

Crime Prevention at the European Level

by

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1. Introduction

It is the 3rd time that I have the pleasure to give a short presentation on EU activities at the German Prevention Conference. The first time was five years ago in 2004, and one cannot review this period without making note of the remarkable progress in the European Union.

Yesterday we had the elections for the **European Parliament** – in principle a joyful event. Never before were so many countries joined in such a strong structure and such close cooperation in Europe as today. Europe is practically united. The European Union covers more than half of the countries in the region. If things develop as planned – the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon is still work in progress - this Parliament could be equipped with far-reaching powers in the future.

The Member States of the EU do have different traditions, history, and legal systems but they have similar approaches to tackling crime, new threats to deal with and the need to develop crime prevention policies to emerging crime patterns.

Cooperation among EU Member States **in criminal justice matters** takes place nowadays on the basis of conventions worked out within the framework of the Council of Europe. Member States have adopted provisions similar in content in certain areas of criminal law, for instance corruption (of EU or foreign officials, private sector corruption) or money laundering. The establishment of Europol, Eurojust, and the network of liaison officers improved the cooperation especially in the investigation and enforcement of offences.

But what are the innovations for **cooperation in crime prevention** on a European level?

There are thousands of promising crime prevention projects in Europe: Hundreds apply annually for funding through the European financing programmes (like the program Prevention and fight against crime“ and „Daphne III“). There is also a growing interest in the European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA), shown by the rising number of nominated national projects.

And there is a remarkable change in the crime policies of member states. From more traditional approaches to tackling crime by repressive methods and criminal justice most of the Member States have put more emphasis on preventive strategies during the last decades. There was the general perception that the multiple causes of crime can only be tackled by a holistic approach – that is common sense I would say nowadays in the EU.

That is of course good news. The bad news, however, is that many projects are still isolated local experiences and not known on a national or even international basis.

2. Overview about actors in Europe

But why is that so? There are already several organizations that operate in this field on a European level:

The **European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS)**, founded already more than 20 years ago, is a non-governmental organization which brings together **local authorities**, mainly city councils. It supports the exchange of information and good practices in the field of **urban safety** and crime reduction policies. It promotes the role of local authorities in national and European policies.

The **European Forum for Restorative Justice**, a much younger organization, is aimed at establishing victim-offender mediation and other restorative justice practices. Its target groups are **public authorities** and other national and international organizations.

The **International Observatory for Juvenile Justice (IOJJ)** is a Belgium foundation based in Brussels and focused on juvenile delinquency. It promotes „international development strategies of appropriate policies, legislation, and intervention methods within the context of global juvenile justice“.

The **European Knowledge Network (EUKN)** which is housed in The Hague, Netherlands, shares knowledge and experience on urban issues. It aims to "support policy makers and practitioners in developing effective urban policy and to promote vitality of Europe's towns and cities". Sixteen member States are members of this network.

So if there are already actors busy in this field, does the exchange of good practice already work on this basis or is more activity needed? Is there –that is my main question - a place or a need for another network like the EUCPN?

By the way, speaking of European stakeholders in this field one cannot help but mention HEUNI. The **European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control**, based in Helsinki and founded already in 1981, is operating within the framework of the **United Nations**. Its main objective is servicing the European countries by providing prompt information on emerging crime issues and by promoting information exchange on crime prevention and control among European countries.

Most of the above mentioned organizations are focused on specific issues and not on crime prevention exclusively. They are all NGO's and that is an essential difference from the EUCPN, which is an **governmental** network. So the target groups differ. Furthermore not all member states participate in the mentioned organizations. That are the main reasons why the information exchange on crime prevention issues had to be improved.

So it seems that there is a need for a governmental network on a European level but it was quite a long way to reach a sort of institutionalized cooperation.

3. History, subject and organisation of the EUCPN

The **Treaty of Amsterdam of 1999** may be seen as a starting point for this process as it aims to provide its citizens with "a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security, and justice" by inter alia.. prevention of crime – "organized or otherwise". Best practices should be developed, and a network of competent national authorities and their cooperation should be strengthened.

Priority areas in Crime Prevention were identified in the Communication of the EU -Commission on "Prevention and control of organized crime..." of 2000. On its basis the **Forum of Organized Crime** was founded, which gathered experts in this field and organized several workshops in Brussels in 2002. As far as I know, this forum, which did not establish stable relationships amongst its members, has not met for several years. After the terrorist attacks of Madrid and London organized crime, like drug and arms trafficking, human trafficking and money laundering, have been subsumed into anti terrorist policy, as many of the terrorist activities also cover these forms of crime.

