

Erich Marks
Executive Director
Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony
German Congress on Crime Prevention

Current Experiences with Crime Prevention in the German and European Context

The thrust of numerous international studies and publications,¹ including the UN publications² issued thus far on crime prevention, show that on the one hand, there exists worldwide an increasing number of fundamental and principal insights, issues and recommendations with general relevance. On the other hand, there is no alternative to having every State, every society and every region develop and continually foster their own culture of (crime) prevention.³

In Europe we can look back on the past 30 years as showing a very positive development of projects, programmes and methods of crime prevention. This development, both qualitative and quantitative, has been observable in a largely parallel manner in the various states and in the European Union overall, as well as in scholarly and non-governmental organisations at the European level. Several central European organisations and institutions that focus on the field of crime prevention should be enumerated here. These include the supranational structures of the Council of Europe,⁴ the European Parliament⁵ and the European Union⁶ with the European Network for Crime Prevention (EUCPN).⁷ Noteworthy in the area of academia are the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI)⁸ and the European Society of Criminology (ESC);⁹ and among non-governmental organisations, the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS)¹⁰ and the Annual International Forum for Crime Prevention (AIF)¹¹ of the German Congress on Crime

¹ On this point, cf. with additional citations the first „International Report on Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Trends and Perspectives (2008)“ of the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC): http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/publications/pub_201_1.pdf (2009-10-20); the second report will be published in 2010 at the UN World Congress in Salvador.

² <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/justice-and-prison-reform/tools.html> (2009-10-10)

³ Cf. Kulach/Whiskin/Marks: Cultures of Prevention – Urban Crime Prevention Policies in Europe: towards a common Culture? (2006) http://www.urbansecurity.org/fileadmin/efus/pdf/gb_pub_justy.pdf (2009-10-10)

⁴ <http://www.coe.int/DefaultEN.asp> (2009-10-10)

⁵ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/documents_par_theme/902/default_en.htm (2009-10-10)

⁶ http://europa.eu/pol/justice/index_en.htm (2009-10-10)

⁷ European Forum for Crime Prevention <http://www.eucpn.org> (2009-10-10)

⁸ <http://www.heuni.fi> (2009-10-10)

⁹ <http://esc-eurocrim.org> (2009-10-10)

¹⁰ <http://www.urbansecurity.org> (2009-10-10)

¹¹ <http://www.gcocp.org> (2009-10-20)

Prevention. This listing is not meant to be exhaustive; rather, it is designed to make clear the breadth of the existing professional organisations.

The following comments will strive to briefly portray and summarise some central experiences and insights from the point of view of the author:

1. Crime prevention is primarily a community task

Crime prevention has developed as a primary task for communities and cities. It is organised in a very citizen-oriented manner; in larger cities, this increasingly means at the level of city districts. The following principle has taken hold among the leadership of the numerous established community prevention groups in Germany: Crime prevention is a matter for the upper echelons of leadership and is a mayoral obligation. The Zaragoza Manifesto of 2006 contains more detailed references to the continually increasing significance of community-based crime prevention and its current self-concept at the European level.¹²

2. Crime prevention requires an interdisciplinary network

Central services and professional groups in regional and supraregional networks for crime prevention specifically include the police, the justice system, schools, health care system, as well as juvenile and social authorities. The police often assume a special role within the network. In this process, it has been shown that successful crime prevention can be achieved neither alone by the police nor without their active cooperation. Community prevention groups are increasingly receiving financial support through special regional promotional associations, and most recently local citizens' foundations as well.

3. Crime prevention is a responsibility concerning all of society

Crime prevention cannot be the sole responsibility of an interdisciplinary network of state offices. Active involvement by non-governmental organisations, private

¹² "Security, Democracy and Cities", the Zaragoza Manifesto 2006 <http://zaragoza2006.fesu.org/index.php> (2009-10-20)

aid organisations, associations, religious congregations as well as the industrial sector is required in order to achieve a common responsibility of society.¹³

4. Crime prevention requires citizen commitment

Concrete opportunities to become involved are becoming ever more complex for citizens, their representatives and experts. More than ever, the principle is that we must think globally in order to be able to take effective action locally. The continued development of our civil society also involves making our society safer and more pleasant for the community, because citizen commitment, democratic participation and civic courage hold our society together and serve to prevent crime as well.¹⁴

5. Crime prevention requires close cooperation with other fields working on prevention

The goal of crime prevention may be attained only in close cooperation with other fields of prevention, such as addiction prevention¹⁵ and traffic safety.¹⁶ But crime prevention goals may also be a side effect of other fields working in prevention, such as health care.¹⁷ The definition of expert interfaces and mutual acceptance of the various goals and methods, as well as expert processes and standards among the different fields of prevention have proven particularly important in this context.

