

# The Possible Impact of the COVID-19 On Crime Rates in Hungary

**Dr. László István Gál<sup>1</sup>**

## Abstract

*The present study aims to make conservative predictions about the future trends of the criminality in Hungary, based on the experiences of the past centuries worldwide. So our initial hypothesis is that criminality is likely to increase from the second half of 2020, and this increase will continue for at least 1-2 years, after 2020. The only question is the extent of the rise and how we can slow or moderate the rise. In the time of the economic crisis the criminal law is a necessary but not sufficient tool for combating crime. If we know the past tendencies, we can prepare for the challenges of the future. We can respond before, during, or after problems arise. The earlier we move, the higher the efficiency can be.*

**Keywords:** economic crisis, COVID-19, Wuhan, crime, trend, economy, unemployment, GDP, Hungary, criminality

## I. The Signs of World Economic Crises Beginning in 2020

The economists agree that the world epidemic entering 2019 ends from Chinese Wuhan that caused by the COVID-19 virus, better known as the coronavirus will generate a severe economic crisis in 2020. Still, its effects will be sensible in the next years. As always, there is an optimistic, a realistic and a pessimistic scenario. According to some opinions, the world economy will soon recover from the economic crisis; the majority now expect a crisis of greater or lesser duration. Still, in the worst-case scenario, it will be even worse than the Great Depression of 1929-33. The Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) has compiled the most pessimistic forecast to date on the short-term outlook for the world economy. Announced: the model calculations prove that this year's global economic recession has become practically inevitable and is expected to be twice as deep as the downturn in 2009. According to the house reviewed forecast the global GDP rate in 2020 will drop at least with 4 percent. The study emphasizes that this would be the deepest global recession since 1931 discounting the wartime years. According to the calculations by CEBR's London analysts, the Italian domestic total output is expected to fall by 11 percentages in this year, the German and the Spanish GDP rate equally with eight percentages, and the performance of the US economy with five percent<sup>2</sup>. We can also

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<sup>1</sup> Head of the Criminal Law Department, University of Pécs, Faculty of Law; contact: gal.istvan@ajk.pte.hu.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.portfolio.hu/gazdasag/20200323/figyelmeztettek-1931-ota-nem-latott-valsag-koszonthet-a-vilagra-421466> (2020. 03. 26.)

talk about optimistic, realistic and pessimistic versions about the expected increase in crime. Still, one thing seems inevitable: the number of crimes will increase even according to the most optimistic estimates.

At the beginning of the 21st century seemed that international terrorism would be the cause of main economic troubles, instead of this, at the end of 2007 we were greeted by a "classic" global financial crisis. By 2007-2008, the world economy turned into the descending branch of the so-called Kondratyev cycle, and many disasters worsened the situation. For example, the hurricane in New Orleans. Because of the impregnation of the credit market, banks turned to secondary debtors. There was no severe credit review; real estate prices continuously raised. In 2006, more and more credit collapsed, so several real estate agencies became bankrupted, which also took some banks along with them. Out of these bankruptcies the most well-known is the Lehman Brothers. The crisis soon spilt over into the real economy. The root causes of the crisis are still being debated by leading economists. Yet, President Bush's big tax cuts program, which has suddenly left billions of dollars within the population, has undoubtedly played a role, further boosting credit supply to banks. Since the Great Depression of the 20th century, the situation called the most significant economic crisis emerged in 2008 from a global financial crisis that preceded it. The resultant of this the mortgage crisis in the United States, which affected the real estate market for the first time. The real causes of the economic crisis of 2008 have been explained by several experts in many ways. Investigations have often come to very different and not infrequently contradictory conclusions. Overall, it can be said that a complex process has resulted in a global economic crisis by 2008, which has spread from the Americas to the whole world in a short time. There is also a broad consensus among some theories that the immediate cause of the economic crisis was the collapse of the US mortgage bubble<sup>3</sup>.

