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COUNCIL FOR PENOLOGICAL CO-OPERATION
(PC-CP)

MEETING OF THE NATIONAL CORRESPONDENTS OF THE LINCS PROJECT
Strasbourg (France)
3 June (9.30 am) - 4 June 2019 (1.00 pm)

Council of Europe (Agora Building) Room G01

LINCS MEETING MINUTES

9 AM: Iliana Taneva opens the meeting and welcomes the participants. Professor Marcelo F. Aebi informs of the state of advancement of the project with a focus on the amount of complete or incomplete data that have been provided per participating country. In general, most countries have provided mostly complete data.

9:30 AM - 4:30 PM The participants continue the discussions in working groups with the regional coordinators.

5 PM: Feedback from the working groups is presented to the plenary:

1. **Police data**

- It is necessary to be careful regarding 'road traffic offences' - it has to be stressed that what should be included are CRIMINAL traffic offences and not all traffic offences which may be dealt with outside the criminal justice system.

2. **Prosecution data**

- It is often the case that this section is more challenging to complete, and there can be several missing data because of the state of prosecutorial statistics in many countries.

- Counting unit: the definition can be misleading. The definition provided refers to cases related to one person only. However, the Group of Experts recognizes that a case can also include several persons. National correspondents are requested to be explicit if there is a contradiction between the counting unit as defined in the questionnaire and the one to which the data provided refers (by giving as much information as necessary).

- In some cases, the offender is unknown and consequently the prosecution data on these cases are preliminary, and sometimes no data are recorded at all. The national correspondents should explain in the comments if that is the situation in their country

- There is an issue with terminology regarding what can be considered a "pre-trial detainee", especially after the first instance judgement, i.e. during the appeal process (it is noted that there can be multiple appeals). A better wording is "detainees without final sentence". National correspondents are requested to explain in the comments whether persons who have been sentenced, but have appealed the verdict / sentence or are within the statutory limits of doing so, are counted among the so-called "pre-trial detainees". In the United Kingdom, the term 'remand' can be used, but it is considered an English concept which does not entirely fit the purposes of the European Sourcebook. In the SPACE statistics, there is distinction between "detainees" (before a final sentence) and "prisoners" (after a final sentence), and the word "inmates" includes both types of persons deprived of freedom.

3. **Convictions**

- It is noted that specific sanctions in a country may not be fully compatible with the provided categories in the questionnaire. In this case, national correspondents are encouraged to try to report the data in the category that comes closest to the same concept, and to provide clarifications in the comments. Recording sanctions in the category "other measures" should usually be avoided. This residual category is specifically reserved for measures against mentally ill and dangerous offenders who are sent to a psychiatric hospital or a drug treatment facility.

- In some countries, the counting unit in conviction statistics is the sanction, not the person or the offence. From the next edition on, this should be reflected in the questionnaire. For now, the national correspondents should provide information regarding this in the comments box, if it applies for their country.

- Regarding questions about staff, it is acknowledged that there is a lack of counting rules for judges. If possible, the concept of full-time equivalent (which will have to be made explicit in following editions) should be applied. A full-time equivalent means, for example, that two persons working part-time at 50% will be counted as one (working at 100%). National correspondents are invited to clarify the counting unit used in the allotted comments.

- ***To take into consideration for the next editions:*** it is necessary to take into account that the distinction between forgery and fraud varies across countries. For example, depending on the country, forging a document to commit fraud can be considered fraud, forgery, or both. Recording differs and the principal offence rule is not straightforward in similar scenarios. This should be addressed in the metadata in the next edition.

4. Prison and probation

- Most of the data are available through SPACE I and II, but not all. Data from 2005 to 2015 are provided. However, national correspondents are encouraged to carefully check the data and to be aware that the questionnaire also asks for some additional information that is not available through SPACE.

- It is noted that for probation, the questionnaire only asks for data on 2015 and does not ask for data completing the series 2011 - 2016. This was a mistake, but will not be corrected for the current edition.

5. General remarks:

- Confusion exists concerning the meaning of “*”, “-2”, “-4”, and/or empty cells. In the final publication, these symbols will be replaced with empty cells because their meaning is ambiguous, and consistent use is not assured across correspondents.

- It is noted that there exist typos and other mistakes in some tables and that care must be taken.

- The issue regarding the lack of a clear distinction between “not available” and “not applicable” is raised. These are clearly two different concepts, but the answers received in the previous years show that it is impossible to make the distinction consistently throughout the whole questionnaire. As a consequence, in the final publications, no distinction has been made and that is the rule followed for this edition.

- It has been suggested to add a third option, “do not know”, for sections about what is “included/excluded”.

- It is noted that some institutions correct or otherwise update their data after the initial publication. In other words, the databases are dynamic and the figures are subject to constant change (e.g. after appeals, etc.). It is requested that, if a national correspondent has reasons to believe that the data may change in the future, to make a comment. The suggested solution is to always provide the retrieval date in the source variable, if the data comes from a dynamic database.

- National correspondents are requested to indicate clearly any figure that has been corrected, as well as typos or other mistakes concerning the data which were introduced in the database.
- If the data are correct, but there is still a significant (remarkable) change in the figures between years, it is requested to make use of the comment boxes in the questionnaire. The national correspondents are reminded that since all the raw data will be published, it is important to provide as much information as possible. However, if the real cause of the change in the figures is unknown, the national correspondents are dissuaded from attempting to give an uncertain explanation or “interpretation”.
- Data availability is often a problem.
- The Word format of the questionnaire has been criticized for not being user-friendly. It has been suggested to use the Excel files for all the data instead, including non-numerical data.
- A national correspondent suggested implementing an online discussion forum dedicated to questions that arise during the filling of the questionnaire and/or to create a FAQ to avoid continuous private questions, to which the answers may be of general interest.
- It has been noted that not all the data sent by the national correspondents are actually already available in the raw data files. This is mainly due to the questionnaires received after the deadline.
- A national correspondent suggested that recommendations for future data collections should be produced and sent to the national statistical offices, etc.

4th June 2019

9:00 AM: Yuji Z. Hashimoto & Marcelo F. Aebi presented the state of the chapter concerning National Crime Victimization Surveys. The importance of completing this chapter is highlighted, and national correspondents are encouraged to try and fill out the questions. Nobody else is collecting these data other than the European Sourcebook.

9:45 AM: Stefano Caneppele's presented the different ways data can be visualized effectively and how useful time-series data can be.

11:00 AM: Reminder of the next milestones. The national correspondents have **until the 30th June** to make the necessary corrections and to provide additional data. In the case of corrections, national correspondents are asked to use the Excel file and to colour any change in **PURPLE**. Likewise, even if the Word document is used to provide corrections, national correspondents are requested to highlight these in **PURPLE**.