

## **Introduction to Research on Crime and Punishment Trends in European Countries**

**Rok Hacin, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Criminology, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia. E-mail: [rok.hacin@fvv.uni-mb.si](mailto:rok.hacin@fvv.uni-mb.si)

**Jošt Meško**, Master's Student, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, University of Maribor, Slovenia. E-mail: [jost.mesko@student.um.si](mailto:jost.mesko@student.um.si)

This article focuses on crime and punishment trends in European countries, and data on crime, convicted persons, and prison populations in selected European countries were analysed in the study. Data were obtained from the Eurostat database on crime, the European sourcebook on crime and criminal justice statistics, and the Council of Europe annual reports on penal statistics – SPACE I (orig. Statistiques Pénales Annuelles du Conseil de l'Europe). Analyses show that crime has increased in European countries, while the homicide rate has declined or stagnated in most European countries over the period under review. Punishment trends pointed out that the rate of convicted persons has increased in several European countries, while the prison population rate and the average length of sentences have increased in most European countries. Moreover, the rate of admissions has declined in most European countries. The findings confirm previous research that crime and punishment trends are relatively independent of each other. We discovered that the crime rate, prison population rate, and length of sentences are the most appropriate indicators to more robustly assess the extent of crime and punitivity in European countries.

**Keywords:** crime, punishment, indicators of crime and punishment, prison population rates, Europe

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