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Strasbourg, 5 May 2018
PC-CP\docs 2018\PC-CP(2018)9_E

PC-CP (2018) 9

COUNCIL FOR PENOLOGICAL CO-OPERATION
(PC-CP)

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS OF THE LINCS PROJECT
Strasbourg (France)
16 April (9.30 am) - 17 April 2018 (1.00 pm)

Council of Europe (Agora Building) Room G1

Executive summary

1. The meeting of the national correspondents collecting criminal justice statistics was held on 16 and 17 April 2018 at the Council of Europe premises in Strasbourg, France. It was attended by 46 participants, coming from 37 Council of Europe member States, and moderated by a group of scientific experts. The meeting agenda and the list of participants are appended to the report (Appendices I and II).

I. Opening of the meeting and presenting the purpose of the study

2. The meeting was opened by Ivan Koedjikov, who welcomed the participants and highlighted the fact that the European Union is co-funding the meeting as well as the previous two meetings of the SPACE national correspondents, which allowed ample opportunities for discussing in details the definitions used, the methodology of data collection, as well as for verifying and correcting data sent since 2005 in the case of SPACE I and since 2009 in the case of SPACE II. The outcome of the first EU/CoE co-funded project will be two longitudinal studies analysing prison trends in Europe and trends related to the number of foreign offenders in Europe.
3. Marcelo Aebi welcomed the participants and explained that the Council of Europe initiated the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (ESB) in 1996, the first editing being published in 1999. In 2000 the funding ceased and the collection was taken up and continued with the support of several institutions including the governments of Switzerland, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, HEUNI for some of the later four editions, and the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, for all four of them. He also recalled that the collection of the Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) was initiated in 1983 and is still maintained. It is time now to link the analysis, definitions of types of crime and types of sanctions and measures of both these collections, analyse the data and compare crime trends with prison trends. This will be done based on the answers to a questionnaire (of about 100 pages) prepared for the meeting, in which part of the data are related to SPACE I and II and part to victimization surveys, the rest being related to police, prosecution and court statistics. The survey will encompass the period 2011 to 2016 and will examine: (a) the relationship between the crime trends observed in each country and its prison population rates and (b) the influence of the legal system of each country on prison statistics, in particular as far as the legal definitions of offences are concerned. It will lead to the publication of the 6th edition of the ESB as well as of two reports: (a) a report on differences in the legal definitions of offences across Europe, which will allow a comparison of the prison population by offence observed on the continent, and (b) a report on trends in conviction statistics since 2005 by type of offence, which will allow a comparison of the trends observed in the composition of the prison population by offence since the same year. The meetings of the national correspondents are co-funded by a new joint EU/CoE project which started on 1 April 2018 (it will last 18 months). It is envisaged to hold two meetings of the national correspondents (the current one and a second one in 2019) and to fund the collection, analysis and research reports which will be carried out by the team of experts from several European universities.

II. Utility of comparative data and linking criminal justice statistics to criminal policies

4. Beata Gruszczyńska presented the collection of the statistics in the framework of CEPEJ, which are bi-annual. She argued that data need to be always interpreted in a context, as otherwise this may lead to creating an incorrect picture of the situation. For example, in the Nordic countries the number of registered offences by the police is very high but much fewer cases are registered by the courts. If one takes into consideration only police statistics, the conclusion would be that crime rates in the Nordic countries are very high, but in fact the majority of these are petty crimes (which in other countries are not registered by the police) dealt with without intervention of the courts.
5. Another indicator of the efficiency of the court system is the clearance rate of cases and the disposition time. These two indicators need to be evaluated together otherwise this may again lead to wrong conclusions.

6. Paul Smit discussed the use of data in The Netherlands for planning and budgeting activities, structures and staff in the criminal justice system depending on the crime rates and forecasts for the coming years. There are several systems developed which, on the basis of the collected statistics, make prognosis regarding expected crime rates, types of most common crimes, expected detention rates, etc. It was empirically proven that forecasts are more trustworthy if done for short periods of time (up to 3 years) above which period they lose their prognostic value.

III. Police statistics, prosecution statistics and court statistics

7. Stefan Harrendorf informed that police statistics in countries like France, Sweden and UK show very high numbers of crimes which is dependent on the one hand on the reporting systems used and on the other on crime definitions (for example what is considered to be rape in a given country). For example, this refers to national differences in the definitions of burglary, aggravated theft and sex offences. In some countries, during the period for which statistics were collected, the legal definitions changed several times. Data related to domestic violence, cybercrime, hate crime and human trafficking are also difficult to collect for the same reasons.
8. In some countries the categories of crimes used in police reporting do not coincide with the categories of crime used by prosecution or the courts.
9. It would also be important to gather more information regarding the definition of “breach of public order” which also differs depending on the legal systems.