The global economic crisis that erupted in 2020 first started as a health crisis in China (Wuhan) and according to the already mentioned pessimistic scenario is expected to shake the world economy, and in particular Europe, more than the financial crisis of 2008 or crisis caused by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001<sup>4</sup>. What can be seen from the current crisis without any special visionary skills:

1) the coronavirus is expected to claim more deaths worldwide than international terrorism has so far collective in world history,

2) the global economic crisis generated by COVID-19 will be comparable with 2008, and with the 1929-33 crisis. The current situation can be even more severe than the other two downfalls.

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<sup>3</sup> Halm Tamás: A gazdasági válság. Okok és tanulságok. [The economic crises. Causes and lessons, In: Kommentár 2009/6. p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> IMF, Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva has painted a devastating picture of the economic impact of the epidemic, according to her even 2021 will not necessarily be about recovery. According to her, the 9 trillion dollars that various governments have already voted for so far will not be enough. Barely a month ago, we had been expecting a definite increase in per capita income in more than 160 of our member states. Today, everything was on top of our heads; we can already see that per capita growth will be negative in more than 170 countries – Georgieva said. The IMF director noted that because it is not known how long the epidemic will last, the outlook is very uncertain, she believes that if the pandemic subsides in the second half of the year, 2021 may already be a year of partial recovery, but the situation may worsen. Investors have already withdrawn more than a hundred billion dollars from these economies, three times as much as during the 2008 economic crisis.

[https://index.hu/gazdasag/2020/04/09/imf\\_igazgato\\_nagy\\_gazdsagi\\_vilagvalsag\\_ota\\_nem\\_volt\\_ekkora\\_recesszio\\_jarvany/](https://index.hu/gazdasag/2020/04/09/imf_igazgato_nagy_gazdsagi_vilagvalsag_ota_nem_volt_ekkora_recesszio_jarvany/) (2020. 04. 10.).

3) Like any economic crisis, this will also have an impact on crime, and the number of known crimes in specific categories of crimes will be increased at least temporarily.

The present study aims to make conservative predictions based on the experiences of the past centuries. So our initial hypothesis is that criminality is likely to increase from the second half of 2020, and this increase will continue for at least 1-2 years, after that. The only question is the extent of the rise and how we can slow or moderate the rise. A recent excellent study that introduces and examines substantive criminal and infringement law rules related to the coronavirus also comes to a similar conclusion: „The coronavirus pandemic means a significant drawback for the life of the whole society, in order to protect life and health, we have to give up several of our activities which have been considered natural, and we can only exercise the right to relocate in a minimal extent. We can only hope that we can survive this period with as little human loss as possible until an effective vaccine will be available to protect against the virus. Until then, we must all be prepared for the fact that the emergency will last even longer, which is expected to mean a recession for the economy. This circumstance – for example, due to the loss of many jobs – could also have a criminogenic effect. After the favorable crime trend of recent years, it cannot be ruled out that the number of criminal offences will increase again as a result of the global crisis. Law enforcement authorities and the actors of criminal justice also have to expect this scenario”<sup>5</sup>.

## II. The Impact of Economic Crises on Crime Over the Last Two Centuries

Looking for a correlation between economic indicators and crime is not a recent research topic. Between 1835 and 1861, based on Bavarian data series, Georg von Mayr showed a quantifiable relationship between changes in grain prices and the number of thefts. The rise in the amount of grain has led to an increase in thefts and vice versa<sup>6</sup>.

In the 1880s, Lacassagne, a famous French criminal lawyer and criminologist, also examined the relationship between economic factors and the development of crime. He sought to discover that changes in wheat prices go in parallel with changes in the number of crimes against property and that the effects of economic crises are also evident<sup>7</sup>.

Crime statistics indicated similarly during the USA's economic crisis of the 1890s. "At the start of the crisis, newspapers reported a huge increase in corruption. On January 1, 1895, article, the Chicago Daily Tribune reported the largest number of embezzlement schemes in 1894 since 1878, which had also been a year of serious depression."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ambrus István: A koronavírus-járvány és a büntetőjog MTA Law Working Papers 2020/5. Budapest, 2020. 22. p. file:///C:/Users/USERUJ/Downloads/2020\_5\_Ambrus.pdf (2020. 04. 11.)

