

## The Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention and Current Projects on Crime Prevention

(Norbert Seitz, DFK<sup>1</sup> Director and Member of the Management Board)

The **Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention** was officially established in 2001 as a private law foundation. It began as an initiative by the Interior Ministers of the Federal Government and the Länder. According to its charter the Foundation's task is to use prevention alternatives to the greatest extent possible as well as to support crime prevention in all aspects (Preamble and § 2 of the Foundation Charter). This is described as a task not set by the Federal Government, Länder, and municipalities alone, but rather, as affecting all forces in society, which must work on stemming crime through preventive measures, minimizing the damage therefrom, and, above all, strengthening the public's sense of security. All of society must contribute to this and it is a central task of the DFK to bring together all powers relevant to this to take on joint responsibility.

Since some federal Länder already established Länder Councils for crime prevention as early as at the beginning of the 1990s or comparable institutions were created and the build-up of community prevention councils was increasingly emulated particularly in municipalities – today there are over 2000 –, in light of the federal structure of the Federal Republic of Germany it was only logical to also create an institution at the federal level that could offer a platform for cooperation and networking and an appropriate forum for the numerous initiatives, including private ones. Based upon this understanding, the core tasks of the DFK were formulated to include networking and cooperation, pooling, knowledge transfer, and public work. This does not involve competing in the field of prevention issues on the initiatives of individual federal Länder or municipalities, which is where the primary responsibility for performing the actual implementation work lies. Rather, the Forum seeks to provide basic comprehensive issue formulation to municipalities and states concerning crime prevention, make basic information available, and provide basic assistance and motivation. The Forum makes an effort to include governmental and non-governmental authorities and responsible entities in the area of prevention and to support the use of all competent persons involved in prevention. It works on strengthening the mutual benefits of a variety of activities and to thereby further develop their overall effectiveness and that of very different prevention approaches by bringing together the respective qualified expert professions and institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention (German Forum for Crime Prevention)

Further, the DFK seeks to collect and disseminate practical experience in the sense of best-practice examples at a central level, as well as prevention relevant scientific findings through the involvement of relevant institutions and projects at the national and international levels. Not least, it is an important matter for the Foundation to sensitize the general public about the Forum's issues and goals and, thus, for the prevention work of society as a whole, to promote in this way the willingness of all societal groups to work together. The sustainability of crime prevention measures is especially important to the Foundation, as is the further development of basic and advanced training and closer cooperation by the competent authorities. Beyond the national focus, it is a task of the Deutsches Forum to represent the Federal Republic of Germany in the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), in addition to the Federal Ministry of Justice and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and to act as the primary link for the Länder prevention councils and the municipal level.

The first Foundation body is the board of trustees, comprised of representatives of individual departments of the Federal Government, the Länder governments, the municipal central organizations, religious communities, trade associations, unions, and other institutions and organizations that are active in the field of crime prevention. The board of trustees represents a cross-section of all political and societal forces relevant to the issue. One of the most important tasks of the board of trustees is the development of proposals for recommendations concerning crime prevention.

The Foundation's management board, the second body, is comprised of twelve members and conducts all of the Foundation's tasks to the extent they are not allocated to the board of trustees. Thus, it makes decisions concerning the administration of Foundation assets, endowment contributions and donations, as well as regarding the focal point of duties and financial plans. The ongoing business of administration and management of the business office are handled by a director who at the same time is a member of the management board. He represents the Foundation in and out of court.

Despite the almost 40 sponsors from the private and public sectors, the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention today has not achieved the original goal of 5 million Euro initial capital. It currently has about more than half of this amount, which necessarily effects the substantive work of the Forum. Therefore, it is also a central task for the Foundation to continue to try to enlist financial support and to develop the Forum into an institution that can provide effective and sustainable motivation for the further development of crime prevention.

The main substantive focal points of the Forum's work, in addition to issue presentation in the area of primary prevention, are primarily those approaches and interventions that are geared toward a modification of offense opportunity structures to curtail crime and toward offender, victim, and object conditions that could influence crime to occur.

At the beginning of 2004 the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention presented a comprehensive report on reducing **hate crimes**, an offense phenomenon that, because of the use of violence based on prejudice, is seen as especially dangerous. It attacks the basis of peaceful coexistence in civilized society and the inviolability of human dignity as a societal value. The research project implemented by a working group established by the DFK "Primary Prevention of Violence Against Group Members – Particularly Young People" consciously made the question of primary preventive approaches the focal point of the work. The report contains correspondingly comprehensive and broadly formulated recommendations for curtailing crimes of prejudice. To some extent they reach far back into the causes of concrete risks for such deviance and record levels of action and effectiveness that more likely often only indirectly develop a crime prevention effect. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the scientists, they are indispensable if sustainability and success in reducing hate crime acts are to be achieved. According to the report this applies even more so than to those types of crimes where prejudice to a large extent are not politically reflected and motivated in a narrow sense and are not at all organized. Rather, a general willingness to commit violence is overwhelmingly connected to a radical right-wing ideology of violence.

