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NOTE

from: Presidency
to: Multidisciplinary Group on Organised Crime
Subject : Single point of contact for comparable statistics on crime

1. Background

Developing a comprehensive and coherent EU strategy to compile comparable statistics on crime and criminal justice was one of the objectives of the Millennium Strategy, adopted by the Council in 1999, and one of the undertakings made in the "Hague Programme" establishing the EU's priorities in the field of JHA, for the period 2004 to 2009. The idea was to equip European decision-makers in the field of JHA with reliable and recognised tools which could lead to better threat assessment and help set priorities in the fight against organised crime. A further aim was to carry out an ex-post evaluation, with more relevance than today, of the performance and effectiveness of many binding European laws adopted in the field and their impact on crime in the EU.

To that end, the Commission published an EU Action Plan for the period from 2006 to 2010¹ on the subject, identifying seven objectives and proposing approximately 40 measures, some of which should yield tangible results by the end of 2010.

¹ COM (2006) 437 of 7.8.2006.

The main aim of the Action Plan is to:

- obtain reliable and recognised statistics on crimes committed and recorded by law enforcement agencies, and authorise comparison of data from one Member State to another
- assess as accurately as possible silent crime and trafficking (known as the "dark figure"), primarily by using large-scale victimisation studies
- collect reliable, recognised and comparable data in the area of criminal justice (data on prison populations - and the ratio of sentenced to charged persons - average duration of an investigation, transfers, crossborder statistics, use and results of the European Arrest Warrant, consultation of criminal records in other Member States, etc.)

To fulfil those aims, the Commission set up an expert group² ("policy needs for data on crime and criminal justice"), which has met regularly since 2006, and is itself divided into sub-groups, to take fuller account of the diversity of problems associated with crime statistics. One of the studies undertaken (classification of criminal offences) based its work on a provisional network of national points of contact.

It soon became clear that one of the obstacles to producing comparable crime statistics at EU level was the absence, in many cases, of a single point of contact in the Member States, capable of meeting the various requests with a view to providing the necessary statistical data, regardless of whether those requests came from the Commission, Eurostat, Europol, Eurojust, or other international organisations. In many cases, that meant delays in dealing with questionnaires and requests, duplication and difficulties in collating data dispersed over different ministries and administrations. In other cases, points of contact did exist, but there were just as many ministries affected by this horizontal problem (Ministry of the Interior, Justice, etc.).

² Commission Decision 2006/581/EC: PNDCCJ expert group (Policy Needs for Data on Crime and Criminal Justice), OJ L 234/29 of 28.8.2006.

The Presidency therefore recommended examining the scope for setting up a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) in the Member States, which would be responsible for implementing the Commission Action Plan for 2006 to 2010:

- on a permanent basis (and not just for the limited duration of the study entitled classification of criminal offences);
- with a horizontal field of competence (i.e. including the criminal offences recorded, criminal justice data and even victimisation surveys).

Against that background, at the meeting of the Multidisciplinary Group on 14 July 2008, the Presidency and the Commission asked the Member States to reply to a questionnaire³ on whether or not they had a centralised national point of contact and the estimated benefits and difficulties of setting up a SPOC.

To date, 14 delegations⁴ have answered to the questionnaire.

2. Summary of replies to the question

Question No 1: Is it feasible to establish a single point of contact on a permanent basis?

If yes, provide details of your national contact point, if no, give details.

A very broad majority of delegations were in favour of setting up a national SPOC, either because it existed already or because the presumed benefits were thought to outweigh any foreseeable difficulties.

A very few delegations expressed general reservations on the setting up of a permanent point of contact (DE), while others imposed prior conditions, most of which are covered under question 3 of the questionnaire (BE, LV).

Almost all the replies indicate that a national single point of contact for statistics on crime already exists.

³ Commission working paper of 11 July 2008.

⁴ FR, NL, EE, CY, LV, BG, PT, LT, DE, BE, ES, AT, RO.

A few Member States, however, indicated that the powers and scope of the entity were interministerial and covered all the needs described above (AT, NL, CY).

In most cases, the delegations referred to two national points of contact: one generally falling under the Ministry of the Interior, for statistics on recorded offences, the other falling under the Ministry of Justice for statistics on criminal justice, convictions and the prison population (BE, DE, FR, LV). In certain cases, although reference was made to a national single point of contact, falling under a supervisory ministry, there was no indication that the field of application was interministerial (PT, ES, LT).

Lastly, some delegations indicated that while a single point of contact did not yet exist at national level, they supported the idea of creating or setting up a network for national SPOCs (BG, RO, EE).

Question No 2: What other benefits do you envisage accruing from such a role?

