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Probable development of selected types of criminality¹

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Extended summary

Attempts to formulate measures against criminality should also take into account the results of scientific forecasting. In view of the fact that the nature of criminality changes together with changing social conditions, this forecasting should perceive criminality in its widest social ramifications. It is within the framework of these that qualitatively new phenomena can appear.

Prognoses in the crime field have been revisited on the initiative of specialists in the Police Academy in Bratislava. These have produced a prognosis of criminality in the Slovak Republic from the first half of the 1990s. In the second half of the 1990s, they attempted to get other countries involved and in 2001 they want to complete a summary prognosis for the Central European region. This will include a prognosis of criminality in the Czech Republic. At the same time, on the initiative of the Czech Government Council for Social and Economic Strategy, specialist studies for a summary prognosis for the Czech Republic began to be prepared at the end of the 1990s. In 2000, under the leadership of the Charles University Centre for Social and Economic Strategy, Visions of Development for the Czech Republic up to 2015 were therefore produced. We have used these summary findings to characterise the development of the wider social environment. We also contributed to production of the visions from the specific criminological point of view.

The methodology was based on application of the summary prognoses for Czech society. As regards the possible influence of **what is termed the relevant environment**, we used the visions of development for the Czech Republic up to 2015, and then ICSP research directed to the causes of organised crime and certain other sources. We thus expressed hypotheses in this area on how various living conditions affect criminality. When processing data relating to crime and selected forms of it, we proceeded from collection of data on the development to date of overall, property, violent, economic, drug-related and organised criminality. This data, summarised in statistical series, and in some cases extrapolated using regression and auto-regression analyses, was only background information for reflections on possible future scenarios. We arrived at these by means of **expertise methods**. In these, selected specialists gave their views on the possible future situation for individual types of criminality. For property, violent, economic and drug-related crime, discussion with the panels of experts proceeded by the **focus – groups** method. Groups of 3 - 4 experts in the individual areas carried out discussions on specific problems. Deliberations took place on the future of organised crime by a traditional survey of 27 specialists in the form of a written questionnaire, which is a certain application of the Delphic method. In addition to prognostic questions, the questionnaire was also directed to other features ascertained by traditional methods from 1993. We attempted to summarise the findings ascertained using the **SWOT method**. The facts ascertained were sorted into strengths and weaknesses and into development opportunities and threats. We attempted to apply this method consistently in the part devoted

¹ Cejp, M., Marešová, A., Kadeřábková, D., Trávníčková, I., Musil, S. Probable development of selected types of criminality. Prague : ICSP, 2001. 141 pages. Summary.

to the relevant environment. The resulting version was also simplified somewhat here in order to emphasise the possible positive or negative effects in individual areas.

In the analysis of **external problems of the world at present** we concerned ourselves with the possible positive and negative effects of globalisation and European integration on criminality. We summarised the deepening differences between developed and underdeveloped countries and different types of existing conflicts. We concerned ourselves specifically with problems relating to integration of countries of the former Eastern bloc into the democratic world. We analysed the main trends connected with the natural environment and population development trends.

Regarding the **internal problems of the Czech Republic**, we took into account the positives and negatives of the political system, state administration, self-government, the civil sector, the legal system, economy, the social structure and widely conceived culture. In the cultural field, we included lifestyle, life values, interpersonal relations, relations between the majority population and minorities, morality, education and upbringing, health care, communications, mass media and science.

The following conclusions emerged from the prognosis we made for the future development of **criminality in general**:

1. Criminality will remain at much the same level in future years, at about the mark of 400,000 criminal offences recorded annually by the police, unless there are radical changes in criminal legislation or other related laws or in the statistics system of the Police of the Czech Republic.
2. The proportion of women among those committing criminal offences will increase.
3. The proportion of juveniles among offenders will remain at much the same level, or decrease slightly. However, the number of criminal offences committed by minors (children up to the age of 15) will rather increase.
4. The proportion of re-offenders among known offenders prosecuted will increase.

Property crime is the criminal activity which determines the extent and future development of criminality and which has by its quantum leap caused the overall dramatic rise in criminality recorded in the Czech Republic since 1990 and has caused the levelling off in recorded criminality in the last few years.

It is impossible at this time to forecast its future development and also its share in total criminality. If the proposed change in legislation in the Czech Republic were to be implemented, in which the minimum level of damage which is not insignificant would be indexed to the lowest minimum wage in the Czech Republic, applicable from 1.1.2001, ie the limit of this damage would be raised from 2000 CZK to 5000 CZK, there would be an unprecedented fall in criminality recorded in the Czech Republic, in the case of property crime by several tens of thousands of criminal offences annually and also a dramatic fall in the number of offenders prosecuted.

Violent criminality is criminality which has also shown an increase (approximately double) since 1990, but one substantially less dramatic than property criminality. Its share in the overall number of criminal offences recorded has thus fallen compared with the period before 1990. In the nearest future we rather expect the number of criminal offences of violence

recorded to remain at much the same level, but also the violent nature of immoral crimes and the number of offenders prosecuted for this criminal activity. However, we anticipate a further rise in violence and its seriousness among offenders under the age of 18 (this applies particularly to robbery). Also a slight rise in the number of offenders whose criminal activity is linked to organised crime – eg contract killings, extortion, attacks on a public official and so on. More and more violent crime will in our opinion be linked with criminal acts committed in the Czech Republic by foreigners, with settlement of their scores and division of territories of interest between foreign and increasingly powerful Czech gangs. For robbery, but also other criminal offences of a violent and property nature, the proportion of offenders motivated to acquire money to purchase drugs by criminal activities will increase. The rise in group violence and the increase in the level of aggression in its manifestations, conditioned by negative socio-pathological phenomena in the family, at school and in the wider social environment, will continue.

