The Evolution and Future Development of Criminological Forecasting in the Republic of Moldova

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the evolution and future prospects of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova, presented as a key component of contemporary criminological science and crime prevention practice. The study aims to trace the historical stages of its development—from the absence of systematic methods during the Soviet period and the first attempts at their introduction in the post-Soviet era to current trends associated with digital technologies and international cooperation. Particular emphasis is placed on the impact of European integration processes and on the contributions of Moldovan scholars, who have played a pivotal role in shaping a national tradition of criminological analysis. The significance of the study lies in its dual perspective: criminological forecasting is examined both as a theoretical category and as a practical tool for enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement in a context marked by limited resources, institutional barriers, and a complex criminogenic environment. The article underscores that successful progress in this field depends on three interconnected factors: the adoption of modern technologies, the strengthening of the local scientific base, and the intensification of international cooperation. Accordingly, the article has both theoretical and applied value. On the one hand, it reconstructs the trajectory of criminological thought in Moldova; on the other, it offers concrete recommendations for state institutions, law enforcement bodies, and the academic community. The study demonstrates that the integration of artificial intelligence, the establishment of a unified national crime database, and the expansion of international partnerships can significantly elevate Moldova's criminological forecasting system to a qualitatively new level.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence, crime prevention, criminological forecasting, European integration, international cooperation, Moldova, predictive analytics, transitional societies

Introduction

Criminological forecasting has become an indispensable component of contemporary criminological science. It constitutes a multifaceted process directed at the identification, analysis, and modeling of criminal trends, with the ultimate aim of designing effective mechanisms for crime control and prevention. The

significance of this area has grown markedly in the era of globalization and regional integration, particularly for states with transitional economies and complex historical trajectories.

The Republic of Moldova, with its rich yet often contradictory experience in shaping its law enforcement system—from the Soviet legacy to the challenges of post-Soviet transformation—offers a particularly compelling case for examining the evolution of criminological forecasting. This article seeks to trace the historical stages of its development in Moldova, beginning with the Soviet period, while also evaluating the prospects for future advancement in light of technological innovation and the broader processes of European integration.

Prior to 1991, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, as part of the Soviet Union, operated within a highly centralized governance framework. Criminological inquiry and practice were subordinated to ideological imperatives and administrative constraints. Official crime statistics were both limited and fragmentary, thereby precluding the establishment of systematic forecasting methodologies (Connor, 1973). Following independence in 1991, Moldova was confronted with the imperative of reforming its law enforcement institutions. This process unfolded amidst significant internal challenges, including systemic corruption and the instability of the Transnistrian region, as well as external pressures, most notably the strategic aspiration toward European integration (Morari, 2015, pp. 229-230). These dynamics underscored the necessity of aligning with Western standards in crime prevention and criminological research, which in Western contexts are closely linked to the application of advanced technologies (Bujor, 2023, p. 10). Nevertheless, attempts to transpose such models into the Moldovan environment have often been met with skepticism by domestic scholars (Bejan & Bujor, 2014, pp. 5-6).

In recent years, criminological forecasting in Moldova has entered a new phase characterized by the gradual integration of innovative technologies, including elements of artificial intelligence and big data analytics. These developments hold considerable promise for enhancing the scientific accuracy of crime prediction. However, structural constraints—ranging from limited resources and institutional fragility to the enduring weight of historical legacies—continue to impede their full-scale implementation. Against this backdrop, the contributions of Moldovan criminologists such as Valeriu Bujor, Octavian Bejan, Sergiu Ilie, and Victor Guțuleac assume particular significance. Their scholarship laid the intellectual foundations of a national criminological tradition and offered some of the first forecasting models specifically adapted to the Moldovan context (Costachi & Iacub, 2023, pp. 89-90). Their work highlights the importance of grounding contemporary strategies in localized knowledge and experience.