The main foreseeable benefits are to:

- achieve better internal coordination, for each Member State (AT, ES, BG, CY) and at EU level in this area (AT, ES, NL, FR, BE, LT, LV, EE, CY, PT)
- enhance the credibility and comparability of European statistics and those of other international actors (United Nations, European Source Book, etc.) (NL)
- optimise time limits for replies to various questionnaires and requests (PT, NL, EE, LT, CY)
- deliver a more streamlined and consistent data flow, as well as a greater economy of resources (NL, FR)
- achieve greater transparency and thus improve satisfaction and confidence ratings among national and European public opinion on this sensitive subject (BG, NL)
- prepare the ground for reliable victimisation surveys to evaluate the differential between genuine insecurity and the feeling of insecurity among EU citizens (NL)
- incorporate, in relation to persons implicated in crimes and misdemeanours, all stages of the criminal cycle (arrest by the police, remand in custody, charges, pre-trial detention, persons finally sentenced, statistics on repeat offenders, etc.); at present, statistical data on these different population groups are sealed off, as they are collected by different supervisory ministries (FR, PT, AT)

Some delegations, however, said that certain of these benefits could only be achieved if a reliable and common statistical nomenclature was adopted (BE, DE)

Question No 3: What obstacles may prevent effective national coordination amongst the diverse national stakeholders?

Below are the main obstacles/difficulties cited:

- the need to define carefully the status and statistical scope of the national SPOC in order to avoid requests that are unjustified or outside its remit (LV, BE)
- disparities in terms of nomenclature of statistical aggregates or even method of analysis (BE, AT)
- the complexity of certain national judicial bodies, e.g. the decentralisation of police forces in federal states (ES, DE)
- different actors or administrative authorities engaged in law enforcement often have different statistics because they intervene at different stages in the criminal cycle (recording of offences, arrest of perpetrators, criminal proceedings, sentences delivered, serving of the sentence, etc.). This sequential process will be an obstacle to obtaining uniform statistics even if the SPOC has several entry channels for data (FR, BE)
- possible resistance of certain ministries not wishing to share their statistics
- the need to adopt, in parallel, a common and uniform approach for processing the results disseminated by the network of SPOCs (nearly all the delegations that answered the questionnaire)
- other delegations (BE, LV) said it would be necessary to ensure that the networking of SPOCs did not generate a proliferation of data entries (whether from the EU or not) and that the requested Member State should be given a reasonable response time (BE)

Question No 4: Is there an existing national policy structure/forum which could assume the function of a policy needs' focus group?

As indicated in the summary of replies to Question 1, only a few delegations mention an existing national structure which could play the role of national SPOC, as defined in the first part of the document (see under "Background").

Those structures are set out in the annex to this document.

3. Given the information presented in this document, delegations are asked to state their positions on:

- ***the advisability and feasibility of setting up a national single point of contact,***
- ***the most appropriate ways and means for operating it and also its implementation schedule.***

a) Table of existing national points of contact for statistics on crime

(based on the delegations' replies)

<i>MEMBER STATE</i>	<i>NAME OF DEPT.</i>	<i>CONTACT DETAILS</i>
AT	Office for Crime Statistics Criminal Intelligence Service	Schlickplatz 6 1090 Vienna 0043 24836 85430
BE	1/ Ministry of Interior, Federal Police (registered crimes) 2/ Ministry of Justice INCC (National Criminology and Crime Detection Institute) for conviction and prison data	Brussels Belgium
CY	Statistical Service of Cyprus	Michalaki Karaoli St CY 1444 Nicosia 357 22602144
DE	1/Federal Office for Statistics (in the area of criminal law) 2/ Ministry of Interior BKA (for registered crimes and arrests by the Police)	Berlin Germany
ES	Ministry of Justice Subdirectorate-General for the Modernisation Programme, DG for the Modernisation of the Administration of Justice	Madrid Spain

FR	1/ National Crime Observatory (OND) (police statistics on offences committed, arrests and victimisation surveys) 2/ Ministry of Justice (judicial and prison statistics)	OND Les Borromées 3 av du stade de France 93218 ST DENIS LA PLAINE France Ministère de la Justice 13 Place Vendôme 75042 PARIS
LT	Ministry of Interior Information and Communications Department, Statistics Unit	Vilnius Lithuania 370 5 2718393
LV	1/ Information Centre of the Ministry of Interior (statistics with regard to pre-trial criminal proceedings) 2/Ministry of Justice, Courts Administration (statistics on the courts and trial stage, classification and legal terminology of criminal offences)	Riga Latvia
NL	Statistics Netherlands	PO BOX 24500 2490 HA The Hague 31 70 337 5667
PT	Ministry of Justice DGPI (Directorate-General for Justice Policy)	Lisbon Portugal

b) Table of interministerial structures as indicated by the delegations (which could fulfil the role of national SPOC)

<i>MEMBER STATE</i>	<i>NAME OF DEPT.</i>	<i>CONTACT DETAILS</i>
AT	Office for Crime Statistics Criminal Intelligence Service	DELETED
NL	Statistics Netherlands	DELETED
LV	The Crime Prevention Council of Latvia	Prime Minister's Office
CY	Statistical Service of Cyprus	DELETED
