosophy of investigation

Over the last decade, the Ukrainian criminal justice system has undergone a series of reforms that are gradually changing not only legal norms, but also the very logic of investigation. With the adoption of the Criminal Procedural Code of Ukraine (further – CPC) in 2012, Ukraine began to implement international and European values, principles and standards for the protection of human rights into national criminal procedural legislation as much as possible, declaring this in the objectives of criminal proceedings. The effectiveness of the implementation of the above-mentioned objectives currently depends on many conditions, in particular on the quality of criminal procedural legislation, the effective activities of criminal proceedings participants in the exercise of their powers, and the proper implementation of decisions by other participants in the process. Ensuring fairness and effective implementation of criminal proceedings in such conditions is extremely difficult, requiring the use of the latest and most effective investigation methods. One of the most effective tools in modern criminal justice, which allows obtaining reliable evidence, reducing the risk of pressure on interviewees and minimising the possibility of judicial errors, is investigative interviewing. An investigative interviewing is an innovative interrogation technique that is successfully used by law enforcement agencies in other countries and is the standard investigation method of the International Criminal Court.

Not so long ago, interrogation in pre-trial investigations was seen primarily as a formal procedure aimed at obtaining confessions. Its effectiveness was assessed on a "got it — means it worked" basis. Accordingly, the very culture of communication in the investigation process was focused on control and subordination. People were seen more as objects of the process than as sources of reliable information (1).

1 - For more details, see Chapter 3 (pp. 99-142) Tell me what happened, or confess. Research on investigative interviews. Analysis of international experience. Description of a generalised model. Analysis of the national training and practice system. [Electronic resource] / Y. Belousov, O. Bronevitska, S. Derkach, V. Lutsyk, A. Orlean, V. Rohalska, T. Filonenko, V. Yavorska. Kyiv: Investigative Interview in Ukraine, 2020. – 232 p.: Access mode (ENG): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LCZ7ByDBAL7gekpn3vo9oGINUG-rjhM/view>

The legislator's intention to protect participants in the process from pressure and unlawful treatment led to the exclusion of the possibility for the court to refer to testimony given during the pre-trial investigation (Part 4 of Article 95 of the CPC of Ukraine). At first glance, this had a "noble" goal — to prevent torture and abuse — but the consequences turned out to be more complex: testimony obtained at the pre-trial stage lost its significance, the practice of interrogation itself lost its meaning, and investigators and detectives began to perceive interrogation as time that had no procedural weight. This eliminated the motivation to develop communication skills and instead reinforced the idea that a high-quality investigation is primarily technical work with testimony, rather than dialogue with people. However, it was during this period, against the backdrop of international discussions and growing attention to human rights standards, that another approach gained popularity around the world — investigative interviewing. Its essence was to bring the human dimension back to the "heart of the investigation" and not to seek confessions, but to create conditions for obtaining reliable and verified information. In 2016, [the report by Juan Mendez](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, officially called on all states to develop and implement models of effective and ethical interviewing. He noted: "The model promoted by the protocol must promote effective, ethical and non-coercive interviewing and be centred on the principles of presumption of innocence and the pursuit of truth. By moving away from accusatory, manipulative and confession-driven techniques to an investigative interviewing model, States will enhance not only the human rights compliance of their questioning practices, but also their effectiveness in solving crimes and keeping societies safe."

Since then, the process of recognising investigative interviewing not only as a technique but as a standard of humane justice has begun.

"..."

The Ukrainian path: from pilots to a system

Ukraine did not stand aside either. The first ideas about introducing investigative interviewing in Ukraine appeared in 2017 as part of cooperation between Ukrainian human rights organisations, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine, and the International Renaissance Foundation. Since then, a gradual movement has begun in Ukraine, where investigative interviewing has become not just an innovation but **an indicator of a deeper change in the culture of investigation**.

Starting in 2017, on the initiative of Ukrainian human rights defenders and with the support of international partners, the first training courses on investigative interviewing for detectives and investigators began. These initiatives were an attempt to answer the main question: Is it possible to ensure both the effectiveness of investigations and respect for human rights?

The first results of introducing the practice of investigative interviewing into the activities of national law enforcement agencies confirmed that this is possible, and ethical interviewing proved to be not a weaker alternative to interrogation, but a stronger tool for obtaining reliable information. Training in investigative interviewing programmes provided **a framework for PEACE** and helped to reflect on our own practice.

