

# Foresight study of research into crime and crime prevention 2010

## Summary

### 4.1. Conclusions

The objective of this foresight study into crime and crime prevention for the Advisory Council for Science and Technology Policy (AWT) is to assess whether the present knowledge infrastructure in the Netherlands for the purposes of scientific study of the issue of crime is adequate in the light of future developments in crime and crime prevention. This foresight focuses on a specific scientific domain: the study of crime (including perpetrators, victims), crime prevention and their interaction.

This foresight asks and, as far as possible answers, five main questions:

1. What are the new forms of crime and of crime prevention?
2. What new scientific knowledge is needed?
3. Given the present knowledge infrastructure in the Netherlands, is it possible to adequately meet knowledge needs in the future?
4. What form should the future knowledge infrastructure take?
5. Which adjustments must be made to obtain the desired knowledge infrastructure?

The foresight committee took the following action to answer these questions. It did not look specifically at the present problems of crime, nor at the question of whether the current demands for knowledge are being adequately met. In other words, the committee was not looking at *the state of the art* nor was it aiming to judge the quality of present scientific research. The foresight looks at the future. We did not do this by formulating a number of alternative trends (scenarios based on various assumptions about the future). We decided to make an educated speculation about the future, as we see it developing in general. We held meetings with experts in different fields (economics, technology and internationalisation) to ask for their vision on the subject. These interviews are the foundation of this foresight. Finally we consulted the available literature.

The process of answering the first question of the foresight led to the following conclusions about crime and crime prevention. Modern society has become safer and more comfortable in many areas. But when it comes to crime, or more broadly stated 'antisocial' behaviour, society has actually become less safe. Crime constitutes an insecurity risk which is difficult to control. Many citizens and organisations will at some stage fall victim - usually completely unexpected - to behaviour which can harm them, physically or financially. The desire to resist this sort of danger is one of the main reasons for the creation of nation states. But it is precisely on this issue that government fails to provide the desired high level of societal safety. Whether we like it or not: it has to be said that crime is an everyday phenomenon in modern society.

Just as crime has lost its 'exclusiveness', the approach to crime and crime prevention is no longer exclusively the responsibility of the police and the judicial authorities. In the early 1980s, there was a sea change in the approach to crime and crime prevention. Inspired by understandable self-interest, individual citizens, organisations in the community and local authorities started to feel that they bore a responsibility for crime prevention. This was expressed in practical terms in many areas, from the sharp rise in investing in proper locks and private security firms to growing interest in the political and social debates on crime

prevention. The government responded neatly to the growing interest of citizens and organisations in fighting crime (prevention and repression) when designing new crime strategies. Major innovations have been the integrated government approach to crime and, more generally, the growing societal awareness of responsibility.

This foresight anticipates which crime and crime prevention themes will be on the agenda in ten years' time. Developments in modern technology, increasing globalisation and changes in social control will bring about changes in crime and crime prevention. We then focus on four areas of crime: crimes committed by frequent offenders, opportunist crimes committed by 'ordinary' citizens, crimes committed by large, often international organisations, and organised crime. This exploration generates many demands for knowledge which should be on the scientific research agenda in 2010. These demands can be subdivided into the contents of the issue of crime and crime prevention and the form which scientific research will take. There is a great need for fundamental research, for interdisciplinary knowledge and knowledge about long-term, ongoing issues such as criminal careers. In the next ten years there will also be a need for more theoretical research focusing on normative and empirical issues. We believe that this exploration satisfactorily answers the second question of the foresight.

In respect to the third question of this foresight, we can say that scientific study of crime is also becoming less exclusive. Whilst until only a short time ago research into the causes of crime and other forms of antisocial behaviour were the domain of criminologists and criminal law, many scientific disciplines now automatically devote attention to how to combat deviant behaviour. At the same time certain disciplines are also showing an explosive growth in and deepening of insights which can throw new light on the causes of crime and the most effective way of preventing it.

