

# EUCPN **MULTIANNUAL STRATEGY**

**2021  
2025**

# SETTING THE STAGE

The crime prevention field is and remains a complex field to navigate. The European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN) has gathered a wealth of information and made this available to policy makers and practitioners alike<sup>1</sup>. The EUCPN aims to be the most accessible network possible in leading evidence-based crime prevention and acting as facilitator of best practices at the European, national and local level.

The EUCPN has multiple actors, each striving to improve and promote crime prevention. The EUCPN Board gathers the National Representatives and substitutes of all EU Member States and is the Network's decision-making body. The Board is responsible for approving the changes in direction as described in the multiannual strategy (MAS). The National Representatives are appointed by their respective Member States and are responsible for carrying and promoting the Network. The National Representatives are the main contact points between the European, national and local level. The Network is dependent on the gathering and dissemination of information by the National Representatives. Concrete tasks are described for the National Representatives throughout the MAS.

The Executive Committee is led by the Chair and composed of up to six members of the Board, the Secretariat and a representative from the EU Commission. The Executive

The EUCPN has multiple actors, each striving to improve and promote crime prevention.

Committee is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Network. It makes the preparations for the Board meetings, it is the principal policy designer and it supervises the Secretariat. The Executive Committee is responsible for keeping an overview of the MAS' progress and tabling action areas when needed.

The EUCPN is chaired by the National Representative from the Member State holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The Chair leads the discussions in the Network meetings and organises these meetings. The Chair is also responsible for acting as a bridge between the Network and the Council of the European Union; i.e. to inform and involve the Network in EU policy initiatives and the support recommendations from the Network to the Council. At the beginning of the year, both presidencies need to explain their priorities for the implementation of the MAS, which need to be added to the Work Programme.

The Secretariat functions on a permanent basis. It is a centre of expertise regarding crime prevention in the EU, coordinates the pursuits of the Network and supports the

Chair, Executive Committee and Board in their tasks.<sup>2</sup> The concrete tasks of the EUCPN Secretariat are related to the implementation of the MAS.

The multiannual strategy provides the overarching framework for ensuring, first, that the EUCPN's work reflects the needs of the crime prevention field. This part contains one strategic goal and four operational goals to accomplish this. Secondly, the strategy will ensure that the EUCPN's activities are supported by an efficient internal structure that adopts a proactive approach to planning, promotes appropriate and efficient working practices, and ensures that core processes are optimised. Four areas of improvement have been identified to improve the internal functioning.

# THE EUCPN'S STRATEGY

The EUCPN will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021. Throughout its 20 years, the Network has predominantly focused on exchanging information on crime prevention between the EU Member States. It was now time for the Network to reflect on its work, to consult stakeholders and commence an evaluation. The result of this work has led to this renewed multiannual strategy<sup>3</sup>. This strategy provides an overview of the strategic goals, operational goals and action areas. The strategy aims to provide the Network with more consistency and to enable it to tackle the challenges of tomorrow more efficiently. This multiannual strategy is divided into two separate parts, each containing a strategic goal. The strategy will be put into operation in 5 yearly work programmes.

## PART I

**Strategic goal I: The Network will support and develop crime prevention within the EU using an evidence-based approach**

