

***Crime Prevention Activities from the Perspective of the
German Presidency of the European Union***

by

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Crime Prevention Activities from the Perspective of the German Presidency of the European Union¹

The catalogue of this Congress says: "The presentation will give an overview of the major activities in the field of crime prevention during the German Presidency of the EU. It will provide information about events, conferences and developments in European and other international bodies, especially the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN)".

Just three years ago, at the **9th Congress in Stuttgart**, there was the opportunity of giving a presentation about the EUCPN, its structure and work. At that time the EUCPN was undergoing a serious crisis. Lack of secretarial and financial resources, lack of visibility and substantial output were the main deficits. The EUCPN underwent an effective reform process in the meantime, which was initiated by the Member States. Below, we will elucidate the reform process and the activities of the EUCPN. Most of all we seek to find out whether the EUCPN is consolidated now, and if it is a model for the future. First however, we will exchange some information about several other activities in the field of crime prevention during the past 5 months and 19 days.

One cornerstone of international crime prevention activities is of course the Crime Commission of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (short: UNODC), which has 40 Member States, one of which is Germany. This year's session of the Commission was shorter than in the past and lasted only one week. But nevertheless, 18 resolutions were discussed and adopted.

I. 16th Session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, 23-27 April 2007

Beneath is a short overview of the outcome of the last session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna:

- The **main topics** in the thematic debate were:
 - Crime prevention activities in the field of **urban crime**
 - Crime prevention responses to the sexual **exploitation of children**

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Concerning the resolutions, the main issues were

- The UN Global Initiative to fight **human trafficking** planned by the UNODC and the way MS could influence this initiative.
- The role of the UNODC in the field of combating **terrorism**.
- UN principles in crime prevention and criminal justice ("**standards and norms**") and the utility of further **questionnaires in this field**. **UNODC formulates and promotes internationally-recognised principles in areas like the protection of victims, alternatives to imprisonment, and the treatment of prisoners. Many countries have relied on these standards while reforming their national law. The Crime Commission is currently evaluating the use of Standards and Norms.**

The EU was able to support **several resolutions** and is increasingly united at the meetings of the Crime Commission. The statements covering the main topics are now prepared, coordinated, and read out by the EU Presidency, which does not preclude Member States from giving their own presentations (but this is becoming less common).

The plans of the Commission for the **future** are as follows:

- The **topics of the thematic debates** of the following sessions will be "**violence against women**" for 2008 and "**economic fraud and identity-related crime**" or "**penal reform and the reduction of prison overcrowding**" for 2009.

The **12th UN Crime Congress** will take place in **2010** in Brazil or in Qatar. The agenda and the themes must still be discussed.

II. Activities in the European Union

During the EU Presidency major efforts were undertaken to improve international **judicial cooperation** in criminal matters such as the **EU-wide networking of criminal records**. Agreement was reached by the EU Ministers of Justice to improve the exchange of information on criminal matters. There will be no new centralised European register, but the Framework Decision obliges Member States to inform home states of convictions of their nationals. Another example is the general agreement reached by the Ministers of Justice on cross-border cooperation concerning sentences of probation and alternative sanctions (community service work, social training, and restorative justice).

The relevance of crime prevention in different areas of crime was underlined during the German Presidency. But there was a clear focus on the protection of children and juveniles, especially on child-related offences via the Internet or the so-called new techniques.

The three major activities in this field:

1. "European Forum on the Rights of the Child"

The forum, which will meet at regular intervals in future, was held in Berlin with opening statements from Vice President Frattini and Justice Minister Zypries. The launch of the forum was attended by more than 200 experts from different EU institutions, ministries and NGOs.

- The forum is based on a **Commission initiative of 2006** and is intended as an instrument for promoting the effective exchange of information and good practices, as well as **establishing a network** of the stakeholders in the field of protecting children's rights, be they governmental or non-governmental organisations.

- The discussion at the **first meeting** focused on the **role of the judicial authorities** in safeguarding and fostering children's rights. In particular, the protection of children against violence and sexual exploitation were the key topics of discussion.

- The experts discussed **repressive and preventive concepts to combat child pornography and paedophilia.**

- For example, the presentation of the **Berlin** approach of therapeutic primary prevention of child abuse of Berlin's University Hospital Charité attracted a lot of attention. This is a unique **therapeutic project** for the **prevention of child abuse** which became widely known in Germany because of a media campaign with the motto "do you love children more than you'd like?" As a result of this campaign, several hundred men volunteered for therapeutic treatment. The aim is to offer and investigate the effectiveness of preventive treatment for men with sexual impulses towards children before they act upon them.

Another focal point of the Conference was the presentation of the **achievements of legal prosecution** in the field of **Internet child pornography**: The public prosecutor's office of Halle, Germany, is conducting a criminal investigation against thousands of people worldwide who have ordered child pornography products on the Internet and paid for them by credit card. In cooperation with credit card companies, it was possible to identify them. For the first time all German credit cards (more than 20 million) were checked for certain search criteria, such as the payment of a certain amount of money and a transfer of this amount to a certain company.

