

CRIME VICTIMS: NEEDS AND SERVICES IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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In recent years, the position of the victim in the criminal justice process has been considerably enhanced, and a number of studies have identified the emergence of victim services both in the UK and other Western societies, such as the US and Canada². Developments in Europe, particularly in the west but also in Eastern Europe have also been noted and accelerated through Council of Europe and United Nations initiatives as well as groups specifically created to promote international co-operation, such as the European Forum for Victim Services³.

A number of studies have indicated that victims have very clear ideas about police performance, and in many cases see the police as failing to address their own priorities vis a vis the crime situation⁴, and in England and Wales the 1988 British Crime Survey (BCS) provides recent evidence of growing public dissatisfaction with the police, albeit among a minority of victims⁵. Yet, with the notable exception of the Netherlands⁶, we know very little about alternative models of service provision by the police in other societies outside the Anglo-Saxon/North American experiences. It is difficult, therefore, to assess how far alternative police systems may be better adapted to providing services that the public appreciate. In particular, little is known of victims' perspectives in Continental police systems, in both Eastern and Western Europe.

The last 30 years has also seen the development in the UK of a range of victim services, including criminal injuries compensations, compensation orders, rape

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² Maguire, M. and C. Corbett (1987) *The effects of crime and the work of victim support schemes*, Gower, Aldershot; Mawby, R.I. and M.L. Gill (1987) *Crime victims: needs, services and the voluntary sector*, Tavistock, London; Rock, P. (1986) *A view from the shadows*, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Rock, P. (1990) *Helping victims of crime*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

³ First European Conference of Victim Support Workers (1989) *Guidelines for victim support in Europe*, VLOS, Utrecht, the Netherlands; HEUNI (1989) *Changing victim policy: the United Nations Declaration and recent developments in Europe*, HEUNI, Helsinki, Finland; Joutsen, M. (1987) *The role of the victim of crime in European criminal justice systems*, HEUNI, Helsinki, Finland; Waller, I. (1988) "International standards, national trail blazing and the next steps" in Maguire, M. and J. Pointing (eds.) *Victims of crime*, Open University Press 7, Buckingham.

⁴ Maguire, M. (1982) *Burglary in a dwelling*, Heineman, London; Shapland, J., J. Willmore and P. Duff (1985) *Victims in the criminal justice system*, Gower, Aldershot.

⁵ Mayhew, P., D. Elliott and L. Dowds (1989) *The 1988 British Crime Survey, Home Office Research Study*, 111, HMSO, London; Skogan, W.G. (1990) *The police and the public in England and Wales*, HMSO, London.

⁶ Hauber, A.R. and J. Wemmers (1987) "An experiment of victim assistance in police stations in the Hague" *WSV Newsletter* 6, 2:68-70; Wemmers, J.M. and M.I. Zeilstra (1991) "Victims services in the Netherlands" *Dutch Penal Law and Policy* 3; Winkel, F. (1989) "Response to criminal victimisation: evaluating the impact of a police assistance program and some social psychological characteristics" *Police Studies* 12, 1:59-72.

crisis centres, refuges for battered women, and victim support schemes⁷. Similar, but not identical, developments have occurred in North America⁸ and elsewhere⁹. However, whilst much of the literature provides a general outline of such policies and tends to stress the broad similarities, as yet no focussed comparative analysis has taken place to assess and explain the precise variations in victims' experiences. For example: how far do different social structures and cultures influence the impact of crime on victims, and the ready availability of informal help; how do different legal and welfare systems influence the structure of services on a formal level; and how are political changes affecting future developments? Such questions are of particular salience in the context of the transformation of political and social structures in Eastern Europe.

The dramatic changes in Eastern Europe have impacts upon law and order in at least four ways. First, widespread public unrest has led to a challenge to legal authorities in an explicit fashion, something that would not have been contemplated two or three years ago. Second, changes to the political structure have made the problem of crime more of an issue than in the past, whether because of an actual increase in crime, a more open review of the extent of crime, or a mixture of both¹⁰. Third, these political changes have implications for the criminal justice system and its organisation; for example, with major reviews of the operation and functioning of the police. Finally, shifts away from state monopolies towards a market economy raise a number of questions about the adequacy of welfare policies and the role of the state, private sector, voluntary sector and local community in meeting needs, in the context of the criminal justice vis a vis victim services. At the same time, the implications of 1992 for countries within the European Community have raised questions about international co-operation between agencies, centralisation and co-ordination of service planning and delivery, and equality of provision between countries, in areas such as policing and victim services¹¹, an issue of wider concern if Eastern European countries subsequently join the EC.

The recent international victim survey¹² provides a welcome initiative in comparative analyses in this area. However, as well as being largely focussed on Western capitalist societies, the very breadth of the survey means that it is limited in many respects and should be seen as providing the backcloth for more detailed and specific future studies rather than as a definitive study. Thus, because it covers a large number of countries, the range of questions, and indeed areas covered, is

⁷ Mawby et al., *Crime...*, op. cit.; Rock, P. (1990) *Helping victims of crime*, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Shapland et al., *Victims...*, op. cit.

