

***Overview of Crime Prevention in Europe -
the European Crime Prevention Network, EUCPN,
and its activities during the Swedish Presidency***

by

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The former presentation outlined the main strands of crime prevention at an EU level, whilst also touching on UN work on crime prevention, and went on to talk about the development of the European Crime Prevention Network, EUCPN.

I understand that it has become a tradition that the current or incoming chair of the EUCPN is invited to speak here. This presentation will follow this tradition and elaborate on the present state of the EUCPN and its possible future, as I see it as incoming chair, chairing the EUCPN during the Swedish Presidency of the EU in autumn 2009.

I will talk briefly about the following items:

1. The evaluation of the EUCPN and the follow-up process on the conclusions of the evaluation
2. The substance of the evaluators' suggestions and the EUCPN Board's recommendations on the future of the EUCPN
3. The plans of the Swedish Presidency – starting on 1 July – concerning the EUCPN
4. The priorities of the Swedish Presidency in the crime and criminal justice area.

1. The evaluation of the EUCPN and the follow-up process on the conclusions

As the former speaker said, the findings of an extensive evaluation of the EUCPN were presented a couple of months ago. The main conclusions of this evaluation were¹:

- That since its establishment in 2001, the EUCPN had played a positive role in raising the profile of crime prevention at a European level and in increasing and facilitating networking between Member States.
- That the necessity of cooperation at a European level in the crime prevention field, and the EUCPN's role in this respect, were strongly underlined by key stakeholders and the EUCPN's wider target groups.
- That the impact of the EUCPN had so far been very limited and that there was little awareness of its activities.
- That the performance of the EUCPN in relation to the specific goals set out in the Council decision establishing the EUCPN had been mixed.

¹ Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services (2009): Final report. Evaluation of the European Crime Prevention Network. United Kingdom. www.cses.co.uk

The evaluators thus concluded that the potential of the EUCPN was far from being realised.

The evaluators found that the main explanation for the underperformance of the EUCPN lay with the EUCPN itself and its “organisation failure”, as they expressed it.

In addition, their view was that the development of the EUCPN had been hampered by a lack of political will to develop crime prevention at a European level and by the absence of a strong EU legal basis for general crime prevention. Furthermore, the many different approaches to crime prevention at national level in the original 15 Member States and later in the 27 Member States of the EU was seen as a complication that had limited the possible development of knowledge.

In analysing the possible explanations for underperformance – in terms of results compared to goals – the evaluators argued that while the goals were probably appropriate/achievable, there were shortcomings in the organisation required to pursue them. The evaluators pointed to a number of factors, amongst them:

- The rotation of the Presidency every six months, which made it difficult to adopt a strategic approach to developing the EUCPN and to ensuring continuity in its priorities and activities;
- The lack of a strong Secretariat, resulting in a lack of support for key activities and for developing cooperation with other organisations;
- The lack of financial resources, which led to difficulties in launching new projects and disseminating good practices, etc.;
- The lack of clarity over the role of the EUCPN in crime prevention research.

The evaluation presented three options for the future of the EUCPN²:

1. Status quo
2. Further developing the EUCPN
 - (i) Development based on the current legal/financial status
 - (ii) Giving the EUCPN a legal personality and its own budget
 - (iii) Combining the EUCPN with a European agency/network
3. Winding down the EUCPN.

The general conclusion of the evaluators was that the EUCPN should continue to be developed as an EU network covering the 27 Member States (option 2). It was argued that this would be in the best long-term interests of the Member States and the EU as a whole. The evaluators pointed out that their conclusion was supported by feedback

² Ibid p. 85

from the evaluation suggesting that there was a broad consensus in favour of developing the EUCPN and making it function more effectively.

At the request of the current Czech Presidency, Sweden took responsibility for chairing an informal working group on the future of the EUCPN that was set up at the beginning of February. This group was charged with scrutinising the evaluation and presenting recommendations for future action to the Board based on this.

The group met on two occasions and had a number of discussions with the European Commission. This was necessary for various reasons, but primarily in this connection because since 2001, the Commission has hosted and is responsible for staffing the EUCPN Secretariat. Secondly, at this point, it does not seem plausible to give the EUCPN a legal personality, and consequently it is not in a position to manage its own budget and its own secretariat.

The informal working group produced a document of recommendations, which was presented to the Board on 4 June. The Board approved the recommendations presented by the group, with some amendments.

The EUCPN was set up by a Council decision, agreed on by the Council of Ministers in 2001, and the EUCPN Board itself cannot amend this decision. Any revision of the decision has to be made by the Council of Ministers, with preparatory work being done in a Council working group where revisions will be negotiated between the representatives of the Member States' governments.

The UK and Sweden have thus drafted an initiative to repeal the current Council decision and to amend it in a new draft Council decision. Currently (June 2009) eight more Member States have agreed to co-sponsor this initiative. Let us take a look at the main changes suggested in the new draft.

2. The substance or content of what the evaluators and the EUCPN Board suggest for the future

The main changes suggested by the informal working group, as supported by the Board and enshrined in a new draft Council decision on the EUCPN, are the following:

1. Focusing on a few main tasks:

- a) Networking – supporting contacts and cooperation
- b) Collecting, analysing and disseminating information and best practices
- c) Providing advice.

2. Deciding that the main tools should be:

- a) Website
- b) Best practice conference
- c) Annual report.

3. Asking the EUCPN to target EU and national actors – underlining the need for national representatives to act as an interface between the EU and national level and local and regional levels, with the possibility of designating an unlimited number of contact points at regional and local levels.

