

Summary

Forecasting the demand on the Dutch justice system until 2015

This report describes the forecasts of the 'demand' for police, prosecution service, courts and prisons until the end of 2015. The forecasts were made using the forecasting model PMJ, developed for the Dutch criminal justice system and the civil and administrative justice systems. The base year for our forecasts was 2008. Legislative and policy changes after 2008 have therefore not been incorporated into these forecasts.

PMJ is based on developments in society outside the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Justice. The underlying assumption of the model is that developments in society are the driving force behind the trends in crime and private disputes. Four groups of factors can be distinguished: demographic structure of the population, economic conditions, social problems and institutional changes. Within each category, a number of background factors are chosen which together indicate problems like social inequality, cultural conflicts, social isolation and economic inequality.

The demographic determinants used in the model are: the size of the population, population density, the number of migrants in various age categories, the number of youngsters (in the four main Dutch cities), the number of singles, the number of emigrants and the number of young men. The economic determinants are the unemployed and employed labor force, average yearly income, purchasing power, the number of social benefits (including those for the unemployed), gross value added, tax burden, collective burden, rents, the hourly rate of lawyers and the number of motor vehicles and mopeds. The social determinants are the number of children involved in divorce proceedings, the yearly number of divorcees, the number of rented houses, the alcohol consumption and the number of children with a low educational level. The institutional factors are the number of police officers, the police budget, the number of lawyers and the contribution people have to pay themselves when applying for subsidized legal aid.

External forecasts of these indicators determine the forecasts of developments within the justice system. If there are no policy changes or new legislation, the number of reported crimes is expected to increase by 3% over the period 2009-2015, while the number of suspects will increase by 2%. Since reporting and handling of crimes and suspects are a part of the criminal justice chain, their increase will affect the partners that follow in the chain. However, this growth cannot be extrapolated in a straightforward fashion. As charges will not be pressed against all suspects, the inflow of cases into the prosecutorial system is expected to increase by only 1%.

The number of transactions with the public prosecutor and the number of summonses will keep pace with the inflow into the prosecutorial system. This in turn is expected to lead to a proportional increase of applications for subsidized legal aid. The demand for prison capacity for adults will be 5% higher in 2015 than in 2009. There will be a 28% decrease in the demand for prison capacity for minors, mainly due to a big drop in the number of sentences with compulsory treatments.

The number of new civil cases at the district courts with a summons will increase by 13% and civil cases with a request by 24% in the period 2009-2015, while the number of new civil cases at the subdistrict courts with a summons will increase by 47% and those with a request will increase by 44%. As a consequence, also the number of civil cases in appeal will increase. The number of new administrative cases (excluding tax cases) at the district courts will increase by 54% in the period 2009-2015. The number of tax cases in the first instance will rise by 20%. The number of applications for subsidized legal aid in civil and administrative cases is expected to increase by 32%.

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. Due to the recent economic crisis this is especially true for the economic forecasts. For this reason, these forecasts should be seen as a signal of what might happen if nothing changes, rather than as certainties. Unexpected events and new policy or legislation will probably alter the outcomes.