

Seven current issues and related suggestions for crime prevention strategies

Erich Marks

Over the last decades we can look back on a predominantly positive development of crime prevention in Europe and also worldwide. At all levels, from the urban up to the global level, countless projects, programs, strategies and recommendations have been created and adopted. Consequently communication, networking and collaboration currently are the most important subjects to discuss. The EFUS conference 2012 “Security, Democracy and Cities: The Future of Prevention” is quite an excellent forum to reflect on these issues and suggestions. I summarize my thoughts on this subject in the following seven points.

1. In practice, policy and science, multidisciplinary cooperation is still underdeveloped

- Practical crime prevention is not sufficiently embedded in a multidisciplinary prevention network, which would / should include the prevention of addiction, social work, health care, etc.;
- Crime prevention research is not sufficiently embedded in a multidisciplinary (new) “prevention science”, which would / should include criminology, public health science, victimology, sociology, education, psychology, economics, etc. ;
- Crime prevention policy is not sufficiently embedded in a permanent effort to coordinate the actions of different political departments - the classical suggestion remains to be followed: “A good social policy is the best criminal policy” (Franz von Liszt, 1905); Richard Wilkinson/Kate Pickett: *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, London 2009, (www.equalitytrust.org.uk).

Suggestion:

For any discipline and for any level of government, crime prevention should nowadays be a primary subject of shared attention and multidisciplinary cooperation.

2. The existing prevention knowledge is hardly in action

- A lot of crime prevention standards, memoranda and findings (e.g. those by UNODC, EFUS, ICPC, VPA/WHO, Beccaria-Standards, UNHABITAT, EUCPN, etc.) are not sufficiently publicized;

- We are not yet successfully moving knowledge into action;
- At any level, existing tools, standards and guidelines are not sufficiently used.

Suggestion:

Prevention knowledge must be better disseminated, especially to the responsible decision-makers at all levels and via the internet.

3. Modern criminal policy is still not sufficiently guided by current experiences of crime prevention in practice, policy and science

- a kind of “Morbus punitivum” is a common disease;
- security, safety and crime prevention are usually not discussed as a holistic issue;
- mediation, reconciliation, victim assistance, restorative justice, and parallel justice are still not adequately discussed, developed and implemented.

Suggestion:

It is an exhausting but necessary way to change from “more of the same” and “fight against crime” to crime prevention as an individual and societal attitude.

4. New risks and types of crime are perceived too late

- 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 are increasing in significance;
- Living in the Anthropocene, an era in which for the first time man transforms his environment on a global scale, we still have not developed a necessary new general preventive attitude;
- In the economic world, we know a lot about Business Continuity Management, but we are still not good enough in Societal Continuity Management. Crime prevention up to now has made too little a contribution to a kind of “Societal Continuity Management”.

Suggestion:

We must not lose sight of the fact that our current global problems require a new and fundamental focus on prevention. We therefore need new goals, priorities and strategies in prevention generally and crime prevention specifically.

5. Exchange of knowledge, discourses and benchmarking are not sufficiently widespread

- Concepts at local, regional, national and global levels are poorly networked;
- If we only knew what we know about crime prevention; concepts, project reports and evaluations must be published more widely and discussed on the internet;
- International data banks on best practice projects and evidence based programs are not sufficiently known and not sufficiently used up to now;
- Some relevant international crime prevention data banks:
 1. www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints
(Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado Boulder)
 2. www.campbellcollaboration.org
(The Campbell Collaboration, Oslo)
 3. www.preventviolence.info
(Violence Prevention Alliance / WHO)
 4. www.gruene-liste-praevention.de
(Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony, Germany)
 5. www.eucpn.org
(European Crime Prevention Network, Belgium)
 6. www.dartington.org.uk/projects
(Blueprints for Europe, social research unit, UK)
 7. www.emcdda.europa.eu/best-practice
(Best practice portal, European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Portugal)
- The adaption of evidence based prevention programs is still not sufficiently widespread.

Suggestion:

Responsible persons at all levels should promote evidence based strategies of crime prevention. In case of doubt it is better to adapt a program already evaluated rather than to design a new one.

6. The interactions between various levels are often affected by “top down” versus “bottom up”

- The development from „think globally and act locally“ to a new orientation towards „think globally and act locally, think globally and act nationally as well as think globally and act globally“ is not sufficiently accepted;
- the division of work between the principal levels of crime prevention (urban level, regional level, national level, continental level, international level) is very often not defined, balanced and organized;
- political leaders at all levels up to now are not sufficiently active in initiatives for long term visions, for better information and more motivation;
- "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea." Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900 –1944).

Suggestion:

The principle of subsidiary is a good model for the interaction between the local, regional and national levels.

7. Sufficient resources are rarely provided for effective, long-term and sustainable prevention strategies.

- the positive cost-benefit-analysis and the knowledge about the return on crime prevention investments are not sufficiently used and often apparently not compatible with short term legislative periods;
- crime prevention can be more successful if there is good management and adequate funding and personell
- activities in the broad field of (crime) prevention are still too rarely evaluated.

Suggestion:

As a specific NGO combining the urban, the national and the European / international level, EFUS should be more active in the future in realizing and promoting the evaluation of crime prevention and prevention research.