FROM NATIONAL TO INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE – THE EUROPEAN CRIME PREVENTION NETWORK (EUCPN)

By

IREEN CHRISTINE WINTER, DR. IUR., EUCPN RESEARCH OFFICER & RESEARCH ASSISTANT, DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL LAW AND CRIMINOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

More than ever, a fruitful crime prevention strategy is playing a major role in the European criminal justice systems. Increasing demands for more effective measures against crime and delinquency, with a focus on new developments in the social and economic context, have not only identified several key crime areas but also new crime prevention fields to address. The prevention of youth or drug crime, antisocial behaviour, burglary, theft and money laundering as well as cybercrime, child pornography or the implementation of neighbourhood watch programmes have been transformed into result-oriented plans on a national level. In addition, they have an essential link to other countries with the same or different experiences or with an associated cross-border activity.

1. Tasks of the Network
One of the main targets of the European Council is to increase the cooperation to protect citizens from crime with a coherent and rational crime policy, based on respect for human rights and the rule of law and directed towards crime prevention. In addition to this philosophy is the requirement of Article 29 of the Treaty of Amsterdam as well as Article 61(3) TFEU (Lisbon) “to provide citizens with a high level of safety within an area of freedom, security and justice by preventing and combating crime”.

For this purpose, the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) was set up in May 2001 by an EU Council Decision to promote more effective crime prevention activity and best practices in the Member States across the EU, and to provide a means for sharing good practice in crime prevention experience and knowledge gained by Member States. As a framework, EUCPN uses various means to exchange information and maintains close contacts with all relevant stakeholders such as crime prevention bodies, authorities and civil society.

By definition in the Council Decision, the following main aims of the EUCPN are to:

- Identify good practices in crime prevention and to share knowledge and experience gained between member countries;
- Collect, accumulate and evaluate information on crime prevention activities;
- Improve the exchange of ideas and information within the Network;
- Develop and implement a work programme that addresses relevant crime threats;
- Develop contacts and facilitate cooperation between Member States;
- Contribute to developing local and national strategies on crime prevention;
• Provide expertise to the European institutions;
• Promote crime prevention activities and results of relevant EU funded projects (by organizing meetings, seminars and conferences);
• Cooperate with other bodies involved in crime prevention if appropriate.

The Network reports annually to the Council and the Commission on its activities, through the Board and the competent working bodies. The Council is invited to endorse the report and forward it to the European Parliament.

On 30 November 2009 the founding legislation of 2001 was repealed and replaced by a new Council Decision. This was because of “an external evaluation of the European Crime Prevention Network which was conducted in 2008-2009. It identified opportunities for strengthening the Network which were accepted by the EUCPN Board and which make it necessary to repeal Decision 2001/427/JHA and to replace it by a new Council Decision concerning the Network. (...) The evaluation identified the need for more engagement in the activities of the Network by the national representatives and a number of changes are required to strengthen the Network which includes amendments to the provisions dealing with contact points, the Secretariat, the structure of the Board and its tasks, including the appointment of the Chair.”

2. Structure
The EUCPN and its activities are financed by the EU countries and consist of a Board of National Representatives, Substitutes and Contact Points in the Member States. The Board is supported by a Research Officer and a Website Management Team. The position of the Board Chair rotates, and since 1 July 2010 the Chair is Mr. Philip Willekens (eucpn@ibz.eu) of the Belgium Presidency of the Council of the European Union. With the agreement of the outgoing and incoming Presidency partners, Spain and Hungary, “A secure home in a safe community, through prevention, community policing and restoration” has also been chosen as the theme of this presidency. Based on the new Council Decision, and subject to EU funding, Belgium will also manage the implementation of a new administration (secretariat) service provider who will professionally support the Board in 2011.

The EUCPN Board comprises an Executive Committee, voting members and non-voting observers. The Board meets at least twice a year. The voting members of the Board are responsible for decision making.

• The Executive Committee is responsible for developing the Network’s strategic approach for consideration by the full board and for developing and managing delivery of the EUCPN Work Programme. It comprises eight members – the previous Presidency, the current Presidency, representatives of the next five incoming Presidencies and a representative of the Commission.

• Each Member State provides the voting members who are represented on the Board by National Representatives and their substitutes. Each Member State has one vote and decision making will be on the basis of majority as set out in Article 11 of the EUCPN Rules of Procedure.

