

Overview of Crime Prevention in Regions and Communities

by

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Overview of Crime Prevention in Regions and Communities The Example of Lower Saxony

Crime prevention is promoted and administered at several levels, ranging from global to national and local perspectives. Even though often not recognized, all these levels interact and contribute to crime prevention strategies on the micro level. For regional crime prevention, i.e. at the state and community level, we find it useful, albeit often neglected, to keep in touch with all these levels. In this presentation, we will describe regional crime prevention in this wider context, focusing first on the global level, then the European and national one, i.e. Germany, before turning to the state and regional level and the work of the Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony and its secretariat.

At the global level, the most prominent “players” in crime prevention are the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, www.unodc.org), located in Vienna, and the International Center for the Prevention of Crime (ICPC, www.crime-prevention-intl.org), based in Montreal. UNODC organizes inter alia the quinquennial Congresses on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the twelfth of which was held in Salvador, Brazil, in April 2010. UNODC administers a number of international agreements and guidelines on crime prevention and criminal justice, including the Guidelines on Crime Prevention adopted in 2002 and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners dating from 1955. UNODC is supported by an international network of scientific institutes established all over the world with the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI) in Helsinki being the European member. While the primary goal of UNODC is to promote standards of human rights and best practices in crime prevention and the administration of criminal justice, particularly in developing countries, the exchange of experience and the publication of innovative ideas developed and tested anywhere in the world can be interesting and helpful for practitioners in industrialized countries as well.

ICPC was founded in 1994 and may be considered a scientific “think tank” providing analyses concerning crime and societal crime prevention in various countries and cities. It also does consulting work for UNODC, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and national governments, for example. It is the only international non-governmental organization to work exclusively in the field of crime prevention and community safety. Its most prominent “products” are the international reports on crime prevention and community safety, guidelines on best practices in intersectoral local crime prevention, and international seminars on methodological issues in crime prevention and other, more practical issues.

In Europe, crime prevention is the theme of two major networks: At the level of national governments, there is the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN, www.eucpn.org), and at the municipal and regional level, you will find the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS, www.fesu.org). EUCPN has its office in Brussels and collects and disseminates information on prevention projects and programmes in EU member states, advises the EU Commission on crime prevention issues and holds an annual conference featuring an award for best practice examples. EFUS originally is an association of mayors interested in new strategies to ensure the safety of their citizens by forming coalitions of various stakeholders in their community to organize a common approach to crime problems, often based on a local safety audit. A German chapter of EFUS was founded in 2010.

In Germany, crime prevention is the responsibility of all three levels of government (federal, state and municipal). Due to the constitutional principle of subsidiarity, the role of non-governmental organizations and local communities has precedence over activities at the state- or federal level.

Due to this decentralization, there are approximately 2000 crime prevention bodies in Germany at all levels of government and outside government. They include at the federal level for example an interdepartmental working group on crime prevention, the German Forum for Crime Prevention in Berlin (DFK, www.kriminalprävention.de), the German Youth Institute in Munich and Halle (DJI, www.dji.de), and the German Congress on Crime Prevention in Hanover (DPT, www.gcocp.org). At the joint federal-state level, there are for example the conferences of ministers for justice and the interior, the Centre for Criminology in Wiesbaden (KrimZ, www.krimz.de), and the Programme for Police Crime Prevention (www.polizei-beratung.de), providing consulting services for potential victims. At the state level crime prevention councils have been established in almost all of the sixteen federal states and in many municipalities. State crime prevention councils primarily support and advise municipal crime prevention bodies and networks, disseminate scientific findings and practical experience concerning crime prevention, analyze crime trends and advise the state government on issues of crime policy and interdepartmental cooperation in this field.

As an example of the organization and scope of crime prevention work at the state level, activities in Lower Saxony are described in greater detail. Lower Saxony has a size of some 47,600 km² and is in this respect similar to Slovakia, its population is about eight million, which corresponds to the one of Bulgaria. Its capital is Hanover, and its population density is 168 persons per km². In 2008, there were 7,400 offences and 2,900 suspects recorded per 100,000 inhabitants, the clearance rate was 59 %.