6. Crime prevention must be a holistic strategy

Experiences from past years and decades show that crime prevention must be understood as a systemic and holistic attitude, goal and strategy. No matter how

¹³ More details, e.g. for the Netherlands, are available from the Netherlands Centre for Crime Prevention and Community Safety www.theccv.eu and in Germany's Leipzig Declaration of the German Congress on Crime Prevention (*Leipziger Erklärung des Deutschen Präventionstages*) (2008)

¹⁴ Cf. On this point with additional authority the Hanover Declaration (2009) of the German Congress on Crime Prevention (*Hannoveraner Erklärung (2009) des Deutschen Präventionstages*) <http://www.praeventionstag.de/nano.cms/de/Dokumentation/Details/XID/868> (2009-10-10) in English, available as of early 2009 at <http://www.gcocp.org>

¹⁵ More details can be found, e.g., at the German Centre for Addiction Issues (*Deutsche Hauptstelle für Suchtgefahren*) http://www.dhs.de/web/bibliothek/onlinerecherche_detail_schlagw.php?page=49&schlagw=Verkehr and, in the European context, at EMCDDA, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction www.emcdda.europa.eu (2007-10-10)

¹⁶ Cf. e.g. a peer project in cooperation with driving schools <http://www.bzga.de> (2009-10-10)

¹⁷ Cf. with additional authority Federal Centre for Health Education (*Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung*) <http://www.bzga.de> (2009-10-10)

positive developments have been in terms of specialisation and quality enhancement in the various professions and disciplines, special significance must be accorded to continual improvements in networking and a more consistent holistic view of individuals, groups and situations.

7. Crime prevention must be a long-term and sustainable form of action

Research results document the outstanding effect of crime-prevention strategies in attaining long-term and sustainable success in reducing crime. Orientation to the principles of sustainability is increasingly being seen and accepted as an immanent and self-explanatory interim goal of all (crime) prevention efforts.

8. Crime prevention is primarily a process-oriented attitude

In the German-speaking countries already, crime prevention is defined in various ways.¹⁸ We must take into account that (crime) prevention is primarily an attitude, and a permanent process of learning and development for individuals, groups and the whole of society. This understanding of prevention also implies that it never is too late nor too early for its application.

9. Crime prevention is a problem- and cause-oriented strategy

Effective crime prevention is cause-oriented. Concrete projects, strategies and methods of crime prevention depend upon the actual problems on site. More details can be found, for example, under the keyword "Problem-oriented policing."¹⁹ The call for stable, evidence-based crime-prevention measures, which is continually increasing, must be followed with determination. Relevant research results worldwide confirm that crime prevention attains the most possible positive effects when it is oriented to strategies and methods whose effectiveness can be empirically assessed and confirmed.²⁰ Most recently, there has been an increase in the number of evaluated strategies and approaches. Core tasks now include improving acceptance of these strategies and transferring them into practice.

¹⁸ On this point, cf. e.g. <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kriminalpr%C3%A4vention> (2009-10-10)

¹⁹ <http://www.popcenter.org> (2009-10-10)

²⁰ Cf. with additional authority: Institute of Criminology of the University of Cambridge <http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk> (2009-10-10)

10. Crime prevention is an effective approach to almost all criminal offences

In principle, approaches to crime prevention are not bound to certain criminal offences. The focus of crime-prevention activities continues to be on the areas of mass, violent and youth crime; however, other areas such as economic crime or crimes against senior citizens are increasing in significance. And we must also not lose sight of the fact that our current global and core problems, which are all situations calling for prevention – in addition to war and terrorism, these include climate change, world nutrition, energy supply, and globalised financial transactions – have consequences that will substantially influence new developments in crime prevention.

11. Crime prevention is economically successful

Particularly in the English-speaking world, evaluations and meta-evaluations have shown that crime prevention projects – especially when viewed from a middle- and long-term perspective – may repay the funds invested several times over by way of savings in the fields of justice, social welfare and health policy.²¹

12. Crime prevention requires specific prevention management

Meanwhile, we are able to take advantage of numerous proven tools and management recommendations to professionally manage crime prevention projects. Some examples include the crime analyses by Ron Clark and John Eck,²² the “Guidance on Local Safety Audits,”²³ the 5 Is approach by Paul Ekblom,²⁴ and the “communities that care” programme.²⁵

²¹ More details can be found at the North American institutions Campbell Collaboration <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>, Center for the Study of Prevention of Violence <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints> und Jerry Lee Center of Criminology <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/jerrylee> (2009-10-10)

²² Clark & Eck: “Become a Problem-Solving Crime-Analyst in 55 small Steps” <http://www.popcenter.org> (2009-10-10)

²³ Guidance on Local Safety Audits: A Compendium of International Practice, published by the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS), Paris 2007, ISBN 2-913181-30-9, <http://www.efus.org> (2009-10-10)

