

# HEUNI

HELSINKI INSTITUTE  
FOR CRIME PREVENTION AND CONTROL  
AFFILIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

THE FEASIBILITY OF A  
EUROPEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM  
ON TRENDS IN CRIME AND  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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THE FEASIBILITY OF A EUROPEAN INFORMATION SYSTEM  
ON TRENDS IN CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Report of the Ad Hoc Meeting of Experts,  
held in Helsinki, Finland, 9 - 10 May 1983  
(Rev. 3, 13 July 1983)

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National Institute of Justice

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Helsinki 1983

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Report on the Ad Hoc Meeting of Experts  
on the Feasibility of a European Information System  
on Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice

Helsinki, 9-10 May 1983

Rapporteur: Mr. Matti Joutsen (Finland)

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1. At the invitation of the Helsinki Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, the Expert Meeting on the Feasibility of a European Information System on Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice was held in Helsinki, Finland, 9-10 May 1983 (the list of participants is provided in Annex I).

2. The Director of the Helsinki Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, Professor Inkeri Anttila, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants to the Expert Meeting. The Director briefly informed the experts of the scope of the tasks with which the Institute was mandated by the Agreement on the Establishment of HEUNI, signed between the United Nations and the Government of Finland. The Director noted that this was the first official meeting organised by HEUNI. The main purpose of the Meeting was to identify the already existing sources of information on crime trends and criminal justice in the European region, to find out the needs of official bodies and the research community for such information, and seek advice on how HEUNI can best meet these needs. Another purpose of the Meeting was to consider how, in the above con-

text, cooperation could best be established with the European countries served by HEUNI and with other United Nations regional institutes in crime prevention and control and the United Nations Social Defence Research Institute. The Director observed that HEUNI, although it has limited resources, looks forward to undertaking viable and important tasks in the area of crime prevention and control in the European region. It was also observed that the Meeting will help in defining the area in which HEUNI could be of the greatest assistance to the countries of the European region.

3. The Director of HEUNI suggested that Mr. Croft chair the morning session and the first half of the afternoon session, and Mr. Cotic chair the other part of the proceedings. It was further suggested that Mr. Joutsen of HEUNI would serve as Rapporteur. As the Meeting unanimously agreed to both suggestions, Mr. Croft took the chair.

4. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for his appointment to preside over the Meeting, and warmly congratulated the Director of the Institute on the establishment of HEUNI. He suggested that the Meeting adopts its provisional agenda and starts by considering the factual background to the topic of the Feasibility of European Information Systems. As this is a wide area of concern, he proposed that the Meeting could begin with general statements, followed by consideration of the scope and contents of the establishment of any information system.

5. After the adoption of the agenda item of the Meeting (Annex II), the Chairman called on the representative of the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs to take the floor. On behalf of Mr. Minoru Shikita, Assistant-Director of the CPCJB, he conveyed Mr. Shikita's warm greetings and wishes of every success in the implementation of the important tasks laid out by the Agreement on the Establishment of HEUNI. It was emphasised that after a period of completion of organisational arrangements concerning the functioning of HEUNI, a first opportunity for substantial cooperation was offered by this Meeting. The topic of the Meeting was linked to subprogramme 10.1 of the 1984-1985 Programme Budget of the CPCJB entitled "Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice". It was also linked to Resolution 2 of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (Caracas, 25 August - 5 September 1980) which stressed the need for research on crime trends, especially on the regional level, and with the Caracas Declaration which, inter alia, provided an over-all frame for cross-national research in this area.

6. On the basis of documentation made available by some of the experts (listed in Annex III), and of the Discussion Guide prepared by HEUNI, the experts considered first the already existing information systems on crime trends and criminal policy in Europe, including the exchange of data among Scandinavian countries, the Member States of the Coun-

cil of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and INTERPOL, as well as within the United Nations system. The already existing information systems cover a wide spectrum of items such as statistical data, information on legislative reforms and research results. There have been efforts, for example among the Scandinavian countries and the Member States of the Council of Europe, to compare the existing data, but these efforts revealed a considerable amount of methodological and technical difficulties. Instead, more flexible and action-oriented arrangements, including telex communication with the network of experts, were sought in the framework of which interested States could obtain relevant and timely data, without their needless duplication.

7. The representative of the CPCJB informed the Meeting of the work of the Branch concerning implementation of the Second United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Crime Prevention Strategies, and mention was made of the methodological difficulties this kind of studies meets with, and how they were overcome. The systematic approach to the collection of data, and other specific goals of the Survey were presented, together with information on how the results of the Survey might contribute to a fuller consideration of Topic 2 of the preliminary agenda item of the Seventh United Nations Congress, entitled "Criminal justice processes and perspectives in a changing world".

8. The Director of UNSDRI called the attention of the Meeting to the Final Report on the International Clearing-house Project on Crime, Deviance and Social Control. This report highlighted some of the problems involved in establishing information systems, and could thus be of guidance to HEUNI. These problems concerned e.g. overly ambitious goals, and insufficient attention to continuous funding and resources.

9. The experts agreed that despite all the difficulties in collecting, evaluating and disseminating information on crime trends and criminal justice, there was a strong need among official bodies and in the research community for statistics and other data on crime trends or criminal justice processes as well as for data on successful and unsuccessful criminal policy and crime prevention innovations. It was emphasized that in respect of the innovations, data were required not only on the substance of these innovations, but in particular on the social, economic and cultural context in which they were introduced and carried out. This kind of information could be made available through dissemination of a newsletter among interested parties, and the Helsinki Institute could explore possible ways and means for publication of such a newsletter.