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# PART



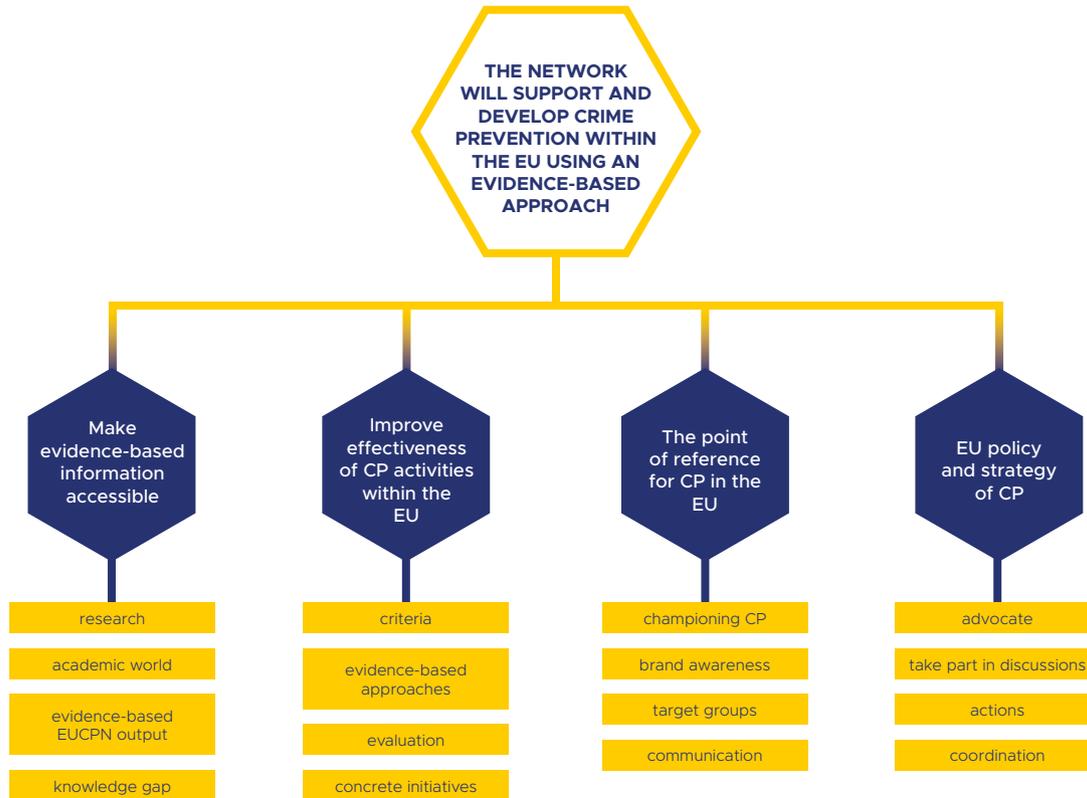
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One of the key functions of the Network is to be a catalyst for facilitating more effective policies and initiatives. The success of the Network depends on the conditions and activities in the Member States. Therefore, throughout the description of the goals, emphasis will be laid on the role of the National Representatives when describing the operational goals.

The first part of the strategy presents one overall strategic goal and 4 operational goals. Each of these goals have been translated into action areas containing milestones that the Network expects to achieve by the end of 2025. It is important to note that, due to the integrated approach to crime prevention, these goals are interlinked and mutually complementary. This structure of the multiannual strategy is visualised in figure 1.

Figure 1:



## STRATEGIC GOAL I:

### The Network will support and develop crime prevention within the EU using an evidence-based approach

According to the Council Decision 2009/902/JHA, the objective of the network is: '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.' This goal remains worth pursuing in 2021 and the years to come. In order to continue promoting and advancing crime prevention in the EU, the EUCPN commits to evidence-based knowledge and actions.

The Network will make use of, and communicate the importance of, the hierarchy of evidence and hereby ensure a higher standard of crime prevention within the EU. By doing so, the Network will support and develop the EU-wide crime prevention field by making factual, objective and reliable information available and supporting its implementation in practice. Within this dimension, it is important to reiterate the Network's understanding of crime prevention. The EUCPN defines 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.<sup>4</sup>*

The Network realises that dealing with crime and (especially) preventing crime is not an easy task and, unfortunately, there is no catch-all solution. However, society simply cannot rely on apprehending and incarcerating offenders alone. Instead, any response to crime should adopt a holistic approach and crime prevention is an integral part of that.

Many challenges follow from this complexity, and all Member States experience these to some extent. There is a need to correctly allocate the available funds, to evaluate the impact of crime prevention initiatives and to learn from each other in order to improve the common understanding of crime prevention. The Network is committed to addressing those challenges by exchanging evidence-based information and by becoming a benchmark in crime prevention. In this sense, the Network not only sets out to exchange information, but also seeks to implement this by creating and supporting effective actions at the local, national and EU level of crime prevention.

Ultimately, these activities from the EUCPN will support the policies and practices within the EU and provide for more effective crime prevention, which will in turn improve the quality of life and safety of all EU citizens.<sup>5</sup>

The strategic goal of the EUCPN provides the framework within which the EUCPN Secretariat staff and National Representatives will situate their work, and within which our target groups can see the added value of the Network and the rationale for products and services delivered.