²⁴ On this point, cf. <http://www.designagainstcrime.com> or <http://www.beccaria.de> (2009-10-10)

²⁵ On this point, cf. for the USA <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/features/ctc/resources.aspx>, for the Netherlands <http://www.ctcholland.nl> and for the adaptation currently underway in Lower Saxony, Germany <http://www.lpr.niedersachsen.de> (2009-10-10)

13. Crime prevention develops its own standards

Development, application and continued promotion of standards for quality management in crime prevention are increasing in significance. One concrete example of this are the Beccaria Standards.²⁶ These standards offer guidelines to developers, actors and others responsible for crime prevention for ensuring the quality of their crime prevention activities. They are designed to ensure that planning, implementation and evaluation of crime prevention projects are oriented to quality criteria, i.e. projects are conceived in a way that makes them generally subject to evaluation. As such, the standards include benchmarks and demands in terms of the quality of planning, implementation and evaluation of crime prevention programmes and projects.

14. Crime prevention requires evaluation

An ever increasing number of projects and programmes in crime prevention is evaluated, and this contributes significantly to an improved and more effective crime prevention. This is associated with an improved exchange between the often strictly separated fields of policymaking, practice and academia regarding the goals and effects of crime-prevention measures; and it benefits all participants²⁷. One important condition for increased evaluation of activities in crime prevention is a solid advance description of problems and data to be collected.

15. Crime prevention requires exchange and benchmarking

Projects, programmes and specific crime-prevention measures should not only be evaluated more systematically; rather, benchmarking processes should be compared and improved at both the national and international levels. In addition to “good practice” and “best practices” processes, relevant interdisciplinary congresses²⁸ as well as awards and prizes²⁹ also have a quality-enhancing effect.

²⁶ http://www.beccaria.de/nano.cms/de/Beccaria_Standards/Page/1 (2009-10-10)

²⁷ More details may be found, e.g., at the site of the CRIMPREV European initiative (Assessing Deviance, Crime and Prevention in Europe) <http://www.gern-cnrs.com> as well as at <http://www.crimereduction.org> (2009-10-20)

²⁸ For example the annual German Congress on Crime Prevention <http://www.gcocp.org> or the annual Colloquium of the ICPC http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/menu_item.php?code=annual_colloquium (2009-10-10)

16. Crime prevention is applied subsidiarity

Today, crime prevention is undertaken at a total of five levels: local, regional, national, continental, and global (international as well as supranational). It has become clear that defined division of labour and coordination between all organisations and institutions working at the various levels are particularly important for successful crime prevention. Actors at the various levels have different tasks which, to the extent possible, should be structured based upon an underlying fundamental understanding and therefore result in an effective overall concept.³⁰

17. Crime prevention is developing into a qualified professional speciality

The necessity of additional specialisation in the areas of planning and management, as well as new challenges in the area of knowledge management, have resulted in initial plans for specific training courses in crime prevention. In the past several years, specialised advanced training programmes have been developed in several European countries for full- and part-time employees in various fields of crime prevention.³¹

18. Crime prevention is oriented toward enlightened crime policies

The statement by Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794) still holds true: “It is better to prevent crime rather than to punish it.” Crime prevention is most successful where it is an integral part of a rational and enlightened policy and criminal policy and is built upon human rights and a democratic state following the rule of law.³²

²⁹ Examples include the Stockholm Prize in Criminology www.criminologyprize.com, the European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA) www.eucpn.org and the German Prize for Crime Prevention (*Deutscher Förderpreis für Kriminalprävention*): http://www.stiftung-kriminalpraevention.de/index_home.html (2009-10-10)

³⁰ Information regarding the definition of the subsidiarity principle can be found, e.g., at Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidiarity> (2009-10-10)

³¹ Cf. on this point the article by Meyer/Coester/Hasenpusch/Marks in this publication as well as at www.beccaria.de (2009-10-10)

³² Regarding the principles of enlightened crime policy, cf. Lawrence Sherman: Enlightened Justice: Consequentialism and Empirism from Beccaria to Braithwaite, in: Marks, Erich & Meyer, Anja & Linssen, Ruth (Eds.): Quality in Crime Prevention, Hanover 2005, ISBN 3-8334-4194-1, http://www.beccaria.de/Kriminalpraevention/en/Documents/beccaria_quality%20in%20crime%20prevention.pdf (2009-10-10)

19. Crime prevention has an important connection to restorative justice

The approaches of mediation, conflict management and offender-victim mediation have developed very positively in the past several years. The restorative justice approach³³ meanwhile makes an important contribution to the continued development of modern societal cultures of conflict. The concepts of victimology,³⁴ restorative justice and crime prevention are complementary approaches and concepts.