10. Other possibilities open to an information system could, under HEUNI's auspices, involve a bibliography of sources along the lines of the World Directory of Criminological Institutes published periodically by UNSDRI. Such a

bibliography might list documentary sources available in national language or in translation concerning legislation (e.g. lists of official gazettes, compilations of laws and administrative regulations, basic text books), and statistical data (both general and specific publications), possibly published in a loose-leaf form. It might also contain abstracts of relevant articles, reports and books that have so far only been disseminated for the benefit of a national audience, and therefore not always easily accessible to the foreign reader. Still another possibility would be publication of a yearbook on trends in crime, and on crime prevention and control in the countries served by HEUNI, as well as publication of an annual report of HEUNI. The preparation of this report is required by the Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Finland.

11. Some of the experts considered the possibility of involving the national correspondents in the field of crime prevention and control cooperating with the United Nations Secretariat in the task of obtaining information required to create a data base on crime trends and criminal justice in the European region, which could also cooperate with HEUNI. It was stressed that this could be given further consideration, and should be weighted in terms of the availability of the national correspondents to undertake such a new and important assignment. A second, perhaps preferable solution, could be the establishment of a network of HEUNI's own correspondents.

12. The experts expressed words of caution in implementing some of these options. Among probable difficulties mentioned were a possible need for evaluation of the collected data before dissemination and, should the undertaking have a wide scope, financial constraints. Even so, the experts were agreed that HEUNI could play an important role not only in identifying the sources of "hard" and "soft" data, but also in disseminating pertinent information on these sources.

13. HEUNI's task in respect of the above-mentioned "hard" and "soft" data could lead to selection of some crime or offender categories, and the collection of comparable data on these. These data, which should include prison statistics from the countries in the European region, could be accompanied by commentary on their contents. Reference was made in this connection to Resolution 2 of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, calling for the collection of data presenting the fewest problems of comparability and reporting difficulties for each State. In this connection it was mentioned that aggregated results of the Second United Nations Survey, which is already being implemented, could be of assistance to HEUNI.

14. Many experts emphasised the need for a wider exchange of information on crime trends and criminal justice between all European countries. HEUNI's role with its United Nations auspices could be very helpful in making such an

exchange meaningful.

15. Some experts stressed the need for computerization of information services on trends in crime and criminal justice in the European region. Examples of the already existing services, together with its limitations, were quoted. Other experts, in acknowledging the certain growth of such knowledge, nevertheless noted that the costs of this service were still relatively high, and the information offered not always reliable.

16. In foreseeing the role of HEUNI in the collection, processing and dissemination of information, the experts stressed the need to avoid unrealistic objectives. The information services offered by HEUNI should be slowly yet steadily expanded. The experts themselves may serve as resource persons in their countries, to make first such information available, and encourage their respective governments to support the activities of HEUNI. The resources of HEUNI could be further augmented through effective use of the system of fellowships provided for in the Agreement on the Establishment of HEUNI.

17. Despite the need for a modest initiation of the operations of HEUNI, the experts emphasised that HEUNI should already at the outset make itself known to the European audience and present itself at the European Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders

(Sofia, 6 - 10 June 1983), and should continue to expand its public information services. One further means through which HEUNI could make itself known could involve an initial survey of the sources of information on crime trends and criminal justice in the European region, already mentioned under paragraph 10 of this Report.

18. The Director of HEUNI closed the Meeting by thanking the experts for their active participation and important recommendations on the agenda item. She emphasised the amount of information already existing on crime and criminal justice, and the difficulties official bodies and the research community have in following and utilising this information. The Director emphasised that it was here that HEUNI could best serve the European region in the regular exchange of information.

## ANNEX I

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS: EXPERTS

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SECRETARIAT

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Mr. Seppo Leppä, Programme Officer, HEUNI

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Ms. Ulla Sinkkonen, Research Assistant, National Research Institute  
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Rapporteur:

Mr. Matti Joutsen, Senior Researcher, HEUNI

ANNEX II  
AGENDA OF THE MEETING

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Ad Hoc Meeting of Experts on the feasibility of a European information system on trends in crime and criminal justice Helsinki, May 9 and 10, 1983

Place: Finnish Red Cross Conference Center

May 9

- 09.15                   Opening of the Meeting, Director of HEUNI
- 09.30                   Topic 1: with special emphasis on regional systems,
- a) what information retrieval, information processing and information dissemination activities on trends in crime and criminal justice already exist or will soon be operational in European countries, and
- b) what are the sources from which these information service systems gather their information
- 13.30                   Topic 2: what are the expectations of official bodies and other interested groups requiring information with regard to
- a) the subject matter of the criminal policy information retrieved, processed and disseminated, and to
- b) the output form - e.g. newsletters, annual reviews, computerized dissemination methods or other alternatives

May 10

- 09.00                   Topic 3: what would be the right niche for a miniresource information service system in the field of criminal policy - a data base constructed on selected issues or other alternatives
- 10.30                   Approval of the Report of the Meeting
- 11.30                   Conclusion of the Meeting

ANNEX III  
DOCUMENTATION PRESENTED BY THE EXPERTS

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Mr. Redo	Statement
Mr. Croft	Background Note on the Position in the United Kingdom
Mr. Svensson	What do Authorities Expect of HEUNI ?
Mr. Holyst	Remarks Concerning a European Information System
Mr. Törnudd	Coping With the Information Explosion
HEUNI	Discussion Guide

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Mr. Asuni	Mr. Asuni presented as Documentation the Final Report on the International Clearinghouse on Crime, Deviance and Social Control 1976 - 1977 (UNSDRI Report 31 August 1977)
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Mr. Slawomir Redo  
Social Affairs Officer,  
Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch

I should like to convey to you warmest greetings and special congratulations on this important occasion. I should like also to express to you the regrets of Mr. Shikita that he is not able to take part in this very special meeting which has been organized by the Helsinki Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman!