<sup>6</sup> Martens, Ulrich: Wirtschaftliche Krise, Arbeitslosigkeit und Kriminalitätsbewegung. [Economic crisis, unemployment and crime movement]- Freiburg i. Br., 1978. pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup> Lacassagne A.: Marche de la criminalité en France 1825-80. [Crime march in France 1825-80.] In: Revue Scientifique, 1881.

<sup>8</sup> Akerlof, George, A. – Shiller, Robert, J., Animal Spirits. Corvina Kiadó, Budapest, 2011. p. 91.

According to German research led by Exner after the First World War,<sup>9</sup> he came to the following correlation: the number of thefts with will increase with ten thousand cases with every one million new unemployed people.

Between 1882 and 1914, rye and bread prices moved almost entirely together with the number of known thefts in Germany, according to research by Eduard Joachim<sup>10</sup>.

At the beginning of the 20th century, between the two world wars, Dorothy Swaine Thomas examined the correlation between economic cycles and various categories of crime between 1865 and 1915<sup>11</sup>. Demonstrable links have been found<sup>12</sup> between the cyclical changes of the economy and the following groups of criminal offences:

- every known criminal offence,
- non-violent offences against property,
- violent offences against property,
- intentional vandalism,
- violent offences against the person.

She proved that economic cycles move almost in the opposite direction to each crime category: crime decreases in the case of recovery and increases in a recession.

During the Great Depression of 1929-33, according to research,<sup>13</sup> while crime overall in Germany decreased, the increase after 1929 is clearly visible for certain crime groups.

After the Great Depression, the relationship between economic crises and crime has also been examined in the United States. Thorsten Sellin draws attention to the following exciting contexts in her book on the subject:<sup>14</sup>

1. Not all types of crime respond sensitively to changes in economic indicators; therefore, investigations should be carried out separately for certain types of crime.
2. Economic changes do not affect all areas to the same extent.
3. Not all classes of society are equally adversely affected by the economic crisis. The impact of the crisis is more visible in the crime of groups more affected by the disaster.
4. Finally, it is essential to underline that less potent economic downturns have less effect on crime rates than greater ones.

It is interesting to note that Thomas Robert Malthus had come to the same conclusion centuries earlier as the American author in the first half of the 20th century that not all classes of society are equally adversely affected by economic crises. "Unfortunately, although working classes benefit from the general boom, but not as much as in the general downturn. They suffer the greatest need in times of low wages, but cannot receive adequate compensation in times of high salaries neither. For them, (economic) surges always do more harm than good, and keeping the well-being of the majority of the society in mind, our goal has to be to maintain peace and equal spending." <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Exner, F., *Krieg und Kriminalität Kriminalistische Abhandlungen*. [War and Crime Criminalist Treatises]. Heft 1. Leipzig, 1926.

<sup>10</sup> Joachim, Eduard, *Konjunktur und Kriminalität*. [Business cycle and crime] Offenburg, 1933. p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas, Dorothy, Swaine, *Social Aspects of the Business Cycle*. New York, 1927.

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Swaine Thomas: *Social Aspects of the Business Cycle*. New York, 1927. 134. p.

<sup>13</sup> Gleitze, Bruno, *Die Konjunkturkriminalität in der Zeit der Weltwirtschaftskrise*. [The economic crime in the time of the Great Depression] W. Kohlhammer Verlag, Stuttgart und Berlin, 1941. p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Sellin Thorsten, *Research Memorandum on Crime in the Depression*. New York, 1937. p. 19-20.

<sup>15</sup> Cited by Szentes, Tamás, *Ki, és miért van válságban? (Who is in crisis and why?)*. Napvilág Kiadó, Budapest, 2009. p. 108.

After World War II, crime rates and the number and duration of prison sentences increased along with economic indicators. There seemed to be no connection between financial crises and crime.