### **1.1 Operational goal 1: The Network makes evidence-based information accessible**

The Network aims to support evidence-based decisions and actions at the local, national and EU level by providing reliable information concerning crime prevention methodologies and practices. The Network is convinced that the accessibility of sound information is a prerequisite for developing effective policies in crime prevention. Therefore, the Network will act as a platform for this evidence-based information.

The Network will develop a sustainable link with the academic world. This will allow the Network to maintain a close and ongoing understanding of developments in the research area. It is important that National Representatives are in contact with their research institutions as far as possible, in order to inform other Member States and the Network of new insights.

The EUCPN is committed to proactively creating evidence-based products that are designed to help policy makers and practitioners to perform their tasks. Attention will be directed towards EU priorities, national and local topics alike. The Network is convinced that knowledge should be picked up outside academic circles. Emphasis will be laid on strengthening the link between academics and crime prevention practitioners. The Network will use academic content to bridge the existing knowledge gap.

#### **Action areas:**

- Make existing and future research accessible
- Maintain a link with the academic world
- Create evidence-based EUCPN output
- Bridge the knowledge gap between research, policy and practice

### **1.2 Operational goal 2. The Network improves the effectiveness of crime prevention activities within the EU**

The EUCPN has an important responsibility to act as a catalyst for improving the quality and delivery of crime prevention initiatives. Effective initiatives have to be based on evidence of the nature of the problem and what has been shown to work rather than on moral or value judgements. Moreover, the common understanding of crime prevention will improve by sharing national experiences. The Network not only sets out to exchange information, but also seeks to implement this by creating and supporting effective actions at the local, national and EU level of crime prevention.

By creating criteria for effective crime prevention initiatives, the Network will increase the uptake of evidence-based approaches to crime prevention. These transparent criteria for assessing the effectiveness of crime prevention initiatives will be implemented in all aspects of the Network's endeavours.

The knowledge of effective crime prevention initiatives lies in the evaluation of these initiatives. In order to increase the amount of evaluated crime prevention initiatives, the Network will also develop and support the capacity of practitioners to perform evaluations. The National

Representatives will stimulate an evaluation culture within their Member States and inform the Network of promising and evaluated initiatives.

The national crime prevention institutions and the Network will work together to proactively create and support concrete crime prevention initiatives in order to support the local, national and EU level. The various priorities at the local, national and EU level will be taken into account.

#### Action areas:

- Create criteria for effective crime prevention initiatives
- Increase the uptake of evidence-based approaches to crime prevention
- Increase the capacity for evaluating crime prevention initiatives
- Support concrete initiatives

### 1.3 Operational goal 3: The Network, the Secretariat and the National Representatives are the point of reference for crime prevention in the EU

There is a wealth of information available through the EUCPN, and this knowledge base will continue to grow in the next five years. In the years 2021-2025, the EUCPN is committed to taking major steps to further promote the accessibility of this knowledge and to promote the value of crime prevention as an integral part of any response to crime. The EUCPN will become a one stop shop for those who need information, practices, experiences and tools about crime prevention.

A core challenge for the EUCPN is to ensure that the information and tools created reach the Network's target groups. The Network's target groups are extremely diverse and contain policy-makers and practitioners at the local, national and European level. The Network will position itself in the market as the point of reference regarding crime prevention in the EU.

National Representatives have an important role to play in this regard. Local and national prevention actors should know their National Representative and interact with them. Emphasis will be laid on the Network's two-way communication, in order to ensure that the target groups know the Network and the Network knows the target groups and their needs. Means of communicating with the target groups will be identified and reinforced in order to enable the channelling-in of interests in a bottom-up direction.

Working at the EU level can create a distance from the local level. This distance could already be overcome by active and proactive communicating National Representatives within their Member States. National Representatives also play an important role in translating tasks at the EU level into tasks at the local level. Nevertheless, overcoming the language barrier will be a task for the whole Network. Furthermore, new methods of communication, such as webinars, will be explored to further decrease communication barriers.

