INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the 20th century has witnessed the renaissance of European criminology. In 1990, three European criminologists – Jan van Dijk, Patricia Mayhew, and Martin Killias – launched the first International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS). Two years later, a majority of European countries participated in the first International Self-Reported Delinquency Study (ISRD). The *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* – with Josine Junger-Tas as Editor-in-Chief – published its first issue in 1993. The same year, the European Sourcebook Group, which produced the first edition of the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics in 1999, started working under the auspices of the Council of Europe. The first International Commercial Crime Survey (ICCS) was carried out in 1994, and the survey changed its name in 2000 to become the International Crime Business Survey (ICBS). At the same time, the number of institutes and students of criminology grew in an impressive way across Europe and, as a corollary, the European Society of Criminology was founded in 2000.

Until the 1990s, European criminologists were mainly known for their theoretical contributions to the field. Since then, a new generation of criminologists has produced an enormous amount of empirical data that, in many cases, challenged the former theoretical constructions.

All the articles included in this issue of the *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* take advantage of this recent interest in empirical research. Thus, the reader will find references to every survey and data collection mentioned in the first paragraph of this introduction.

The issue starts with an article written by Martin Killias, Sonia Lucia, Philippe Lamon, and Mathieu Simonin. The authors combine conviction statistics, police statistics, victimization surveys, and self-reported delinquency studies in order to analyse the evolution of juvenile delinquency in Switzerland since the 1950s. According to these four crime measures, that kind of delinquency followed a steady upward trend during the period under study. Specially, there has been an important increase of violent offences during the 1990s.

The analysis of Martin Killias and his colleagues is particularly convincing thanks to the multiple crime measures involved in it. In particular, the fact that self-reported delinquency studies as well as victimization surveys among juveniles confirm this trend rules out the possibility – often invoked

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by researchers – of an artificial increase produced only by reporting and recording practices. As the authors suggest, this result supports the perception of the general public on the evolution of delinquency against the reluctance of many academic circles.

The authors explain the upward trend in property offences using the routine activities approach that suggests that the increase in that type of offences is due to the increased availability of consumer goods in Western countries since the 1950s. In addition, Martin Killias and his colleagues suggest that the increase in the consumption of violent media scenes – in particular through computer games – by juveniles may have played a major role in the increase of their violent offences.

In the second article of this issue, Beata Gruszczyńska analyses the evolution of delinquency during the 1990s in seven Central and Eastern European countries. Her study combines police statistics from the *European Sourcebook*, health statistics on homicide, and victimization data from the ICVS.

The analysis shows a general increase in delinquency at the beginning of the decade while, since the mid-1990s, different offences followed different trends. Thus, homicide registered a relative decrease during that second period, whilst assault registered a relative stabilization and robbery an even more pronounced increase. Theft followed a curvilinear trend as the increase at the beginning of the time series was followed by a decrease in the middle of it and a new increase by its end. Finally, drug offences followed a firmly upward trend during the whole decade.

Beata Gruszczynska explains these trends by pointing out that the changes in social structures that took place in Central and Eastern Europe led to an increase of crime opportunities – and an ensuing increase in delinquency, as suggested by the routine activities approach – and a weakening of social control. The latter played an important role in the increase of drug users, which in turn, led to an increase in delinquency. She also includes relative deprivation theory in the explanation of crime trends, as the impoverishment of large sectors of the population was accompanied by an enormous success of other groups. At the same time, Beata Gruszczyńska reminds us that the criminal justice systems of Central and Eastern Europe were not at all prepared for the new scenario of the 1990s. Therefore, the official reaction to crime was slow and many times inefficient, thus leading to an important privatization of security measures.

We remain in Central and Eastern Europe with the third article included in this issue, as Anna Alvazzi del Frate presents the main findings of the International Crime Business Survey (ICBS), conducted in nine Central Eastern European capital cities in 2000.

