

EUCPN-secretariat contribution to the public consultation of the EU Commission

General information

Since the creation of the European crime prevention network (EUCPN) through council Decision 2001/427/JHA and repealed through Council Decision 2009/902/JHA increasing cooperation and information exchange on the topic of crime prevention has been established. Article 2 point 1 of the Council decision (2009/902/JHA) described the mission of the network: "The network shall contribute to developing the various aspects of crime prevention at the Union level, taking account of the European Union crime preventive strategy, and shall support crime prevention activities at the national and local level". In line with this objective the network encourages information exchange and cooperation between member states.

The alignment of the EUCPN and EU security policy priorities

At the EUCPN conception it had the intention to strengthening crime prevention and the exchange of best practices in the field of "juvenile , urban and drug-related crime". The scope of the network broadened gradually to what can be called "ordinary crime" as opposed to a more "organised" form of crime. However the EUCPN has been aware of a more globalised and interconnected world in which the European Union tries to offer an area of freedom, justice and security, and which creates challenges for Policy makers at each level of the Union. As the line between the concepts of ordinary and organised crime has become blurred, the EUCPN once again widened the scope of its focus. Therefore the EUCPN chose deliberately to align its focus more with the EU policy cycle priorities. In this regard the EUCPN board welcomed the proposed issues to be discussed during the Italian and Luxembourg Presidencies: respectively "Trafficking in human beings" and "Cybercrime". Furthermore, one of the projects included in the EUCPN work Programme, "Strengthening resilience against violent radicalisation" addresses the issue of violent radicalisation.

Notwithstanding this alignment, the EUCPN would like to stress the importance of keeping a focus on traditional ordinary crime. Eurostat (2013) data show that the numbers of crime in the EU are falling during the last years. But that they remain at an unacceptable high level. Also for some types of crime and in some member states there has been an increase. As these numbers indicate, these ordinary crimes hinder the establishment of a true area of security, freedom and justice. As it is well-known that prevention is more cost effective than repression, preventive measures could enhance the feeling of security of EU citizens and EU citizens are more likely to encounter ordinary crime rather than organised crime, the prevention of ordinary crime should remain on the EU agenda.

In addition to the previous argument, the recent research of [REDACTED] elaborates further on the issue of serious crime. They state that this concept is often used as a 'common sense'- concept and is seldom defined or conceptualised. Whereas

¹ [REDACTED] .

EU policy documents use this term to indicate very different kind of crimes than those that are labelled serious crime in scientific research. Thus creating a sort of 'black box'-term that could be the problematic in the future of EU security policies.

EUCPN suggestions for the future EU internal security strategy

The issue raised by [REDACTED] could provide a starting point for an important suggestion for the future EU internal security policy. It is their view that in order for the EU to tackle serious crime the concept itself should firstly be clearly defined. Research documents divide various types of crime that are the core business of the EUCPN, into the category of serious crime. Examples are domestic burglary, theft and sexual delinquency. The EUCPN would welcome broadening the scope of the EU internal security strategy and including thus these types of crime. Since the likelihood of such a crime happening is higher than to be a victim of organised crime, including these crimes would have a major impact on the area of security freedom and justice.

As it are often local authorities dealing with these kinds of crime, increasing the support and in particular the knowledge of local authorities and practitioners could help to prevent these sorts of crime. As a result the numbers of crime could be falling throughout the EU, which remain, as previously mentioned (Eurostat, 2013) at a very high level. The EUCPN network could play a pivotal role in this regard. By exchanging good practices via the Network and making available to all the stakeholders practical information, it tries to spread crime prevention knowledge throughout the EU. The EUCPN has noticed a renewed attention to crime prevention within several EU institutions and agencies. This evolution is warmly welcomed by the EUCPN. However the Network advocates a more intense cooperation with the EUCPN in order to fully benefit from the experience and knowledge that is present within the network.

Based on all the above mentioned arguments the EUCPN advocates a strengthening of its Network within the EU. The benefits of having a European network with a clear multidisciplinary approach could not be underestimated. Insights from academics, criminologists, social workers, sociologists, jurists, prevention workers, city developers and police forces are the strength of the network and provides practitioners with very concrete examples and handles for an integrated prevention policy. It is the EUCPN's opinion that this *raison d'être* should be a part of the future EU internal security strategy, as an important multidisciplinary building block for an area of freedom, security and justice.

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