The Helsinki Institute is to fulfil an important task in the overall activities of the United Nations in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. This task, as it may be recalled, is clearly laid out in the Agreement between the United Nations and the Finnish authorities on the Establishment of the Institute, which provides particularly for the regular exchange of information and expertise in crime prevention and control among various countries of Europe, taking fully into account the different socio-economic systems. To that end, Mr. Chairman, I should like to assure this meeting that the United Nations Secretariat, especially the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, which is the organizational unit responsible for crime prevention and criminal justice activities, is confident that under the leadership of Prof. Anttila the goals envisaged under the Agreement will be fully accomplished. In this connexion it is worth noting that the accomplishments of those goals and

objectives could be enhanced by closer collaboration between the Institute, the United Nations Social Defense Research Institute in Rome and the other regional institutes. It is, therefore, the expectation of the Branch that efforts will continue to be made to strengthen relationships between the Helsinki Institute and those institutes in developing research and operational activities consonant with the aims of the United Nations in providing both the knowhow and the capabilities to translate it into action oriented programmes.

Close linkages between the CPCJB and HEUNI were developed during the organizational stage of the establishment of the Institute. We now have an opportunity for parallel substantive cooperation in the consideration of this topic, which falls under that objective of the Institute which I quoted above.

The work programme of the CPCJB offers numerous possibilities for this. We are very happy to see that the present meeting will be concerned with one of the subprogrammes, namely with the analysis of crime trends and the assessment of crime prevention strategies, and, more specifically, with programme element 10.1 of the 1984 - 85 Programme Budget entitled "Trends in crime and criminal justice". The Branch, indeed, is already involved in the implementation of the programme element concerning the Second United Nations Survey of Crime Trends, Operations of Criminal Justice Systems and Crime Prevention Strategies, as was pointed out in the discussion guide prepared by HEUNI for this meeting. There-

fore the topic to be discussed here has and will have a continuing impact and relevance to the work of the Secretariat. For the moment I do not intend to consider the specific questions and problems encountered in the implementation of the Second United Nations Survey, which I am in a position, should the need arise, to describe in detail later. Many of them are parallel to the concerns expressed in HEUNI's discussion guide and, therefore, collectively constitute a significant area of important questions for those who pursue the uneasy task of cross-national research in criminology.

Mr. Chairman, there is very strong encouragement for conducting crosscultural research in resolution 2 of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders held at Caracas, 25 August - 5 September 1980. This resolution requests, inter alia, the Secretary-General "to intensify efforts to coordinate the collection of comparable cross-national statistics on crime and justice in each of the Member States, initially at a regional level" (emphasis added). It further recommends "that all States should enhance their efforts at improving information, particularly quantitative information about those crimes and those parts of the justice system that present the fewest problems of comparability and reporting difficulties for each State". The same resolution also recommends that "the Secretary-General should provide technical assistance to Member States according to their indivi-

dual needs, in order to encourage their participation". The Caracas Declaration unanimously adopted by the Sixth Congress provided an overall frame for this important undertaking, stressing inter alia that "crime prevention and criminal justice should be considered in the context of economic development, political systems, social and cultural values and social change", and that "there is a need to promote scientific research, taking into account the particular circumstances and priorities of each country and region".

In view of the Sixth United Nations Congress resolutions and recommendations quoted above the expert meeting hosted by the Helsinki Institute on the Feasibility of a European Information System on Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice can assist in carrying out the tasks with which the Secretariat was mandated, and so may improve the United Nations work in the field of crossnational research in crime trends and criminal justice.

In conclusion, I was asked by Mr. Shikita to convey to Mrs. Anttila his special words of appreciation and wishes of every success in her capacity of the Director of HEUNI. All of us here know well of her previous outstanding contributions to criminology and her distinguished service in the capacity of Minister of Justice of Finland, and as a member of the United Nations Committee on Crime Prevention and Control. In her new capacity of the Director of HEUNI, we are sure of Mrs. Anttila's further valuable contributions to

the field of crime prevention and control.

I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this welcome opportunity to address this distinguished body of experts and express the CPCJB's warm wishes for the meeting's successful results.

Mr. John Croft  
Head (ret.),  
Home Office Research and Planning Unit

Feasibility of an European Information System  
on Trends in Crime and Criminal Justice:  
Background Note on the Position in the United Kingdom

1. Statistics are collected, and for the most part published on an annual basis, relating to crime and criminal proceedings in England and Wales, and regularly for Scotland, and also for Northern Ireland. These statistics relate to offences recorded by the police, to proceedings in the lower and higher courts and to sentenced offenders. As a consequence of sample surveys in England and Wales and in Scotland, statistics related to crimes reported by victims should be published biennially with effect from 1983. Some statistics on specific offences, such as burglary and fraud, are also collected by other agencies. Statistical information is also published separately on such matters as the operation of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, on parole and so forth.
2. So far none of the new data has been deposited in data banks, such as that maintained by the Social Science Research Council at Essex University; while the Data Protection Bill, at present before Parliament, may alter the situation, completely free access to information about crime and criminals held on computer tapes seems unlikely although, subject to suitable safe-guards, certain types of

aggregate data may become available other than in the form of published series.

3. The position about non-numerical information is rather different. Although there is no single comprehensive facility, the existence of computerised links between British and North American libraries, reference systems, special indexes, abstracting services and other methods all contribute to making the task of retrieving information relatively easy, if not necessarily very speedy, bearing in mind the use of a common language, namely English. With the use of visual display units linked to sources of computerised information, one can expect to see the development of a fuller information retrieval service during the next few years; progress will depend not so much on technical resources as the creation of a demand sufficient to justify economic investment. The marriage of numerical and non-numerical data may pose some problem.
4. To conclude, perhaps two brief comments may be offered;
  - a. it will be recalled that the Council of Europe's fifth criminological colloquium held in Strasbourg in November 1981 recommended that consideration should be given to the preparation of a detailed bibliography of comparative research in crime trends, an exercise that might be extended to the publication of an inventory of comparative research; and
  - b. to take the example quoted in the HEUNI "discussion guide", while one can visualise the possibility of a

regional system that retrieved and disseminated information on compensation schemes, the evaluation of such data would be no mean task and one would have to provide safeguards against interpretative bias creeping into the procedure.

