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NOTE

From:	Incoming Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Towards a European strategy for General Crime Prevention to tackle all sorts of crime and antisocial behavior

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INTRODUCTION

The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty mentions prevention as a means of maintaining and developing the area of freedom, security and justice in the European Union.

It was the 1999 Tampere European Council that developed more specifically the concept of criminal prevention and agreed on the need to develop concrete measures, such as the establishment by the Council of the European Union (2001) of the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), which aims to develop crime prevention at EU level, supporting initiatives and activities at national and local level.

The first crime prevention strategy at EU level dates from 2000: ‘The Prevention and Control of Organised Crime: A European Union Strategy for the beginning of the new Millennium.’¹ It includes detailed recommendations on establishing evaluation mechanisms, the exchange of information to prevent criminal infiltration, the creation of new legal instruments to combat criminal infiltration and fraud and the integration of crime prevention aspects into actions against crime, among others.

¹ Official Journal C 124 , 03/05/2000 P. 0001 – 0033, [EUR-Lex - 32000F0503 - EN \(europa.eu\)](#)

The political evolution of crime prevention has undergone a number of transformations promoted, inter alia, by the Hague programmes (European Council, 2004) and by the Treaty of Lisbon of 2007, establishing through Article 84 TFEU the legal basis for the EU to create measures to promote and support the preventive action of the Member States.

It was in the Stockholm Programme (2010 European Council) that it was proposed to the Member States and the Commission to actively promote and support crime prevention measures. This instrument took a step further and invited the Commission to present, on the basis of the assessment of the work carried out by the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), the establishment of a Crime Prevention Observatory (OPD), whose tasks would be to collect, analyse and disseminate knowledge on crime in general (common and cross-border crime), including statistics and to support Member States and the Union institutions in adopting and promoting preventive measures and exchanging best practices. It should include or replace the EUCPN, with a secretariat located within an existing Union agency and functioning as a separate unit.

The Commission follow up to this proposal with an action plan, named ‘Delivering an area of freedom, security and justice for Europe's citizens Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme’,² where it set out three measures under crime prevention: 1. Evaluation of the functioning of the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) and legislative proposal on the establishment of a Observatory for the Prevention of Crime (OPC); 2. Promote the concept of preventing and fighting organised crime through an administrative approach and 3. Development of a customs risk management framework in order to prevent organised crime activities linked to goods.

In the Commission’s 2012 Communication on the evaluation of the EUCPN, it was concluded that the EUCPN fulfilled embryonic functions of such an observatory and should therefore be strengthened. However, the setting up of an observatory was not considered cost efficient at the time.³ Since then, crime prevention has become an integral part of EU security policies. The Security Union Strategy⁴ names close cooperation with local and regional administrations as well as civil society as key for crime prevention. Furthermore, the EU works towards prevention of corruption as well as of criminal infiltration of the economy and society. The EU Strategy to Tackle Organised

² Brussels, 20.4.2010, COM(2010) 171 final, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52010DC0171>

³ https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-09/20121130_eucpn_report_en.pdf

⁴ COM(2020) 605 Final

IDENTIFIED NEEDS

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Since crime prevention includes all the activities that contribute to halting or reducing crime as a social phenomenon, its definition can be broad, and may depend on the specific context. In 2019, the European Crime Prevention Network defined the concept of crime prevention as ‘Ethically acceptable and evidence-based activities aimed at reducing the risk of crime occurring and its harmful consequences with the ultimate goal of working towards the improvement of the quality of life and safety of individuals, groups and communities’. A comprehensive policy response to crime prevention, including in particular the prevention of organised crime, needs to address local drivers of recruitment into organised crime, strengthening resilience of public institutions and the economy against infiltration, provide alternatives to a criminal career and offer way out (e.g. through rehabilitation and reintegration measures) as well as the protection of victims or vulnerable persons as well as economic sectors (e.g. through awareness raising measures etc). Given the many aspects of effective crime prevention (including not only law enforcement measure but also measures promoting for instance social integration) a multi agency and multidisciplinary approach including administrative measures, is key at national and European level.

Since common crime occurs at the local level, effective policies can only be implemented at the local level, albeit with support at the national level. This support should be sensitive to the fact that some crime at local level has a direct link to transnational organised crime, and should also provide additional guarantees for respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, avoiding duplication and making better use of available resources.

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ADVANCING TOGETHER IN PREVENTION

There is a clear EU added value to working on crime prevention. Notably, the exchange of best practices offers access to knowledge on crime prevention to policy makers and practitioners across the EU and facilitates exchanges of best practices between policymakers and practitioners from different EU Member States.

Furthermore, an EU-wide crime prevention initiative offers opportunities to strengthen national ones, including the collection of statistics to support the work of Member States and the Union institutions when taking preventive measures, as well as the production of relevant reports and materials to help guide preventive policies. It is a need recognised by all stakeholders consulted¹³. While several initiatives and networks are in place, increased efforts are needed to translate policy objectives into concrete action, requiring renewed commitment by all relevant stakeholders.

In light of the above, delegations are invited to discuss which strategic or specific measures could improve the situation, considering the following aspects:

1. Does your country have a national crime prevention strategy or action plan? How has their implementation been monitored and when have they last been reviewed to take into account new criminal realities?

¹³ Consultation of member countries vi Consultation of member countries via EUCPN 26 June 2023a EUCPN 26 June 2023

2. Which competent authority is responsible for crime prevention in your Member State? By this we mean a government institution that is responsible for the prevention of crime in general and that works at the national level. What are the tasks of this authority in the area of crime prevention?
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