The European Union Strategy for the beginning of the new millennium called in its recommendation 6 for the establishment of a network of experts on crime prevention. But the concrete proposal of setting up a European Network was definitely presented at the **Tampere** summit.

The EUCPN was set up by Council Decision 2001/427/JHA in May 2001 to promote crime prevention activity in EU Member States. Its main objective is to develop a platform for EU Member States to exchange experiences, knowledge and best practices. Valuable good practice in preventing crime – mainly volume crime – should be contributed by the network.

The substantial **focus** actually lies on three areas of crime:

Juvenile, urban and drug- related crime.

The network is represented by a **Board**, which consists of nominated Representatives from all member states. Practitioners, researchers and other experts form the **contact points** of the network.

4. How the exchange of information works

Two major instruments for exchanging information and best practice are the website and the annual Best Practice Conference:

The **website** of the EUCPN, hosted by the government of the UK, is the main source for information and quite a success. The number of visits has increased by nearly 100% over the year 2008. It shows the growing interest in the activities of the EUCPN. It is mainly used by governmental institutions, researchers, and practitioners. Until now the information collected on the website has been in English. It may be sensible - and there are discussions going in this direction - to lift this language restriction in future in order to make the website even more popular for the interested public.

While the **information exchange** between governmental experts – the National Representatives – was quite efficient, regular contacts between local or regional practitioners were lacking under the umbrella of the EUCPN. The so-called Best Practice Conference, which takes place annually during the last quarter of the year, was the one (and only) occasion when those “contact points” could meet.

The last Best Practice Conference took place in November 2008 in Paris and was attended by about 250 experts and representatives of local, regional, and national organizations. The theme was “**Crime Prevention in Urban Spaces**“, and topics for discussion related to urban development design and renovation, to the use of video protection technologies, and to public space management.

The next BPC will be hosted by Sweden and will take place on the 9/10th December 2009 in Stockholm. The theme is “**Preventing crime and victimisation among children and young people**“ and I am very glad that we will get more detailed information about it today.

The themes as well as the format of these annual BPC vary from year to year, and in the past it was up to the relevant presidencies of the EU to choose the theme for the conference. The rotating Presidency made it difficult to have a unique format and continuity in the substance of the conferences. This was the subject of discussions in the EUCPN Board last year and guidelines were elaborated which deal with organizational and structural questions of the conferences. A better coordination is foreseen for the future.

All the activities of the network took place on a basic financial and personal background: The network has a very small organizational structure. The **secretariat** of the EUCPN actually has a very limited capacity, it is with one part-time employee from the EU Commission understaffed, and its functioning is permanently an issue for discussion amongst the National Representatives. The functioning of the secretariat is therefore a key priority for the future.

5. What are the achievements of the EUCPN?

If we take into consideration that this new area of cooperation only got going in 2001, then we can certainly say that quite a lot of work has been done since then. "Since 2001 the EUCPN has played a positive role in raising the profile of crime prevention at the European level and facilitating networking between member states." (Final Report, Evaluation of the EUCPN 2009 Executive Summary, i)

Indeed, within this short period of time, a network of governmental experts of all Member States was installed and a lively information exchange took place on the issue of good practices in crime prevention.

But, on the other hand, if one expects national crime prevention strategies to be influenced by the EUCPN and initiatives of the European Council or the Commission to have been developed in close cooperation with the EUCPN, one would have to come to the conclusion that these expectations are far from being fulfilled.

6. Evaluation of the EUCPN

At the summit in 2004 the heads of states were already in agreement that the EUCPN should be further strengthened and professionalized. During the German Presidency an internal progress check took place. On this basis an external evaluation of the EUCPN took place in 2008, initiated by the European Council and financed by the EU Commission. Its aim is to strengthen the network and to improve the impact on crime prevention in the EU. The assessment process was undertaken by a British consultant firm - the Center for Strategy and Evaluation Services – which has already undertaken several evaluation assignments with other EU institutions - like the EMCDDA.

Almost one hundred survey questionnaires were filled out by National Representatives, researchers, practitioners and international organizations. Over 80 interviews were conducted. The final report – more than 100 pages long – lists the merits and potential of the network as well as its deficits and shortcomings and will soon be available on the website of the EUCPN. On this basis a working group was installed which looked more deeply into this issue and worked out proposals for the future structure and organization of the network. A reform of the EUCPN is planned for the end of this year.

The legal and organizational consequences of the evaluation are still under consideration by the member states. First steps were decided last week in a Board meeting held under the Czech Presidency in Pilzen. Monika Olsson participated in that meeting and furthermore chaired the working group on the Future of the EUCPN.

So now I would like to give the floor to Monika for more detailed information.

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