



**IRCP**

Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy  
Ghent University

Prof. Dr. G. Vermeulen – Criminal Records and Taking Account of Convictions – Trier, 29 June 2011

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# Criminal Records and Taking Account of Convictions

Prof. Dr. Gert Vermeulen

Summer Course on European Criminal Justice  
ERA – Trier, 29 June 2011



## Structure

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- > acquis (pre-Amsterdam)
- > relevant EU initiatives
  - > context
  - > overview – state of affairs
  - > questions and challenges
  - > towards a generic EU data structure?
  - > further potential
- > questions & discussion



## Acquis (pre-A'dam)

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- > CoE treaties, chiefly
  - > 1959 MLA (Articles 13 & 22)
  - > 1960ies Road Traffic
  - > 1970 Int'l Validity Criminal Judgements
    - > =MR *avant-la-lettre*
- > unsuccessful EPC-Convention 1991
- > Schengen (road traffic)
- > EU (Maastricht): 1996 driving licenses
- > ...



## Context EU initiatives (1)

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- > Mutual Recognition (MR) Plan November 2000
  - > individualisation of sanctioning
    - > take account of previous EU convictions in sentencing for newly committed offences
    - > already earlier introduced for EUR fraud/counterfeiting
  - > give effect to disqualifications in MS of residence (e.g. driving license withdrawal) or all MS (e.g. working with children)
  - > mutual recognition of decisions to prosecute
    - > link with avoiding 'double prosecution' (extended ne bis)
    - > feasibility study requested re EU criminal records system and register of disqualifications
    - > IRCP-initiated; co-financed by EC (Grotius)
    - > Vermeulen et al (2002), Blueprint for an EU criminal records database



## Context EU initiatives (2)

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- > Fourniret case 2004 (B-F)
  - > what? challenge (real, perceived)
  - > recalling Dutroux case 1996 (B), having triggered studies (IRCP) & policy initiatives re EU data collection sexual offences against children
- > initiative European Commission
  - > White Paper 2005 (+ annex)
  - > building strongly on proposals Vermeulen et al
    - > searchable central index system
    - > detailed (folio) info remains in individual MSs
- > JHA Council April 2005: political 'dual track' scenario
  - > convictions against EU citizens
    - > centralisation in MS of nationality
    - > triggered by 'interconnection' pilot network (B-F-D-E) (expanded)
  - > convictions against 3rd country nationals
    - > central index system after all? Cfr COM(2006)359 + Unisys study



## Overview – State of affairs

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- > Decision November 2005/876/JHA (abrogated from by)
- > FD 2009/315/JHA organisation & content
  - > centralisation info in MS of nationality
  - > “develop standardised European format for criminal records infoex in a uniform, electronic & easily machine-translatable way”
    - > Unisys & IRCP – led to D 2009/316/JHA (ECRIS+ classification)
  - > improve application CoE 1959 MLA Convention
    - > render Article 22 (more) performant
    - > especially relevant for ministries/central authorities
  - > facilitate/accelerate crimrec-related MLA requests Article 13
    - > especially relevant for decentral, competent authorities
- > FD 2008/765/JHA on taking account of earlier EU convictions
  - > addresses decentral, competent judicial authorities
- > working doc & study index system 3rd country nationals (supra)
- > new study on disqualifications (IRCP 2011)





## FD 2009/315/JHA

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- > implementation deadline: April 2012
- > framework for a computerised system of crim rec infoex to MS nationality
- > obligations convicting MS and MS of nationality
- > request for info on convictions + reply 10 days
  - > updates Article 13 CoE 1959 MLA Convention
- > critiques
  - > no full generic EU data structure (infra)
  - > applying to natural persons only
    - > contrary to our suggestions, and denying
      - > EU obligation of corporate liability for offences (administrative, civil or penal) & EU hard law acquis re MR confiscations/fines
    - > breakthrough following new EU study?
      - > IRCP 2011: JUST/2010/JPEN/PR/1009 Study on the liability of legal persons for offences in the MS' national legal systems