The present article aims to provide a systematic examination of the historical stages in the evolution of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova—tracing its development from the Soviet era, through the transitional

post-Soviet period, to current trajectories—while also assessing the prospects for employing advanced technological tools within the broader framework of European integration. The article proceeds as follows: the first section outlines the historical foundations of criminological forecasting in Moldova; the second analyzes the current state of the field and its institutional constraints; and the third evaluates future prospects in light of technological innovation and international best practices. This framework not only reconstructs the trajectory of criminological thought in Moldova but also advances practical recommendations for policymakers and the academic community alike.

Methodology

The present study employs an interdisciplinary framework that integrates historical-legal, comparative, and statistical methods of analysis. Examining the evolution of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova necessitated engagement with thematic studies, official statistical data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics, as well as reports issued by international organizations such as the OSCE, Eurojust, and Transparency International.

The analytical foundation of the research rests on the works of Moldovan and foreign criminologists, which were subjected to critical reflection through content analysis. The comparative method enabled a juxtaposition of Moldova's experience with practices in the European Union and the United States, thereby revealing divergences in institutional models and levels of technological support. The historical-legal analysis provided insights into the continuity and transformation of approaches to crime forecasting from the Soviet era to the present. Statistical analysis offered a quantitative dimension to the study of trends, while the systemic approach allowed for the integration of individual findings into a coherent framework that highlights the interplay of political, social, and technological factors.

This methodological apparatus ensures the robustness of the findings and makes it possible to assess not only the historical and contemporary trajectories of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova but also the prospects for its future development.

Historical Analysis

The historical analysis of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova makes it possible to trace the evolution of approaches to the study and prediction of crime, from the Soviet period through the post-Soviet transformations. This process unfolded under the combined influence of external and internal factors—including political, social, and technological shifts—that shaped the distinctive trajectory of its development within the national context.

The Soviet Period (1940–1991)

The incorporation of Bessarabia into the Soviet Union in 1940 marked the beginning of criminological practices within the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). During this period, crime forecasting as such did not exist. The collection of statistical data on crime, carried out by the militia, was highly restricted due to its classified status and its subordination to the ideological objectives of the state (Connor, 1973). In the context of post-war reconstruction and the nationalization of private property in the 1940s, there was, for example, a noticeable increase in criminal phenomena such as theft and speculation, which were at times equated with anti-Soviet activity. However, the data on these manifestations were used primarily for immediate operational responses and suppression rather than for long-term analysis or forecasting (Carp & Condrat, 2023, pp. 16-17).

By the mid-twentieth century, the Moldavian SSR witnessed the gradual development and systematization of criminological science and practice. Statistical methods of crime accounting were expanded, crime reporting was institutionalized, and analyses of the social factors influencing criminality became more common. The main emphasis of the period was placed on crime prevention and the reinforcement of Soviet legality, which was also reflected in the scholarly output of the time. Nevertheless, approaches to crime forecasting remained largely formalistic and limited, often subordinated to ideological imperatives, while more substantive criminological analysis and systematic forecasting were only beginning to emerge (Ursan, 2002, pp. 42-44).

In the late Soviet period, the state concentrated its efforts on strengthening public order and combating alcoholism, most notably through the anti-alcohol campaign of 1985–1987. The absence of effective forecasting mechanisms in the implementation of these measures led to significant social shifts, including a reduction in alcohol production that fueled the growth of the shadow economy, illicit manufacturing, and the overall criminalization of society (Bogdanov, 2009, pp. 115-116). In the Moldavian SSR, as in the Soviet Union more broadly, the lack of systematic and sustainable criminological forecasting contributed to the emergence of these negative dynamics (Bejan & Bujor, 2014, pp. 4-5).

The Post-Soviet Transitional Stage (1991–2000s)

The attainment of independence in 1991 represented a turning point that necessitated the reform of the law enforcement system and its adaptation to new social realities. Amidst economic crisis, rising unemployment, and instability in the Transnistrian region, the criminogenic situation in the Republic of Moldova deteriorated, manifesting itself in a surge of street crime and the proliferation of organized groups. These developments underscored the need for reliable criminological forecasts to inform effective measures of control and prevention.

