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Crime trends in Europe

Editorial

In the history of statistics, one of the first social topics to appear was crime. There has always been an almost obsessive need to measure the level of criminality. In this century, crime has generated the most sophisticated evaluation techniques. Nevertheless, time and again, crime data is found to be less accurate than one might expect. The comparison of crime data from different countries has also provoked controversy. However, as European unification forges ahead, there is a growing desire to make comparisons between countries.

In the case of the European *Sourcebook*, a network of specialists, whose objective was to assess the validity of the data, was established across Europe. Although some of the problems encountered when making comparisons at a transnational level could not be settled, the *European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice* offers comparative data on a variety of subjects from 36 Member States of the Council of Europe. Most of this issue is devoted to discussions on this data. Martin Killias is the theme editor and was responsible for inviting authors to participate and for the concordance of the issue. The article by *Martin Killias and Wolfgang Rau* introduces the subject and gives an overview of the other related articles in this edition.

One article has been added to the thematic part of the issue, because it is related to crime trends in a particular way. *Frank van Tulder* presents recent trends and forecasts regarding prison capacity requirements in the Netherlands. A model is presented which relates trends in crime and law enforcement activities to the prison capacity required and to task-sanctions for adults. These trends in crime are in turn related to demographic and socio-economic factors and law enforcement performance indicators (solution rates, conviction rates, etcetera). Finally it is shown that the model can be used to estimate (simulate) the crime-reducing effects of different policy options. Though the practical usefulness of the model is clear, the author warns us to bear in mind that the model is far from perfect.

The *Current Issues* section features an article on counterfeiting. *Jon Vagg and Justine Harris* focus on the situation in the UK and discuss both the problem of counterfeiting and the current legislation.