The organisation of the criminal investigative power of 25 regional police forces

Summary

For several years now, there are signs that there would be too little expertise among criminal investigation departments of the police in the Netherlands. This is said to apply in particular for the area between petty crime on the one hand and organized crime on the other hand. This area which in the police field is known as the ‘middle area’ or the ‘middle crime’, covers among others burglary, fraud, sexual offences, juvenile delinquency and violent crime.

This was the main reason to make an inventory of the way in which the 25 regional police forces in our country have organized their criminal investigation power in general, as well as expert investigation power in particular. In all of the 25 forces one or more force staff members were interviewed as well as the head of the education program of the ‘criminal investigation school’. Due to limited time, the study was - generally spoken - restricted to the state of affairs in a formal sense. Everyday practice might deviate more or less from the formal picture.

The study gives a review of the organization of the 25 police forces in the Netherlands. At several organizational levels in the forces, from local to regional, there appear to be units and/or officials (experts) who carry out investigative activities. Grosso modo, the petty crime is handled by policemen at the local level, the ‘middle crime’ by district investigation units and organized crime by regional investigation units. This is a rough categorization only which in practice is not so rigid. In all forces there is a unit that supports investigation processes in other units by providing information, intelligence, manpower etcetera.

Besides, combinations of cooperating forces constitute five special teams for tackling cases exceeding the interests of individual forces.

Within the limitations of this study, the main conclusion is that, contrary to the reason for starting this research, the police forces somehow have arranged the availability of investigation power and expert knowledge is arranged. This holds for the fields of petty crime, the ‘mid crime’ and for the organized crime.