During this period, the first attempts at analyzing criminal trends began to emerge; however, they remained rudimentary, relying largely on the intuitive assessments of experts. Forecasting as an independent field within criminological research in Moldova was underdeveloped and received insufficient scholarly and institutional attention, despite its importance for managing social risks (Țurcan, 2002, pp. 57-59).

      The principal reasons for the weak development of predictive methods lay in limited theoretical and methodological knowledge, the scarcity of empirical studies, and a shortage of qualified personnel. At the same time, it was during this first post-Soviet decade that the systematic study of the social determinants of crime and the methodological foundations of criminological forecasting in Moldova began to take shape. Nonetheless, this work only laid the groundwork for subsequent research, with many themes remaining at an incipient stage (Bejan, 2002, pp. 105-110).

      Beginning in the 2000s, with the onset of integration processes with the European Union, basic statistical tools were introduced into law enforcement institutions, reflecting the influence of Western approaches (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2022). Yet the development of these initiatives was significantly hampered by limited financial resources and systemic corruption (IMF eLIBRARY, 2021). It was at this stage that the foundations of national criminological science were established, with a significant contribution made by Valeriu Bujor. His research on organized crime and its methods of analysis constituted the first step toward the systematization of crime data in Moldova (Costachi & Iacub, 2023, p. 90).

Interim Conclusions

The historical stages in the formation of approaches to criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova illustrate a trajectory from the complete absence of predictive methods during the Soviet period to the initial steps toward their development in the post-Soviet era. This process was constrained by institutional, technological, and social factors, setting the Moldovan experience apart from more developed Western systems such as CompStat. A further analysis of the current state and future prospects will make it possible to evaluate the extent to which historical legacies continue to shape contemporary strategies of crime control.

The Current State and Challenges of Criminological Forecasting in the Republic of Moldova

The contemporary stage in the development of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova is marked by a gradual shift from reliance on intuitive assessments to the adoption of analytical instruments. This transformation has been shaped both by domestic reforms and by external drivers linked to the

processes of European integration. Nevertheless, the trajectory of this development continues to confront a series of challenges, including institutional constraints, limited resources, and complex social conditions. An examination of the current state of the field makes it possible to assess the progress achieved thus far while also identifying the obstacles that impede the effectiveness of predictive approaches.

Current Methods and Achievements

Since the early 2000s, the Republic of Moldova has shown a gradual trend toward integrating statistical methods and analytical tools into law enforcement practices. This development has been largely driven by the adoption of Western data-driven governance models and has been supported institutionally through international projects facilitated by the OSCE, UNDP, and the Council of Europe (OSCE, 2024). These initiatives have strengthened the analytical capabilities of the police, advanced the implementation of intelligence-led policing principles, and improved systems for collecting and processing crime-related data. Consequently, the quality of justice statistics has improved, aligning more closely with international standards (United Nations Moldova, 2022), thereby laying the groundwork for more effective police planning and the development of preventive measures.

According to official data from the National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova, the recorded crime rate in 2024 was 102 cases per 10,000 inhabitants, a 2.5% increase from 2023 but a 6.5% decrease from 2020. These figures indicate a gradual stabilization of crime trends and significant progress in monitoring efforts (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2025). A notable contribution to criminological methodology was made by Octavian Bejan in 2023, who developed a predictive model for individual recidivism based on ten criminological indicators, including an offender's attitudes toward the law, morality, work, authorities, and their own detention. This conceptual model aims to enhance the precision of individualized criminal responsibility and sentencing, though its practical application remains limited (Bejan, 2023). These advancements underscore the gradual development of an analytical framework, albeit one that remains limited in scope and depth.

Key Challenges

Despite advancements, criminological prevention efforts in the Republic of Moldova encounter several obstacles. A primary challenge is the lack of financial and human resources, which impedes the implementation of preventive initiatives and restricts the capacity for effective planning and the adoption of modern methods, such as forecasting criminological trends. Effective criminological forecasting also demands strict adherence to methodological principles, a critical prerequisite for successful preventive activities (Botnaru, 2023, pp. 77-78).

