

***“Frankfurt Declaration”  
of the 20th German Congress on Crime Prevention***

**German Congress On Crime Prevention  
and Congress Partners**

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## **German Congress on Crime Prevention and Congress Partners**

### **“Frankfurt Declaration” of the 20th German Congress on Crime Prevention**

Ever since its 12<sup>th</sup> annual congress in Wiesbaden in 2007, the German Congress on Crime Prevention and its partners have concluded each congress with a declaration containing the (criminal) policy conclusions drawn from that year’s principal topics and the further discussions of current developments and trends in the field of crime prevention. Following in this tradition, the “Frankfurt Declaration” of the 20th German Congress on Crime Prevention is, once again, primarily addressed to the people, authorities and echelons responsible for crime prevention at the level of the local authorities, the German States and the Federal government as well as the European level.

With this objective in mind, the German Congress on Crime Prevention would like to thank the German President, Mr Joachim Gauck, the Prime Minister of the Federal State of Hesse, Mr Volker Bouffier, and the Mayor of the City of Frankfurt, Mr Peter Feldmann, for the real appreciation of the subject of crime prevention they expressed in their welcoming speeches to the 20<sup>th</sup> German Congress on Crime Prevention. We would furthermore like to extend our gratitude to the Minister of Justice of the Federal State of Hesse, Ms Eva Kühne-Hörmann, for including the State government’s crime prevention strategies in her government policy declaration of 26 May 2015.

For the first time, this year’s principal topic “Prevention pays off: The economic aspects of crime prevention” places the economic dimension of crime prevention at the heart of the debate. In preparation of the congress, the Director of the Lower Saxony Institute for Economic Research (NIW), Professor Dr. Stephan L. Thomsen, drew up an appraisal entitled “Economic analysis of the costs and benefits of crime prevention”. Up until now, the German crime prevention debate has paid little attention to this topic. With cost-benefit analysis providing an effective tool for the assessment and planning of preventive and criminal policies, the German Congress on Crime Prevention is of the opinion that Germany has a lot of catching up to do in this area.

However, this will only be possible unless certain conditions have been met. Firstly, the methodological basis for the preparation of cost-benefit analyses must be developed and tested. Secondly, a socio-political and ethical discussion of the term “prevention pays off” must take place and its exact meaning must be defined. In specific, we must discuss the benefit that is to be associated with the respective crime prevention measures and programmes and the risks that may arise if benefits are given a “price tag”. Based on the appraisal drawn up by Professor Dr. Stephan L. Thomsen and the

debate that took place at the 20th annual congress, the German Congress on Crime Prevention and its partners

- the German Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ),
- the German Association for Social Work, Criminal Law and Criminal Policy (DBH),
- the Federal State of Hesse,
- Police Crime Prevention at State and National Level (ProPK),
- the City of Frankfurt am Main,
- the German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) and
- the victim support organisation WEISSER RING

hereby publish this “Frankfurt Declaration”.

### **1. Economic analysis of the costs and benefits of crime prevention:**

#### **Germany is lagging behind**

In Anglo-Saxon cultures, cost-effectiveness analysis and cost-benefit analysis have been used to assess public intervention and preventive programmes for many decades. At least since the mid-1990s, such analysis has also been employed to evaluate both judicial and crime prevention measures. Germany offers next to nothing in terms of comparable information. With few exceptions, neither systematic analysis nor a continuous economic dialogue is taking place in the fields of criminology and prevention. Not to mention specialised institutions focussing on the economic evaluation of criminal policy and prevention, which provide systematic and extensive analysis, information and results, as for instance in the USA.

This state of affairs is not only surprising, it also indicates a substantial need to make up for lost time. Economic aspects of crime prevention, in particular the identification of costs and benefits, can make a significant contribution to our understanding of, and rationale behind, preventive action.

Internationally, the results of cost-benefit analysis clearly show a positive balance in favour of effective prevention measures. “Early intervention” programmes and measures for parents, which start at the pregnancy stage and focus on children up to the age of three, as propagated in Germany, among others, by the National Early Intervention Centre (Nationales Zentrum für Frühe Hilfen, NZFH), show great promise, not least in terms of cost-benefit considerations. The inclusion of cost-benefit analysis in political decision-making may, for instance, provide a basis for the sustainable funding of local and regional support

systems offering timely intervention at the earliest possible stage.