A final declaration was issued at the end of the forum. The declaration encourages the development and implementation of strategies to promote the rights of children at the national and international levels, especially for the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The benefits of close cooperation between all the stake-

holders of the Forum were stressed so as to derive mutual benefit from existing good practices and exploit synergies.

2. Killer/Violent videos

At the initiative of the German Presidency, an initial exchange of opinions took place at the informal meeting of Justice Ministers in Dresden in January with regard to the increasing dangers posed to young people due to their consumption of killer and violent videos. They decided that further work should initially focus on clarifying the various rules in the Member States.

A report with the responses of the Member States to a detailed questionnaire was presented at the JHA Council meeting last week. With this, the Member States have a comprehensive compendium for the first time, which contains both the legal foundations and legal practice.

Last week, the EU Justice Ministers agreed to take additional steps based upon this work. They brought up Europol, which already has experiences in this field and could take action in cooperation with national bodies to protect children throughout the EU. It was announced that the debate would continue during the Portuguese Presidency.

Below are the activities of the German Presidency within the context of the EUCPN.

3. European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN)

The EUCPN was set up by Council Decision 2001/427/JHA in May 2001. The main purpose of this legal act was to create a platform for EU Member States to exchange experiences, knowledge and best practices in the field of crime prevention. The wider underlying rationale was to promote crime prevention activity in EU Member States.

a) About EUCPN in general

The EUCPN's principal activity is information sharing. It provides a means through which valuable good practice in preventing crime, mainly volume crime, can be identified and subsequently shared between Member States. The basic idea is that the Network will support the development of contacts and will thus facilitate cooperation between Member States. Thereby it is intended to contribute to developing local and national strategies on crime prevention.

In this context it is important to emphasise that the EUCPN does not necessarily deal with all kinds of crime prevention activities. In mid-2005 the EUCPN National Representatives agreed in their Board meeting that the focus should be on three well-defined types of crime: juvenile, urban and drug-related crime.

b) EUCPN Best Practice Conferences

Much of the information exchange is done by way of seminars and conferences, such as the Best Practice Conferences. Once a year, typically in autumn and organised by the "Autumn Presidency", a Best Practice Conference is held that provides each country with the opportunity to present crime prevention projects in a certain field of delinquency. A particular topic is chosen for the conference, such as "alcohol-related crime" or "domestic violence", and then all National Representatives are called upon to look for promising, innovative and successful prevention projects in this field on the national level. Each Member State is allowed to nominate one prevention project as candidate for the annual European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA). Representatives of the individual - most often local - projects are invited to attend the Best Practice Conference, present their project and discuss their ideas with representatives of other national candidate projects as well as with EUCPN National Representatives.

c) EUCPN Website

The exchange of information, notably of best practices, is however not only done on the occasion of conferences and seminars; the EUCPN website (www.eucpn.org) also plays a major role in exchanging best practices in crime prevention.

Since fairly recently, the specific crime prevention policies of Member States for various specifically defined policy areas can be viewed and compared on the EUCPN website. So far there is information available to all users of the website on domestic violence, prostitution and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, public perceptions of safety and sexual crime.

Information on persistent offenders, vehicle crime, robbery and youth crime will be added soon.

d) German Presidency in the EUCPN

Finally, to summarise the efforts made by the German Presidency in the EUCPN: The EUCPN underwent a serious crisis a few years ago. Structural issues as well as a lack of resources were the main problems the EUCPN was confronted with. Against this background, the German EUCPN Presidency initiated an internal progress check of the EUCPN. A questionnaire was developed and disseminated to national EUCPN representatives with the aim of identifying possible deficiencies in the EUCPN and its structure. Its underlying rationale was to find out what is currently working well in the EUCPN framework and - maybe even more importantly - what is not. The results of this questionnaire, which we will have in December 2007, will serve as a first step for improving the EUCPN's structure, its visibility, the effectiveness of its activities and for communicating best practices in crime prevention in general. The next step in this process will be an external independent evaluation building on the results of the internal inquiry, since only external evaluators will be sufficiently neutral and inde-

pendent to identify all the issues that might be important. The independent evaluation is due to start at the end of December 2007 and is scheduled to finish in 2008.

Another reason for the EUCPN's crisis was a lack of academic input and of secretarial support to the EUCPN. Therefore, the German Presidency ensured that an interim academic advisory board to the EUCPN was established (interim "Research and Validation Committee"). Its purpose is to provide academic advice to the EUCPN and to verify whether the best practices meant to be communicated, are sound and valid. Since it is always difficult to find proficient experts for academic advice who are also available and have the time to support these kinds of activities, it was felt that the EUCPN's academic advisory board was in need of secretarial and research assistance itself in order to make it capable of completing the kind of work the EUCPN board was expecting it to do. Consequently, the German Presidency managed to secure the services of a knowledgeable young researcher based at Vienna University who is now providing sound and steady support to the Committee, both in an academic and an organisational way.