"Of course, I had a set of methods... I did a lot of things intuitively. After the training, I looked at the ethical aspect differently... Artificial cruelty proved to be ineffective. The methodology really helps to obtain the most important thing — objective information."(2)

"No one really explained to us how to conduct an interrogation (interview) properly... I did the same thing, without a clear structure or sequence of actions. The training is all practical, and we are gradually implementing this knowledge."

One of the most significant shifts was **the reassessment of the role of empathy and the importance of listening skills**. What was once considered unnecessary in interrogations turned out to be **a prerequisite for accurate memory and complete storytelling**. Refraining from harshness and pressure reduces the interviewee's defensive reactions and improves **the quality of the information obtained**.

"It was believed that empathy had no place in interrogation... But it turned out to be the opposite."

"After the training, I realised that it is very important to give a person the opportunity to say everything they want to say and not to interrupt them."

For many specialists, investigative interviewing has become **a point of professional growth** after years of routine. It opens up space for **critical thinking**: testing hypotheses, looking at things from different angles, not "hunting" for confessions, but **reconstructing events that have taken place**.

When interviews are conducted ethically and in a structured manner, **trust grows** — and this is directly reflected in the cases: people are more willing to cooperate, provide more details, create fewer conflicts, and we receive **higher quality information**.

"What has changed since implementing this practice? Trust has increased. People feel like equal participants in the dialogue. And the result is effectively obtained information."

These trainings had an extraordinary effect. Detectives began to notice that interviews were not only more effective but also **reduced the level of conflict in cases**. People, even suspects, were more likely to agree to cooperate when they saw that they were being treated with respect (3).

In 2019–2020, the first comprehensive study on investigative interviewing, [**Tell Me What Happened or Confess**](#), was conducted, which analysed international experience (the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Australia) for the first time and outlined opportunities for its implementation in Ukraine.

After the start of the full-scale war, the relevance of introducing investigative interviewing into the activities of pre-trial investigation bodies has only increased, in particular due to amendments to Articles 95 and 615 of the CPC of Ukraine. Thus, Part 11 of Article 615 of the CPC of Ukraine currently allows the use in court of testimony obtained during the interrogation of witnesses, victims and suspects in pre-trial proceedings under martial law, but under certain conditions, in particular in the case of video recording and interrogation of suspects using available technical means, in the presence of a defence lawyer (4). This is precisely why there has been an increase in demand for practical knowledge among investigators, detectives and prosecutors. Initiatives that yesterday seemed like experiments have gained support from state institutions and international partners. Thanks to JustGroup's cooperation with various international and national actors, **the foundation for systematic training of specialists has been laid**.

The first step in 2022 was the design and implementation of two pilot programmes, "**Investigative Interviewing: Basic**", developed for prosecutors, investigators, and detectives. The programme combined international expertise with the Ukrainian context and, most importantly, formed the first national team of trainers.

At the same time, a team of practitioners and academics developed national "**Standards for Investigative Interviewing**" (5), the presentation of which (6) in 2023 became an important milestone in the development of the methodology in Ukraine. This document was the first attempt to systematise approaches to conducting investigative interviewing and to bring together in a single framework the key principles, values and elements of practice that had proven effective during training programmes and fieldwork.

The "Standards" became the starting point for a national conversation about professional boundaries and responsibility in the communication process during investigations. They formulated what had previously remained at the level of intuition or practical experience: what constitutes a quality interview, what conditions ensure the accuracy and reliability of information, and how to combine ethics with effectiveness.

The years 2024–2025 became a time of consolidation. Investigative interviewing began to be perceived not as a new technique, but as a new standard of professional ethics. Conversations with people became a space of trust rather than confrontation, a way of establishing facts rather than demonstrating power. In practice, this means that investigators, prosecutors and detectives think in terms of cooperation, openness and accountability.

3 - An investigative interviewing helped investigators solve a double murder case (UKR): <https://share.google/mV3fBuT6QPUXTfGLQ>

4 - On amendments to the Criminal... | dated 14 April 2022 No. 2201-IX (UKR) <https://share.google/CS0sWbRPFydISKa4r>

5 - Standards for investigative interviewing / Belousov Y., Orlean A., Filonenko T., Rokun S., Ivanov O., Dyba O., Usikov V., Kabaiev V., Ershov P., Rykoltsev O., Yavorska V., Vasylchuk V.; edited by Rokun S., Filonenko T., Belousov Y., Yavorska V. — Dnipro: Serednyak T. K., 2022 — 182 p. (UKR) <https://justtalk.com.ua/post/standarti-protsesualnogo-intervyu>

6 - Investigative interviewing as an integral standard of investigation | JustTalk Special (UKR) <https://justtalk.com.ua/post/protsesualne-intervyu-yak-nevidemnij-standart-rozsliduvannya-justtalk-special-event>

This stage is characterised by the emergence of systemic achievements and the development of a professional ecosystem.