In 1978 Ulrich Martens analysed the previous research with a critical approach. According to him, "no general statement can be made in time or space that whether and if so, what impact does the economic situation, and in particular, unemployment, have on the development of crime?".<sup>16</sup> In the literature, hesitation can be seen in the 1970s, when researchers began to question the effect of economic crises on crime. "In the early 1970s, as the value system controlling the whole society in financial crises changed, the relationship between economic conditions and crime was again on the list. The most comprehensive research – including international comparisons – was conducted within the framework of the Council of Europe, and its results were published in 1985."<sup>17</sup> Research of the 1970s and 1980s did not prove any correlation between economic crises, recessions, recessions and crime in time, as Katalin Gönczöl points out in a study:

"Contrary to the usual methods of the investigation so far, they have not been based on indicators of the social status of offenders, but have sought to show the impact of changes in the above factors, which are most characteristic of the economies of the countries concerned. The analysis covers the period from 1963 to 1981. During this period, the number of perpetrators per 100,000 people at fault in the Federal Republic of Germany increased from 2,920 to 6,600, in France from 1,350 to 5,370, and in England and Wales from 2,250 to 5,660. In addition to the steady rise in crime, economic development was not even in any country. While national incomes increased to varying degrees between 1950 and 1960, they increased in all three countries, and then declined to a stagnating level in the second half of the 1970s. Unemployment reached 10% and then fell sharply as a result of favourable developments. In the early 1960s, for example, the Federal Republic of Germany did not reach the 1% level. From 1975, however, it rises again, and in 1980 it approached its former highs.

Researchers have found that the cyclical development of the economy has no direct correlation with the evolution of crime. The delayed response to the improvement or deterioration of economic conditions in crime changes is not apparent. Thus, the research did not confirm the hypothesis that the effect of economic terms does not appear in the actual crime, but the statistical series of a later period. Crime has steadily increased in all three countries. This increase, in turn, resulted in countries starting from very different situations in terms of per 100,000 offenders by the end of the investigation period, 1981. Specifically, crime has risen by 400% in France, 230% in the Federal Republic of Germany and 250% in England and Wales in 18 years to reach roughly the same level by 1981. From Katalin Gönczöl: Contrary to the findings of the cited works, international scientific literature based on research completed in the second half of the 1970s once again confirms that crimes against property and economic crime are on the increase during the financial crisis.

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<sup>16</sup> Martens, Ulrich, *Wirtschaftliche Krise, Arbeitslosigkeit und Kriminalitätsbewegung*. [Economic crisis, unemployment and crime movement] Freiburg, 1978. p. 36.

<sup>17</sup> Gönczöl, Katalin, *Válság – munkanélküliség – büntetőpolitika*. [Crisis – unemployment – criminal policy.] p. 3.

[http://www.fszek.hu/szociologia/szszda/gonczol\\_valsag\\_munkanelk.pdf](http://www.fszek.hu/szociologia/szszda/gonczol_valsag_munkanelk.pdf).

In 1976, UNSDRI (United Nations Social Defense Research Institute), based in Rome, showed that during special economic downturns and disasters, some specific forms of economic crime are increasing. In such cases, effective countermeasures must be taken, which, of course, are not limited to criminal law enforcement.

In 1983, a German study showed the inverse relationship, that is, during the economic boom, the prison population and the number of people in psychiatric treatment decreased.

The author of a monograph published in 1987 found the following correlations between the occurrence of unemployment and certain serious crimes:

- burglary 0.572,
- violent crimes against persons,
- vandalism 0.494,
- theft 0.423
- robbery 0.342
- fraud 0.338
- sexual offences 0.158.

From this, it can be seen that, apart from sex crimes, there is a significant relationship between crises and several types of serious crime. Indeed, high unemployment has a robust correlation with economic recessions, a typical and systemic consequence of the crisis.