Mr. Bo Svensson  
Director,  
Swedish Council on Crime Prevention

What Do Authorities Expect of HEUNI ?

#### Abstract

I have been requested to present some thoughts on what the authorities and other interested parties expect of HEUNI: what information on criminal policy the Institute should gather, process and disseminate, and how this information should be disseminated - as newsletters, annual reports, by means of computerised data processing or through other channels.

HEUNI - A link between the East and the West

HEUNI has begun its activities at a time when there is a discussion in many Western countries on an imminent crash facing the legal system. The amount of criminality known to the police is increasing, the clearance rate of these offences is decreasing, the prison population is expanding rapidly - there can be no doubt that the trend gives rise to unease. In such circumstances it is natural to seek impulses from new directions. On Sweden's part, this could involve turning to the Socialist countries in order to utilise their experience in criminal policy. Even though there is a difference in the basic ideologies of our societies, we can still point to a long common European tradition in legal policy and science. This can be expected to pro-

vide a foundation for a useful exchange of information.

I believe that HEUNI has a good possibility of making initiatives for the opening up and organisation of an effective exchange of information. As the Institute is situated in Helsinki, on the border between the East and the West, its location is optimal for following the developments in criminal policy in both the Socialist and the non-Socialist countries of Europe. In addition, Finland has had for years good relations with both camps, which should be a factor in easing the exchange of information. So far, I have spoken from the point of view of the situation in Sweden, and I have tried to point out what we in Sweden would be interested in learning about the experience the Socialist countries have with criminal policy. I would assume that there is a corresponding interest in the Socialistic countries.

What information should HEUNI be interested in?

A probable point of departure would be that the authorities involved in criminal policy hope to obtain international data that can be used as arguments in the debate in their own countries on criminal policy. This means above all that they hope to obtain data from countries with a relevance from the point of view of criminal policy. It must be possible to use the international data they want in comparisons with the data from their own country. Thus, it would be interesting if HEUNI could offer rather basic data to which reference could be made in the debate on criminal policy in almost all countries. Data that would then enter

the question would include criminality reported to the police, offenders sentenced in court, and the number of offenders in prison, or on probation and parole. On the other hand, everyone knows how difficult it is to make international comparisons in this sector. It is therefore a self-evident demand that there is a large probability that the data in question are at least approximately correct. If there is some doubt on this matter, HEUNI should not begin to gather empirical data.

A second type of data that interests the authorities is news on legislations. However, it would scarcely be worth the trouble for HEUNI to construct a data base on the criminal legislation of the countries of Europe. The legal authorities in the various countries would not have confidence in the information offered by a foreign institute; instead, they would control the accuracy of the information through other channels. On the other hand, it might be appropriate to produce information similar to that offered in the newsletters of the Council of Europe - information on new criminal legislation in a very condensed form. Even in this, the goal should be to point out the ideas that are behind the legislative reforms - for example a conviction on the negative effects of imprisonment on the individual, a belief in the reforming effect of work - rather than a dry commentary that the supervision of offenders in one country has been changed, and will henceforth be known as community service.

### In conclusion

HEUNI should take as its point of departure in creating an information service the data that is being sent to the Council of Europe and similar organisations. HEUNI should concentrate on the ideas lying behind reported legislative reforms and other measures. HEUNI should strive for a clear profile in processing these ideas, and should disseminate the information in newsletters. However, HEUNI should leave open the possibility that researchers could have computer access to the data bases stored by HEUNI.

Mr. Brunon Holyst  
Director  
Institute of Crime Problems  
Warsaw, Poland

Remarks Concerning a European Information System on  
the Control and Prevention of Crime

Two problems are worth being especially noted. The first concerns the scope of information required by the decision-makers, i.e., in particular, the governments of European States and scientific circles. The second problem concerns the dissemination of information.

It is proposed that, generally, the subject of information should cover the questions concerning the act-victim-offender as well as the reaction of the state authorities and of the society to crime phenomena. Thus, one can mention the following problems:

1. The system of statistical recording

In view of the character of our conference, I should like to discuss shortly this question. Criminal statistics should provide information concerning the current number of penal proceedings and data relating to criminal threat in a given area, the caseload of the particular law enforcement agencies and criminal justice and their effectiveness, as well as information about dynamics and structure of criminality and the effects of prosecution.

An analysis of the current system of criminal statistics leads to the conclusion that it cannot appropriately fulfil the informative functions.

There is still a widely spread opinion that law enforcement agencies and criminal justice are responsible, to a great degree, for the state of safety and the rule of law in the country. Such an opinion must, of course, create the determined feedback. A deficient definition of the responsibility of these agencies for the state of criminality leads to shaping specific "statistical defensive mechanisms" within the framework of the very agencies. There is a lack, up to now, of concrete research in real impact of the determined activities of law enforcement agencies and criminal justice on the level of criminal phenomena. This impact is defined as a "specific" in outstanding criminological publications. The role of these agencies is, of course, strictly measurable (but up to now was not measured) not so much in the sphere of the very criminality as in the field of crime statistics.

Among main deficiencies of the systems of criminal statistics existing in many countries one can point out, among other things:

- lack of applying modern methodological solutions developed by the social sciences in recent years;
- focusing on a simple counting of the facts;
- a total lack of assessing the value (no matter in what manner understood ) of collected data;

- lack of training system for the personnel specializing in criminal statistics.

A basic shortcoming of traditional criminal statistics is the lack of methods and techniques enabling to reply to what extent the observed quantitative changes (numerical) result from change of the very life and to what extent they result from changes of the very system of evaluations. The matter is relatively simple if it concerns legislative changes. It is, however, more complicated when a manner of evaluation is changing within the admissible limits of the very law (due to, for example, impossibility of univocal definition of crime features).

