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COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL WORK IN THE UNECE REGION

Rapporteur Report for justice and crime<sup>1</sup>

Submitted by Statistics Netherlands

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. A previous analysis of the issues and problems of international work in the area of crime statistics was presented by Statistics Netherlands in a supporting paper for the fifty-first plenary session of the CES on 10-12 June 2003 in Geneva (Document CES/2003/18/Add.1). The main issues were: information on crime statistics comes from different organizations such as ministries of justice, research departments, police organizations and NSIs. This results in a variety of data: in other words, data that are not comparable internationally. Put simply, international comparisons must always be placed in the context of differences between national criminal justice systems and the statistics they produce. Statistics Netherlands proposes that, using the experience of all experts, a framework be developed for criminal justice statistics under the responsibility of Eurostat or UNECE, that is workable for each nation. The UN produced a "Manual for the development of a System of criminal justice statistics" in 2003. This was a good start, and since then a number of meetings have been organised: the joint meetings of UNECE-UNODC (November 2004 and January 2006), and a Task Force meeting of Eurostat

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been prepared at the invitation of the secretariat.

(May/June 2005 and March 2006). The results of these meetings can be considered as a guideline future work. Some steps have already been taken.

## II. COLLECTIVE PROGRESS

2. For an up-to-date overview and in order to facilitate the report, readers are referred to the Database of International Statistical Activities concerning the area under review:

<http://unece.unog.ch/IntPres/> (subject area: demographic and social statistics; item 1.8 Justice and crime).

3. The recommendations on future work of the last UNECE-UNODC work session on crime statistics (25-27 January 2006) are:

(a) to reinforce the objective of the joint UNECE-UNODC work towards the development of guidelines in the field of victim surveys; initiate work towards the production of a manual on victim surveys. It was suggested that such a manual should cover all key aspects in the implementation of victim surveys giving various options to address the different needs of the countries;

(b) to continue the analysis of information collected by UNECE-UNODC on the national victim surveys;

(c) to continue to coordinate its activity with the Eurostat Taskforce on crime statistics.

4. The results of the last Eurostat Task Force meeting (2-3 March 2006) are:

(a) Eurostat would contact all contact points to request checking of the current state of the results of the exercise to collect data and metadata. Existing metadata from the Sourcebook and UNODC would be integrated. Further synchronisation and harmonisation with these exercises would be a priority as Eurostat's activities developed. A draft Statistics in Focus would be prepared for discussion by the Task Force in October. A further collection exercise would be initiated at the end of 2006;

(b) Eurostat would initiate a study of European victimisation surveys aimed at designing a set of common topics and questions, and proposing alternative solutions for implementing these as a survey or module. This work would be carefully co-ordinated with the ongoing activities of the UNODC and UNECE on analysis of the results of the questionnaire, and with the development of a manual by the UNODC/UNECE task force;

(c) on organised crime, the members of the group would examine the available report of the EUSTOC study and also the results of the IKOC study when available. They would provide assistance as requested to the DG JLS exercise regarding the collection of data and metadata on five crime types. The Commission would organise a conference to evaluate these projects in early 2007.

## III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

5. There are still three issues to be considered.

(a) The International Victim Crime Survey (IVCS). Progress has been made but there are huge gaps between the various countries. Some have made very good progress, while others have still to start. Two kinds of problems have emerged: methodological aspects, and the aspects regarding the content of the questionnaire. The new manual (to be developed by the UNECE taskforce next year) will solve this problem to a certain extent

(see also under para. 2.) Should the National Victim Crime Survey (NVCS) incorporate the IVCS? This is debatable; it is very important to pinpoint the core questions. HEUNI in particular examines this aspect. The methodological aspect will be examined by the United States as they have a long tradition with VCS's.

(b) Traditional crime statistics (administrative data). These vary enormously. The IVCS must be considered as a supplement to this kind of statistics. The definition of crimes, how and when they are recorded, differentiate substantially between the countries.

(c) New types of crime: cyber crime, money laundering, organised crime, trafficking. These are not relevant for NSIs, but are very relevant for politics and the police. Who will measure these types of crime?

#### IV. IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CONFERENCE

6. There are many players in the field of "comparability of crime statistics", and they cooperate well. It would seem that a number of political interests are also involved and therefore there is a lack of decision. The organised meetings are sometimes for the Member States only, but sometimes also include the United States, Canada and Australia. Also at the various meetings, the author got the impression that the differences in development play a substantial role. The most unsophisticated countries were not able to deliver presentations and they never joined in discussions because they are way behind on methodological aspects. That is a pity.

7. It should be noted that three parties have an interest: politics, researchers and NSIs. This complicates data collection, data processing and publications (input, throughput and output). It is noticeable in the discussions and ultimately in the cooperation. In itself it does no harm, but it does impede progress and delays the overall process.

8. The continuity of the participants must be guaranteed. Many personal changes have taken place, without responsibilities being transferred. This is especially relevant for methodological matters; keeping up with the relevant literature is very important. Some subjects are well documented in the specialist literature. If this knowledge is monitored it would save a lot of time, prevent double work and make the process more decisive. Otherwise it becomes a delaying effect.

9. In addition to being comparable, crime statistics should ideally be integrated in social statistics. This would make it possible to look at certain population groups (victims or offenders); are they the same in different countries? Statistics Netherlands is currently constructing a Social Statistical Database (SSB), which combines several data sets.

10. Nowadays politicians want to know how much the government spends on crime. How much does crime cost? In other words: how much of a country's GNP, or how many euros per capita is spent on crime? The construction of safety accounts is necessary and desirable, and politically relevant. In the Netherlands there are attempts to make satellite accounts to estimate all costs related to crime and the judicial public safety and security concept. The public safety

and security concept can be an emerging issue in statistics; official statistics could look in-depth into this topic.

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