Over the course of seven years, a unique educational, analytical and professional infrastructure has formed around investigative interviewing in Ukraine.

Seventeen national development programmes, "**Investigative Interviewing: Basic**", have been implemented, and the new programme "**Investigative Interviewing: Vulnerability**" (7) has been piloted. **A total of 464 specialists** have been trained, including 214 prosecutors, 90 police investigators, 53 SBU employees, 25 DBR investigators, 40 NABU detectives and 42 teachers.

At the same time, there are **success stories**:

"I have had a positive experience using the investigative interviewing technique during the interrogation of a witness — an insider in a case involving war crimes. At the time of the interviewing, the witness had been convicted by a local court for collaboration and sentenced to 14 years in prison. The sentence was under review by the court of appeal. At the time of the events under investigation, the witness in the case held the position of head of the pseudo-police force created by the Russians and possessed information about the commission of violent acts against a local resident. As a prosecutor, I understood that this witness was not interested in providing us with objective testimony, as it would incriminate him in acts of collaboration. Also, since he had been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment, there was a possibility that he would not provide any testimony at all, which was very valuable in my case. When choosing the interrogation method, I decided to conduct the interrogation of this witness using an investigative interviewing model. The chosen method allowed me, despite the above circumstances, to build the rapport with the witness and obtain "perfect" testimony confirming the guilt of specific individuals. In fact, there was a risk of losing this witness's testimony for the prosecution, but during the interview, I obtained testimony that he confirmed during the court interrogation, which made it possible to prove the guilt of specific individuals. I believe that no other model would have been as successful in this case in achieving the desired result."

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A separate area of focus is cooperation with universities. In 2025, a pilot course entitled "**Investigative Interviewing**" was held for students of two leading law schools. (8) In the 2025–2026 academic year, the discipline "Investigative Interviewing" has already been introduced into the curriculums for higher education students at the Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University as a separate course, as well as in the curriculums for cadets of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within the discipline "Tactics of Conducting Individual Investigative (Search) Actions." To this end, a training course for trainers was held, attended by **23 teachers** (9) from the above-mentioned higher education institutions, and a pilot test of this course was conducted for **26 cadets and students**. (10)

In 2024–2025, the [Ukrainian version of the Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation](#) was translated (11) and presented, and an online UN eLearning course in Ukrainian was launched. In 2025, with the support of JustGroup, the **Principles of Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering** (Méndez Principles), developed based on the experience of many countries where law enforcement agencies and security forces use effective interrogation techniques and have better results in obtaining accurate and reliable information, [were officially translated](#).

7 - For more details, visit the JustGroup's website (ENG) <https://justgroup.com.ua/en/investigative-interview/investigative-interviewing-for-vulnerable-individuals-new-training-program-development-underway/>

8 - For more details, visit the JustGroup's website (ENG) <https://justgroup.com.ua/en/investigative-interview/50-law-students-complete-a-3-month-investigative-interviewing-course-led-by-practitioners/>

9 - For more details, visit the JustGroup's LinkedIn (ENG) https://www.linkedin.com/posts/justgroup-ua_justlearn-activity-7330525099403399169-RXum/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAEPewBEBsM2kQvz5Zg79Gj_5KSaioyNmxs0

10 - For more details, visit the JustGroup's LinkedIn (ENG) https://www.linkedin.com/posts/justgroup-ua_we-are-continuing-to-implement-investigative-activity-7343578714934243328-_zTt/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAEPewBEBsM2kQvz5Zg79Gj_5KSaioyNmxs0

11 - Translated Manual on Investigative Interviewing for Criminal Investigation by the Department of Peace Support Operations, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Office on Drugs and Crime of the United Nations, edited by Y. Belousov and V. Yavorska.(UKR) <https://cutt.ly/zthrb9z>

12 - Translated Principles of effective interviewing for investigations and information gathering (Méndez Principles) (UKR) https://www.apt.ch/sites/default/files/2025-10/apt_poei_ukr_web.pdf

An important milestone was the inclusion of investigative interviewing in **state policies**. In 2024, [an interdepartmental order](#) (13) approved the implementation of a pilot project for child protection centres based on the Barnhaus model, which involves the use of investigative interviewing techniques. [The new Strategy for Combating Torture](#) (14) explicitly mentions the application of the Mendez principles. In addition, the Mendez principles have been implemented in the codes of ethics of the [Security Bureau of Ukraine](#), (15) the [Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine](#) (16) and the [State Bureau of Investigation](#) (17). [The National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Field of Justice until 2028](#) (18) provides for the creation of a national methodology for interviewing children in accordance with international standards.