Another American study<sup>18</sup> aimed to develop a model that explains the evolution of the crime rate against the property by using economic variables. Dependent variables used to measure the speed of property crime were obtained from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Independent variables include public education, the unemployment rate, the GDP rate, the poverty rate, the average income and the amount of heroin and cocaine seized.

A correlation model was used for dependent and independent variables. With the use of a linear regression model, all independent variables were analysed. The results were as follows:

A negative correlation can be found, for example, in the following way: As the amount spent on public education increases, the rate of crime against property decreases. So there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. These relationships are usually felt or inferred by intuition, except the negative correlation between the unemployment rate and the rate of crime against property.

After the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, the fear of crimes against property and violent criminality has grown significantly in society. This was also supported by crime statistics, as a significant increase could be seen in thefts, burglaries and robberies. Between 2009 and 2011 the number of known thefts and burglaries grew by 33%-, from 72,658 to 96,925. Meanwhile, robberies increased by 41%, from 4,708 to 6,636<sup>19</sup>.

According to a report of the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime 2010, monitoring the Impact of Economic Crisis on the Crime (Rapid Impact and Vulnerability Analysis Fund), the economic crisis that broke out in 2007 can be proven

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<sup>18</sup> Reza Fadei-Ttahraniés Thomas M.Green: Crime and Society (=International Journal of Social Economics Vol. 29. No 10. 2002. p. 785-788.

<sup>19</sup> The politics of crime and the financial crisis in Greece Sappho Xenakis and Leonidas K.Cheliotis, 2 August 2012 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/sappho-xenakis-leonidas-kcheliotis/politics-of-crime-and-financial-crisis-in-greece> (August 20, 2012).

by statistical models (especially ARIMA models). Volume. This conclusion was reached based on statistics from 15 countries. The conclusion of the research was:

1) Economic factors have a demonstrable impact on crime statistics and crime trends.

2) In the case of 11 out of the 15 countries examined, there was a significant change in the economic indicators during 2008/2009, which can be called an economic crisis. In 8 of these 11 countries, the deterioration of economic indicators had an impact on crime.

3) Crimes of violence, such as robbery, have shown the closest correlation with economic factors. In addition, in the case of deliberate killings and motorcycle thefts, the relationship was confirmed by statistical methods.

4) The model always indicates a time lag between a change in economic indicators and a change in crime statistics. On average, adverse economic events in criminal statistics show a 4-6 month time shift.

5) On average, for three months, you can predict well the prospective future development of crime at the national level or for a city based on historical crime statistics and economic variables<sup>20</sup>.

The increase in the number of intentional homicides is clearly visible in the timeline based on Mexican crime statistics data. In the year of the outbreak of the economic crisis, the steadily declining trend visibly broke and turned into growth. So the crisis has also increased the number of intentional homicides. A co-movement of robbery and unemployment has been observed in Canada, with the timeline moving almost entirely together<sup>21</sup>.

We agree with the concept that not only economic crises, but economic recovery can often act as a factor in increasing the crime rate.

“A sudden unfavorable change of the economy – the increase in poverty, the increasing number of poor people – can be blamed for the cause of deviance, and rise of crimes, as well as the positive economic growth, if the process is rapid”<sup>22</sup>.

### III. The Main Tendencies of the Hungarian Criminality After the Regime Change

After the general overview, the Hungarian example is also very instructive, as it confirms the international experiences observed in the last two hundred years: The Hungarian regime as also preceded by a deep economic crisis. After that, there was a global financial crisis in 2008, the effects of which lasted for years. After both crises, the definite and robust increase in crime in Hungary could be seen. It must be noted that criminal statistics data of the period since the regime change only give a limited possibility to compare and to draw conclusions, because of the many amendments to the Criminal Code. For example, in 2007 the petty offence limit of the criminal offences against property grew from 10,000 to 20.000 HUF, and in 2011 to 50,000 HUF: all this

<sup>20</sup> [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/GIVAS\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/GIVAS_Final_Report.pdf) (2012. august 18).

<sup>21</sup> [www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/GIVAS\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/GIVAS_Final_Report.pdf) (August 18, 2012).