Correct functioning of the statistics should be based on the following criteria:

- purposefulness of information;
- reliability and validity of information;
- coordination of collecting and processing the information;
- speed of transmission of information;
- availability of information.

A few remarks should be presented here on the above mentioned criteria. The criminal statistics should be purposeful, i.e. it should contain such information which is necessary for optimization of the decisions undertaken in the course of implementations of goals assigned by the State to law enforcement agencies and criminal justice. The statistical information should be useful: this means that it

should have a defined practical value. Speaking in most general terms, only such information is considered as useful which causes in receiving person a different behavior (action, decision) from that which would occur without this information. A "test of usefulness" understood in this way should be applied to all the numerical data published in criminal statistics.

The statistics becomes fully valid when its data suit the planned utilization. This requirement concerns both factual aspect and formal-statistical one. There is a need to construct such statistical categories which would enable obtaining relatively homogeneous populations. The criminal statistics applies qualitative categories of very high degree of generality. A more detailed information will enable a correct factual evaluation of activities of law enforcement agencies and criminal justice as well as the extent of criminality in a given area.

Besides a suitable interpretative validity concerning the factual sphere, the criminal statistics must also guarantee a correct formal-statistical interpretation. Raw statistical material should be interpreted in a scientific way. It should concern above all the calculation of many synthetic characteristics being descriptive indicators such as, for example, measure of a central trend, measure of differentiation, concentration, etc.

The statistical activities of law enforcement agencies and criminal justice should be co-ordinated with the activities of all organizational units of these agencies as well as with the activities of all-nation system of statistics. Presently, it is difficult to tolerate longer the lack of informative integration, that is the lack of grasping the interrelationships among noxious phenomena into one system. Therefore, it is necessary to put into force an integrated informative system containing a set of negative social phenomena which have a great impact on etiology of criminality. Thus, crime statistics should constitute an integral part of the statistics of social pathology.

The main subject of concern of social policy are the needs connected with living conditions, i.e. above all, alimentation, housing, material assistance in case of disaster, inability to work etc; furthermore, the extramaterial needs such as protection of health, education, cultural activity, recreation as well as the needs of psycho-social character such as civic activity, satisfaction of work, respect, safety, etc.

The possibilities of implementing the goals of social policy depend, to a great extent, on the results of economic policy. It should be noted here the existence of many so-called feedbacks between economic growth and social progress. The social policy formulated in this way includes the various kinds of policy concerning:

- population and family;
- employment and education;
- income and expenses;
- alimentation;
- housing;
- culture;
- labour protection;
- social protection together with health protection;
- recreation and tourism;
- law enforcement.

## 2. Dynamics and structure of criminality

The dynamics of criminality is understood as a rate and direction of changes of basic characteristics of a set of delinquent acts. When analyzing the dynamics of criminality one assumes, as a basic tool, a linear model of developmental trends which allows the evaluation of the impact of criminogenic factors, the scope of seasonal fluctuations and amplitude of occasional fluctuations.

If a set of perceived offences is classified and the number of offences in particular categories is determined, then one can determine the structure of offences according to the admitted classification criterion.

## 3. Evaluation of criminogenic and victimogenic factors

One should mention some of the more essential determinants of delinquent behaviour. It concerns some phenomena and macro-social processes, as for instance, socio-economic

development, negative contents of culture. The role of family and school in the genesis of delinquent behaviour should also be mentioned. Disfunction of these basic links in the socialization process is traditionally considered as criminogenic and victimogenic factors.

#### 4. Methods of criminal acting

The knowledge of criminal methods is i.a. an indispensable factor of effectiveness of prosecution in each country; it enables also the development of a rational preventive system. In a more detailed approach, it concerns the offences committed with violence, with the use of firearms, the degree of organization of criminal milieu, collaboration with criminal groups in other countries, etc. There is a phenomenon of spreading the determined criminal methods; hence, the exchange of information is of a great importance in counteracting the crime.

#### 5. Motives of criminal acting

Mental etiological factors play a basic role in the process of conceiving and realization of criminal intent. Determining the motivational process during the court proceedings affects meting out punishment.

The individualization of methods and measures of penitentiary treatment must also be based on in-depth analysis of the motivational process of the offender. The reports should contain the most frequent motives of the particular offences, for example, political motives, economic, erotic,

sexual, threat to safety or honour.

6. The scope of victimization of societies

This problem is extremely important for criminal policy. Hence, the issue of counteracting the victimization or its reducing is of relevance. It is a new set of problems, therefore the exchange of experience in the field of victimology may prove to be very useful.

7. Victims of crimes

It is proposed to introduce also data on victims of crime into criminal statistics such as basic data concerning sex, age, occupation, education and marital status.

8. The role of the victim in the genesis of crime

Much research work in the field of victimology focuses on the problem of the "guilt" of a victim. In an evaluation of victimological susceptibility one can distinguish the individual and social groups of factors. The prosecution practice shows that certain groups of persons are particularly predestinated to the role of crime victim. This predestination can be "guilty" or "not guilty", individual or caused by belonging to some social or occupational group, etc. Thus, the persons particularly exposed to danger of violent death, bodily injury, robbery are the alcoholics, prostitutes as well as the categories of persons of a roistering disposition, having an inclination to aggressive conduct. In case of "guilty" conduct of the victim the most important group constitutes a provocation.

In the court proceedings concerning group rape such elements as the provocative behaviour of the victim or her serious recklessness are considered as extenuating circumstances for offenders. The provocation is also the most serious motivational factor in the etiology of assault and battery. The scope and forms of provocation are different. Provocation can be of a passive or active character and it can be lasting or incidental. Considering the factor of intent one can distinguish conscious or unconscious provocation. From the point of view of moral and social criteria one should point out the provocation of a pejorative, positive or neutral character.

