

***Crime Prevention in Denmark - Current status***

by

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## **Crime Prevention in Denmark - Current status**

The following is a brief overview of the Danish approach towards crime prevention.

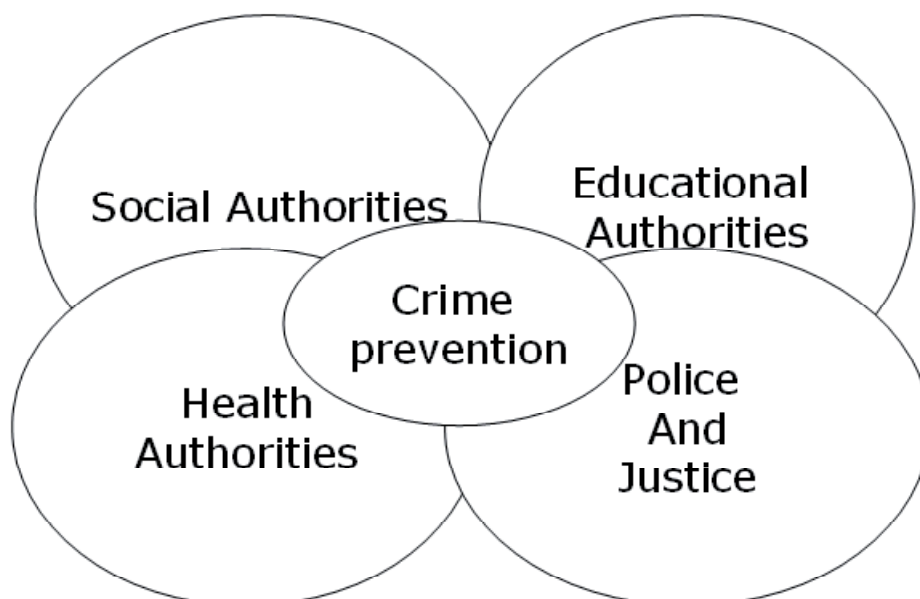
Bearing in mind that The Preventive Council of Denmark is undergoing a transforming process, the Danish Preventive Council will have a new structure and a new strategy from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007.

In Denmark the citizens don't worry excessively over crime and they generally have a significant sense of being safe and secure. The reasons for this feeling of safety and security are, of course very complex.

The way that the Danish society has actually worked with crime prevention since the 1970s is based on the idea that crime prevention is primarily a social responsibility. 20 percent of the population even finds crime prevention to be one of the most important tasks of the police. On the other hand, every member of society is expected to contribute. Accordingly, the basis of the Danish crime prevention is the cross-sectoral cooperation between the public and the private sector. Even individual citizens are supposed to take responsibility and act in the interest of the community to prevent crime.

Focussing on the public sector, the cooperation between the different parts of public administration is essential and may be the core of the Danish idea of crime prevention. Accordingly, the co-operation in the public administration will be the main subject of my overview.

### **Multidisciplinary cooperation**



Social prevention, health, education and publicity work are all publicly acknowledged to have a crime preventative effect. But crime is a smaller part of the problems that a person might face. Issues of social affairs, health and educational politics are part of the political agenda at the national level when crime is discussed. There are however political trends to introduce more severe punishments to prevent crime. But for some years, crime preventative measures, such as community service, social treatment of juvenile delinquents, conditions of treatment for drunk drivers' alcohol abuse, and cognitive programmes for violent criminals have been part of the sanctions used in Denmark.

To this day it has not been necessary to make a clear distinction between crime prevention and e.g. social prevention.

At a practical level, crime prevention is in my opinion, most commonly understood as the area where the responsibilities of the different authorities overlap. What do we do with the risk behaviour of kids? What do we do with violence among kids? How do we avoid violence in families? etc.

### **The Danish municipalities**

Denmark is divided into 98 municipalities.

The services of the municipalities are often divided into Children and Culture Service, Social Service, Road and Traffic etc. The primary and secondary schools are part of the Children and Culture Service.

The municipalities in Denmark have a legal responsibility to prevent crime. The purpose of the law on social service is, for example, to offer counselling and support to citizens to avoid social problems. Crime is considered to be a severe social difficulty. The municipalities have the responsibility to find the right kind of care, to offer it and to pay for it.