20. Crime prevention needs cross-border cooperation

The European Union has been carrying out specific funding programmes on crime prevention for more than ten years (e.g. within the scope of the GROTIUS, AGIS and ISEC programmes, among others)³⁵; and this has shown the necessity – and above all the opportunities and advantages – of supranational cooperation within the Third Pillar of the EU.³⁶ Of equal significance are the various proposals adopted by the Council of Europe³⁷ in the past decades.

21. Crime prevention also works through adaptation

Like in all other areas, the wheel does not constantly need to be reinvented in crime prevention. Examples of the adaptation of successful programmes and projects from other countries are the Nurse Family Partnership Programme (NFP)³⁸ by David Olds and its adaptation by the Pro Kind Foundation in Germany,³⁹ as well as the programme Communities that Care (CTC) in the Netherlands and Germany (Lower Saxony).⁴⁰

³³ www.restorativejustice.org (2009-10-20)

³⁴ On this point, cf. World Society of Victimology <http://www.worldsocietyofvictimology.org> (2009-10-10)

³⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding (2009-10-10)

³⁶ Pursuant to the Lisbon Treaty of 2007 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Lisbon, 2009-10-10), the former “police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters” of the current “3rd pillar” is now termed the “area of freedom, security and justice” as a portion of the “internal policies and measures of the European Union.”

³⁷ www.coe.int (2009-10-10)

³⁸ www.coe.int (2009-10-10)

³⁹ Lower Saxony Criminology Research Institute (*Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen*) <http://www.kfn.de> and the Pro Kind Foundation <http://www.stiftung-pro-kind.de> (2009-10-10)

⁴⁰ Narcis <http://www.narcis.info> and the Lower Saxony Land Prevention Council <http://www.lpr.niedersachsen.de> (2009-10-10)

22. Crime prevention is not a punishment

As the term implies, crime prevention is an attitude of anticipation and strives to preclude the criminal offence; as such, it should not be equated or confused with a reaction to or punishment for crime. Stated differently, crime prevention is neither a substitute nor an alternative to sanctions imposed after crimes have been committed. Nonetheless, the principle applies that in cases of doubt, less intrusive sanctions exhibit a better tertiary preventive effect.

23. Crime prevention serves to increase reporting of crime

Using the example of the new manner of dealing with the problem of domestic violence in most European countries, we can see that measures at the interface between intervention and prevention are also suitable to allow more criminal offences to be reported and included in criminal statistics, thus reducing the number of unreported crimes.⁴¹ Extensive scientific research confirms these findings.⁴²

24. Crime prevention is strongly influenced by the Internet

The rapid and irrevocable expansion of the Internet has manifold effects on crime prevention. The spectrum ranges from improved approaches to information, counselling and communication in the area of crime prevention, to addressing new offences and forms of criminality, to the problems resulting from new forms of addiction.

25. Crime prevention is an effective form of victim protection

Within the past two decades, we have gained the insight that victim protection and assistance on the one hand, and crime prevention on the other, are not opposites; rather, they supplement and imply one another. One significant example of this development and attitude is the mission statement and institutional self-

⁴¹ More information is available at http://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/default_EN.asp (2009-10-10)

⁴² For example the student surveys taken by the Lower Saxony Criminology Research Institute at http://kfn.de/home/Forschungsbericht_107.htm (2009-10-10) with additional authority

understanding of the largest German victim assistance organisation, WEISSER RING,⁴³ at the European level Victim Support Europe,⁴⁴ and at the international level the World Society of Victimology.⁴⁵

26. Crime prevention has limits

Going forward, crime prevention will require a more precise, concrete formulation of personal and societal purposes, goals and visions. In this, we must not lose sight of the tension between freedom and prevention. Prevention must not be confused with an attitude of risk elimination in principle. The basic ethical principle of double effect must thus always be taken into account in the field of crime prevention.

To conclude, reference should be made to the continued development of deliberations for concrete strategies and cooperative projects for an increasingly global and to be further globalised crime prevention. Crime prevention strategies and concrete projects exist throughout the world and are, dependent upon their respective local societal, state and economic realities, extremely diverse in terms of their problems, goals and resources. Nonetheless, in the World Wide Web, these diverse approaches are only a few mouse clicks away from one another. More than ever, the principle is that we must think and communicate globally in order to be able to act effectively locally. Another important principle is that we must learn and gain experience in the field of crime prevention; that we must better share and consolidate efforts to work on the problems that exist worldwide; and that we must refine existing strategies to improve and resolve problems.

⁴³ <http://www.weisser-ring.de/internet/index.html> (2009-10-10)

⁴⁴ <http://www.victimsupporteurope.eu> (2009-10-10)

⁴⁵ <http://www.worldsocietyofvictimology.org> (2009-10-10)