

**Helsinki, 01 & 02 April 2004: European Seminar on
Costs and the Distribution of Costs of Crime and Disorder and Crime Prevention**

Workgroup A. "Comparison of costs in EU countries –
what is available, what is needed and how to go forward?"

Leader: Paul Van Soomeren

Rapporteur: Sarah De Hovre

Participants: from 11 different countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, United Kingdom

First question: What kinds of data or which numbers are available? This question was divided in two parts: (a) numbers on crime, (b) numbers on costs.

(a) Numbers on crime

- Numbers on crime can be found in very different sources. Following sources were mentioned by the participants:
 - Crime victim surveys (BE, CZ, FI, GE, HU, NL, PO)
 - Mostly on a national basis, sometimes both national and regional or local
 - Mostly done yearly or every 2 years
 - Not always done on a regular basis
 - Sometimes include both households and businesses
 - Crime against business surveys (FI, NL, UK)
 - New criminal justice figures (UK)
 - Police crime statistics (BE, PO, RO, SL)
 - Statistics from the justice department (BE, PO)
 - Street Safety Index (FI)
 - National crime statistics (GE, HU, PO)
 - Organised crime figures (GE)
 - Statistics about prisons (BE, FR, GE)
- It is important to stress following facts:
 - In all countries the information is quite fragmented between different ministries, departments, and other services.
 - Numbers are not necessarily available for all types of crime. They are often only available for certain crimes.
- Conclusion: A lot of information on the numbers of crime is available. Although it is not to be compared yet due to many differences (e.g. terminology, calculation, selected crimes, and others), the situation is very promising.

(b) Numbers on costs

After discussion following conclusions could be made:

- A lot of information is out there "somewhere". But only very little useful information is available on the costs of crime. The major problem is that the information is scattered and fragmented, thus not very suitable for immediate further study. It is possible to count the costs, but it will take a couple of months or years.

- Following information is available from governmental sources: costs of police, costs of justice, costs of prison.
- Some non-governmental sources can be useful: (a) insurance companies keep information, especially on car thefts; (b) retail shops know quite well what they loose due to shoplifters.
- In many countries, this kind of information is not known and thus not calculated. One interesting study was made in Finland: “How much does a criminal career cost in Finland?”.
- Often local information is more easily available, especially on property crimes. Some examples were given. In Finland, the city of Helsinki has 2,7 million € costs for the cleaning and repainting of graffiti per year, it also pays 29 € per square metre for the camera surveillance of the city hall. In France, the city of Angers with only 157.000 inhabitants has 70.000 € costs per year due to vandalism, its bus company 25.000 €, and its schools 15.000 €. Local authorities can thus quite easily calculate the “price” per crime or injury. This cannot be done on national level. Unfortunately, this local information is not comparable, even within one country: they use different statistics in different towns.
- Concerning the costs of crime prevention, the following remark was made: costs can be estimated quite easily for crime prevention in its narrow sense, but not for crime prevention in a broader sense.
- Looking at the costs of crime is a recent trend. It still has a lot of weaknesses and encounters quite a lot of scepticism.
- The European Commission works on crime statistics across member states, but not on the costing of crime. A lot of work needs to be done within the member states themselves before a comparison can be made.

Second question: What would be needed for a comparison that would satisfy at least some minimum requirements for reliable comparability? How do we go forward?

- Crime statistics in EU member states are available but not comparable yet. All the numbers are different and thus difficult to be compared. Some statistics are comparable though.
- A first step could be made by selecting some crimes for comparison. It is important to concentrate on some types of crime, both for the information concerning numbers and for the information concerning the costs. General cost of crime will not tell us much. We should start with easy examples.
- We need to harmonise. As a start we could select some kinds of crime that create material damage and are thus more easily comparable. And then harmonise the concepts.
- An option is to start from the local level: small is beautiful. E.g. it is rather easy to calculate the material costs of vandalism in the cities.
- We have to make our own European model. We don't have to take over the models invented in UK and USA. These might not be appropriate for the European continent.

- Member states have more information than they think. All member states have crucial information in the yearly budgets of the government. But it is difficult and time demanding to study it.
 - An important question is: what do we understand with crime? Is it only “legal” crime? Quid with beggars, prostitution, unsafe areas, etc... There is no accepted definition of “crime”. Member states refer to offences in different terms. We need to be clear which crimes we are talking about.
 - The situation was resumed as follows in a few key-points:
 - We have to start working on a very practical basis.
 - We have to choose a couple of crimes.
 - We need to be clear which crimes we are talking about.
 - It is better to look at the local level.
 - The situation looks grim but we want to go forward.
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