

## **Crime and criminal investigation activity in 2003**

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The rise lasting several years in the number of criminal offences handled and measures taken by the police in crime control ceased in 2003 and remained at the level of the previous year. A quantitative stabilisation of the trend of recorded crime was most influenced by the following factors: more accurate recording and presentation of police work in this area; a tendency to give investigative priority to less numerous, but more serious and for the investigation more complicated crimes, and finally, a slight improvement in the security situation, having been manifested by a decrease of illegal migrations, a smaller number of reported crimes such as criminal homicides, aggravated assaults, robberies etc., as well as by a smaller number of dead and seriously injured victims of crime.

In 2003 the police laid charges and reports supplementing these charges before prosecuting agencies in relation to 76,643 (77,218) criminal offences, which is 0.7 percent less than the year before. Within the structure of crime handled by the police, there was a moderate rise in the number of property offences (from 54,853 to 55,231), which was due to more frequent burglaries, while the number of criminal offences of general, economic and organised crime statistically decreased. Such a trend was basically the result of a modified methodology of computer registration of criminal phenomena, more severe legal criteria for ordering investigative acts by the police and more rigorous criteria for the definition of organised crime.

In the investigation of criminal offence, the police have made efforts to improve the professional level, which is demonstrated by the target number of performed crime scene investigations and in the increased extent of forensic, analytical and international activities. In the sphere of economic crime, the police handled more serious cases than a year before, but police work was facilitated by the adaption and implementation of strategies of economic crime control. On the other hand, most difficulties were encountered in the investigation of property crime in larger urban areas, which was mainly due to the inadequate organisation of the police at the local level. In detecting covered forms of crime (such as computer misuse and illicit drug use), the police were still confronted with difficulties arising from the lack of experienced staff and with a slow and inconsistent implementation of adopted strategies.

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