The municipalities are also obliged to make a coherent policy for children. The policy is supposed to cover all sides of the activities of children and youth in the municipality, to ensure a preventative and early intervention, flexibility and coherence among the services. The policy should, for example, describe the role of kindergartens and schools in the early prevention and intervention for vulnerable children.

### **SSP Cooperation, etc.**

Today, local cooperation between school, social services and police - called SSP cooperation - is the cornerstone of local crime prevention work with children and young people.

## SSP Cooperation



The aim of SSP co-operation is to build, use and maintain a local network that has an influence to deter crime and criminal behaviour in the daily life of children and young people. SSP cooperation provides an opportunity for the early detection of danger signals, and new trends in crime development and the conditions of life for children and young people, so that measures can be taken to prevent them from taking a criminal path. At the same time, SSP cooperation is well suited as a forum to clarify which preventative options exist locally for the authorities involved. SSP co-cooperation can also instigate projects to prevent the emergence of groups or gangs of young people with criminal behaviour.

SSP co-cooperation also deals with young people over 18 (called SSP+). Accordingly, SSP+ is an important link in crime prevention efforts to cooperate with local businesses to find apprenticeships or workplaces for young people who need special supportive efforts on their behalf.

SSP co-cooperation between the police districts and the municipalities should be developed even further with emphasis on close cooperation with each local authority in the police district. Furthermore, more generally, it would be natural to consider the future organisation of crime prevention efforts, including the work under the auspices of SSP.

As part of future local crime prevention efforts, the police commissioners should also take the initiative for each police district to prepare a special plan for strategic crime prevention actions regarding children and young people in the district. Such a general strategic plan could include the following topics, among others:

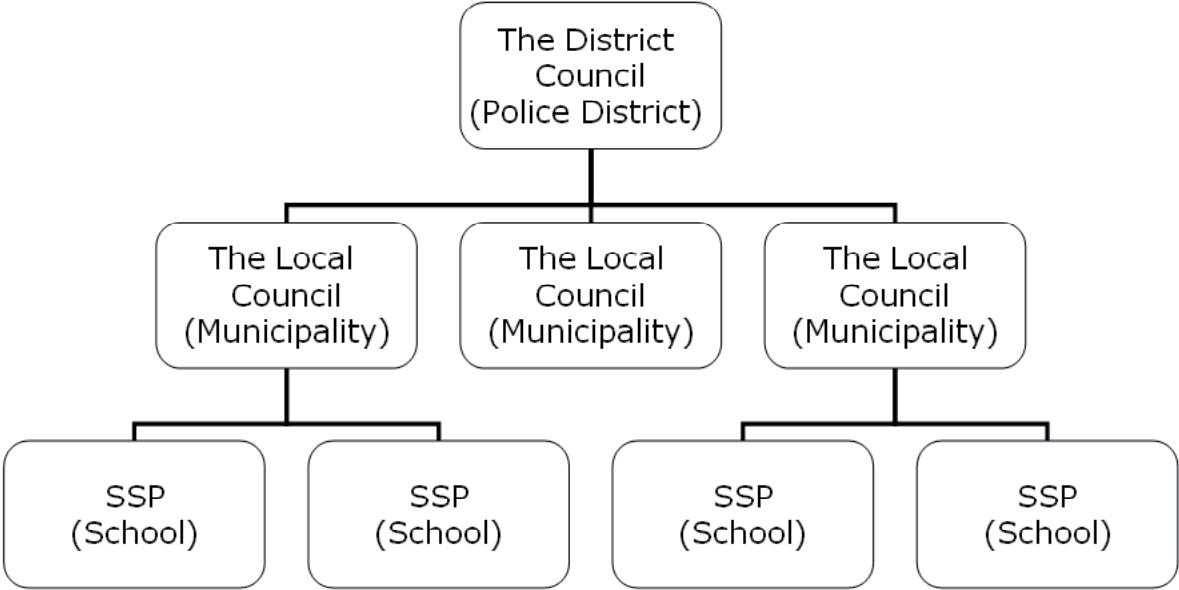
- A systematic course of *general efforts* made during the childhood and adolescence of children and young people with the involvement of schools, clubs, and other places dealing

with youth education. Such efforts could include information campaigns, special SSP days, regular meetings between SSP employees and the police and parent boards of children's day care institutions and schools, joint activities as part of school projects, etc.