The other form of "guilty" conduct of the victim is her imprudence. Quite often the victims create convenient circumstances for the offender as a result of their imprudence. The danger of violent death, bodily injury or robbery, irrespective of victim's behaviour, threatens persons in some occupational groups or those of a certain social status.

The cause of homicides of taxi drivers and salesmen as well as robberies against the representatives of the above mentioned occupations is the conviction of the offender that the victim has a greater sum of money.

The criminal policy should aim at shaping the antivictimization attitudes.

9. Offenders

The basic data: sex, age, education, marital status, previous convictions, attitude toward victim and links with her, a degree of criminal career.

10. Criminal policy

Applying the penalties of unconditional deprivation of liberty. Trend toward meting out the penalties without liberty deprivation. Questions of recidivism. Criminological prognosis while meting out punishment. The role of social and individual factors taken into consideration in criminal policy.

11. Penal legislation and other fields of the law

New legal acts creating conditions for better crime control. The role of other fields of the law in reducing criminogenic circumstances.

12. New methods of crime prevention and treatment of offenders

Experiences in the field of prevention and penitentiary system deserving to be spread in other countries. The system approach to crime prevention. The role of the society in counteracting crime. I wish to focus attention on the need of "socialization" of criminal justice.

It is obvious that not all of these problems can be the subject of continuous information. The question is that one should realize the need for such information for the purpose of applying a proper criminal policy or for conducting comparative analyses in the European countries.

+ + +

Presently, there is a great social need for dissemination of information in the field of crime prevention and control. The attention of the governments, societies and particular citizens is focused on these problems. Each of us is interested in safety life conditions, each member of the society can become a victim of crime at every moment. Hence, the increasing importance of all the methods of disseminating the findings of criminological research, elaborating the best forms of spreading information on self-defence against crime.

I wish to put before you a few proposals concerning this question.

1. List of state and public institutions, and scientific institutes dealing with problems of crime control

For the purpose of research co-ordination and exchange of information it is indispensable to prepare a list of state and public bodies, of which the task is to collect the data and elaborate the methods on crime control. It will permit an insight into i.a. directions of research and current problems of crime. Having such a list it will be possible, after receiving respective materials, to undertake comparative research.

2. List of penal legislation in force

A short commentary indicating the motives behind legislation will be a valuable indication for regulating the problems by law in other countries.

3. International journals for the European countries

A journal in English and Russian would fulfil the role of an important forum for exchanging experiences. The title of the journal: "Crime Control in Europe" or "Crime Prevention in Europe" would allow publication of articles from all the European countries.

4. Reviews of the contents of professional journals and books

Due to the explosion of scientific information it is necessary to prepare abstracts containing the reviews of journals and books. It would be a valuable assistance to the researchers and practitioners searching for the solutions of, sometimes, difficult problems of crime prevention. One can also consider the concept of editing monothematic reviews.

5. Periodic meetings of directors of criminological institutes

Such meetings could be held in different countries. Their prime objective would be the exchange of information concerning the research directions, presenting more interesting research findings, other scientific achievements, publications etc.

6. Symposia and scientific conferences

One can define the current questions for most of the European countries, which could be the subject of scientific

conferences. The proceedings of these meetings are a valuable source material for further research. During these conferences there should be presented papers from the sociopolitical point of view, as the scheme of crime analysis must take into account a context of the political system.

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Coping with the Information Explosion: Strategies for Hard and Soft Data on Crime and Criminal Justice

1. Introduction

HEUNI is a unique resource. This is not only the moment to present ideas on how it may best serve the common interests of all European countries but also - and this is important - the moment when we should avoid enticing HEUNI to take on overambitious tasks, the successful completion of which would be uncertain.

2. A look at some present sources of information and their relation to the needs of planners and researchers (topic 1)

2.1. Regional information systems

- Council of Europe: Research/Legislation,
- Scandinavian information systems,
- OECD: proposed social indicators of physical safety (victimization).

2.2. Some other transnational information systems

- compilations of statistics (INTERPOL, UN, WHO and others),
- NCJRS (USA),
- library documentation centres,
- abstract publications.

2.3. National sources

- the language and availability problem: see Appendix I.

### 3. Possible tasks for HEUNI (topic 2)

#### 3.1. Six alternatives

- information on information sources,
- permanent source-oriented specialization,
- permanent theme-oriented specialization,
- bibliography projects,
- a soft data approach,
- information search on request,

#### 3.2. Recommendation: a soft package with a hard core?

## TÖRNUDD/APPENDIX I

AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION ON CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
 An illustrative example from Finland - from a foreigner's perspective

	A can be ordered through book- shops	B can be ob- tained (in typical cases free of charge) by writing to sources agency	C available only on personal request to key persons	D will be available in the future
<u>1. Computerized data banks</u>				
1.1 Decision of the Supreme Courts	-	F	(F,S,E)	
1.2 Penal Code statutes	-	-	-	F
1.3 Law commentaries and legal treatises	-	-	-	F
<u>2. Statistics</u>				
2.1 Annual official statistics	F,S,E	F		
2.2 Statistics with informed commentary	F,Es	F,Es		
2.3 Regular victimisation surveys	F,Es	F,Es	F,S,E	
2.4 Standardized social indicators of the crime situation	-	-	(F,S,E)	F,S,E ?
<u>3. Official documents etc.</u>				
3.1 Law books	F,S			
3.2 The Penal Code	F	E		
3.3 Committee reports, planning documents	F,Ss/S	F,Ss/S		
3.4 Summary information on legislation in progress	-	F	F,S,E	

	A can be ordered through book- shops	B can be ob- tained (in typical cases free of charge) by writing to sources agency	C available only on personal request to key persons	D will be available in the future
3.5. Specific details on legislation progress	-	-	F,S,E	
4. <u>Research</u>				
4.1 Publications	F,Es/E	F,Es/E		
4.2 Research in progress	-	-	F,S,E	
5. <u>Soft data</u>				
5.1 Qualitative appraisals of the crime situation	-	-	F,S,E	
5.2 Opinions on the effect of specific programs	-	-	F,S,E	
5.3 Reports on the opinion climate: the "mood" of public debate, atti- tudes of planning bodies	-	-	F,S,E	

F,S,E = usually available in Finnish, Swedish or English respectively

s = summary

## TÖRNUDD/APPENDIX II

ON USING INFORMATION FROM OTHER COUNTRIES WHEN CARRYING OUT  
PLANNING IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

## An over-simplification

Information from other countries is used selectively and cosmetically so that it appears to support already agreed-upon conclusions.