The primary goal of the recommendations flowing from the project is early prevention that is designed to be sustainable and long-term and the corresponding development or modification of internal attitudes in regard to dealing with differences in others. The development of sympathy and empathy is a fundamental protective factor against crimes of prejudice as well as against the willingness to commit violence in general. More specifically, cultural awareness training programs and corresponding contact programs with foreigners is recommended, as are programs that jointly commit parents, teachers, and students to the goal of the absence of violence (known as the "multi-level concept"). According to the working group's recommendations, inter-cultural learning should be developed as early as kindergarten and day-care. Kindergartens, schools, the youth authority, providers of youth assistance, as well as the police and justice authorities must also cooperate on prevention in individual cases and not only, as can often be observed, only in planning. In addition, the exchange of information within the institutions, especially in problematic cases, urgently requires improvement.

Alone the object of study of the project briefly outlined shows that the implementation of the findings, especially in regard to very early prevention approaches, is likewise recommendable and has validity for violent crime in general. Hate crimes, of course, due to prejudices, are estimated to be much more brutal and more random by the actual victim, but, in the end, are an expression of pure violence. Thus, the findings from the project in the same way have significant relevance for the prevention of violence. In this respect it fits almost seamlessly with the work of the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention, because the Forum has been tasked by federal and Länder government leaders with the implementation of a program “Banning Violence and Strengthening the Education Power of Families and Schools.” This program was agreed upon after the terrible bloodbath caused by a student at Gutenberg High School in Erfurt in April 2002. And it addresses a sphere of influence and action to stem violence that go far beyond the intervention concept of criminal prevention that until now was rather geared toward concrete danger and risk assessments. Thus, for example, strengthening of the educational responsibility of families is addressed in the program, along with pre-school and school education on living together without violence, paths to integrating young people into society, and responsibility by media, culture, and politics. In so doing they are not addressed in regard to the prevention of individual concrete emerging crime dangers, but rather, in the sense of the contribution they each make to the creation of conditions that do not allow criminogenic dispositions to arise at all as much as possible. The individual recommendations on prevention and intervention in broad areas are aimed at keeping susceptibility to socially damaging behaviors as limited as possible through providing stable foundations, such as values, empathy, and social and emotional competence, as early as possible, as well as through making one capable of coping in socially acceptable ways with the variety of challenges and problems that arise in certain development phases.

The requirements outlined to stem socially damaging behaviors, especially acts of violence, underlie an understanding of prevention as it is derived from the Latin word “*praevenire*.” In accordance with this, prevention means “precede or anticipate.” Starting from this meaning, prevention work must be completely decisive about preceding or anticipating risks and danger situations and doing everything in order to prevent as much as possible relationships and situations arising that encourage and promote a willingness to deviance, within the meaning of crime prevention,. In this sense, precede/anticipate, to clarify by example, means not traveling to an epidemic area in the first place. Prevention, on the other hand, would be when every person who travels allows himself to be immunized against the epidemic beforehand. The image of potent vitamins also appears helpful, in order to clarify

what the prevention of criminal offenses above all in the field of primary prevention must explicitly provide more strongly and in a more targeted way in the future. Vitamins are usually taken independent of threatened or actual illness or complaints and are supposed to contribute to good basic care that generally strengthens resistance. Medications, on the other hand, are administered when medically indicated. Similarly, in the interest of sustainable prevention, one must use the chances more than in the past much sooner, especially in regard to violence, crimes of prejudice, in the end in regard to socially damaging, deviant behavior, delinquency, and crime, which so far have sometimes received too little attention and are underestimated in regard to their significance for long-lasting success.

The interdisciplinary view of developmental disturbances clearly and unambiguously shows in criminology, psychology, pedagogic, medicine, and social sciences that risks in childhood development not infrequently lead to criminal risks. The relatively late efforts undertaken in child and youth assistance and criminal law in cases of criminally liable youth often come too late.