There is consensus among professionals that preventing crime and increasing the citizens' feeling of safety and security requires the concerted action of many people and institutions, since crime has a multitude of causes which together are beyond the

jurisdiction of any single organization. For countering these effectively, strategies by society as a whole are necessary. As a forum for these common efforts, the Crime Prevention Council of Lower Saxony (CPC, www.lpr.niedersachsen.de) was founded in 1995. It now has more than 250 member organizations from all relevant social sectors, among them more than 200 local prevention bodies, various government departments and local authorities, and several civic organizations and scientific institutions which all contribute with their expertise to concepts concerning security and criminality and support their realization.

The Crime Prevention Council's Board of Directors consists of a president elected by the council's members, the Executive Director managing the CPC Secretariat, representatives from the State Chancellery and the Departments of the Interior, Justice, Education and Social Affairs, three representatives of the municipalities, and three representatives of non-governmental organizations. At present, the latter are the Housing Federation, the State Federation for the Promotion of Sport and the Standing Working Group for Women's Rights.

The goals of the CPC, namely the reduction of crime occurrence in Lower Saxony and the improvement of the subjective feeling of security of Lower Saxony citizens, are to be achieved by supporting and advising local crime prevention bodies and supporting communities in the establishment of crime prevention bodies, by observing and analyzing criminality and the conditions of its occurrence, and by advising the State Government in issues of crime policy and by disseminating scientific findings and practical experience concerning crime prevention.

The CPC's Secretariat is part of the Department of Justice and presently has 15 staff members working on various projects and activities outlined below. Several of these projects are funded in the context of a framework-partnership with the European Commission, others are supported by the Federal Government and Foundations such as the Klosterkammer Hanover. In these projects, the CPC promotes the improvement of quality in crime prevention by providing training, exchange of experience and knowledge management and encourages the involvement of citizens and institutions in societal crime prevention.

The CPC is well aware that nowadays, international contacts are necessary to profit from experiences abroad, to learn about new developments and to find partners for cooperative efforts. The CPC therefore maintains close links to the international organizations named above and in the context of its EU-funded projects has partners in several countries in Europe and beyond.

The core of the Secretariat's activities is the support of municipalities in the field of crime prevention. Among the services provided in this context are on-site consulting on the establishment of a crime prevention council and on project-planning, the

moderation of events and workshops on specific issues, the promoting, advancing and funding of crime prevention projects, and the dissemination of information by an electronic newsletter, a website and by large-scale congresses.

Closely related to this core activity is a pilot project funded by the EU Commission: Social area-based Prevention in Networks, aiming at the testing, adapting and implementing of the American prevention strategy "Communities That Care" (CTC) in three locations in Lower Saxony and subsequently in other German communities (www.spin-niedersachsen.de). In this pilot project, communities are encouraged to use evidence-based prevention programmes in a highly structured approach to involve relevant institutions and members of the community. The exchange of experience with other European countries using the CTC model is part of the project.

The CTC-process provides research-based tools to help communities to promote the positive development of children and youths and to prevent adolescent problem behavior that impedes positive development such as substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence. It is a long-term prevention strategy underpinned by research evidence on factors of risk and protection, connecting certain conditions in children's lives and the likelihood of subsequent problem behavior. It helps communities to select proven prevention programmes to address the most pressing risk factors. CTC provides communities with a manualized operating system including assessment tools to identify and measure the level of risk- and protective factors in an area, to prioritize and then target them with interventions, a data bank providing evidence and information on programmes that are effective in reducing risk factors or showing promise to do so, and on-site training and assistance in a step-by-step process to foster joint prevention planning and to define measurable outcomes that can be tracked over time.

Another activity of the CPC funded by the European Commission is the Beccaria-Programme for ensuring quality in crime prevention through the improvement of competence among practitioners. The Beccaria-Programme (www.beccaria.de) stands for three subsequent EU projects, the first of which focused on Quality Management in Crime Prevention (2003 to 2005). In this period, detailed descriptions of standards for a professional approach to planning, implementing, administering and evaluating crime prevention projects were set out, the Beccaria Standards, available now in several languages (www.beccaria-standards.net). The second project aimed at Training in Crime Prevention (2005 to 2007) and led to the implementation of an in-service training course for practitioners (meanwhile taught three times) and to the development of an accredited curriculum for a Master programme in crime prevention (to be implemented in winter 2011 in the Ostfalia University of Applied Sciences in Wolfenbüttel, Lower Saxony). The third project is on (web-based) Knowledge-Transfer in Crime Prevention (2008 – 2011) and centers on the design of an internet portal for international knowledge transfer.