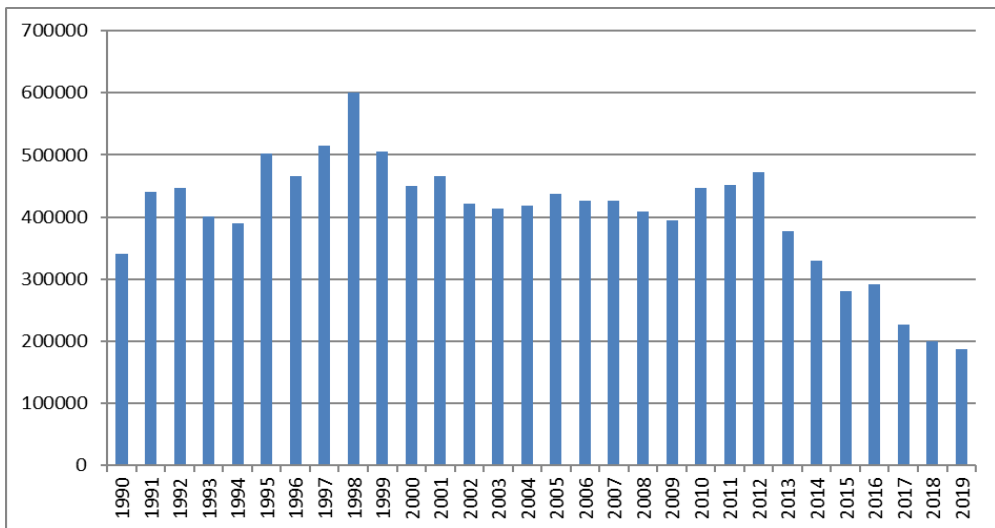
<sup>22</sup> Durkheim É, Az öngyilkosság. (The suicide). Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó 1967. p. 250-251.



excludes tens of thousands of crimes previously classified as criminal offences from the scope of criminal law. These acts are still committed just the same but are now only registered as infringements by the statistics, so they are distorted in a favorable direction. (We note that, in addition to the beneficial “optical effect” on the statistical data, these acts can be prosecuted more quickly and perhaps more effectively as infringements, than in the context of the criminal proceedings, that is slower and involves more guarantees.)

Examining the last three decades, it is visible that there was an increasing trend from the regime change to 1998 as a result of the economic crisis that preceded the change of regime and lasted for a few years after that. After this, a decreasing trend could be seen until 2003. In the following years, crime stagnated slightly around the thirty-year average<sup>23</sup> of around 400,000 until 2009, and it can also be said that this was a period of normalization and ‘criminal consolidation’. Then, the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis could be felt strongly on the increasing trend from 2009-2012, despite various governments “intervention” in growth in 2007 and 2011 by raising thresholds, which would have been even stronger without the intervention. These legislative changes, as already mentioned, have resulted in a formal reduction in the volume of crime, or would have resulted, because the strong growth rate has nevertheless prevailed.

After all this, we can see a declining trend again, with the number of crimes falling to a low of 186,724, a level is never seen since the change of regime. Among the reasons for this, we can also mention the changes in the legislation, the new Criminal Code and the new Criminal Procedure Code are so modern, and proving to be a useful tool in the fight against crime, with improving economic performance and presumably more valuable tools.



Source: KSH

<sup>23</sup> 404, 371 criminal offences per year; generally, between 1990-2019 in the analysed period.



Other factors have played a role in this process, in addition to stricter criminal policy and more efficient performance of tasks by state bodies involved in criminal proceedings – a significant factor of the drastic increase in the number of Hungarian workers abroad in the 2010s. “Based on the data provided by the Hungarian State Treasury, the number of foreign maternity benefit applications in 2018 was 9.907. According to this, every tenth Hungarian was born abroad.” Among Hungarian workers, who are working abroad, young men are overrepresented, who may be the typical perpetrators of crimes from a criminological point of view, so this may also have been a factor in reducing the volume of crime.

