

## ***Crime Prevention Networking in Germany***

The report surveys the situation of crime prevention networking in Germany with focus on the complementary structure of crime prevention on different levels (local, region/state and national level) in Germany and especially the support by national bodies.

### ***General important facts about the population, political and governmental system in Germany***

Of course following facts are chosen because of their relevance for the subject matter.

- Germany has a population of approximately 82 million including 7 million foreigners and is one of the most populated countries in all of Europe (230 people per square kilometre)
- The population is distributed very unevenly: There are very large city-regions mostly in the western part, where towns and cities are so close together that there are no distinct boundaries between them. These densely populated regions contrast with very thinly populated rural areas.
- Nearly one-third of the population (about 25 million people) live in the 82 large cities with more than 100.000 inhabitants. But the majority of people in the federal Republic live in small towns and villages: nearly 6.4 million people in municipalities with a population of fewer than 2.000 and 50.5 million people in towns with between 2.000 and 100.000 inhabitants.
- The name “Federal Republic of Germany” itself denotes the country’s federal structure. The Republic consists of 16 states (Länder) with own constitutions and power. The federal system has a long history and is not variable.
- Another principle has a long tradition: Local self-government, an expression of civic liberty. Self-government embraces particular local transport and road construction, electricity, water and gas supply, sewerage and town planning, as well as the building and the maintenance of schools, theatres, museums, hospitals, sport facilities and public baths. Other local responsibilities are adult education and youth welfare. Local self-government and independence are bound to suffer if the municipalities are unable to finance their programs – a permanent subject of public debate.

- Internal Security is in Germany carried out by both the states and the Federation. The police are for the most part under the jurisdiction of the states. The police forces are essentially responsible for ensuring public security / order and for the prevention and detection of crime.

According to law crime prevention is firstly the task of police. In a broad sense it is a matter for all citizens, an aim for the whole society. The first link to the local level of crime prevention is, that local self-government gives all citizens the most extensive opportunity to play their part and have controlling influence.

The different communal structure in urban and rural areas and regions indicates different problems and crime rates and concludes various models for successful crime prevention.

### ***Theoretical background and development of communal crime prevention in Germany***

Many German cities and municipalities have founded committees during the last years – nearly 2000 all over Germany. These are occupied with crime prevention on a municipal level. Communal Crime Prevention describes the efforts of municipal and city citizens, of municipal institutions and of the police, to reduce crime and crime fear.

According to a known criminological thesis crime does cause fear among the citizens in a municipality and these citizens are often coming into social retreat. As a consequence informal control (such as active neighbourhood) will break down and criminality will spread more or less unhindered.

The main aspect of the described context is crime fear, which is caused mostly by the neglected public area (such as decay of buildings and institutions, drug abuse, beggars, graffiti's, loitering youth) and less by personal victim experiences. The broken windows approach is evidenced by numerous inquiries of municipal citizens. As a consequence the reduction of crime fear becomes an important aim of crime preventive efforts. Security feeling of the citizens can mainly only be influenced in the municipality, the communal approach takes effect.

In other words: Security feeling is a main aspect of quality of life for citizens and it does influence local crime development. The security feeling of the citizens is influenced on a local

level. Therefore reduction of crime fear is a main target of crime preventive efforts especially on a local / municipal level.

Another criminological finding explains meaning and necessity of the local approach: Criminality has a strong local reference. Site of crime and residence of the offender (delinquent) are close to each other in about 70 % of all offences. The conditions for development of local criminality can mainly be found on a local level. Therefore they can only be influenced by municipal preventive measures. This relation becomes even more evident in the field of disorder phenomena, that is in the forefield of criminality.

*Following Conclusions for the development of local crime prevention:*

- The approach of municipal prevention is founded theoretically.
- The approach of municipal prevention is more than only support of a police close to the citizens. Important is an integral social approach with a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors.
- The integral social local approach corresponds to the traditional self-government on the municipal level in Germany.
- therefore crime preventive measures enter into local problems.