#### Action areas:

- Continue championing crime prevention
- Improve the brand awareness of the EUCPN
- Be accessible to the target groups of the EUCPN
- Overcome the existing communication barriers

#### **1.4 Operational goal 4: The Network contributes to the EU policy and strategy of crime prevention**

Crime prevention has to be an integral part of any holistic approach towards crime. An important priority for the Network is to provide support for those who define policy at the EU level. Crime prevention needs to be included in all related strategies and policies. Of particular importance here is the Network's responsibility with respect to the EU Policy Cycles on serious and organised crime and the Security Union Strategy.

The EUCPN is committed to proactively promote crime prevention in any EU crime strategy or policy. National Representatives and especially the Presidency will increase the contact with their national counterparts in the relevant working groups of the EU Council to further support recommendations made by the EUCPN and to include the EUCPN in EU discussions on crime strategies and policies.

As crime prevention is a huge field, there are many other organisations, besides the EUCPN, that partially focus on it. In order to prevent duplication, promote effective initiatives and coordinate the information gathering, the Network will be present at the EU level. The Network is committed to, and dependent on, maintaining successful partnerships with European and international organisations.

The EUCPN aims to stimulate and create EU-wide effective actions. This could be within the boundaries of the EU Policy Cycle on Serious and Organised Crime, as well as through joint projects.

#### **Action areas:**

- (Continually) advocate for making crime prevention an integral part of the response to crime
- Take part in discussions on EU crime strategies and policies
- Create EU-wide effective actions
- Coordinate the various crime prevention activities and actors at the EU level

# PART



2021

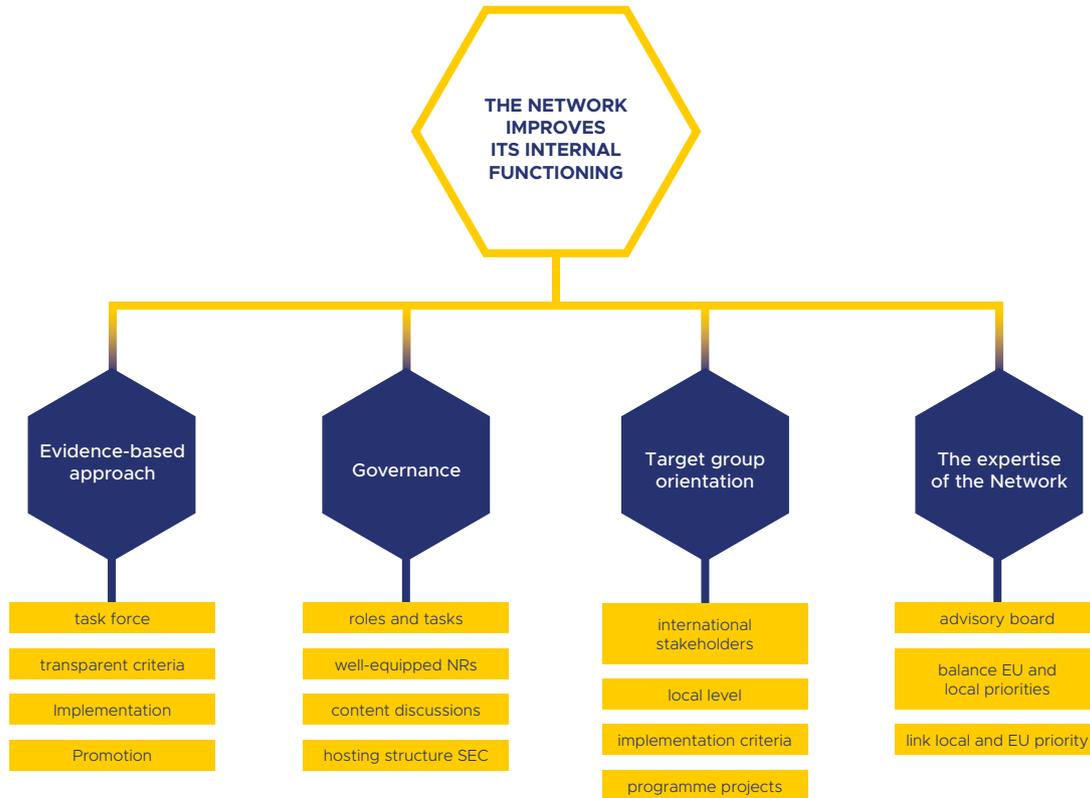
2025

The consecutive external evaluations have stated that the EUCPN made an impact on the EU crime prevention field, but also discovered some limiting factors in the functioning of the Network. Increasing the Member States' engagement - which is sometimes very sporadic at present - is increasingly one of the biggest opportunities for expanding the impact of the Network.