In my opinion, the increasing or decreasing trend of crime is influenced by three circumstances:

1) the actual change of the phenomena (increase or decrease of the number of the committed crimes),

2) the role of the formal legal factor (in the case of unchanged crime, the given conduct may be considered a criminal offence due to changes in legislation, or the given conduct may no longer be considered a criminal offence),

3) the efficiency of criminal justice (primarily the work of the investigating authorities plays a crucial role here). That is, to put it, if we see that, according to official statistics, crime is declining over some time (5 or 10 years) in a given area (a city, a county, a country), it may be because fewer crimes are being committed. It may also be the reason as a result of the amendment of the Criminal Code, individual behaviours, which remain unchanged or even increase slightly, are no longer criminal offences but, for example, are offences. Finally, the reason may be that the investigating authority worked less efficiently during the period under review; the population did not trust the police, resulting in fewer reports and higher latency. We should also emphasize that “since latent crime differs from registered crime in both its structure and dynamics, the usefulness of general crime control methods becomes questionable.” It is also essential to point out that an increase in the number of known crimes may not indicate a negative trend. If crime statistics show an increase in an offence where latency is estimated to be low (such as intentional homicide), this is a negative trend, as it means that more homicides have taken place. If, on the other hand, there is an increase in the number of crimes according to official statistics with very high latency (such as fraud or corruption crimes), then the increase may not mean an actual improvement. It can also mean that, with an unchanged or even declining number of offences, more is discovered because of the more efficient work of the investigating authority. In other words, to put it, twice as many homicides in official statistics are negative news. At the same time, twice as much bribery or fraud is most likely positive news for those who are expert in criminology.

#### IV. A Cautious and Moderate Estimate of Hungarian Crime After 2020

The question is not that; there will be a global economic crisis in 2020 or not, economists are only debating how big it will be, whether the pace of growth will slow down, or even the entire world economy could go into recession. Given the impact of the crises of the last two centuries on crime rates, the question is not whether crime will increase, either in Hungary or internationally, but only what its extent will be. We can set up optimistic, realistic and pessimistic scenarios. I will present below the script that I consider to be realistic.

Fortunately, the crisis did not hit the Hungarian economy in a bad situation: "The Hungarian economy – if good things can be found in this fate at all – was hit by the coronavirus in an outstanding state. No matter how big is the catastrophe now, it is true that recent annual GDP growth has ranged from four to five per cent, unemployment has fallen to close to three per cent; employment has reached a historic high. At the same time, the budget deficit has been kept below the EU average, and finally, public debt has also begun to shrink." The initial condition is relatively good. Crime has also declined at an unprecedented rate since the regime change in recent years, at least the number of crimes that have become known has fallen sharply while reaching a record low in 2019, 186.724 crimes that have become known. This number is expected to increase after 2020 as a result of the combined effect of the following factors:

I. from such a low base, some growth could be forecast even without a crisis, all other things being equal,

II. Thousands of Hungarian young, single men who have returned home due to the closure of European countries, from whom typical offenders are excluded in a criminological sense, this is also expected to increase the number of known crimes.

III. the curfew is likely to significantly increase domestic violence and other crimes against persons (life and physical integrity),

IV. if people lose their jobs it will increase the number of crimes against property and violent property,

V. The impact of the economic crisis will be linked to these four factors.

Let's look at the latter, on its own, regardless of the previous four factors<sup>24</sup>. Based on my earlier research in 2012, the following are probable:

1) The crime rates will increase (on average) 4-6 months later after the economic crisis especially in the third quarter of the year of 2020,

2) starting from the crisis of 2008, the number of crimes against persons will increase from the end of 2020, but also in the next 1-2 years,

3) there will be a definite reduction in the name of offences against traffic regulations in 2020 due to travel and travel restrictions as well as quarantine measures and the reduction of tourism to zero,

4) crimes against public order will first show a decreasing (due to quarantine measures) and then an increasing trend (after the lifting of access restrictions),

5) an increase in the number of economic crimes is expected, especially in crimes committed with the help of information technology,

6) crime against the property will first decrease, and then it will also turn into a definite increase, especially from 2021,

7) The number of intentional homicides is also expected to increase as early as 2020.