## D 2009/316 (ECRIS + classification)

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- > implementation deadline: April 2012
- > ECRIS classification, partially transposing Unisys/IRCP study
  - > generic EU data structure/single interface/“criminal justice Esperanto”
    - > offender-related fields
    - > offence-related fields
      - > encompassing EAW categories, pilot network families and classifications Europol IS & Eurojust CMS, etc
      - > idea of EU classification of offences officially supported
        - > DG JLS/D3 (crim records) + Unisys/IRCP (crime statistics)
        - > EULOCS (enhancing internal coherence EU criminal policy)
    - > decision-related fields
    - > sanction/measure-related fields
  - > making most of info machine-translatable
  - > providing end-user useful interpretative info
    - > not enough: cfr EULOCS





## FD 2008/765/JHA taking account of convictions

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- > implementation deadline: August 2010
- > In the course of new proceedings, MS must take account of previous convictions of the same person in other MS for different facts ...
  - > info on previous convictions in EU MS through MLA or crim rec infoex instruments (systematic)
  - > applicability to legal persons? (Y but)
  - > not only for typical 32 MR offences, but for any
- > ... in that they must attach “equivalent” legal effects to them as to previous national convictions, in accordance with national law
  - > dual criminality required? (Y)
  - > loads of problems, both for general and specific reoffending (examples)
  - > need for full generic EU data structure, with enhanced offence interpretability (and limitation applicability to jointly identified offences throughout EU (EULOCS) and EU sanction scales
  - > ideally through double legal qualification (national + EU) (extra work)



## Further problems and challenges

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- > enhanced involvement end users required
  - > judicial authorities: courts/judges, investigating judges, prosecutors
  - > police authorities: national, Europol (explanation)
- > use common format (generic structure?) also for
  - > direct exchange under Article 13 1959 Convention
  - > EU-index system MS' info on 3rd country nationals
- > maximize investigative/prosecutorial value criminal records infoex system
  - > make offence-/other fields searchable
    - > via MLA requests or based on PoA
    - > currently searchable on name/id fields, in case of known EU nationality
  - > link in with Europol information system
  - > establishment ne bis in idem situation (+ Eurojust access/CMS)
- > role Eurojust in hosting index-system (a.o. for 3rd states' access)?
- > additional EU legislation based on MR concept
  - > regarding legal effect inclusion following notification
    - > currently no added value for Fourniret-like cases ☹
  - > limited introduction EU-certificates non-prior conviction
  - > see hereafter



# The EU Level Offence Classification System

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- > bench-mark for enhanced internal coherence of the EU's criminal policy
  - > including in the area of criminal records infoex
- > improved ECRIS classification
  - > exclusive categories
  - > incorporating/centered around EU approximation acquis
    - > clustering of common denominator underneath “jointly identified parts of offences”
    - > i.e. much wider acquis than 32 MR list, for which dual criminality test can be omitted
    - > i.e. joint acquis = trust-building
    - > = also tool for delineating Europol/Eurojust access (mandated offences incorporated)
  - > including definitions (usually form binding EU acquis) for interpretability in application FD 2008/675/JHA

## EULOCS - illustrated

0906 00	<b>MONEY LAUNDERING</b>
<b>0906 01</b>	<b>Offences jointly identified as Money Laundering</b>
0906 01 01	The conversion or transfer of property
0906 01 02	The illicit concealment or disguise of property related information
0906 01 03	The illicit acquisition, possession or use of laundered property
0906 02	<b>Other forms of Money Laundering</b>

0201 00	<b>OFFENCES JOINTLY IDENTIFIED AS PARTICIPATION IN A CRIMINAL ORGANISATION</b>
<b>0201 01</b>	<b>Directing a criminal organisation</b>
Article 2 (b) , Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA of 24 October 2008 on the fight against organised crime	Conduct by any person consisting in an agreement with one or more persons that an activity should be pursued which, if carried out, would amount to the commission of offences, even if that person does not take part in the actual execution of the activity.



# Disqualifications

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- > breakthrough following new EU study?
  - > IRCP 2011: JUST/2010/JPEN/PR/1010 Study on disqualifications as a sanctioning measure in the national systems of the Member States
- > preliminary EC/IRCP approach
  - > policy focus on children, road traffic, procurement - global approach
  - > extension to legal persons important
  - > distinction between
    - > disqualifying effect of certain convictions
    - > disqualifications expressly pronounced
    - > effect of convictions/disqualifications in that they bar certificate(s) non-prior conviction, required for certain (professional, leisure, ...) settings
  - > transborder/EU effect
    - > no more negative impact than in sentencing MS (lex mitior)
    - > equality before the law in internal market
    - > EU vertical (harmonised minimum) approach in tender procedures etc



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# Questions and discussion

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