Economic assessment can make a valuable contribution towards objectifying the debate about limited funds. Assessing the damage to society caused by criminal acts requires a uniform methodological framework to facilitate comparison between aspects that may, at first glance, appear disparate. Identifying the gains achieved by prevention, including consideration of their material and immaterial costs, allows us to compare different alternatives and can help us make informed political decisions.

The German Congress on Crime Prevention therefore calls for the development and implementation of systematic cost-benefit analysis to promote crime prevention in Germany and asks all those concerned to embrace the scientific challenge of resolving the considerable methodological difficulties involved. Although this may require a certain amount of time and effort, the approaches and instruments employed to assess and prepare cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses at the international level can also be used in Germany.

## **2. Cost-benefit analysis is one among several ways of contributing towards evidence-based prevention policies**

The German Congress on Crime Prevention has repeatedly called for crime prevention to be placed on an evidence-based footing, most recently in its 2014 “Karlsruhe Declaration”. In this context, we welcome the emerging trend towards placing practical preventive activities on a scientific basis. At the same time, the Congress laments the fact that criminal policy generally shows a sustained disregard towards the urgently required shift towards (crime) prevention. What we need is a positive appraisal and promotion of approaches to crime prevention that are based on theoretical and empirical evidence.

Economic assessment of criminality and its prevention could provide an inducement to expand evidence-based crime prevention at the political level. Ultimately, any economic assessment requires effect analysis and programme evaluation since cost-benefit analysis is merely an extension of the underlying evaluation of programme effects. The methodological prerequisites that must be in place for the implementation of cost-benefit analyses generally exist in Germany, although they are, in some areas, fragmentary. The German Congress on Crime Prevention therefore calls on research funding programmes in Germany to substantially increase the funding of impact evaluation in the field of preventative measures.

## **3. Cost-benefit analysis may expedite political decisions but cannot rationalise them**

The German Congress on Crime Prevention considers authoritative estimates of crime-related costs to be a necessary, albeit insufficient, prerequisite for evidence-based, efficient crime prevention policies. Cost-benefit analysis is neither capable of,

nor should it be allowed to, serve as sole criterion in the selection of preventative measures.

If, as a result of cost-benefit analysis in the fields of criminality and prevention, criminal policy focussed exclusively on measures that “pay off” financially, such analysis would have failed to meet its central objective of contributing to evidence-based prevention policies.

Crime prevention beyond economic assessment pays off if only for the frequently associated interlinked and interdisciplinary cooperation which promotes those conceptual approaches that facilitate supportive behaviour and raise the quality of joint crime prevention measures.

Although, given Germany’s evident inattention towards cost-benefit analysis of responses to criminality, the risk of crime prevention being reduced to fiscal aspects is low, the German Congress on Crime Prevention considers a timely and ongoing debate of the exact meaning of “paying off” to be essential in this context. From a cost-benefit perspective, it should be noted that the more cost-effective measures may not necessarily be the ones we would prefer on ethical grounds. Even if social benefit, as opposed to cost effectiveness, is taken as the yardstick for cost-benefit analysis, we still have to ask ourselves what the consequences of putting a “price tag” on social benefits may be. The employment of cost-benefit analysis must thus be weighed against the risk of such analysis squandering scarce resources on preventative measures and programmes that have a negative or less positive cost-benefit balance.

#### **4. On the need for an ethical discourse in the prevention field given current developments and trends**

Leaving the problems that may be associated with cost-benefit analysis in crime prevention aside for the moment, the German Congress on Crime Prevention would also like to comment on current developments and trends.

In previous years, the Congress has repeatedly pointed out that crime prevention may be associated with certain risks. These include the (further) emergence of a preventive state, or the criminalisation of social policy, i.e. taking a predominantly criminal policy-based approach to problems that are essentially of a socio-political nature.