At the moment, in April 2020, we do not know the extent of changes in the future. The increase (and the decrease in offences against traffic regulations) is already predictable; the question is only to what extent. According to the optimistic scenario, the percentage increase may be small, according to the realist it may be at least double-digit, according to the pessimistic it may reach or exceed 50% for the total crime, and each of the highlighted crime groups examined.

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<sup>24</sup> Obviously, complete independence is not true, as these explanatory variables may also have some degree of stochastic relationship with each other.

## V. Criminal Law as *One of the Possible Tools of Therapy*

As my former professor, József Földvári, often told students in his lectures: "Criminal law is not capable of solving social problems. I go even further: criminal law *alone* cannot solve even criminal law problems."

All we can add to this undoubtedly true finding is that criminal law is a necessary but not sufficient tool for combating crime. If we know the past tendencies, we can prepare for the challenges of the future. We can respond before, during, or after problems arise. The earlier we move, the higher the efficiency can be.

If crime policymakers forecast an increase in crime, first of all, it is possible to consider increasing the number of the investigating authority and raising salaries in connection with the existing staff.

At first glance, the second proposal may seem strange, but an immediate amnesty (pardon law) could also be helpful, in several ways. On the one hand, it would reduce congestion in prisons, which would reduce the likelihood of infection, thereby reducing the risk of the prison staff and the convicted persons to be infected.

The other factor may be that there will also be a need for 'free capacities' from 2021, because, in my view, rising crime rates will only be restrained by a consistently strict criminal policy. There would be a need to build more penitentiary institutions and to accelerate ongoing construction, and to increase the number of workers in prison enforcement and the average monthly income per capita from 2021.

My fourth proposal is to make the statutory provisions of the crimes that are increasing in the Criminal Code more strict. Since Cesare Beccaria's classic work<sup>25</sup> was published in 1764, it has been an axiom in criminal law that two factors deter potential offenders from committing a crime: the severity of the expected punishment and its inevitability (i.e., the mathematical probability of punishment).

In my view, it is vital to make the Criminal Code more strict alongside about strengthening the investigating authorities even though the current Hungarian Criminal Code is already one of the most rigid codes in Europe.

As a formal factor, we could consider raising the value limit for property crimes to 100,000 Forints, instead of the current 50,000 Forints.

This would have a positive effect on future statistics; furthermore, it would partly relieve the investigating authorities in criminal matters. On the other hand, this would, at the same time, increase the workload of the police investigating regulatory offences. (Add immediately: it is faster and easier to deal with theft of HUF 75,000-80,000 as a regulatory offence than in criminal proceedings, it is also more efficient and faster to impose a sanction.) At the same time, the maximum fine that can be imposed in infringement proceedings should be doubled or tripled. The summary of my recommendations are the following:

1. in the case of investigating authorities, we should increase the staff members and the salaries,
2. amnesty for some non-violent offenders to reduce congestion and free up capacity,
3. accelerating the prison construction program, increasing the number of workers in the penal execution from 2021 and raising salaries here as well,

<sup>25</sup> Cesare Beccaria: Dei delitti e delle pene, (On Crime and Punishments) 1764.

4. The make the Criminal Code more strict with regard to criminal offences against individuals, property, public order and economic activities,

5. raising the threshold for crimes against property to 100,000 Forints, in parallel with a firm tightening of the Regulatory Offenses Act and a significant increase in the number of fines.

In addition to all these proposals, as Franz Liszt put it: "The best criminal policy is good social policy." That is, a lot will depend on how the government handles the social policy effects and consequences of the crisis. Together, they will help reduce the negative effects of the crisis on crime and, in the long run, flatten not only the epidemic curve but also the growth waves on time series showing an increase in total offence and individual crimes in the coming years.

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