In order to assess whether the knowledge infrastructure will be capable of adequately responding to the new knowledge demands in 2010, we have made a distinction between the organisation of the demand for knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge distribution. Based on our descriptions of the present status of those elements and their coordination, we believe that the present knowledge infrastructure is characterised by the following problems:

1. Heavy dependence of the knowledge infrastructure on short-term, specifically commissioned research and the lack of sufficient independent, fundamental and long-term research;
2. Limited availability of research resources at universities, meaning that the organisation of knowledge production is unstable and dependent on what the parties demanding it in the field can offer. As a result few researchers are able to develop field skills on a systematic basis.
3. The fragmented structure of knowledge production.
4. The many players operating on the demand side of knowledge production, in combination with many knowledge producers who do not collaborate sufficiently mean that there is little pooling of knowledge, which impedes knowledge accumulation.
5. The separate and compartmentalised development of the object disciplines and the other disciplines in the field in question.
6. The limited international coordination of knowledge production.
7. The growing imbalance between private sector and public sector knowledge production in this field.

These conclusions provide an answer to the third question of this foresight. The existing knowledge infrastructure is structured in such a way that orientation to future issues is seriously impeded and that a number of radical changes are required before the necessary infrastructure can be achieved.

#### **4.2. Recommendations**

The first three questions of this foresight related to the identification (albeit in the form of educated speculation) of the future developments in crime and crime prevention and in the present knowledge infrastructure. Questions 4 and 5 look at what needs to be changed in the knowledge infrastructure for it to respond properly to the (suspected) knowledge need in 2010. We will answer both questions in this section.

The government has stepped up crime prevention, following its recently published policy document entitled 'Crime control' (*Criminaliteitsbeheersing*) (2001). In a new offensive the government is channelling millions of extra euro into the police and judicial authorities. The foresight committee takes the view that some of these extra funds should be spent on fundamental scientific research into issues which are already playing a part at this time, but which will be even more in the spotlight in 2010. By that time crime will have changed radically as a result of technological and economic developments and changes in social control and cohesion. This is bound to have repercussions on the prevention of crime in all its forms. The developments will also certainly impact on scientific research. A phenomenon which is as complex and multifaceted as crime and which will change so radically requires not only extra resources to fight it, but also requires more knowledge and insight. And this knowledge should be not so much policy-oriented knowledge for practical application (while such knowledge is certainly necessary, it is already being produced in sufficient quantities) but rather fundamental knowledge about new developments.

We do not mean fundamental knowledge which simply offers 'more of the same'. It is essential that the insights from the traditional disciplines of criminology and criminal law be combined fruitfully with disciplines from the other fields such as sociology, psychology, public administration, forensics, the natural sciences, medicine and forensic accountancy, ICT, environmental sciences and biotechnology. In other words, we mean other types of fundamental knowledge. Of all the demands for empirical and normative research mentioned in this foresight study, we present a number of subjects which we believe should already be on the research agenda if we are to be prepared for the crime and crime prevention problems in 2010.

## **I Research agenda**

Recommendation 1: the following subjects should already be on the research agenda:

- Fundamental research into (the regulation of) forms of organised crime which have existed for a long time (fraud, corruption, money-laundering etc) which have significant financial and economic consequences and which will not only increase in scale as a result of ICT and globalisation, but will become more complex and more difficult to trace;
- Fundamental, long-term research into how frequent offenders embark on and continue on their criminal careers. Particular attention should be paid to the effect of interventions: how can criminal careers be interrupted/ended?
- International research into cross border crime and into international cooperation between police and the judicial authorities in practice; how can nation states protect themselves against international criminal organisations (drug dealers, international terrorism);
- Systematic research into the effect of "hands-off" government and lower levels of social control, including cumulative evaluation research into best practices. The regulation of cyberspace is an important area for attention;
- Ex-ante evaluation research into the criminogenic effects of the application of technological innovations and the effects of European unification on crime;

It goes without saying that the research agenda is not exhaustive. When determining the issues for this agenda the government should ensure that Dutch research is not replicating research conducted abroad. Duplication should be avoided. In certain fields which are related to extremely recent and anticipated developments (internationalisation, technological innovation) there is very little foreign research as yet. And in other areas whilst there is a great deal of foreign research (for example, on criminal careers) this must be put into context and adapted to the unique Dutch situation.

The research agenda given above requires a thorough systematic and interdisciplinary approach in knowledge production and the development of new fundamental knowledge. In order to reach this situation, radical measures must be taken to adapt the structure and quality of scientific research, and to strengthen the international dimension of the Dutch knowledge infrastructure.

The recommendations given below are the result of our analysis of the new knowledge demands we can expect and our assessment of the chances that the present knowledge infrastructure can respond

adequately to these demands. We have made three recommendations, relating respectively to the demand side of the knowledge infrastructure, knowledge production and higher education.