## Statistics

Statistics on crime in other countries are more often misinterpreted or misused than used correctly. But if you can see in your mind's eye what the figures stand for - as when considering figures on bodily injuries or prisoners - then the statistics may make some sense.

## Trendy thinking

Facts and figures from other countries often leave the opponent cold when some controversy is aired in a planning body. But if you want a really forceful and convincing argument, start talking about "the trend of thinking" among experts in other countries or about the attitudes and mood changes in other planning bodies.

## Successes and failures

Both international congresses and other information systems suffer from the convention that you are supposed to tell success stories and success stories only. A list of self-confessed failures may not only be more credible but above all more useful.

The Helsinki Institute  
for Crime Prevention and Control  
Affiliated with the United Nations

22 March 1983

Discussion Guide on the Feasibility of an Information Service  
System in the Field of Criminal Policy

Introduction

The Helsinki Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, will arrange an expert meeting to discuss the construction of information service systems in the field of criminal policy. This paper is intended to focus in some degree the discussion on structural and organizational aspects of the topic in question, without, however, attempting to limit the scope of deliberations with regards to the substance.

What are information service systems?

The history of information service systems and information service units is not a long one, especially if we consider the sector of criminal policy. The following two examples will give an idea of the area of interest.

A) The United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch, is conducting a survey on crime trends and crime prevention strategies called "The second United Nations survey of crime trends, operations of criminal justice systems and crime prevention strategies". This survey is being conducted in accordance with the guidelines set out in the

proposed medium-term plan for 1984-1989 by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The survey results will help in the establishment of a United Nations data base on crime trends and the operation of criminal justice systems (cf. CSDHA (1), subprogramme 10.1, "Trends in crime and criminal justice"). The reason for establishing a data base of this type is that "member states have ... a need for more accurate assessment of the extent and different forms of crimes". It is felt that "a more comprehensive and reliable data base can be helpful in evaluating the negative effect of crime on the quality of life" (cf. DIESA(2), p. 12).(3)

B) Some years ago the United Nations Social Defense Research Institute (UNSDRI) had plans for starting an information service system called the "UNSDRI International Clearinghouse". The purpose of the system was

"to establish an international clearinghouse service for selected published materials (monographs or articles) regarding crime, crime prevention, criminal justice and the treatment of offenders. The clearinghouse would be operated on a continuing basis, in collaboration with regional UN institutes and national reference or information programmes. It would be addressed primarily to the information needs of policy makers and government research units, training programmes and operational agencies; it would also, however, be accessible to universities and individual scholars" (UNSDRI (4), p.2).

These two examples illustrate what is meant by information service systems and by the discipline related to these systems, known as "informatics". The subject matter may be statistical information on any aspects of criminal policy,

or it may be abstracted monographs or articles - scientific or non-scientific - dealing with criminal policy matters. It may even be something entirely different - fiction, folklore, audiovisual material - anything that would have some relevance to perceived criminal policy information needs by information producers, information processors or information users.

A central element in this network is held by the information service unit, which has the responsibility of getting the information delivered to those needing it in the right form and at the right time. The task of an information service unit is to retrieve information and to rearrange it, to screen and remodel it, and to disseminate it to the information consumers in decision making, research, planning and other fields where a need arises.

In this connection, we shall not give any large amount of attention to the information producer as such, as he very often merges, or at least works in very close cooperation with, the information processor.

The consumer or user of information, on the other hand, has almost as important a position as the information service unit, since he more often than not activates the information retrieval process by presenting an actual criminal policy problem to information officials - if indeed there exists an information service unit with specialized information officials to whom such a problem can be presented. Otherwise he

has to do the information retrieval and processing work by himself. In the next chapter a brief orientation is given on the difficulties an information user in search of background data on a certain criminal policy matter runs into, when there is no coordination of information services.

#### Information retrieval on a criminal policy topic: an example

The following example reflects the Finnish circumstances, but doubtless similar experiences may be unearthed also in other European societies. To start with, let us assume that there exists a demand for all relevant information on how the legislation concerning the indemnification of crime damages works; i.e. to what degree the victims of crime are compensated for their losses. And, in addition, let us assume that this information is needed as soon as possible, which means that the information consumer himself can not be expected to process the information to any considerable degree. The search will therefore be concentrated on readily accessible information.

There are two obvious starting points for the information search. One is to turn to the authority which, according to the legislation, is in charge of the operation of the indemnification system. In Finland this is the State Accident Compensation Office. The information available from the office deals with the annual number of indemnification cases since the launching of the system, as well as the annual total of indemnifications in Finnish marks. The other source to turn to is the relevant official statistical

series of Finland. One soon finds that this is a neglected area in the statistics. Virtually no information is given on the victims of crimes as a rule, with the exception of one year, 1976, when an attempt was made to prepare statistics on several aspects of victimization.

