Summary

Forecasting the criminal justice system until 2011

This report describes the forecasting results of the "demand" for police, prosecution service, courts and prisons until the end of 2011. The forecasts are made using the new prediction model developed for the Dutch criminal justice system (PMJ). The models for the civil and administrative justice systems are still in their developmental stages and have not yet been used to make forecasts. The base year for our forecasts was 2004. Legislative and policy changes after 2004 have therefore not been incorporated into these forecasts.

The PMJ model is based on developments in society outside the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Justice. The basic underlying assumption of the model is that problems that occur in society drive trends in crime and the criminal justice system. Three groups of factors can be distinguished: changes in the demographic structure of the population, economic factors, and social problems. Within each category, a number of background factors are chosen that, taken together, indicate problems like delinquency, social inequality, culture conflict, social isolation and economic inequality.

The demographic determinants used in the PMJ model are: the number of migrants in various age categories and the number of 12- to 17-year-olds in the four main cities. The economic determinants are the non-working proportion of the labour force, purchasing power, the number of motor vehicles, average yearly income and the police budget. The social determinants are the number of children involved in divorce proceedings, alcohol consumption, the number of drug addicts and the number of people belonging to a religious or philosophical belief.

External forecasts of these indicators determine the forecasts for the criminal justice system. If there are no policy changes or new legislation, the number of reported crimes can be expected to increase by ten percent over the period 2004-2011. This will affect the chain partners that follow in criminal justice system, but this growth cannot be extrapolated in a straightforward fashion. It will not be possible, for example, to identify a suspect in all additional reported crimes. In fact, the number of suspects will only increase by four percent over the same period.

As charges will not be pressed against all suspects, the inflow of cases into the prosecutorial system will remain more or less equal. The inflow of minor offences is expected to fall sharply, resulting in 21 percent less court-imposed fines.

As far as cases involving serious offences are concerned, the increased number of police and prosecutorial transactions, summonses and guilty verdicts will approximately keep pace with the rise in the number of suspects. This in turn will lead to a proportional number of applications for legal aid. The increase in guilty verdicts will result in a fourteen percent higher demand for prison capacity for adults and an eight percent higher demand for prison capacity for minors.

A word of caution is in order. These forecasts are based on the information available at the moment of calculation. Both the forecasting process and the

external forecasts of the determinants are surrounded by uncertainty. For this reason, these forecasts should be seen as no more than a warning about what could happen if nothing changes, rather than as prophecies. Unexpected events and new policy or legislation will alter the outcomes.