These changes are the result of coordinated efforts by the ECHR Commissioner of the Prosecutor General's Office, experts and JustGroup partners. They show that investigative interviewing, which started as an educational initiative, is becoming part of state policy in the field of justice.

Next steps

The task ahead is to make these changes irreversible. This is not just about individual educational initiatives or pilot programmes, but about systematically embedding investigative interviewing into the "fabric" of the national criminal justice system.

The next steps should include the following:

- 1) Developing and approving an **inter-institutional Standard for conducting investigative interviewing** for national pre-trial investigation bodies and prosecution authorities.
- 2) The implementation of investigative interviewing cannot be effective without **internal institutional policies** that ensure the sustainability of changes. This means the need to:
 - developing internal policies (orders, instructions, regulations) in each pre-trial investigation body to implement the Standards for Investigative Interviewing;
 - the formation of implementation plans (with goals, indicators, and responsible persons) in institutions;
 - integration of investigative interviewing standards into daily operational activities (from planning investigations to preparing materials for court);
 - conducting internal training events and regular briefings for managers and investigators;
 - creating an institutional support environment (feedback mechanisms, experience sharing, mentoring);
 - holding a session to share experiences with the implementation of investigative interviewing in Ukrainian institutions. (19)

13 - Order approving the Procedure for implementing a pilot project to establish child protection centres (based on the Barnhaus model) 26 July 2024 No. 2218/5/180/523/352-n/1306 (UKR) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1151-24#Text>

14 - Order approving the Strategy for Combating Torture in the Criminal Justice System and approving the action plan for its implementation dated 28 October 2021 No. 1344-r (UKR) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1344-2021-%D1%80#Text>

15 - Order on Approval of the Rules of Professional Ethics and Integrity of Military Personnel of the Security Service of Ukraine dated 27 November 2023 No. 474 (UKR) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z2150-23#Text>

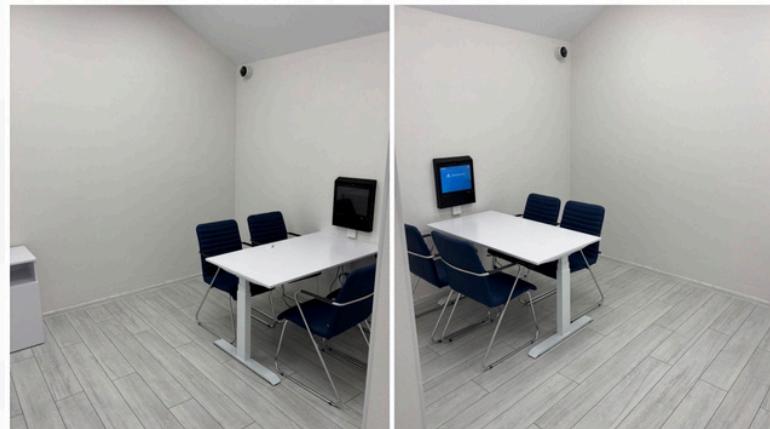
16 - Order on the Approval of the Rules of Professional Ethics for Employees of the Economic Security Bureau of Ukraine dated 30 June 2022 No. 129 (UKR) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0943-22#Text>

17 - Order on the introduction of amendments to the Rules of Professional Ethics for Employees of the State Bureau of Investigation dated 31 December 2024 (UKR) <https://dbr.gov.ua/assets/files/diyalnist/pravovi-zasadi/2024/12/nakaz-535.pdf>

18 - Order approving the National Strategy for the Protection of Children's Rights in the Field of Justice for the period up to 2028 and approving the operational plan of measures for its implementation in 2025-2028 dated 14 July 2025 No. 708-r (UKR) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/708-2025-%D1%80#Text>

19 - For more details, see section 5 (pp. 142-157) Standards for investigative interviewing / Belousov Y., Orlean A., Filonenko T., Rokun S., Ivanov O., Dyba O., Usikov V., Kabaiev V., Ershov P., Rykvtsev O., Yavorska V., Vasylchuk V.; edited by Rokun S., Filonenko T., Belousov Y., Yavorska V. — Dnipro: Serednyak T. K., 2022 — 182 p. (UKR) <https://justtalk.com.ua/post/standarti-protsesualnogo-intervyu>

