



Scientific Indicators of Confidence in Justice: Tools for Policy Assessment

Half project reporting: abstract

JUSTIS is a research project designed to provide EU institutions and Member States with new indicators for assessing public confidence in justice.

Member States are making growing use of social indicators to improve policy and its assessment, but limited progress has been made on this in criminal justice. Common-sense indicators based on readily available statistics – such as crime trends – have been used extensively. Much less attention has been paid to crucial but hard-to-measure indicators about public trust in justice. Without such indicators, there is a risk that crime policies may become over-focused on short-term objectives of crime control, at the expense of equally important longer-term objectives relating to justice and social cohesion.

JUSTIS is developing and piloting survey-based indicators of public trust in justice. It is also assembling contextual country-level data for interpreting the indicators, such as socio-economic data and information about each country's criminal justice system. It will develop tools for presenting and interpreting the indicators in ways that are intuitive and accessible. The project aims not only to develop scientifically credible indicators but also to build some consensus across Member States about the importance of assessing crime policy against criteria of public confidence, making effective dissemination a priority.

During the first 18 months of activities, there were three major achievements.

Firstly, the key elements of first two substantive Work Packages were completed. WP2 explored the need for social indicators of public trust in justice across Europe. It involved examining the need for such indicators, assessing the social scientific literature on trust in justice, and gathering existing indicators that have been used at national and supra-national levels. This included conducting a questionnaire-based survey in seven countries to find out about the perceived need for a set of indicators of trust in justice amongst criminal justice experts and practitioners. It also included a detailed review of literature on available indicators measuring trust in justice in each of partner countries as well as other selected countries. The entire work resulted in a first publication titled: *JUSTIS Project Working Papers – Review of Need: Indicators of Public Confidence in Criminal Justice for*

Policy Assessment. Drawing on this work, WP3 then elaborated the project's conceptual 'roadmap' and specified in detail the work required in the following two work packages – designing survey questions and assembling contextual data.

Secondly, JUSTIS project organised its first international conference in Sofia, Bulgaria in March, 2009. Invitees to the conference included the Vera Institute of Justice from the US, who are also involved in a relevant project. There was also a public discussion event at the Bulgarian National Institute of Justice. Speakers included the Bulgarian Minister of Justice, Director of the National Institute of Justice, and the Deputy Prosecutor General.

The final achievement for the first half of the project was the successful bid for participation in the fifth round of the European Social Survey (ESS), which will be conducted in about thirty countries in 2010. We have been given space for fifty questions on trust in justice, and we propose to use for the ESS a subset of JUSTIS questions relating largely to perceptions of fairness, effectiveness, trust and legitimacy. This development is of particular importance, since we shall not only design and pilot indicators, but shall build a large comparative dataset that will allow us to describe cultural variations in trust in justice and to test theories about the factors that shape institutional legitimacy. Academic partners in other jurisdictions are encouraged to mount equivalent surveys in their countries: discussions are now in progress with Australia, Japan and Trinidad and Tobago.



JUSTIS

FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – SOFIA, 24-25 MARCH 2009



First day of the conference. JUSTIS includes institutions from the UK, France, Lithuania, Hungary, Finland and Italy. The conference was attended by all partner institutions, as well as members of the JUSTIS External Expert Group and other prominent criminologists.



Left: Prof. Stephan Parmentier, University of Leuven, Belgium
Right: Prof. Helmut Kury, University of Freiburg, Germany



From left to right: Dr. Stefano Maffei, University of Parma, Italy, Ms. Daniela Stradiotto, Ministry of Interior, Italy, Ms. Cristina Pavarani, University of Parma, Italy and Mr. Ben Bradford, London School of Economics, UK



The public discussion event during the conference at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) the Center for the Study of Democracy.

From left to right: Prof. Mike Hough from the Institute for Criminal Policy Research - King's College, London, coordinator of the JUSTIS project, Prof. Julian Roberts from the University of Oxford, Chair of the JUSTIS External Expert Group, Ms. Miglena Tacheva, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Hristo Manchev, Deputy Prosecutor General of the Republic of Bulgaria and Dr. Pencho Penev, Director of the National Institute of Justice



Dr. Maria Yordanova, Director of the CSD Law Program



Prof. Julian Roberts, University of Oxford, Chair of the JUSTIS External Expert Group