- *Specific efforts* aimed at groups of children and young people at risk of developing criminal behaviour. These efforts could, of course, be implemented in co-operation with local father groups, schools, youth clubs, etc., and fieldwork on the street.
- *Individual-oriented efforts* for young people who have already committed a crime, with a view to preventing recidivism. These efforts could involve actual treatment or attempts to establish new social relations for these individuals outside their usual environment, for example, in cooperation with the local business community about traineeships, etc.

**District Councils**

## Local Crime Prevention



A new *district council* has been established, as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, in each police district. The district council is composed of the police commissioner and the mayors of the local authorities, comprised by the police district. The district council will thus serve as the central executive forum where the chief executives of the police and the local communities have an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest.

With a view to underlining the police commissioner's independent responsibility for planning police cooperation with the local authorities in the police districts, the police commissioner is appointed chairman of the district council in the police district. The mayors concerned should represent the local authorities.

With a view to underlining the function of the district councils as the central contact forum for the chief executives of the local police and the local authorities, it has been decided that the district councils shall meet at least four times a year. Naturally, the district councils can hold more meetings as required.

The district council shall discuss all issues of a general nature regarding the police's activities and organisation in the police district. It is particularly relevant to discuss areas where there is a need to ensure cohesion in the undertaking of tasks by the police and the local authorities, for instance with regard to the efforts made on behalf of children and young people at risk. The district council shall discuss organisational issues of special importance to the local community, e.g. changes in station districts and opening hours, etc.

The district council shall furthermore discuss crime development and local crime prevention etc., in the police district, and this could most frequently take place based on the police's analyses of the nature, extent and development of the crime problems in the different parts of the police districts.

The district council shall try to give local people information about the police's activity in the district, including crime prevention initiatives, for example.

The police commissioner shall submit one yearly written report to the district council regarding the police's activities in the past year. This occur, e.g. in connection with the police district's submission of its annual report to the district council. It would be prudent if, in addition, the police commissioner prepares status reports and the like for the district council regarding the general police efforts in the district and/or concrete efforts in specific focus areas.

The district council may submit statements about issues regarding the general organisation of the police district and the district council can recommend to the police commissioner that for a limited period of time the police shall prioritise solving special tasks with regard to upholding safety, peace and order in the police district.

### **Local Cooperation Plan**

It is important for all relevant local players in the new police districts to become involved in cooperation in the tasks best solved in collaboration between the police and the local community.

In order to further anchor and strengthen this involvement, the police commissioner shall prepare a total *plan for cooperation* between the police and the local authorities, other public authorities, interest organisations, associations, etc., in the police district.

The police commissioner should prepare the local cooperation plan for one year at a time after prior discussion in the district council. Thus the district council shall take up the plan once a

year with a view to ensuring that it always provides the best possible framework. The plan is to be published, for example, on the website of the police district. In this way, it would be possible to use the cooperation plan as a reference for the local community and as an inspiration to other police districts.