The conception of municipal crime prevention has entirely developed in Germany since about 15 years and it is as a so-called sectional task part of municipal policy.

### ***Actors of municipal crime prevention and organisation***

The actors of municipal crime prevention are often organised in committees. They are called differently such as preventive council, round table or security board. The integral social orientation is given shape by the participation of different actors. The main aspect is bunching and linking of resources. Busy citizens and functionaries as well as experts are brought together. Thereby can be considered the complexity of prevention programmes and the multiplicity of reasons for crime. With a continuous and institutionalised co-operation grows the mutual understanding of all council participants and can end in a co-ordinated division of responsibility and labour.

A questionnaire in all German municipalities with more than 50.000 inhabitants shows 12 groups which are (often) participants of municipal crime prevention councils:

- Municipal officials: especially mayors
- Police
- Social Organisations:
- Justice
- Economy
- Schools
- Sports and other clubs
- Churches
- Universities
- Political parties
- Media / Press
- others

### ***Integrated Crime Prevention Structure in Germany***

In Germany an integrated network-structure of three levels: local, regional, national is developing. The *German Forum for Crime Prevention* (DFK) represents the national level with a link to the European co-operation. Besides a *national service centre of the police (ProPK)* works since 1997. The national meeting of actors of each level and discipline is the *German Congress for Crime Prevention*, an annual two days event. The regional level supports the communal activities with its own prevention councils, initiated in the last ten years.

By co-ordinating a city-network the German Forum is directly involved in municipal activities and has knowledge about local problems and good practice.

## ***The German Forum for Crime Prevention and its functions within the networking***

The programmes, projects and events undertaken by the DFK so far, reflect the foundation's broad, collective and societal understanding of the issue of prevention and the DFK's claim for sustainability.

Taking into account the experiences made since the foundation's formation, following prospective tasks for the DFK have been defined:

- *Networking and Co-operation:*  
bringing together state and non-state actors in the field of crime prevention, as well as supporting the most suitable prevention actors according to the individual aims and needs of a specific project.
- *Bundling:*  
supporting and strengthening the different activities and their mutual use and thus increasing their total effects as well as further developing different prevention approaches by bringing together the various experts and institutions in the field.
- *Management and Transfer of Knowledge:*  
initiating further practical work in the field of crime prevention and propagating "good"-practice examples as well as relevant scientific findings on a national and international level.
- *Public Relations:*  
Sensitising the public for the foundation's aims and objectives and thus working towards more public commitment and participation in the field of crime prevention

The DFK sets great priority on the scientific consolidation of its work by consulting scientific advise and expert opinions.

The co-operation of the DFK with the prevention *councils of the German states* and the *National Service Center of the Police (ProPK)* is very advantageous for the subject of



prevention in Germany. The co-operation will be further developed to achieve a closer co-ordination in principal issues.

Expert circles as well as the general public increasingly recognise the DFK as *the* national forum for issues on crime prevention.

Following factors account for this status:

- The DFK's role as a co-operating partner of the German Congress of Crime Prevention "Deutscher Präventionstag"
- the publication of its own journal "forum kriminalpräventoin" and periodical newsletters
- the co-ordination of the nation-wide prevention data-bank "PräviS"
- the foundation's web presence [www.kriminalpraevention.de](http://www.kriminalpraevention.de)
- the DFK's active engagement in the national and international exchange of information and experience via the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and the European Forum for Urban Safety (EFUS).

The expectations of a continuous, qualified and reliable co-operation with the DFK are generally increasing according to foundation's established status. In order to meet these expectations, as well as fulfilling its mission of acting as a strong national forum in the field of crime prevention the DFK works strongly on a strengthening of its personal and financial resources.

**Contact us:**

If you wish to obtain further information please do not hesitate to contact us or visit us on [www.kriminalpraevention.de](http://www.kriminalpraevention.de)

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