• Observers may participate in the business of the EUCPN Board, but do not have a vote. They are invited onto the Board by decision of the board members.

The Research Function is provided by a dedicated Research Officer who is the main contact point from whom Network members may seek support and advice on criminological research matters. The part-time Research Officer, funded by the Network, proved to be a success with the collection (good practice projects, library entries and important contacts) and preparation of relevant research information (summaries of systema-
tic reviews, research overviews of specific themes) and high levels of support to network members.

3. Work Programme
The Network is required to decide on an annual programme of work. The development of the work programme is the responsibility of the EUCPN Executive Committee, which works in collaboration with Member States in order to summarize and underline the EUCPN priorities and projects of the coming year. The programme has no defined start or finish: projects will be removed upon their completion and new projects added. In this way the programme is continual. The current work programme is the result of adopting a more strategic approach towards identifying the current position of crime prevention activity within various crime areas. It recognizes the need to undertake an assessment of the subject area to both identify knowledge gaps, which might be filled by commissioning research activity, and to prevent duplication of activity.

The work programme has been developed taking into account three underpinning principles, which are that it:

- Should be involved only with the identification (and ultimate dissemination) of good practice derived from literature and other research activity. It does not involve the development of crime prevention initiatives or the evaluation of such initiatives on the ground.
- Should comprise projects that are of interest to the majority of Member States, in terms of the subject matter and the proposed outcomes.
- Should only contain projects or activities which have clearly defined outcomes based on a conventional project managed approach to ensure that the outputs will be delivered on target and to agreed quality standards.

The Network currently relies on three funding sources:

- EU financial programmes managed by the Commission;
- Member States who fund their own projects;
- Work Programme Fund (WPF) – an internal fund built up by voluntary contributions from Network members.

Seven 'headline' themes have been agreed for the current Work Programme:

- Crime proofing of legislation;
- Making goods less vulnerable to crime;
- Common methodology to evaluate best practices;
- Inventory of good practices;
- Monitoring Member State crime prevention policies;
- Focus on specific and well-defined types of crime (juvenile, urban, drugs);
- Professionalising and strengthening the EUCPN.

Following completion of earlier projects, the programme currently contains the following projects under the themes above referred:

- Developing the European Crime Prevention Award (Finland);
- Restorative justice in the criminal procedure (Hungary);
- Crime prevention in school, "Everybody else does it" (Slovakia and Denmark);
- Developing estimates of the economic costs of crime (Hungary);
- Inventory of good practices based on the ISRD-2 international latency research (Hungary);
- Domestic violence tackled in partnership (Belgium);
- Professionalising and strengthening the EUCPN / Setting-up the EUCPN Secretariat (Belgium);
- Presidency theme – “A secure home in a safe community through prevention, community policing and restoration” Crime prevention in the habitation. Towards a European secure home (Belgium).
4. Website (http://www.eucpn.org)
Here you will find a delivery platform that provides access to discipline-specific research findings on crime prevention. It contains summaries of systematic reviews of the effects of crime prevention measures, details of ongoing research projects and international sources of references of journal articles, scientific extracts or links to full text journals from leading scientists or practitioners. The website also contains strategy papers of the Member States, a diary page with upcoming events and actual news that might be of interest in the crime prevention landscape. The introduction site is available in all EU languages.

5. European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)
EUCPN also rewards the best European crime prevention project each year, by a jury. Participation in the ECPA is open to any project, initiative or package of measures. An objective of the project must be to reduce crime and the fear of crime within the specified theme. Entries can originate from, for example, local authorities, the police, educational institutions, community groups, sports clubs, youth organizations, business community, probation service, neighbourhood watch schemes, parish councils, public transport operators, voluntary organizations/groups.
It is up to each participating country to decide how to select projects for consideration under the scheme. There are some binding criteria:

- The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the specified theme;
- The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives;
- The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches;
- The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible;
- The project shall be capable of replication by organisations and groups in other Member States.

References

2 Treaty of Amsterdam amending the Treaty on European Union, the treaties establishing the European Communities and certain related acts, Official Journal C 340, 10 November 1997.
4 Council Decision 2001/427/JHA.
6 Council Decision 2009/902/JHA.

Further contact:
E-Mail: ireen.winter@univie.ac.at
Web: http://www.eucpn.org