Moreover, some scholars emphasize the need to shift from increasing the quantity of scientific publications to enhancing the quality of criminological research, particularly in forecasting (Ilie, 2002, p. 68), and advocate for greater integration of research outcomes into prevention and response frameworks (Casian, 2002).

Corruption within Moldova's law enforcement agencies remains a significant barrier. It compromises the objectivity and reliability of crime statistics, hindering their use for reliable criminological forecasting and necessitating robust anti-corruption measures alongside independent scientific approaches to analyzing crime trends (Bejan & Bujor, 2014, pp. 4-5). Recently, the legal community has raised concerns about a growing trend of law enforcement agencies manipulating statistical data on crime rates (Malic, 2025), leading the Supreme Court of Justice to issue a related advisory opinion (Curtea Supremă de Justiție, 2025).

Lastly, the historical legacy of the post-Soviet era in Moldova, marked by a lack of foundational research, fragmented analytics, and a focus on reactive measures, continues to shape contemporary criminological approaches, delaying the shift toward proactive crime prevention strategies (Costachi & Iacub, 2023, pp. 89).

The Role of International Cooperation

International cooperation is instrumental in advancing criminological forecasting in Moldova by providing access to advanced technologies, expert knowledge, and shared databases. This is particularly vital given the country's constrained domestic resources and complex criminogenic environment. As a transitional economy, Moldova faces challenges such as data fragmentation, the impact of transnational organized crime—including human trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering—and geopolitical instability stemming from the Transnistrian conflict. These factors impede the independent development of robust forecasting systems, making international partnerships a cornerstone of modernizing national criminology.

The European Union is a key partner for Moldova, with cooperation intensifying following the country's candidate status in 2022 and the start of accession negotiations in 2023. The agreement with Eurojust, effective since 2016, has enabled data sharing to forecast cross-border crimes, such as money laundering and phishing, and supported the formation of joint investigative teams utilizing analytical tools for predictive analysis. In 2023, Moldovan prosecutor Mihail Ivanov began serving as a liaison prosecutor at Eurojust, strengthening coordination on 35 new cases, including projections related to organized crime. Additionally, access to Horizon Europe programs, such as the FLOURISH project for assessing risks among vulnerable populations, has equipped Moldova with cutting-edge data analysis tools, enhancing the precision of national forecasts. Funding of €525 million from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 2022 for reforms, including anti-corruption mechanisms with

forecasting elements like the Anti-Corruption Court, has also significantly advanced this field. Transparency International reported an improvement in Moldova's Corruption Perceptions Index from 30 in 2016 to 43 in 2024, partly due to the adoption of EU-supported international standards (Transparency International Moldova, 2024).

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) also significantly contributes to crime prevention and response in Moldova through its mission, operational since 2018. OSCE programs focus on countering human trafficking and transnational risks, offering workshops on joint investigative teams and forecasting techniques. For example, a November 2018 workshop with Eurojust trained 15 Moldovan prosecutors and police officers in using data to predict human trafficking, marking a pivotal step in refining local methodologies. The OSCE also facilitates information sharing to evaluate crime trends in the context of the Transnistrian conflict, where data fragmentation remains a significant obstacle (OSCE, 2018).

Interpol enhances criminological forecasting through its global data-sharing network, in which Moldova ranks 17th among 190 countries for database contributions. In 2018, then-Prime Minister Pavel Filip discussed with Interpol President Meng Hongwei strategies to strengthen information exchange for predicting cybercrime and organized crime. Operations such as "Hotspot" (2023) and "Operational Assistance in Moldova" integrate biometric checks with analytics to anticipate threats, including terrorism and arms trafficking, improving forecast accuracy by 20–30% through international data integration (Interpol, 2024).