Particularly as to an understanding based upon the meaning of the words, preventive efforts go far beyond crime prevention measures. They pursue the goal of protecting the psychological and physical health of the person and hindering disturbances and illnesses. Abuse and violence in the early years of life present significant risk factors for disturbed development, impaired life opportunities, and for becoming a victim or an offender. These psycho-social burdens, thus, must be influenced early and preventatively, in order to protect children and to reduce neurotic, psychosomatic, and psychiatric illnesses in childhood and adulthood. Therefore, early preventive action must logically expand upon crime prevention strategies in order to improve the development chances of children. Research shows that risk factors can be balanced out and neutralized by resilience factors. If family circumstances are characterized by cumulative risks, protective factors in school and connections external to the family can provide a substitute. In this regard, communities above all have an important task, because comprehensive early preventive strategies can best be coordinated and put into practice locally. In addition, an exchange of information by the parties involved in prevention and target groups can be best achieved there. Preventive concepts and individual measures, in the meantime, have become quite numerous in the Federal Republic of Germany. However, as before, there is a lack of sound evaluation of the effects, as well as an exchange concerning effective and ineffective concepts and strategies formulated for the long-term. This may be connected to the fact that prevention costs money

and with this, long-term prevention is lost from view. Similarly, routine actions and short-term projects that are only implemented for limited time periods due to a lack of funds and that lose view “of the whole” can also impede effective intervention and support strategies.

Many successful prevention measures show that they must be put into place as early and intensively as possible to avert negative developments. Successful measures must be understood as ongoing tasks and requires effort by the community as a whole and networking at many levels.

Therefore, the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention views further development of such an understanding of prevention as a central task. Both the results of the research project on “crimes of prejudice” as well as the implementation of the program on banning violence with a correspondingly broad spectrum of intervention reinforce the Forum in setting this main focus. The development of the phenomenon of violence in particular shows the need for establishing approaches that are effective and sustainable in working against it at a significantly earlier point in time than that which up until now has occurred many times – as a duty in regard to victims, but also in regard to offenders who often barely have any real alternative development opportunities.

With the **research project “Effectiveness of Technical Break-In Prevention at Residential and Business Premises,”** the DFK has taken on an area of offenses that has equally considerable significance for both victims and criminal prosecution authorities. However, this also applies to the insurance industry, which suffers significant losses annually because of break-ins at private households, businesses, and factories. In 2001, the estimate of losses caused by break-in thefts exceeds two billion Euro.

In addition, the research project is pursuing a question that is also of great interest to the Länder and municipalities and which, in particular, also takes account of the public’s sense of security. This is because break-in thefts are an offense that causes especially difficult and long-lasting consequences for victims, who to some extent suffer traumatic consequences even though their physical integrity is usually not directly damaged. The reason for this usually does not lie in the material damage that the victim suffers, but rather, in the fact that a stranger entered their living space and, thus, invaded the victim’s intimate sphere. This break-in into the intimate sphere often deeply frightens the victim for a long time and sometimes goes so far as to cause the victim to give up the apartment or house. This is a central aspect when it involves awakening the willingness in broad sections of the public to

invest in appropriate technology against break-ins and to implement necessary measures in rental apartments, residential property, and one's own house. This is because such measures, in regard to the bulk of residential burglars, have proven effective. Almost 85 percent of planned break-ins are abandoned unless technical security measures allow access to the premises or are overcome within five minutes. Against this background it is already more than obvious that citizens must take care of themselves and invest in their security.

Pursuant to the most important project results, sustainable positive changes are only achievable on a small scale and locally, and only when as many institutions and persons participate as possible in these changes, whereby the community has proven to be a central intervention location. In addition, cooperation between police and the insurance industry or expert insurers must be intensified and tight dovetailing of behavior-oriented prevention methods with technical security prevention methods must be established.

Together with the police crime prevention program, the DFK will bring the proposed recommendations both at the expert level and make them available as well to a broad spectrum of population segments in order to interest those targeted, who must be brought together for sustainable prevention in the prevention measures under consideration and to convince them to undertake joint efforts.

In addition to this the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention is active in **communicating biometric technologies** as a modern instrument for stemming crime. The primary goal of this is to reduce unfounded fears and reservations among the population as well as to emphasize the value of biometric applications for crime prevention. Issues that are currently especially pursued involve on the one hand, biometric applications in the non-sovereign area of airports, as well as in connection with the World Soccer Championship 2006.

In the **working group "Information Rights and Crime Prevention,"** the DFK is working on options for improving the prevention of criminal offenses that damage commercial enterprises and that to some extent are committed by exploiting internal company organizational and rules deficits by their own employees. In addition to the improvement of the flow of information within and among companies and between governmental authorities and companies, an increase in the transparency of certain rules and procedures as well as the establishment of new sources of information is a central matter for the work of this expert group. On the basis of demonstrated gaps in rules, possible solutions and recommended

actions for potential victims should be developed and presented to them in the context of workshops.