4. Strengthening the Secretariat – so as to make it work for the Network and for the Member States – and equipping it with at least two full-time staff. The Secretariat should have three main tasks: an administrative support function, a criminological clearinghouse function, and webmaster and information support.

3. The plans of the Swedish Presidency – starting on 1 July 2009 – concerning the EUCPN

The Swedish Presidency considers it important to develop the exchange of knowledge on crime and criminality and on crime prevention methods. Strengthening the EUCPN is an integral part of this priority and we are prepared to put in the necessary effort to try and change the EUCPN in cooperation between the Member States. The goal is for the Network to fulfil its potential for developing and sharing knowledge on crime and crime prevention methods for the benefit of the citizens of the EU, for whom issues of safety are of the highest concern.

We aim to conclude negotiations on the new Council decision before the end of our Presidency – a goal of 1 November has been set, the date on which the new Lisbon Treaty may enter into force – and hope to be able to hand over the EUCPN to the Spanish Presidency with a good structure for the future and positive prospects of a strong and supportive incoming Secretariat.

In addition to managing the negotiations on the new Council decision, we will chair the EUCPN and support the fulfilment of its regular tasks. We will organise Board meetings in September and December. Core issues for the Board to discuss and decide will be the modalities for a functioning Secretariat and possible financial models for setting it up. The website, hitherto managed by the European Commission, needs to be modernised and developed and constantly kept up to date. The UK is providing the technical platform but the substance needs to be developed by the Network itself. The EUCPN research officer, established by the Board with the help of funds from a Member State, will continue to develop the substantial work both at EU level and, when possible, in support of national policies, in close cooperation with the Member States.

The EUCPN flagship event – the annual Best Practice Conference, organised in conjunction with the European Crime Prevention Award ceremony – will take place in Stockholm in December. The conference is being carefully organised in accordance with new principles that have been established by the Board – the guidelines for Best Practice Conferences and rules and procedures for the European Crime Prevention Award.

This year's theme for the European Crime Prevention Award and the Best Practice Conference has been declared to be:

Preventing Crime and Victimisation among Children and Young People: Current and future challenges – school, cyberspace and recruitment to criminal groups.

During the conference, the national entries participating in the ECPA will be presented and discussed. In addition, a number of individuals – researchers and policymakers – will make interventions. Four workshops designed to fit the themes and one follow-up looking at a former ECPA winner will allow for in-depth discussions. The general goal of the conference is to fuse research and practice to draw conclusions on the best way ahead.

4. The priorities of our Presidency in the crime and criminal justice area

Every Presidency faces new challenges. The challenges for the Swedish Presidency include the possible entry into force of a new treaty, the Lisbon Treaty, which will radically change working methods in the Justice and Home Affairs area, a newly elected European Parliament, and a new Commission in the autumn.

The Swedish Presidency will thus be marked by change and renewal. What will count in the end is how we succeed in the areas that affect EU citizens most. In the area of Justice and Home Affairs, the goal is to support continued development towards a safer and more open Europe. The Swedish Presidency intends to put effort into developing cross-border cooperation to protect democratic values and individual rights whilst meeting the challenges that the EU is facing today.

One priority for the Ministry of Justice (which handles not only justice but also interior issues) will be to conclude a new five-year programme for the area of Justice, Freedom and Security – already now called the Stockholm Programme. The programme will outline the main developments and achievements to be made in the area in the years 2010–2014 and will function as a steering document for the development of policies in the area. The informal meeting of the Ministers of Justice and Interior will be held in Stockholm in July to discuss the Stockholm Programme.

Cross-border cooperation to prevent and fight crime will become more important, as will measures to improve the exchange of knowledge and information. A core issue is to improve mutual trust in order for EU cooperation to function properly. A very sig-

nificant priority is to improve measures to protect individual rights for both suspects and victims of crime. An initiative on interpretation and translation will be launched as well as an initiative regarding conclusions on a concerted strategy and practical measures to support victims of crime. An official Presidency conference on access to justice in the EU from the citizen's perspective will be held in Stockholm in July to discuss both these issues. Negotiations on the framework decisions on trafficking in human beings and on sexual exploitation of children are ongoing and are prioritised by the Swedish Presidency.

These are just a few of the important issues to be targeted by policymakers and officials from the 27 Member States during the Swedish Presidency of the EU between 1 July and 31 December.

We are going to be busy

Thank you.

Post script - update on EUCPN developments during the Swedish Presidency:

Board meetings were held in September in Göteborg and in December in Stockholm. For more information, contact your national representative, see <http://www.eucpn.org/contact/index.asp>

A new Council decision was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 30 November: Council decision 2009/902/JHA/ of 30 November 2009 setting up a European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and repealing Decision 2001/427/JHA, OJ L 321, 8.12.2009 p 44.

The Best Practice Conference actively involved a number of the EUCPN national representatives and saw around 200 participants. Conclusions from the conference were developed and adopted by the EUCPN Board as recommendations on preventing crime and victimisation among children and young persons. See: <http://www.eucpn.org/bpc/entries.asp?year=2009>.

A Secretariat, hosted by the Belgian Ministry of the Interior, is about to be set up, pending financial support from the European Commission, as the EUCPN is waiting to be awarded monopoly status in relation to its financial programmes.

The EUCPN website has been developed with more information, a presentation in all EU languages, research information and additions to the library. However, it is still in want of updated project descriptions and information on crime prevention, which is the responsibility of the national representatives of the 27 Member States.

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