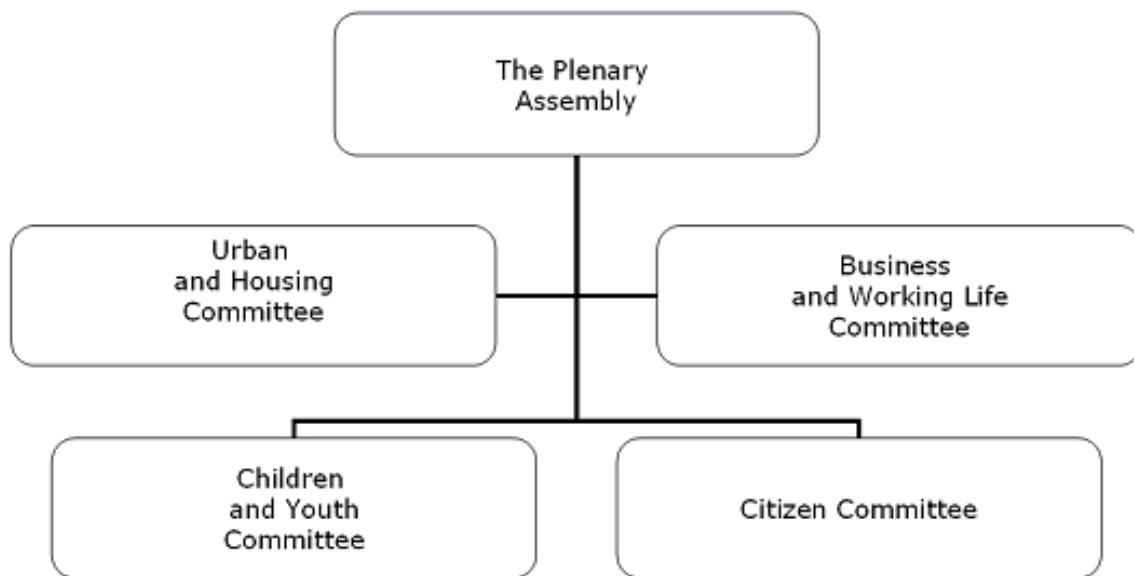
The local cooperation plan should contain a more detailed description of how local cooperation is or will be organised and implemented in the police district. The plan should address the most important local cooperation areas, including local crime prevention cooperation between the police and the individual local authorities (SSP cooperation, etc.). Aside from that, there is a very free framework for how the police commissioners, in consultation with the district council, will draft the cooperation plan. In connection with the current follow-up on the cooperation plan, new important cooperation forms and forums could be included in a revised plan.

### **Role of the community police**

The 12 Danish police districts are divided into an investigating department, a department prepared for action, and the community police.

The community police are helping to ensure close contact between the police and the local community, including the local authorities. The community police are posted at the different police stations (headquarters and the other police stations) in the police district, and the daily leader of each community police unit is able to prioritise and use the resources of the local police in the best possible way, given local preferences and requirements, within the framework set out by the management of the police district. The head of the community police in each police station is the contact person in the day-to-day work for the local authority concerned, including in connection with local cooperation on crime prevention (SSP cooperation, etc.)

## The Danish Crime Prevention Council



The Danish Crime Prevention Council is a national committee.

The council is a public – private partnership, or network. The council has approximately 50 members e.g. researchers, the police, the ministry of education, the ministry of social affairs, the association of municipalities, the association of producers of security equipment, the association of insurance companies, and trade unions of policemen, social education workers and schoolteachers. The council is supposed to be a mirror of the Danish society.

The council works at national level. The aim of the council is to prevent crime and create a safer and more secure society through a coherent and effective approach to crime and crime prevention. The council should define national crime problems in need of attention, and identify ideas of intervention. The collaboration in the council provides the members with an opportunity to coordinate their knowledge and their efforts and provides the members with an opportunity of informal dialogue with relevant partners.

The council is about to establish 4 new standing committees:

- The Children and Youth Committee
- The Citizens Committee
- The Urban and Housing Committee
- The Business and Working Life Committee

The target groups of the council are the members themselves, the district councils and the public.

A secretariat of 25 employees – some of them with degrees in law, criminology, psychology, pedagogical science and communication - facilitates the collaboration in the council and is responsible for the public information and other public activities of the council.

## **Conclusion**

Since the 1970s, Danish crime prevention has been based on a bottom-up approach. The core element of the Danish idea of crime prevention has been – and still is – cooperation between authorities, and between authorities, the private sector and the citizens.

In recent years, Denmark has been designing and implementing very radical reforms moving tasks from national to municipal level as well as merging police districts from municipalities to larger units.

A small part of these reforms has been establishing the district councils and the local councils with the purpose of strengthening the strategic part of local crime prevention, and the communication between the bottom and top in local administration.

A decision has been made to evaluate the police reform. Part of the evaluation is, for example, a study of the existing and future cooperation between the police and the municipalities regarding crime preventive work.

At the same time the Danish Crime Preventive Council has increased its focus on timing and effective methods, process and coherence.

In Denmark the results of these adjustments in the Danish Crime Preventive approach are eagerly anticipated in a couple of years.

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