The survey covers mainly small and medium size businesses and, whenever possible, the author compares its results with the ones obtained with

its *elder brother*, the ICVS. The results show that 27% of the businesses where victims of any crime in 1999, and that fraud and corruption were the most frequently experienced problems. In particular, the respondents considered that corruption was almost omnipresent in the public sector. The survey also shows that the development of criminal gangs that require money for protection is a reality in many of these cities. At the same time, the respondents do not hide their lack of confidence in the police, a fact that leads to a serious problem of underreporting of criminal offences.

In the fourth article of the issue, the focus is placed on the other side of the continent, as I analyse the evolution of police recorded crime rates for 9 offences from 1990 to 2000 in 16 Western European Countries.

The analysis shows an increase in drug and violent offences, while property offences reached a peak at the beginning of the 1990s and started decreasing afterwards. These results are cross-validated using data from the ICVS and the ESPAD survey on drug use. My explanation of these trends is inspired by the routine activities approach, as I consider that the evolution of property offences can be related to the emergence of a large black market for stolen goods in Central and Eastern Europe at the beginning of the time series, while by the end of it that market was saturated and there had also been a reinforcement of police measures in the frontiers and of security measures in Western European households. The increase in drug offences is correlated to the rise of drug use in Europe shown by other indicators, and can be related to an increased availability of drugs in European markets. Finally, the upward trend in violent offences can be explained partially by gang struggles over the control of illegal markets and by the consolidation of problematic neighbourhoods, but seems also due to a large extent to an increase in the reporting of violent offences by their victims and the recording of such offences by the police. At the same, the article applies historical-comparative research in order to show the inadequacy of subcultural explanations of the delinquency of ethnic minorities.

In the fifth article of this issue, we remain in Western Europe as Chris Lewis, Gordon Barclay, Bruno Aubusson de Cavarlay, Maria João Morgado Costa, and Paul Smit analyse the evolution of three offences – robbery, domestic burglary, and car theft – during the 1990s, in the 15 countries that were members of the European Union at the beginning of 2004.

The article includes an overview of the existing sources for comparative criminological research – including the crime statistics compiled by Interpol, the United Nations Crime Survey, the European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics, the annual data collection of the United Kingdom Home Office, the International Crime Victims Survey (ICVS), and the Eurobarometer – as well as a discussion on the comparability of offences definitions, and a lucid presentation of the many pitfalls of micro-level comparisons of crime.

The results – based on the analysis of data from the European Sourcebook, the Home Office collection, and the ICVS – show great variations among countries, although since the mid 1990s robbery increased whilst domestic burglary and car theft decreased in most countries. The authors explain the increase in robbery through the increase in the possession of small electronic devices, an explanation that, as many others in this issue, is inspired by the routine activities approach. Finally, the article studies fear of crime and perceptions of risk across the European Union through the analysis of the Eurobarometer. The latter shows that perceptions of risk are greater among women, elderly people, and populations living in urbanised areas.

In the last article of this issue, Paul Smit, Ronald Meijer, and Peter-Paul Groen present a research on the comparability of detection rates, i.e. crimes *solved* by the police, across Europe. The starting point of this study were the vast differences that could be observed in such rates. In order to understand such differences, the researchers developped a detailed questionnaire, filled by nine European countries, that studied the way in which such rates were constructed.

The analysis of the answers to the questionnaire shows that absolute comparisons are impossible, as the methodology for calculating detection rates varies widely across Europe. Nevertheless, a comparison of the detection rate with the punishment rate shows that cross-national differences are far less important according to the latter. The authors link this finding with the extent of the discretionary powers of the police and the prosecution. Thus, in countries where it has large discretionary powers, the police can lead a so-called offender oriented approach that focuses on finding offenders instead of finding suspects for every recorded crime. This approach produces low detection rates. On the contrary, when it has little discretionary powers and is obliged to investigate all crimes, the police tend to produce high detection rates by finding suspects for many recorded crimes, but many of these suspects are dismissed in the prosecution stage.

In sum, the articles included in this issue support the idea of an increase in violent and drug offences throughout Europe during the 1990s. This increase seems to have started long before, as indicated by Martin Killias and his colleagues in their article, and may well be one of the major causes of the renaissance of European criminology.

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