## **II The demand side of the knowledge infrastructure:**

Recommendation 2: in the near future there should be a radical reorganisation of how financial resources are made available, with a view to guaranteeing and reinforcing independent and fundamental research into the issue of crime and crime prevention.

Explanatory note:

In recent years increasing numbers of institutions, municipalities, government departments and private-sector agencies have been studying crime and crime prevention. We note that each party makes an individual demand for scientific knowledge. This fragmentation is undesirable. We advocate that:

- The universities make structural facilities available (funds, staffing) to conduct scientific research in this field in order to create an adequate long-term infrastructure for fundamental independent research;
- The Dutch Research Council (NOW) should make generous funds available for major interdisciplinary research programmes to fund areas requiring long-term research. These major research programmes should preferably be open to interdisciplinary partnerships;
- The fragmented and market-oriented funding of scientific research be pooled more effectively. A substantial proportion of the available public sector funds (from all departments, government bodies and institutes committed to fighting crime) and private sector funds should be pooled in order to facilitate cumulative knowledge production. A Council should be set up to allocate these resources across competing knowledge producers in order to safeguard independent scientific research for the long-term.

## **III Knowledge production:**

Recommendation 3: in the near future the Dutch universities and NWO institutes should take measures to ensure that in 2010 enough highly qualified researchers will have been trained to deal adequately with the demand for knowledge at that time.

Explanatory note:

There is an acute shortage of young researchers. We do not just mean researchers in the field of criminology and criminal law, but also in the fields of forensic medicine, criminalistics and forensic science.

Recommendation 4: within the domain of scientific study of crime issues measures should be taken to stimulate theoretical deepening and innovative developments.

Explanatory note:

We refer in particular to the capacity to use new insights from disciplines which have not traditionally been part of the scientific domain of the crime issue, within integrative frameworks.

In this respect it is important that there should be a focused professorship policy within these 'new' disciplines so that the Dutch academic community has its antenna permanently tuned to creating this type of integration within the domain. This includes the focused exploration of those problems intrinsic to interdisciplinary cooperation. At the same time, a link can be made in scientific research between technological innovations and normative and legal issues in respect of the possibilities for applying this research.

Recommendation 5: the infrastructure of scientific study of the issue of crime should be more oriented to the international nature of crime and fighting crime than at present.

Explanatory note:

By this we mean increasing international collaboration in research projects and encouraging the comparative perspective. The Ministry of Education should make resources available for partnerships between universities and institutes to establish a network of European institutes to conduct joint structural European research.

Recommendation 6: criminology should take on the role of 'knowledge broker' and concentrate much more on facilitating integration and synthesis than it currently does.

Explanatory note: as more disciplines start to examine the problem of crime and crime prevention, there is a growing need for unambiguous definition of terms, coherence between insights from different disciplines and the availability of working structures (research school, research programme) for synthesis and integration in research. This is a significant task for criminology, not only because it has traditionally acquired the most knowledge on the issue and has the greatest overview of the contribution from different disciplines, but also because criminology can forge a link between the empirical and normative demands for knowledge on crime and crime prevention. A possible example in respect of education are the criminal justice courses which are considered to be mature (multidisciplinary) disciplines in the United States and which teach both the empirical and normative approaches to crime and crime prevention issues.

#### **IV University and higher professional education**

Recommendation 7: within the Dutch universities and universities of higher professional education broad courses in crime and crime prevention should be developed.

Explanatory note:

Until recently there were no broad interdisciplinary academic courses in crime and crime prevention. The new Bachelors and Masters degrees which the Dutch universities are currently developing should offer opportunities for such broad interdisciplinary courses. In respect of the Masters, it can be said that a range of courses should be introduced such as Masters for investigators, for policy practice, for forensic scientists and forensic practice. The Masters course for investigators should preferably focus on the theoretical, empirical, methodological and normative training on the demands for knowledge highlighted in this foresight. Once again, we can look to the criminal justice courses in the US on this point. An international component is a primary requirement. Higher professional education should introduce courses aimed primarily at technical security and forensic security skills.

The foresight committee proposes that the recommendations be implemented by a steering group set up for the purpose. This steering group should consist of representatives from all the fields listed in the recommendation and should be given responsibility for the rapid implementation of the plans. In this respect we refer to the Public Administration and Justice and Safety Sector Council (*Sectorraad Openbaar Bestuur en Justitie en veiligheid*) which is currently being established. This body could also make programming proposals for scientific research into crime and crime prevention.