



Impulses for Community-based Prevention Management in Germany

Results and recommendations with regard to organisation and work of crime prevention bodies on the community level

A guide for community practice

In the past few years, the concept of community-based crime prevention has experienced an enormous upward trend in Germany. However, due to the extremely heterogeneous spectrum of various organisational forms and a wide range of substantive approaches, critical voices have become louder; they fear that the concept of community-based crime protection will be diluted and eroded.

The “German Forum for Crime Prevention” (DFK) has thus taken on the task of contributing toward the continued development and stabilisation of community prevention bodies by developing a guide for community practice. Above all, the just-published guide identifies structural elements that have proven to be either necessary and beneficial or an impediment to the planning, establishment and work of community prevention bodies.

It is based upon a secondary analytical assessment of selected publicly accessible literature on the topic of “community crime prevention,” which posed the question of which prerequisites and framework conditions are discernible for effective community prevention work, and the extent to which impulses for the initiation, optimisation and revitalisation of community forms of institutionalisation may be gleaned therefrom.

The results of this analysis have been submitted for evaluation to prevention practitioners from the DFK Working Group “Cities for Safety, Tolerance and Non-violence” within the scope of a Delphi Survey. Germane for the study was the question of whether the abstract parameters of success and design could be confirmed with the specific experiential insights in the communities of the DFK Working Group.

This guide is a reworked summary of the preliminary study “Impulses for Community-based Prevention Management;” like the guide, it is available for download from the DFK Internet site (www.kriminalpraevention.de).

An overview of the most important results and recommendations:

The successful initiation, thematic direction and goal-oriented work of community prevention bodies present demanding challenges for the participants. Some of the parameters of

success and design have proven to be particularly important for helping to meet those challenges:

- Characterising crime prevention as a **multi-disciplinary endeavour** first and foremost means recognising existing areas of activity in terms of their significance for crime prevention, fulfilling these in a more efficient and effective manner by networking available resources, and taking into account the ancillary effects of community action in terms of crime prevention.
- **Institutionalisation** of community-based crime prevention is of crucial importance for its acceptance and coordination.
- The key to establishing functional cooperative structures is harmonising the interests, restrictions and motivations of various actors with one another.
- The success of networks active in crime prevention depends to a great extent on the **willingness to cooperate and compromise** on the part of the participants.
- Goals of the **cooperative approach** include
 - Inclusion of multi-faceted expertise
 - Coordination and communication between the actors
 - Taking full advantage of synergistic potential
 - Participation opportunities for the general public
- The **participation of high-ranking representatives** from the community and police top-level leadership in prevention bodies ("**mayoral obligation**") underscores their importance and facilitates implementation of decisions within public authorities.
- Timely anchoring of **prevention as an obligatory aspect of planning** in the goal establishment, planning and decision-making process of communities offers the opportunity to attain financial savings.
- The guiding principle of **citizen participation** is a constituent feature of community-based crime prevention. Addressing and including the direct surroundings of the public seems to promise success.
- Conceptually well-shaped and goal-oriented **public relations and outreach work** should foster the recognition of crime prevention forums and bodies within the target groups, among potential members and partners, financial contributors as well as competing institutions. For this, specific goals, tasks, work focuses and approaches to problem solving must be imparted in a manner appropriate to the target group.
- The principle of **cause orientation** implies not only viewing crime in the community at a symptomatic level, but also analysing a multitude of possible framework, conditional and creational factors in order to be able to develop strategies which contribute in a sustainable manner to reducing delinquency and feelings of insecurity by influencing their causal contexts.

- In order to be able to direct measures to the influencing factors of crime in a goal-oriented manner, thorough **stocktaking** and cause analyses are necessary.
- **Long-term community prevention concepts** are designed to connect strengths of “primary” crime prevention (cause orientation and sustainability) with the advantages of situation-based approaches (direct effects, easier to measure effectiveness). **Professional performance of tasks** consistent with original responsibilities and special expertise would accent the strengths of both approaches instead of playing them off against one another.
- Uniform structural recommendations for the **establishment organisation** of community prevention bodies are not very feasible because they do not adequately reflect concrete on-site framework conditions.
- Currently, a transformation is apparently taking place in terms of the **structure of crime prevention bodies** as a result of participatory deficits in recruiting public commitment. Connected with this is a functional split into three: a small leadership group capable of decision-making, a broader working level which includes the most comprehensive expertise possible, and a district level narrower as to scope.
- Initiatives on the **district and neighbourhood level** open up identification opportunities for the public, with the goal of community crime prevention in their immediate everyday surroundings.
- Coordination in the sense of management is a necessary prerequisite for the continuity of the work of a prevention body. In addition to these administrative obligations, a **prevention manager** could take on additional responsibilities which are of great significance for the professionalisation of community crime prevention.
 - The integration of crime prevention as an independent planning item into the community administration
 - The guarantee of a scientifically confirmed strategic direction of the approaches to crime prevention, as well as
 - A social integration function as the moderator between differing special interests.
- **Evaluations** – understood here as analyses of effect – are indispensable for the methodological continued development of the crime-prevention approach as well as for its long-term legitimacy. To establish the instrument, however, the willingness to admit to errors (“**error culture**”) is necessary.
- Particularly indispensable for the institutionalisation of community crime prevention is a **basic funding level** by the community, which is ideally set down in a separate line item in the budget.

More information is available at www.kriminalpraevention.de

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