Besides giving an incoherent picture of the functions of the indemnification system, the statistical data does not answer the crucial questions: how well does the indemnification fulfill its purpose - does everybody entitled to the indemnification receive it, are all receivers handled equally? It may be that there exists some research on these matters, in the form of official papers, surveys or academic treatises. Now, all one has to do, in the optimum case, is to go to an information service unit and to search the files using the keyword "indemnification of crime damages" - it may be, if one wishes to be assured of not missing any information, or if there is no such keyword as "indemnification of crime damages", one uses the keyword "victim of crime" as well. In Finland, however, no such information service unit exists so far. As a consequence, all the potential sources have to be tapped.

The likeliest sources are the leading libraries specializing in judicial literature. First, the card files of the Library of Parliament can be searched. In this case, besides some references to articles describing the indemnification system, one reference to an article of an evaluative character was found. But this had been published a couple of

years after the promulgation of the legislation, and therefore the information given was not of great value. Next, a similar search was carried out at the library of the Faculty of Law, University of Helsinki. No new references to relevant publications were unearthed. Thus it can be said with a fairly great degree of certainty that e.g. no academic studies on the subject have been made.

The last source to be tapped is the governmental Research Institute of Legal Policy with its specialized library. Some additional information on the indemnification system could be gathered. First of all, one of the initiators of the indemnification system was, by and large, the Institute, which had made several reports on crime damages while the legislation was in the planning and drafting stage. Also, in cooperation with the Central Statistical Office, the Institute had participated in a project called "Victim-80". In this survey people were interviewed about their victimisation experiences. They were asked, among other things, whether they had received any indemnification in case they were entitled to it. The results have been published in the form of statistical tables. The card files of the library of the Institute and the annual review on criminality in Finland, produced by the Institute, did not produce any new relevant references or factual information.

It is true that there exists a great deal of relevant references to and factual information on indemnification of crime damages in the information service sources mentioned

above. This information, however, deals with the state of affairs with regard to indemnification in other societies while here our object of interest has been the Finnish system. Actually, the more detailed and exact the request for information is, the smaller the chances are that we will hit the target. On the other hand, a lot of unnecessary browsing is saved. It seems to be very seldom that the information service units can produce exactly the information the consumer asks for.

#### On the qualifications and obstacles for construction of information service systems

This chapter deals with the question of the most appropriate way to create information service systems as well as what the most obvious obstacles are.

First and foremost it is important to notice one central trend in development: the information is consumed now, not at some time in the future, because of an immediate requirement. But, on the other hand, the information user strives to learn the unknown, to discover an inner order in a seeming chaos of facts. If he knew exactly what knowledge is needed to solve the problem facing him, he would have much of its solution already on hand. An information user can therefore never rely entirely on an information service for getting all the information he needs; the greatest task he can entrust to the information service is to select for him the documents that are likely to be of relevance to the subject of his concern. Redundant information hampers deci-

sion-making, as the number of alternative strategies tends to grow with any increased volume of information. The fact is that the basic problem in regard to information production is not the lack of relevant information, but the amount of redundant irrelevant information, of which the term "information pollution" has also been used. There is also a psychological factor worth noticing: the constant contact between a user and his information system results in his no longer expecting anything of the system that lies beyond its capacity. Another point is that the general eagerness of users to get as much information as possible while spending the minimum effort will unavoidably lead to pressure on information service systems to carry out the task of synthesizing, creatively processing and tailoring information to user needs.

All these facts together with a multitude of other factors - such as overall expenses for the user - are to be considered when the feasibility of an information service system is being deliberated. Furthermore, to balance the trend towards instant consumption of information, the new technical aids in the form of the computer and telecommunication developments require serious attention. Already the new technologies have begun to result in profound changes in the field of information retrieval, processing and dissemination. They have altered the nature of the basic product. The fundamental product is now a data base. It is a precise, manipulable, compact record which can be used with consider-

able flexibility for various applications. We have at the moment enormous user-searchable bibliographic and numerical data bases stored on interactive computer systems, as well as electronic message systems - even in the field of criminal policy. These technologies provide us with the tools we need: they allow us to store, manipulate and retrieve information with a high degree of flexibility. They are the instruments which are making it possible to bring about a transition from a society based on prelearning to one that depends on the instant acquisition of information from data bases as needed.

The development of the tools mentioned above also has implications in regard to another structural matter within information service systems: should the data bases in question be in the form of reference information or factual information? The difference is quite clear: reference information data bases refer to the sources from which the factual information is to be found, while factual information data bases contain the information proper in themselves. Instant acquisitions of information favours factual information service systems.

The new technologies also seem to have solved the problem of information dissemination and transmission fairly well, at least technically. Electronic methods of transmitting information from one point or one party to another over great distances have resulted in land-based or satellite-beamed telecommunication networks, of which one called EURONET is

of special interest in this connection. A mutual understanding, on the other hand, seems to remain far off in the future with regard to another major problem in connection with information service work. The reaching of an agreement on adopting a common search language would very much seem to facilitate the day to day activities in this field. One more point not to be forgotten is that the proneness to deliver information on criminal policy matters varies from society to society.

### Conclusions

When considering the mounting problems of constructing information service system based on "hard" data, ie. on quantitative, statistical information, it would appear to be advisable to ponder upon the possible superfluousness of creating yet another information service system of this type. Instead, would it not be worth creating an information service system based on ideas, ie. on the all-too-often vague arguments and motives that lie behind criminal policy reforms and legislative amendments? An idea bank instead of a data bank. Is it possible to store ideas without having access to data?

## Footnotes

- (1) United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs.
- (2) Department of International Economic and Social Affairs: Proposed Medium Term Plan for the Period 1984-1989.
- (3) In addition to these two examples some regional information systems dealing with criminal policy data are the one administered by the Council of Europe and the one based on the cooperation of the Scandinavian criminal policy authorities concerning criminal policy statistics and research efforts in the field of criminology. Parallel activities exist in the Benelux countries as well as among the socialist countries.
- (4) United Nations Social Defence Research Institute.