International cooperation also bolsters institutional capacity and training. For example, the 2021 initiative *Promovarea Activității Poliției bazată pe Drepturile Omului (Promotion of Human Rights-Based Policing)*, supported by the OSCE, trained Moldovan law enforcement in data-driven prevention, directly tied to forecasting. The establishment of the Horizon Europe National Office in 2023 to coordinate participation in criminological modeling projects has elevated specialists' expertise, as demonstrated by the rise in joint investigative teams involving Moldova from 5 in 2016 to 21 in 2024. These efforts facilitate the adaptation of international practices to local contexts, though cultural factors, corruption, and the complex situation in Transnistria remain formidable barriers. The Organized Crime Index underscores the limited implementation of international conventions in Transnistria, highlighting the need for continued efforts (Organized Crime Index, 2023).

Interim Conclusions

The current state of criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova represents a transitional stage, where advancements in basic analytical methods and local scientific developments are hindered by institutional and resource

constraints. Challenges such as corruption, instability, and technological deficiencies require a multifaceted approach, encompassing both domestic reforms and international collaboration. Further exploration of future prospects will facilitate the identification of strategies to surmount these obstacles and integrate advanced technologies into national practice.

Prospects for the Development of Criminological Forecasting in the Republic of Moldova

The prospects for advancing criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova hinge on the integration of modern technologies, international expertise, and local scientific advancements. This process seeks to overcome existing challenges and enhance the efficacy of crime prevention amid global transformations and European integration. An analysis of these prospects enables the formulation of strategic recommendations that account for technological innovations and the country's sociocultural context.

Integration of Modern Technologies

A primary prospect is the adoption of artificial intelligence and big data analytics to anticipate criminal trends. Technologies such as PredPol, successfully utilized in the United States and European Union countries, can predict crime "hotspots" with up to 90% accuracy using historical data (Gizmodo, 2021). In Moldova, the foundation for such approaches is already in place, with access to data from the National Bureau of Statistics and local initiatives, such as Octavian Bejan's recidivism prediction model. Expanding these efforts, particularly through the creation of a national crime database, could significantly enhance forecast precision. There is also a pressing need to establish a dedicated criminological forecasting unit within Moldova's Ministry of Internal Affairs, employing advanced analytical tools (Cicala, 2020, p. 20). However, successful implementation will necessitate substantial investments in infrastructure and training, which remains a critical priority (Botnaru, 2023, p. 76).

Role of International Cooperation

The advancement of criminological forecasting in Moldova is closely linked to its full integration into the European Union, which will grant access to the European Public Prosecutor's Office for global data sharing. In 2025, during parliamentary elections, Sweden allocated €20 million for monitoring and cybersecurity, bolstering capabilities to predict hybrid threats. As a result, international cooperation is transforming criminological forecasting in Moldova, enhancing its effectiveness by an estimated 25–40%, according to Eurojust, and establishing a

framework for systematic crime prevention (European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation, 2014).

European Union integration provides access to international programs, such as Eurojust initiatives and the OSCE Mission in Moldova, which promote the adoption of cutting-edge forecasting methods. For example, law enforcement training programs incorporate analytical tools adapted to local contexts. Collaboration with neighboring countries like Romania, where predictive policing is advancing, could foster the exchange of expertise and technologies. Nonetheless, adapting these approaches requires careful consideration of Moldova's cultural and social dynamics, including its multiethnic population and the ongoing instability in Transnistria (Costachi & Iacub, 2023, p. 90).

Development of the Local Scientific Base

The enhancement of national criminological science plays a critical role in advancing forecasting capabilities. Contributions from local scholars, including Valeriu Bujor, Octavian Bejan, Sergiu Ilie, Victor Guțuleac, and others, have established a foundation for systematic crime analysis. Further studies by Moldovan criminologists have conceptualized preventive activities as a multi-phase process involving investigation, analysis, forecasting, and planning. This framework emphasizes the need to address both current and emerging challenges influenced by conducive factors, requiring rigorous adherence to methodological standards (Botnaru, 2023). Currently, the evaluation of future crime trends serves as a vital instrument for mitigating potential threats and forms a cornerstone of prevention strategies (Costachi & Iacub, 2023).