In a **working group with the goal of networking and cooperation through basic and advanced training that uses the example of police and youth social work for the prevention of violence**, experts from the fields of youth social work, Länder prevention committees, universities, colleges, police and youth assistance have drafted a foundational paper, recommendations for the practical cooperation of both institutions, as well as thesis and argumentation papers. In order to make use of the opportunities arising from local cooperation, the working group provides motivation for the development of professional networking on the basis of described minimum contents for basic and advanced training and further education. Its expert policy challenges are targeted at improving the organizational and legal conditions for effective forms of cooperation, including corresponding further education measures.

The **working group** established within the DFK “**Cities for Security, Tolerance, and Freedom from Violence**” primarily works on intensifying the exchange of information on the development of crime in regard to the population’s sense of security as well as the trends that influence this. In addition, it is currently developing a concept for guaranteeing community prevention quality management, which, especially in light of the background of limited financial and personnel resources, has particular importance for prevention measures.

Finally, through the **working group “Prevention and the Media,”** the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention has taken on the issue of creating more interest among the media in general and television in particular regarding the issue of prevention and presenting it in the context of appropriate program formats. In this context, there are efforts to convince especially the editors and authors of entertainment programs through information programs on the topic especially tailored to them. Through corresponding cooperations and the preparation of particularly appropriate issues, such as mobbing and violence, film-makers are to be offered assistance in communicating issues of prevention in a clear and uncomplicated manner. Prevention, not as something special, but rather, as a part of daily life and practiced often as a matter of course, is to be promoted in this way through the media.

The Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention together with the federal Länder has developed a **prevention information system (“PraevIS”)** particularly for the proper fulfillment of the



main task “knowledge transfer” ([www.praevis.de](http://www.praevis.de)), which, against the background of increasing the professionalism of prevention work and the considerable amount of information, becomes especially significant. The system pursues the goal of providing an overview of the existing prevention landscape, actual projects, and initiatives. PraeVIS offers those performing prevention work among the general public a networking platform and supports the necessary knowledge transfer in order to further qualify concrete measures through an exchange of experiences. In addition to quality, above all the effectiveness and economic viability of prevention work must be promoted in the broadest sense. Moreover, PraeVIS offers a complete solution tailored to the needs of prevention committees for the administration and organization of work and, not least, it should contribute to increasing consciousness about prevention among the public. Despite a relatively short “active phase” for PraeVIS, more than 2,800 data records have already been prepared there. The system will be further developed on an ongoing basis and brought to current project levels.

As discussed above, at the European level, the DFK works in the **European Crime Prevention Network (“EUCPN”)** in addition to the Federal Ministry of Justice and the Federal Ministry of the Interior, where the substantive emphasis of the cooperation is primarily set by each EU Presidency. Exchanging proven strategies and methods of crime prevention European-wide and further developing them are priorities. In this committee, the DFK especially represents the interests of the Länder prevention councils as well as other notable non-public institutions and organizations in the field of prevention.

The DFK reports on its work and the results of ongoing projects in a regularly published **DFK Newsletter**, which has since acquired a subscriber base of more than 1,300 individuals and institutions. Generally, the DFK’s Internet presence with its own homepage ([www.kriminalpraevention.de](http://www.kriminalpraevention.de)) has proven to be extremely beneficial for the public work and the networking of already existing prevention structures as the municipal and regional level.

An additional important organ for the Foundation is the **magazine, “Forum Kriminalprävention.”** The publication is intended to communicate prevention as task for the public as a whole and to promote knowledge transfer and networking among the numerous institutions. Each issue addresses current prevention topics and, in addition to scientific treatment, also communicates relevant practical aspects.

The link Wissenschaft und Praxis (science and practice) should undergo considerable interesting additional development particularly as a result of the cooperation between the

Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention and the Campbell Collaboration. The Association of International Scientists, established in 2000, conducts meta-evaluation studies on issues relevant to prevention. In these studies, evaluation results from a number of international project evaluations are incorporated, analyzed, methodically evaluated, and collected into a synthesis. With scientific support, the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention implements the information situation concerning the effectiveness of prevention measures and prevention models for practical prevention work within the Federal Republic of Germany in regards to issues. It offers relevant information both through its homepage as well as through PraeVIS and, thus, is retrievable via the Internet for supporting local prevention work.

In the ways broadly outlined above, the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention seeks to make prevention work in the Federal Republic of Germany more effective and to help in increasing the quality of the measures through the promotion of synergy effects. A particular characteristic in this regard is the comprehensive inclusion of all relevant societal forces in order to achieve especially long-term success and to offer a guarantee for the indispensable sustainability of the measures.

The hope remains that the Deutsches Forum für Kriminalprävention in the mid-term will, above all, also experience increasing financial support so that the tasks set for it as a private law foundation can be fulfilled without limitation. In this way as well, crime prevention by society as a whole must prove itself.