

Summary

Forecasting the demand on the Dutch justice system until 2017

This report describes the forecasts of the 'demand' for police, prosecution service, courts and prisons until the end of 2017. 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 2010. Legislative and policy changes after 2010 have therefore not been incorporated into these forecasts.

PMJ is based on developments in society outside the sphere of influence of the Ministry of Security and 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, taken in combination, represent 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 size of different age groups, the number of non-western immigrants in various age categories, the number of youngsters (in the four main Dutch cities), the number of singles, and the number of migrant men in various age groups. The economic determinants are the unemployed and employed labour force, both total and in the age group 15-24 years, average yearly income, purchasing power, the number of social benefits (including those for unemployed), gross value added, tax burden, collective burden, rents, the hourly rate of lawyers, the number of motor vehicles and mopeds, the number of businesses and the number of self-employed people. The social determinants are the number of social rent houses, the number of applications for political asylum, the number of underage refugees, the number of drugs addicts, the yearly number of divorcees, the number of singles and the percentage of people connected to a church.

The institutional factors are the number of police officers, the police budget 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 decrease by a little over 5% over the period 2011-2017, while the number of suspects will decrease by 6.5%. Since reporting and handling of crimes and suspects are a part of the flow cases follow through the criminal justice system, their increase will affect the partners that are next in the system. Although this growth cannot be extrapolated in a straightforward fashion, both the inflow of cases into the prosecutorial system and the number of summonses are expected to decrease by a little over 5% as well. The decrease in the number of summonses is expected to lead to a proportional decrease of applications for subsidized legal aid.

The decrease in the influx at the prosecution induces a sharp decline of the number of cases brought to court. The number of criminal cases in court is expected to fall

by 9% during the period between 2011 and 2017. And also the demand for prison capacity for adults will be 9% lower in 2017 than in 2011. There will be a 16.5% 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 sub district courts with a summons will increase by 47% and civil cases with a request by 51% in the period 2011-2017, while the number of new civil cases at the district courts with a summons will increase by 21% and those with a request will increase by 26%. As a consequence, the number of civil cases in appeal will increase too. The number of new administrative cases (excluding tax cases) at the district courts will increase by 16% in the period 2011-2017. The number of tax cases in the first instance will rise by 15% and in appeal by 30%. The number of applications for subsidized legal aid in civil and administrative cases is expected to be more or less stable.

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.