IV. Prison and probation statistics and victimisation surveys

10. Marcelo Aebi informed that in SPACE there is a classification of prisoners by types of most common crimes, but that it is difficult to obtain information on the flow of prisoners by types of crime.
11. He invited the national correspondents to use the data collected in SPACE I and SPACE II when filling in part IV and V of the questionnaire and requested them to inform the team of experts in case they find out by doing so that corrections of the available information are needed.
12. Claudia Campistol informed that a section on National Crime Victimisation Surveys was included in the latest edition of the ESB. This section will be included in the LINCIS questionnaire with an additional item asking for the wording of questions on cybervictimisation included in such surveys. National correspondents will receive the data collected by the experts for the 5th edition of the ESC who will only have to validate them and add the latest surveys conducted. Countries that did not provide such data will need to collect it now. This section provides longitudinal data and metadata as it refers to surveys conducted in the years 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015, or the closest available years.

V. Attrition and linking criminal justice statistics. Longitudinal studies

13. Stefan Harrendorf illustrated the problems when measuring attrition (defined as *the “loss” of cases or, more technically, the filtering out of cases during the criminal justice process*) throughout the criminal justice system, for example measuring the relation between suspects identified by the police and persons convicted by the courts. To measure appropriately the attrition process, it would be necessary to rely on case flow statistics which follow the path of individual cases throughout the system. The previous editions of the ESB show that such kind of statistics are seldom available, which means that until now it has not been possible to measure the attrition process in a perfectly valid way. However, it is possible to obtain estimates of it. The data collected through the LINCIS project will allow users to thoroughly scrutinize the available attrition indicators and assess their quality and usability, taking into account the limitations mentioned above.
14. Marcelo Aebi presented the longitudinal series that are currently being elaborated in Lausanne and combine the data collected since 1990. The series of each country will be individually shared with the national correspondent of the country in order to be checked and completed.

VI. Discussions led by the members of the team of experts in regional working groups

15. Throughout the meeting, the national correspondents met several times in working groups moderated by one of the members of the team of experts who will act during the project as their regional coordinator. Each meeting of the working groups followed the oral presentation of a section of the questionnaire, which guided the discussion in the groups. This allowed a detailed analysis of the questionnaire, and the national correspondents had the opportunity of to ask questions, express themselves about each country particularities and make suggestions to improve the questionnaire and avoid ambiguities in it. Each regional coordinator took notes of its working group discussions. The main information collected by them was later discussed in the general feedback session.

VII. Conclusions and follow-up

16. It was agreed that the finalised questionnaire will be sent to all national correspondents within three or four weeks and that answers need to be sent not later than by the end of September 2018. The questionnaire as well as the list of participants and the presentations will be put on the Council of Europe website in due course.

17. A letter from the Council of Europe asking for cooperation on collecting criminal justice and prison statistics indicating the person responsible of the LINCS project in each country will be drafted and sent to the National Correspondents, who can use it when asking data from the institutions that collect the data required.

18. The ESB website will be updated with the LINCS project information and with the updated list of National correspondents and scientific experts.

19. The next meeting of the national correspondents is scheduled for the first half of 2019, when a first version of the data collected will be presented in the form of a draft report. The meeting is part of the data validation process established to ensure as far as possible their validity and reliability. The national correspondents will thus have the possibility of discussing the answers provided and their analysis, as well as the potential conclusions of the reports.

20. Iliana Taneva, Council of Europe, insisted on the necessity when drafting the reports and analysis to try and send clear messages to the national stakeholders regarding possible reasons for crime trends and prison trends in their respective countries in order to help them in taking informed decisions regarding planning of budgets and structural and legal reforms, if necessary.

AGENDA

16th April 2018

- 9:00 Registration of the participants
- 9:30 Opening (Ivan Koedjikov, Head of Action against Crime Department, Directorate General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe)
- 9:45 Purpose of the Study (Marcelo Aebi)
- 10:00 Utility of comparative data: the case of the CEPEJ (Beata Gruszczyńska)
- 10:15 Linking criminal justice statistics to criminal policies: the case of the Netherlands (Paul Smit)
- 10:30 Definition of offences and sanctions (Stefan Harrendorf)

- 10:45 – 11:15 Coffee break

- 11:15 Introducing the questionnaire of the project (Marcelo Aebi)
- 11:30 Meet your regional coordinator and discussion in working groups

- 12:30 – 14:00 Lunch break

- 14:00 Feedback from the working groups
- 14:30 Police statistics (Anniina Jokinen)
- 14:45 Prosecution statistics (Jörg-Martin Jehle)
- 15:00 Court statistics (Jörg-Martin Jehle)
- 15:15 – 15:45 Coffee break
- 15:45 Discussion in working groups (on police statistics, prosecution statistics and court statistics)
- 16:45 Feedback
- 17:30 End

17th April 2018

- 9:00 Prison and probation statistics (Marcelo Aebi)
- 9:30 Victimization surveys (Claudia Campistol)
- 9:45 Discussion in working groups

- 10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

- 11:00 Feedback
- 11:30 Attrition and linking criminal justice statistics (Stefan Harrendorf)
- 11:45 Longitudinal series (Marcelo Aebi)
- 12:00 General discussion and closing remarks
- 13:00 End

- 14:00 – 16:00 Meeting of the team of experts

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