3) Pre-trial investigation bodies must provide **the necessary infrastructure**, such as interview rooms. The first example of this approach has already been implemented: in 2025, **a room** for conducting investigative interviewing **was set up** in the Office of the Prosecutor General. The establishment of such rooms has also begun in regional prosecutor's offices. The next step should be the gradual expansion of this practice — the creation of similar rooms in all key institutions of the criminal justice system: the National Police, the State Bureau of Investigation, the Security Service of Ukraine, as well as in departmental higher education institutions. This will ensure uniform standards, consistent training practices and high-quality interviews at all levels.



4) High-quality investigative interviewing requires constant improvement. To this end, it is necessary to introduce **systematic monitoring and evaluation** as tools for training and development. The next steps should include:

- developing a comprehensive tool for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of investigative interviewing in the national criminal justice system;
- developing a unified plan for monitoring the implementation of the methodology in departments, indicating key performance indicators (number of interviews conducted, quality of recording, compliance with ethical standards, etc.);
- creation of a coordination group or interdepartmental council to collect and analyse data on the status of the methodology's application;
- introduction of regular supervision and peer review (review of video recordings, debriefings, discussion of cases in a safe learning format);
- preparation of a report assessing the impact of the methodology's implementation, with an emphasis on qualitative changes in the work of investigators and the trust of participants in the proceedings;
- developing and supporting communication between and with institutional leaders to understand the level of implementation and the necessary further efforts. (20)

5) Investigative interviewing should become **an integral part of legal education**, from basic to postgraduate training. This involves not only combining criminal procedure, psychology and criminology, but also an emphasis on practical training: simulation exercises, video analysis, assessment and feedback. Thanks to this, the methodology is transformed from an innovation into a professional standard that is passed on to future generations of specialists. Investing in training higher education students in pre-trial investigation standards, in particular investigative interview standards, is a guarantee of improving the quality and effectiveness of pre-trial proceedings. Mastering this methodology will enable future law enforcement officers to obtain information most securely and effectively during the investigation of criminal offences and will provide procedural guarantees for all participants in the proceedings, thereby contributing to the implementation of fair justice. To this end, it is necessary to ensure:

- development and implementation of specialised training disciplines in investigative interviewing at higher education institutions that train students in the fields of 081 "Law" and 262 "Law Enforcement";
- development of a national team of trainers and mentors for training programmes at various levels;
- integration of training programmes dedicated to investigative interviewing into the development programmes for investigators, detectives and prosecutors;

5) In order for investigative interviewing to become a fully-fledged instrument of justice, it is necessary to ensure its **proper regulatory consolidation**. This involves the concept of updating legislation, which provides for:

- the establishment of investigative interviews as a form of interrogation with clear guarantees of the rights of participants;
- determining the possibility of using testimony obtained during the pre-trial investigation, subject to compliance with admissibility criteria;
- mandatory video recording of interviews as a procedural standard;
- the introduction of unified protocols and technical requirements for interview rooms;
- a change in terminology: replacing the term "interrogation" with "investigative interview" to reflect the collaborative and ethical nature of communication.

The changes should take into account international experience, in particular the practice of Norway, Great Britain, New Zealand and Canada, where the transition from interrogation to interview took place in the 1990s and 2000s and was accompanied by the development of national guidelines and training programmes.

This experience has shown that humanising the process does not reduce its effectiveness but, on the contrary, improves the quality of evidence, trust in the system and the professionalism of investigators. (21)

From 2012 to 2025, Ukraine went from distrust of the communication process to recognising its central importance. The procedural interview became a symbol of this transition. Not just as a technique, but as a new way of thinking. The next stage in the development of procedural interviews involves not only improving the methodology but also making it part of the DNA of the criminal justice system. From coordinated internal policies to legislative changes, each level must contribute to the creation of a holistic ecosystem in which procedural interviews are not the exception, but the professional standard. This is the path from individual practices to a systemic culture of mutual respect, evidence-based decision-making and humanity, capable of ensuring public trust in justice and improving the quality of work of all those who stand guard over the law.

We are still on the way. Transforming the culture of investigation is always more than just a change in techniques. It is a story about the evolution of people in the profession, about the development of empathy, thinking and inner freedom. That is why procedural interviews are not just about interviews. They are about us, about the system's ability to change, listen and learn.

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