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**Session 1 – Invited paper**

**THE NEED FOR CRIME STATISTICS AT EU LEVEL**

Submitted by European Commission \*

**I. Perceptions of crime and safety**

1. Public interest in crime and justice is increasing, nationally in all EU Member States as well as at European level. For EU citizens crime and safety are issues of major concern. This is demonstrated not least by the Eurobarometer, a survey of public opinion in the European Union. The latest survey was published this summer and it demonstrates that a quarter of those interviewed in all Member States think that fighting crime is one of the two most important issues facing their country. That the European Union has an important role to play in this area is shown by the fact that 41% of the respondents indicated that the European Union has a positive role to play in fighting crime and 53% (the highest score attributed to any of the issues asked about, including defence, foreign affairs, protecting the environment, the economic situation, immigration and several others) thought the same about the role of the EU in fighting terrorism.

**II. A necessary knowledge-based policy to prevent and fight crime**

2. Without exaggerating, it could be said that one of the main deficiencies in the area of justice and home affairs is the lack of Community statistics on crime and criminal justice.

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\* Paper prepared by Mr Sönke Schmidt / Ms Monika Olsson, Directorate-General Justice and Home Affairs, Directorate D Internal security and criminal justice.

3. To be able to respond to public concern and to work towards developing the area of justice, freedom and security, it is necessary that policy makers have access to knowledge both on the scale of the problem to be addressed and on what efforts at European level can give the intended result of reducing crime. In this policy area, as in others, it is of course necessary to develop policy which is soundly based on knowledge and on evidence about crime, as well as on the measures taken to prevent and fight crime.

### **III. Future measures at European level**

4. In the future, the European Community will probably provide financial support to Member States that take measures with the aim of increasing safety and reducing crime in certain regions. In order to prioritise measures and areas - and to monitor their progress - information on levels and trends in different regions is necessary.

5. One necessary component in a knowledge-based policy to prevent and fight crime is statistics on crime and victimisation. Quantitative and comparable information on levels and trends of crime and victimisation in different regions of the European Union will be much sought after, not least in view of the new financial perspectives, in other words the new budget, of the European Community, from 2007.

6. In addition, the threat of organised cross-border crime is perceived to be on the increase. In response to this, methods to assess the threat of organised and cross-border crime as well as of terrorist acts are being developed. Quantitative and comparable information is necessary here, too, not least to inform the annual report on organised crime, which is drafted by Europol on the basis of from all Member States.

### **IV. Current international comparisons**

7. For several decades, different expert groups and organisations have put effort into comparing available national statistics to draw conclusions on differences and similarities between countries. These efforts have given us valuable information mostly on trends in crime and victimisation.

8. There are, however, important limitations as long as state of the art national criminal justice statistics are used, even if you try to adapt these to more general definitions. I'm sure there is no need to mention to this audience all the complications with using these kinds of data and trying to adapt them to international needs.

9. Victimisation studies can give part of the picture of crime and victimisation in a comparable way, but they have important limitations. They are not suited to giving an accurate picture of different types of organised crime, nor of very serious criminality such as crimes directed against children.

10. There is clearly a need to develop new methods and techniques to measure different types of crime in the European Union, while not losing track of achievements already made and using the experience and expertise that has been developed over the years.

### **V. Commitments at European level**

11. Article 30 of the Treaty on European Union provides a clear obligation to establish a statistical network on cross-border crime. The Millennium strategy on organised crime, decided by the Council of Ministers, recommends the elaboration of crime statistics as an important tool in the fight against organised crime. The interim evaluation of that strategy calls upon the European Commission to launch

a study on statistics development in the area of Organised Crime (in close collaboration with Europol and Eurostat) and submit a proposal for the setting up of a research, documentation and statistical network.

12. Recently, the Dublin Declaration, endorsed by the Council, recommends that “a comprehensive system of European crime statistics should be elaborated and a co-ordinated EU Crime Statistics Strategy be developed.” Currently, a multi-annual programme, the Hague-programme, for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union, is being discussed between the Member States and in close cooperation with the European Commission. The programme will probably be decided by the European Council at the end of this week and it seems likely that it will include explicitly the demand for developing instruments for collecting, analysing and comparing information on crime and victimisation in the Member States.

## **VI. Harmonised definitions of different crime types have already been decided**

13. In the last couple of years, the Council of Ministers of the European Union has agreed on definitions of several crime types. Examples are fraud, counterfeiting, money laundering, terrorist offences, corruption, trafficking in human beings and environmental offences. Work is continuing along these lines, with decisions being taken on harmonising definitions, minimum rules on penalties and measures to improve judicial and operational cooperation. This work also provides a good basis for collecting statistical information on the types of crimes that, by virtue of these developments, are clearly deemed to be of most interest to the EU..

## **VII. The European Commission initiative on developing comparable statistics on crime, victimisation and criminal justice**

14. On these grounds, the European Commission has launched its work towards collecting comparable information from Member States. Two parts of the European Commission cooperate closely to develop this work: the Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs: JAI, and the Directorate General responsible for providing statistical services: Eurostat. Europol is also closely related in this work.

15. Within the Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs we also coordinate efforts so as to build an infrastructure that can host information on many different types of crime, whether organised or not, and including information on terrorist acts and drug related crime.

16. To develop truly comparable information on crime, victimisation and criminal justice is of course a complicated and long term goal. My colleague from Eurostat will elaborate on the elements of our concerted action in session two, but let me mention that we are in the process of developing an action plan and establishing a Commission expert group. The elements of an action plan have been discussed this summer and early autumn with representatives of Member States in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs and of Statistics. After these consultation sessions, we feel that Member States have provided massive support for the journey on which we are now embarking..

17. Nevertheless, the work will take considerable human and economic resources, and of course time. In the short and medium term it is therefore important to use also the information and analyses produced by the different organisations and agencies that are already doing work in this area. The Commission will actively support such initiatives that have a bearing on its future long-term work, in striving towards concerted European action with all players involved – both producers and users.

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