The CPC also administers several programmes against right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, in which communities or groups of citizens are given advice on how to deal with local crisis situations involving right-wing extremism. Such situations may result from the infiltration of local youth groups or the emergence of “no-go-areas” for certain groups, attempted real-estate buy-outs, the imminent organization of “cultural” events for youths or public violence, demonstrations, provocations, or damage to property with a right-wing background. In such situations, members of a network of professionals (for example capacities of ministries and state agencies, police, office for the protection of the constitution, specialists of social work, youth organizations, justice, medicine, psychology, media, science, and private initiatives and foundations) offer counseling to victims, citizens, parents, pupils, headmasters of schools, teachers, youth workers, local administrators, projects, parties, media, churches, clubs or communities and advise them both on resources available from government departments, the police, and several non-governmental organizations and on suitable strategies and tactics to deal with the situation.

Another important aspect of the work of the CPC is the prevention of domestic violence. One out of four women in Germany is at least once in her lifetime a victim of violence by an intimate partner. Many of these women suffer for a long time from an abusive relation and its consequences. Children, too, can be seriously affected by witnessing such violence. In order to protect and support abused women and their children adequately, police, justice, social services and counseling centers have to work hand in hand. To promote this cooperation, the CPC acts in the framework of a state action plan as a coordination center which supports practitioners in founding local and regional platforms of cooperation, organizes and supports training for members of social services, women’s counseling centers, the police and the courts. The CPC also acts as a clearing house for information from the state and local levels and develops concepts for preventing and intervening against domestic violence.

In order to disseminate recent scientific findings and examples of best practice concerning crime prevention, but also to provide opportunities for informal networking among researchers, administrators and practitioners, the CPC regularly organizes or participates in large scale conferences and public events. Among them are the “Conflict Management Congress”, the conference on “Society engaged in Prevention” or the annual conference “Taking Responsibility in the North” against right-wing extremism.

The CPC is also in close contact with the German Congress on Crime Prevention, which has its secretariat in Hanover. It is the largest European annual conference on crime prevention and related issues – there were more than 3000 participants in 2010 and some 300 presentations, lectures, workshops etc. The Congress includes an international platform for an interdisciplinary exchange in English, the Annual International Forum.

Another example of networking is the Lower Saxony Crime Prevention Conference, a bi-annual meeting of experts involved in societal crime prevention in Lower Saxony. It demonstrates the wide spectrum of current approaches and initiatives in Lower Saxony and serves to facilitate contacts, networking and the exchange of experience among practitioners in municipal crime prevention. New practical, scientific and political or legal developments are presented in lectures and workshops as well as an extensive exposition.

Further activities of the CPC include participation in the Working group “Structural Child Welfare”, in the Exposition “Mediation” and in the Alliance for Healthy Children in Lower Saxony Primary Schools. The CPC is in close cooperation with the Foundation “German Forum for Crime Prevention”. It administers a project against truancy and cooperates with the Project “Parent-Media-Trainer”, the Partnership for Security in Urban Development and many others on the local, national and international level.

Other important agencies involved in crime prevention in Lower Saxony are of course the police, which provides advice to potential victims, cooperates with schools and other societal institutions such as city planning offices, keeps contacts with youths at risk and – among numerous other activities – maintains its traditional patrol activity. On the scientific side, there is the Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony (KFN, www.kfn.de), which - inter alia - conducts evaluation research on counseling services for victims of domestic violence, on early intervention programmes for children from disadvantaged families, and on the effectiveness of preventive measures at the municipal level and in schools.

All in all crime prevention is a task that needs long termed measures as well as co-operations on all regional, national and international levels. While the world is growing closer together things that happen somewhere else will have an effect on the everyday life of citizens everywhere. Therefore the international exchange in crime prevention as well as the theoretical and practical findings from around the globe should be taken seriously by the people involved in crime prevention on the local level.

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