Practical Recommendations

To advance criminological forecasting effectively in the Republic of Moldova, a blend of strategic and tactical measures is necessary. Given the challenges and opportunities associated with adopting modern technologies and strengthening institutions, the following recommendations aim to improve analytical quality, broaden international collaboration, and build a sustainable scientific-practical foundation:

1. Establish a dedicated criminological forecasting unit within Moldova's Ministry of Internal Affairs, equipped with state-of-the-art analytical and IT tools for big data processing. Deploy artificial intelligence systems to predict crime "hotspots" and recidivism.
2. Formulate and implement a national digital criminology strategy, incorporating measures for collecting, integrating, and analyzing data from diverse sources (including Transnistria), while promoting inter-agency and international cooperation.

3. Increase budgetary allocations for acquiring equipment, software licenses, and enhancing professional training in criminological research and analytics.
4. Establish ethical standards for algorithm and artificial intelligence use. Develop regulations ensuring transparency, non-discrimination, and the protection of citizens' rights in forecasting systems.
5. Intensify international cooperation and expertise exchange. Capitalize on Moldova's prospective EU membership to integrate into European data-sharing networks, engage in Eurojust, Horizon Europe, and OSCE Mission projects, and promote scientific exchanges with Romania and other neighbors.
6. Foster and sustain the local scientific base. Support applied criminological research, implement innovative forecasting methodologies, and train specialists through partnerships between academic institutions and law enforcement.
7. Develop a unified national crime database. Provide centralized access to regularly updated data for all relevant agencies, enabling the use of advanced analytical tools.

Interim Conclusions

The prospects for advancing criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova are closely linked to the integration of artificial intelligence, international collaboration, and the enhancement of national scientific capacity. The success of these efforts hinges on overcoming institutional barriers, investing in technology, and addressing local contextual factors. This approach will not only bolster the efficacy of crime prevention but also strengthen Moldova's role as a proactive contributor to the European security landscape.

Conclusion

Criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova has followed a complex trajectory, evolving from the absence of systematic methods in the Soviet era to early analytical efforts in the post-Soviet period and current endeavors to incorporate advanced technologies. This evolution reflects both historical limitations and the potential for further progress within the context of European integration and globalization. Drawing on the analysis conducted, key findings can be distilled, emphasizing the critical role of this field in ensuring national security and public order.

Research Findings

A historical review indicates that the Soviet period was marked by fragmented data collection and a lack of predictive methodologies, driven by ideological

priorities and a repressive approach. The post-Soviet transitional phase saw initial efforts to analyze criminal trends, though these were constrained by economic and institutional challenges. The present landscape shows advancement through the adoption of information systems and local scientific contributions. Nevertheless, challenges such as corruption, instability, and resource deficiencies continue to hinder the full realization of this field. Prospects, such as the integration of artificial intelligence and international collaboration, offer new opportunities but require strategic investments and adaptation to local contexts.

Practical Significance

The findings of this study are of practical importance to state institutions, law enforcement agencies, and the academic community. Formulating a national digital criminology strategy, promoting interdisciplinary research, and integrating data from all regions, including Transnistria, could significantly enhance crime prevention efforts. Additionally, strengthening the local scientific base, higher education institutions, and fostering knowledge exchange with Romania and other EU countries will support the development of a proactive security approach.

Prospects for Further Research

Future research should focus on assessing the efficacy of implemented technologies, evaluating the ethical implications of AI algorithms, and developing models that incorporate migration and economic factors. Special emphasis should be placed on integrating data from uncontrolled territories and analyzing the long-term effects of European integration on crime dynamics. Such research will require collaboration with international organizations and access to updated statistical data from the National Bureau of Statistics.

Final Conclusions

Criminological forecasting in the Republic of Moldova is at a critical turning point, where historical legacies converge with the possibilities afforded by advanced technologies and international collaboration. The success of these efforts depends on surmounting institutional barriers, investing in science and technology, and addressing local nuances. Progress in this field will not only strengthen national security but also elevate Moldova's role as a proactive contributor to the European security landscape. This study highlights the necessity of a holistic approach that bridges the past, present, and future of criminological thought in the country.

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