In addition, for a few years now, the German Congress on Crime Prevention has considered crime prevention trends associated with “big data” and “nudging” with a certain amount of distrust, since both approaches may involve a dangerous restriction of the freedom of action.

In his speech at the closing plenum of the 19th German Congress on Crime Prevention on the subject of “Big data – opportunities and risks in crime prevention“, Viktor Mayer-Schönberger emphatically spelled out the problems that may be associated

with big data predictions, among others in the field of criminality and prevention. In this context, he specifically referred to the need to protect the individual's freedom of action. Since big data is an excellent predictor of human behaviour, in the longer run, the state may feel justified in dismantling constitutional restrictions and holding its citizens to account for predicted crimes they have not even committed yet. There is a fine line between preventive intervention and perceived punishment, and it is with good reason that the subjects of "Predictive Policing" and "Catching criminals with big data and intelligent software" were discussed at length at the 20th German Congress on Crime Prevention.

Viktor Mayer-Schönberger's emphatic appeal to accept a certain level of risk in order to defend our personal freedom and continue living our lives as individuals and as a society even in times of big data is all the more important now that "nudge" theory is gaining popularity.

From the perspective of the caring state, "nudging" is an apparently neutral, unobtrusive strategy designed to help citizens live their lives in their own best interest. However, from a critical perspective which focuses on the personal freedom to live one's life as one sees fit, this strategy pursues an entirely different aim whereby the state increasingly tells its citizens how to lead their lives. The call for preventive measures in the field of personal health, where the individual's power and right to take their own decisions, including the right to make unwise decisions, is slowly but surely eroded, is a poignant example of this intrusive approach.

Prevention is not inevitably positive just because it is intended to prevent evil. The German Congress on Crime Prevention is therefore of the opinion that a debate on the "ethics of prevention" is absolutely essential.

## **5. The German Congress on Crime Prevention continues to support the establishment of a National Crime Prevention Centre**

In consideration of the need for a debate on the ethics of prevention and the steps towards a National Crime Prevention Centre that have been taken since its 19th annual congress, the German Congress on Crime Prevention hereby repeats its request that this Centre should be organised in conformance with its responsibilities and provided with sufficient human and financial resources. In particular, it must be ensured that the Centre takes an interdisciplinary approach to prevention and that political decisions can be taken irrespective of resource allocation considerations and across departmental responsibilities. These parameters are absolutely essential to allow the future National Crime Prevention Centre to perform any meaningful work.

The National Crime Prevention Centre (NZK) that is currently being established could also provide a home for a German research institute along the lines of the "Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)". This institute is generally per-

ceived to be exemplary in its field, not least due to its development of a politically relevant approach to cost-benefit analysis. With the aim of identifying effective and efficient crime reduction programmes, the institute began researching the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of prevention and criminal justice programmes as early as 1997. The WSIPP, which was established by and reports to the local government, is an outstanding example of an institution that pursues criminal, and particularly crime prevention, policies based on scientific evidence.

Frankfurt, 9 June 2015

## Content

<b>Introduction</b> .....	7
STEPHAN L. THOMSEN On the Economic Analysis of Costs and Benefits of Crime Prevention .....	9
ERICH MARKS Let's risk more crime prevention - our task at hand .....	21
JAMES E. ANDERSON Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES).....	29
PETRA GUDER/BERND-RÜDEGER SONNEN Deciding what Works: Empirical Evidence and Cost Effectiveness.....	45
DEUTSCHE GESELLSCHAFT FÜR INTERNATIONALE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GIZ) GmbH Violence prevention initiatives in international development cooperation.....	57
CAROLINE L. DAVEY/ANDREW B. WOOTTON/MELISSA R. MARSELLE ProtectED: Valuing the safety, security & wellbeing of university students .....	79
ERICH MARKS/KARLA MARKS 20 Years German Congress On Crime Prevention in Numbers .....	95
GERMAN CONGRESS ON CRIME PREVENTION AND CONGRESS PARTNERS "Frankfurt Declaration" of the 20th German Congress on Crime Prevention .....	103
<b>Programme of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Forum</b> .....	109
<b>Authors</b> .....	113