Summaries

*Justitiële verkenningen* (Judicial explorations) is published nine times a year by the Research and Documentation Centre of the Dutch Ministry of Justice in cooperation with Boom Juridische uitgevers. Each issue focuses on a central theme related to judicial policy. The section *Summaries* contains abstracts of the internationally most relevant articles of each issue. The central theme of this issue (nr. 7, 2006) is *Identity fraud*.

**Identity theft; lessons from abroad**  
*J.E.J. Prins and N.S. van der Meulen*  
In this article, the authors provide an overview of the prevalence and developments of identity theft in three regions, the US, the UK, and the EU. After a brief introduction to the phenomenon of identity theft, the authors discuss the different policy and regulatory initiatives introduced against identity theft in the three regions. They do so against the background of different policy options available: transparency, prevention and enforcement. Based on a first analysis of the potential effectiveness of the different measures, the authors conclude their analysis with a set of relevant lessons and possible countermeasures for Dutch policy makers.

**Behind the screens; the experiences of identity theft victims**  
*N.S. van der Meulen*  
Despite the considerable prevalence of identity theft, especially in the United States, relatively little attention is devoted to the severe consequences the crime has on its victims. In this article, the author identifies the different types and forms of identity theft. Subsequently, she describes how identity theft, in different ways, negatively affects the lives of victims. Through personal stories from victims and limited research from non-profit organisations like the Identity Theft Resource Center and the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, the author tries to provide her readers with the necessary insights about the distinct experiences of identity theft victims. In the conclusion the author reflects on the relevancy of the experiences of American victims to the Netherlands and takes a brief look at the future of identity theft victims.
Identity fraud and government

J.H.A.M. Grijspink

Identity fraud – using or stealing somebody else’s identity with malicious intent – is becoming a major issue in our information society. In this article its roots and impact are explored, focusing on three factors that cause identity fraud to get out of control. Law enforcement might become more and more ineffective because traces left by identity fraudsters direct towards the victim instead of the fraud. After a successful identity fraud victims tend to have problems proving their innocence. Combining figures regarding forensic biometrics gives a better idea of the dimensions of identity fraud in the criminal law enforcement chain. Elsewhere the problem could be even bigger while they lack effective instruments. Next, improving identity checking procedures is discussed. The author concludes that the criminal justice chain should be given priority in combating identity fraud, because it directly affects the legitimacy of the state. The identity chain should come next, because of its leverage on other social chains. Most of the big projects underway to improve the identity chain (biometric passport, national citizen number), however, run the risk of backfiring.

Identity fraud and social security

J. Barense and J.A. Eijkelenboom

This article describes to what extent identity fraud occurs on the job market and in the area of social security. According to the authors, two employees of the Public Prosecutors Fraud Office, identity fraud is not really a separate type of fraud. In its essence, it’s a trick about the ‘abuse of identifying data’. It is mostly a case of the Siod (Social Intelligence and Investigation Unit) if false identification papers are used on a large scale to help illegal persons with obtaining jobs. The authors describe examples of the Siod’s criminal investigations over the last three years. They also describe measures that the government has taken to battle identity fraud in general, and in this area specifically. They conclude that, by making identity fraud one of the spearheads, the government now starts to realize what the size of the problem is. Implementing the right instruments will be an issue for the near, but also the far future.
Biometrics; miracle tool?
A. Ruifrok

Biometrics is regularly announced in news items as a panacea against terrorism, security problems, fraud, illegal migration, etcetera. Biometrics, which can be defined as the (automatic) identification or recognition of people based on physiological or behavioural characteristics, is not a single method or technique, but consists of a number of techniques, with each their own advantages and drawbacks. This paper includes a general introduction into a number of issues concerning verification and identification, and an overview of different biometric modalities. None of the available biometric modalities combines the properties of an ideal biometrics system. We have to acknowledge that biometrics never can be 100% secure. However, if requirements and applications are carefully considered, biometric systems can provide an important contribution to investigation, authentication and safety.