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Introduction

The Federal Government considers the continuous improvement of internal security as one of its most important tasks. This was clearly expressed by the government in the guidelines of the coalition agreement „A firm stand against crime and its causes“.

The development of effective approaches for finding solutions in dealing with crime demands that the crime situation and the problems related to it be taken stock of as comprehensively as possible. The existing statistics for crime and for the administration of criminal justice already provide extensive information for this purpose. Clearly more satisfactory answers to (topical) questions of internal security can nevertheless be gained from a comparative study of this pool of data, taking into consideration scientific analyses and findings. The Federal Government has therefore decided to put together a scientifically-based, comprehensive report about the security situation in the Federal Republic of Germany.

In order to transform this intention into reality, both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice have set up a Committee of Experts, consisting of scientists and scholars from the areas of criminology, sociology and psychology as well as representatives from the Federal Criminal Police Office, the Federal Statistical Office and the Central Institute of Criminology. The Committee has been commissioned with drawing up the Report on Crime and Crime Control.

The objective of this report is to put together the most comprehensive picture possible of the crime situation in Germany. For the first time in a report, it will draw together findings taken from the existing pool of official data, particularly from data provided by the criminal statistics of the police and by the statistics of the administration of criminal justice. At the same time, the report will use as a reference the results of scientific research into the manifestation and causes of criminality. Aided by more extensive findings, taken particularly from the area of research into undetected crime as well as from interviews with victims, this portrait of the crime situation will be brought into a more scientific light and will be complemented by knowledge gained from the victims' perspective. The analysis of material from existing data will take place for Germany as a whole. For this purpose, only data which had already been agreed upon with the Länder has been used. In those sections where the authors of the scientific section have drawn more strongly on Länder data in their contributions, they had reached agreement on this with the respective persons responsible for the underlying studies.

The report aims to cover as long-term an observation of the crime situation as possible, as establishing continuity over a longer period of time allows important developments in criminal activities to become clearer and makes possible a more differentiated judgement of the current security situation. This takes into consideration that the Federal Government intends to expand upon and update the report at regular intervals in the future.

The section of the report which was drawn up by the Committee of Experts deals with selected areas of crime and its structure, development and causes in accordance with statements on the security situation in general and according to the possibilities and deficits of criminological knowledge in particular. In addition to traditional types of offence, such as offences against property, drug offences and crimes of violence, newer forms of crime - in the present report Internet crime for example - are also discussed. The prosecution of crime under criminal law is dealt with in its own section of the report and this investigation process is traced from beginning to end. Considerations for crime prevention are dealt with in the conclusion. Furthermore, every edition of the Report on Crime and Crime Control should portray in detail one particular topic of main interest which is considered to be especially urgent at the time. This report goes into child and juvenile delinquency in some depth, an area which has become more and more the subject of public interest in recent years. Special attention is paid here to violent offences among young people.

With regard to this main topic of interest, the Periodical Report on Crime and Crime Control intentionally draws to the foreground security-related approaches rather than those of juvenile and social policy. These are the subjects which are dealt with in the Federal Government's reports on youth, family, non-German citizens, social welfare, as well as on poverty and wealth. It is recommended that these reports be used as a source of reference.

Special thanks should be made at this point to those who drew up the scientific sections of the report, Prof. Dr. Roland Eckert, Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Heinz, Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Kerner, Prof. Dr. Christian Pfeiffer, Prof. Dr. Karl F. Schumann and Dr. Peter Wetzels, who was appointed later to the Committee of Experts after Prof. Dr. Pfeiffer left. They already laid the foundations for the realisation and the success of the Periodical Report on Crime and Crime Control through their committed and constructive work on the report and their readiness to engage in critical dialogue. Thanks must also be made to the representatives of the Federal Criminal Police Office, the Federal Statistical Office and the Central Institute of Criminology who supported considerably the drawing up of the report.

The fundamental consensus in the entire Committee was invariably a decisive factor for the final version of each respective contribution to the report. It goes without saying, however, that the world of politics and the world of science do not always evaluate certain offence-specific developments and their causes in the same way. This is occasionally reflected in the individual contributions. The scientific descriptions of the individual areas of crime are followed by the criminal and legal policy conclusions of the Federal Government. There, those questions considered by the government to be urgent for the purposes of policy-making are formulated and measures which have already been introduced as well as approaches to problem-solving for the future are highlighted.

The Federal Government is thoroughly aware that the report also draws attention to areas of weakness, for example in the area of the availability of data on undetected crime. Just as often, problem areas become apparent in the text that cannot be met with simple and concise political answers. Furthermore, as the first part of a regular set of reports, it cannot lay claim to completeness, rather it aims at continuous further development and completion. This edition of the Periodical Report on Crime and Crime Control sees itself therefore as a ground-laying work which aims to provide a broad-ranging preparation and analysis of the existing material in a way which has never been achieved in this form till now. As such, it should act as an impetus for open discussion of the subjects dealt with, should promote the dialogue between the fields of politics and science about the most important problems of internal security and should act as a tool for the evaluation of previous approaches to solutions for dealing with crime as well as being a guide for the future.

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