

EDITORS' INTRODUCTORY NOTES

This volume presents the proceedings of the International Conference on Understanding Crime: Experiences of Crime and Crime Control. It was organised by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) in co-operation with the Italian Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice of the Netherlands.

The Conference itself is the result of a long preparatory process which involved two main activities. First, the organisation and carrying out of the International Crime (Victim) Survey¹. The second activity consisted in structuring the International Conference. For this the international Working Group (Jan van Dijk, Patricia Mayhew, Ugljesa Zvekic) and the Project Officer (Anna Alvazzi del Frate) prepared an outline which was discussed by the Organisational Committee in a meeting held in Rome on 17 and 18 March 1992. This preparatory phase was then followed by soliciting material from the selected contributors and by making public this event. The final phase of preparation consisted in the organisation of this International Conference. We would like to express our gratitude to the members of the Organisational Committee as well as to the members of the Organisational Secretariat.

Three were the main objectives of the International Conference. First, to present the main results of the 1992 International Crime (Victim) Survey carried out in some 30 countries/cities all over the world (Parts One and Five of this volume). Overviews of the key findings for industrialised, developing, and Eastern and Central European countries are presented in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Chapters 1 and 2 also provide historical and organisational accounts of the International Surveys. For summaries of the key findings at the national/city levels the reader should consult Part Five of the volume. The whole data set will be available, and can be purchased upon request, in 1994. Parts One and Five therefore contain a wealth of empirical data for country/city and comparative level analyses. Indeed, we encourage further use of this data set.

The second objective of the Conference was to discuss a selected number of issues related to research (mainly methodological and to some extent theoretical) and policy potentials and use of the (international) victim surveys. Contributions presented in Part Two of this volume were solicited for these purposes. The Discussion Session of the Conference, and correspondingly Part Three of the volume, go beyond the solicited contributions and expands on issues presented in the preceding sessions. A number of contributions relate to research and policy issues, particularly for certain countries, or discuss dimensions of victimisation/criminal justice processes in a comparative manner. This part also presents several attempts at secondary data level analysis based on the results of both the 1989 and 1992 International Surveys.

¹ It should be noted that the terms "International Crime" and "International Victim" Survey are used interchangeably. This is due to the fact that the first survey, carried out in 1989, was coined the Crime Survey and in the second sweep (1992) in industrialised and some Eastern and Central European countries it was again referred to as the Crime Survey. However, in developing countries, UNICRI referred to it as the International Victim Survey in order to avoid confusion with the quinquennial United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of the Criminal Justice Systems.

The third objective of the Conference was to bring together research and policy making/administration communities in order to promote an exchange of views and experiences. In particular it was felt important to discuss respective expectations, potentials and limits. These are related to research on the one hand and, on the other, to policy implications and implementations of the results of research. Both research and policy possess certain expectations; e.g. policy expects research to provide for understanding and, at least, to outline possible and feasible suggestions as to what to do, how to do it, and what will be the likely results. Research, on the other hand, expects policy to fund it, support it, consult it, listen to it and subject itself to research-based critical evaluation. At the same time each should be aware of its own potentials and limits and those of the other.

The possibility for an exchange of views between the two communities was first of all provided by the structure of the participants (see the List of Participants). Almost all the countries participating in this Conference were represented by at least one researcher and one criminal justice policy maker and/or administrator. Secondly, this possibility was provided at the discussion period following each session of the Conference, as well as during the informal meetings and social events organised in conjunction with the Conference. Only part of this rich process of exchange of views is presented in this volume, in Part Three and in particular during the Round Table: "Citizens and Criminal Justice", with the participation of high level representatives of the criminal justice system from several countries, from the United Nations and INTERPOL (Part Four). The Round Table in particular discussed various forms of relations between citizens and criminal justice and, in addition to issues linked to conventional victimisation, it focussed on citizens as victims of organised and environmental crime and the need for citizen participation in facing and reacting to these serious, often transboundary crimes.

Part Four is entitled *Rounding Up*. It attempts to present the main issues and results discussed and presented at the Conference and therefore consists of three main Session Reports and a General Report. While providing summaries, they also advance further research and policy agenda.

It is our hope that this volume will contribute to the advancement of national and international comparative research for the understanding of victimisation, crime and criminal justice and to the promotion of international comparative data bases, as well as to the advancement of policy reflecting, and targeted to the needs of the community. It will, we hope, further co-operation between research and policy, to the benefit of each and for the advancement of sound crime prevention and control strategies.

In closing these Introductory Notes we would like to express our gratitude to the participants, the contributors, the Session Rapporteurs and the technical support staff. Arrivederci at the next international conference about the next sweep of the International Crime (Victim) Survey.

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