The quantitative and also structural occurrence of **economic criminal activity** in the last decade of the last century, like its occurrence at present and in the immediate future, is an immanent social change starting at the end of 1989. It reflects its new economic, legislative, criminal law, social and other indicators. In this, of course, the structure of the current occurrence of this criminal activity differs markedly from the structure of previous occurrences and for this reason only quantitative occurrence in the time scale of the last ten years is accepted here for predicting development. The first two years of the period analysed show numerically lower occurrence of economic criminal activity than that recorded in the previous years. In comparison with, for instance, 1989, occurrence of ascertained and recorded cases in both these years hovers at only slightly above half of the 1989 number in the findings. Since 1993, however, there has been a rise each year and the highest number of acts to date was recorded in 1999, when conversely it exceeded the occurrence recorded in 1989 more than three times.

Further increase in the occurrence of this type of crime has, however, probably now stopped and it will not grow substantially. In view of the evident calming down and gradual stabilisation of all areas of social life, objective reasons for linear growth in the number of recorded cases of economic criminal acts are also fading away. Future occurrence of this type of crime in terms of numbers will be around the level of the current number, but included in this to a higher degree than hitherto will be latent cases, ie cases already committed. Contrary to past development, however, this may lead to changes in the structure of acts committed, particularly in response to legislative changes or changes in service offers of financial institutions or offers in the securities market and so on.

The **drug-related crime** prognosis was prepared on the basis of replies from specialists and the development of drug-related crime in the Czech Republic since 1989. The development tendency for drug-related crime over the next five years is also derived from analysis of the current situation in the Czech Republic, the priorities and activities of organised crime and other accelerating factors in crime with respect to specific aspects of the drug-related issue.

Organised crime represents one of the greatest security risks in the world today. This started to reveal itself to a significant extent in the Czech Republic too after 1990. About 75 groups with a total of approximately 2000 members operate in the Czech Republic. Further growth is expected in the future. On the other hand, paradoxically, nobody has been prosecuted, charged or arrested since (and including) 1997 in connection with participation in organised

crime. Since 1998, isolated cases of persons prosecuted and charged have occurred (in 2000 there were 40 of these). However, virtually nobody (one in 1999) has been convicted. More than a third of organised crime groups are highly organised – with a multi-level organisation structure. The number of these groups will grow because those with poorer organisation cannot compete in the crime world. Half of the members are external. The proportion of external members will clearly continue to be high. Hiring them is advantageous for organised crime. It is estimated that around 15 % of those linked to organised crime are women, which is more than for crime in general (10 %). In the coming years their number may increase. Specialists estimate that children are also linked to organised crime in the Czech Republic – most often in connection with child pornography and prostitution and also in theft and distribution of drugs.

In terms of nationality composition, for a long time somewhat over half of the members of criminal groups have been from abroad, and slightly under half are Czech citizens. Groups from abroad which wanted to enter the Czech Republic have already established themselves here. They have built up contacts and the required structures. Their number will clearly not grow very much. On the other hand, they will recruit Czech citizens in still greater numbers. So roughly 1/5 of the groups operating in the Czech Republic will be exclusively Czech. Of the foreigners, those most heavily represented in organised crime are Ukrainians and Russians. Citizens of the former Yugoslavia and Chinese used to be in this most heavily represented category, but the number of Chinese has been going down since 1998 and the number of Yugoslavs since 1999. The number of Poles has also been declining. The second group, then, consists of Bulgarians, Albanians and Vietnamese. Nationals of other countries are represented sporadically.

Among the most widespread activities of organised crime are the production, smuggling and distribution of drugs, theft of automobiles, organised prostitution and trading in women, and illegal migration. These activities were, with certain fluctuations, accompanied by a whole range of other activities, such as corruption, money laundering, counterfeiting of CDs and copying of video-cassettes, violence and murder, theft of works of art (these were among the most widespread in the first half of the 90s), illegal debt collecting, tax, bank and customs fraud, extortion and trading in weapons.

By 2005 – according to the estimate of specialists – the most widespread activity connected with organised crime should be the production and trafficking in drugs. This should then be followed by violent crime, illegal migration (the level of its occurrence is dependent on acceptance in the EU), organised prostitution and money laundering.

In conclusion, we can state that beginning in 2000 we laid the foundation for new prognostic activity in the crime field on which this should be based in future years. The analyses conducted confirmed that it is not possible to proceed mechanically only from painstakingly collected data. This can be the background information for further deliberation. In view of the fact that practically any possibility could be realised, it is necessary in these deliberations to weigh up all circumstances responsibly. It is not possible in this to proceed only from the internal development of specific phenomena, but it is always necessary to take into account the widest social ramifications. All types of crime and features of offenders and victims are always influenced by the social system.