⁸ Lurigio, A.J., W.G. Skogan and R.C. Davis (eds.) (1990) *Victims of crime: problems, policies and programs*, Sage, Newbury Park, Calif; Mawby et al., *Victims...*, op. cit.; Rock, *A view...*, op. cit.

⁹ First European Conference of Victim Support Workers, *Guidelines...*, op. cit.; HEUNI, *Changing...*, op. cit.; Joutsen, *The role...*, op. cit.

¹⁰ Mawby, R.I. (1990) *Comparative policing issues: the British and American experience in international perspective*, Unwin Hyman, London.

¹¹ Cannings, D. (1991) *Policing in Europe: towards 1992*, Devon and Cornwall Constabulary, Exeter; Kattau, T.F. (1990) "1992 - Europe without frontiers", paper to Conference on Crime and policing: 1992 a global perspective, Islington.

¹² van, Dijk J.J.M., P. Mayhew and M. Killias (1990) *Experiences of crime across the world: key findings of the 1989 International Crime Survey*, Kluwer, Deventer, the Netherlands.

limited, and there is little detail on victims' needs or specific services. Similarly, as with other victim surveys, such as the BCS, since only a minority of crimes are reported to the police or known to other official agencies, there is for practical purposes a limit to the number of questions that can be included on the response of such agencies towards victims.

Following our own specific interests, and reflecting the conclusions of a recent conference ¹³ this proposal aims to address these issues through a comparative analysis of services and "clients' needs", focussing on a quite specific issue within a small number of cities in Eastern Europe, Western Continental Europe and England. By focussing down in this way we aim to maximise the degree of comparability while using the specific research areas as case studies through which to illustrate and explain wider areas of policy and practices within the criminal justice system.

Essentially, we propose to focus on a number of medium-large size cities and within them on samples of burglary victims (200 in each) who have reported their crimes to the police within a predefined time period. Using a standardised sampling method and questionnaire, victims will be interviewed concerning their crimes, the response of different people (family, neighbours, community) and agencies (such as the police, welfare agencies, victim services, insurance companies, courts etc.) and their perceptions of the relationship between needs and the services provided. To gain some impression of the level of unreported crime and the reasons behind non-reporting, victims will also be asked about previous burglaries and burglaries against friends and neighbours. Using this snowballing technique a sample of victims of non-reported burglaries will then be interviewed. The crimes included in the sample will then be used as a base for widening the analysis to assess the organisation and provision of relevant services, and ultimately the extent to which changes in these are currently being proposed or enacted. This can be illustrated if we take two simple examples. First, with regard to the police: victims will be asked about their contact with specific sections within the police and their impressions of police behaviour; this will provide a basis for deeper analysis of the police organisational structure, specialist units, policies vis a vis levels of investigation etc., and outcomes in terms of victim satisfaction and detection; finally, this will be assessed in the context of ongoing discussions within and outside the police on the organisation of the police, personnel issues, prioritisation etc., and the possibility of future change. Second, and similarly, with regard to the wider services available to crime victims: victims will be asked about the impact of the crime on them and their families and the involvement of outside agencies; this will provide the basis for wider review of the availability and appropriateness of different victim services and victims' awareness of these services; this analysis will be used to inform assessment of the prospect of new service provision, and the appropriateness of alternative forms of provision.

The project, therefore, hinges on the deployment of a range of research methods. Recorded data will provide a background for the study and the original sampling frame; victims will then be interviewed using a structured questionnaire;

¹³ Eastern-Western European Conference on Victimology, March 1991, Warsaw.

finally, observation and semi-structured interviews will be used to contextualise the experiences of the sample within the wider operation of the system.

It is proposed that the research be conducted in three cities in Eastern Europe: Warsaw, the capital and one other smaller city in Poland, and Miskolc, the second largest city in Hungary: and two contrasting cities in England, Liverpool and Plymouth. For wider comparison we shall also include Monchengladback in Germany (formally FRG).

The countries and cities chosen reflect the good contacts that the proposers have with police and other agencies in these areas.

More important though, Poland and Hungary have been selected because they, within the Eastern bloc, have evidenced a more concerted interest in victimisation and victim policies than have other Eastern European countries¹⁴, and are thus better placed to invite consideration of the place of the victim within their criminal justice systems.

The research will be co-ordinated jointly by the team¹⁵. One data set will be available for analysis by the research team in each country; one will be available for analysis by the group as a collaborative venture.

The research aims to identify the different situations facing victims in various countries, and the extent to which the availability and nature of service affects their well-being. The results, which thus have a practical focus, will be fed back through conventional channels (articles, conferences etc.), through the active co-operation of those involved in the research in the four countries, and through direct links with agencies such as the European Forum for Victim Services, HEUNI, and the Council of Europe.

¹⁴ Bienkowska, E. (1991) "Victimology in Eastern European countries: the outline of development", paper to Eastern-Western European Conference on Victimology, Warsaw.

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