The most important event of the German Presidency in the EUCPN was an international one-day seminar on "Dangers of the Internet to Children and Juveniles". It was held on 1st June 2007, taking place on the premises of the German Federal Criminal Police Office ("Bundeskriminalamt"). Based on a multidisciplinary approach, it was the intention of the seminar to highlight the various concepts existing in the disciplines of media education, medicine and crime prevention. As far as crime prevention in a strict sense is concerned, different national concepts were presented by speakers from Germany, Sweden and Finland. There were six presentations, followed by a panel discussion where the speakers exchanged their views. The seminar was hosted by Mr. Carl-Ernst Brisach, President of Division "KI" of the Bundeskriminalamt, this division being the Institute of Law Enforcement Studies and Training. Mr. Brisach also chaired the panel discussion.

The first presentation was held by Mr. Thomas Rathgeb of the Media Education Research Institute of Southwest Germany. The topic of the presentation was the relevance of the Internet for young people's lives and new aspects of youth culture. Subsequently, Professor Jo Groebel, of the German Digital Institute, presented his research on "New Media, New Opportunities, New Risks and New Types of Delinquency in the Information Society". Dr. Andreas Hill, from the Institute for Research into Sexual Behaviour and Forensic Psychiatry at the University Hospital Hamburg-Eppendorf, reported on the effects of pornography in the Internet from a medical point of view, inter alia addressing the issue of addiction. He was followed by Ms. Ann Katrin Agebäck, director of the Swedish Media Council, who spoke on the Swedish prevention approach. Ms. Mari Laiho, who works as a project officer with Save the Children Finland, presented the Finnish approach to the issue. Finally, Mr. Reinhold Hepp, executive director of the Programme for Police Crime Prevention on the Länder and Federal Levels,

completed the session by explaining the preventive approach taken by German police authorities.

From the perspective of the Presidency, the following conclusions were drawn from the seminar:

- The increased use and increased importance of the Internet brings great opportunities, but it also comes with considerable dangers, particularly for children and juveniles.
- However, this does not mean young people should be prevented from using the Internet. On the contrary: It is of special importance that dangers are not caused by lack of knowledge. Accordingly, improving "media competence" should be strongly encouraged, both for parents and for youths.
- Finding answers to the dangers of the Internet for young people is not only the responsibility of governments. It has to be a joint effort of the entire society: Besides the police and the justice system, parents, schools and particularly those offering Internet services are called upon to make active contributions.
- A promising approach has to be multidisciplinary in nature, involving media education, science, medicine, psychology, sociology, criminology, the justice system and the police.
- A profound exchange of knowledge and experience between these disciplines is needed. Yet, exchange is also needed between different nations, since the Internet, by its very nature, is a cross-border medium.
- The research done on the issue of Internet dangers is still insufficient. In particular, research needs to be done into the characteristics of risk groups and how to get messages across to them. Also, the areas for possible synergies between the various players need to be identified, and research needs to be done on the preventive effects of improved media competence.

Against the background of what has just been reported on EUCPN activities during the German EU Presidency, the question raised at the beginning: "Is the EUCPN now consolidated and is it a model for the future?" should be addressed. Quite naturally, this question is very difficult to answer. Taking all aspects into consideration, considerable structural and organisational progress has been made. This progress has brought back some stability and a considerable degree of seriousness to the development of the EUCPN. Regardless of whether the EUCPN is already a model for the future in its current shape, it will need our joint efforts to make sure that it will at least become a model for the future, building on the lessons to be

learned from the EUCPN's internal progress check as well as from its upcoming external evaluation.

Content

Introduction	1
Lectures from the 1st Annual International Forum	
SŁAWOMIR REDO	
Six United Nations guiding principles to make crime prevention work	5
MARGARET SHAW	
Why Youth Are Essential Partners in Crime Prevention: An International View	23
ELIZABETH JOHNSTON	
The multiple Challenges of Youth facing Violence	37
DETLEF OTTO BÖNKE AND TOBIAS PLATE	
Crime Prevention Activities from the Perspective of the German Presidency of the European Union	43
Contributions from participants at the 1st Annual International Forum	
TIINA RISTMÄE	
Neighbourhood Watch as an effective crime prevention method in Estonia	53
ANNA KARINA NICKELSEN	
Crime Prevention in Denmark - Current status	63
JANINA CZAPSKA	
Crime prevention in Poland 18 years after the transformation	71
LIBOR GAŠPIERIK AND JANA MÜLLEROVÁ	
Criminological aspects of delinquency of juvenile and criminality of teenage offenders in the Slovak Republic	85
LUBOMÍRA PECKOVÁ	
Crime prevention Strategy in the Slovak Republic	91
ANGELOS GIANNAKOPOULOS, KONSTADINOS MARAS AND DIRK TÄNZLER	
Research Findings on Perceptions of Corruption in Seven European Countries within the EU-Project 'Crime and Culture'	99
WIESBADEN DECLARATION OF THE 12TH GERMAN CRIME PREVENTION CONGRESS "A STRONG YOUTH – A STRONG FUTURE"	125