The second part of the strategy focuses on the internal improvements necessary to enhance the Network's

functioning. It presents one overall strategic goal and 4 areas of improvement. The areas of improvement deal, first of all, with how the evidence-based approach will be developed and implemented in the Network's endeavours. Secondly, the governing structure of the Network will be discussed to improve the internal working environment. Furthermore, an improved orientation towards the target groups will be envisioned and lastly, the expertise of the Network will be demarcated. This structure is visualised in figure 2.

Figure 2:



## STRATEGIC GOAL II:

### The Network improves the internal functioning

In addition to the external goals of the Network, the self-reflection and evaluation have also uncovered some limiting factors in the Network's functioning and processes. These limitations within the areas of improvement are currently hindering the successful implementation of the Network's strategic and operational goals. In order to face these challenges head on, the four identified areas of improvements have been integrally subjoined in this strategy. The Network therefore commits itself to resolving these challenges and to proceeding with creating the best possible working environment for supporting crime prevention within the EU.

#### 2.1 Area of improvement 1: The evidence-based approach

During the discussions preparing this Multiannual Strategy, the increased focus on evidence-based approaches within the work of the Network was put forward as one of the most important areas of improvement in order to accomplish the Network's strategic and operational goals. It was recognised that the focus on evidence-based knowledge and activities needs to be at the heart and centre of the Network's endeavours.

In order to further develop this discussion, the Board created a Working Group of interested Member States (WG-EBA). This Working Group formulated a declaration of intent for the next 5 years, encouraging the different stages of integrating an evidence-based approach into the Network's work. The full declaration can be read in annex 3.

The WG-EBA will establish a task force that will create a strategy to increase the uptake of evidence-based approaches within the EUCPN. This will entail creating transparent criteria for assessing the evidence base of crime prevention practices, implementing these in the work and tools of the EUCPN and promoting these criteria in national strategies and funding opportunities.

#### Action areas:

- Create a task force
- Decide on transparent criteria for assessing the evidence base of crime prevention practices
- Implement these criteria in all aspects of EUCPN
- Promote adoption of these criteria in national strategies and funding opportunities

## 2.2 Area of improvement 2: Governance

Each of the three external evaluations that have been performed over the years discovered limiting factors in this structure and expressed the need to improve the governance of the Network. The EUCPN therefore commits itself to tackling these governance issues in order to create a strong and clear structure. Specifically, the role of the National Representatives, the division of tasks and the hosting structure of the Secretariat have come into focus.

The Board decided to also create a Working Group to tackle the governance issues. The Working Group is intended to clarify the different roles and tasks of the EUCPN members. Emphasis will be directed towards the role and tasks of the Member States. The National Representatives have an important role in relation to promoting the EUCPN in their country and in gathering information. The inactivity of certain Member States and the lack of alternative contact points in these Member States results in serious information gaps for the Secretariat and the Network as a whole. The working group will advocate the necessary funding to implement the tasks.

Additionally, the mandates of the Chair, Executive Committee, Secretariat and Board will be clarified to create more room for discussions on crime prevention content. Lastly, the external evaluation has discovered some shortcomings in the hosting structure of the Secretariat. One question is how the different MS can get more involved and be present in the structure of the Secretariat. It might be an idea to mix up the nationalities present in the structure. Even though this Secretariat has been established since 2011, it still operates according to time-bound EU-funded projects and is hosted by an EU Member State. The Working Group will examine how a more durable structure can be created.

### Action areas:

- Clarify the different roles and tasks of the EUCPN members
- Promote the appointment of well-equipped National Representatives
- Leave room for content discussions during Board Meetings
- Discuss the hosting structure of the Secretariat

## 2.3 Area of improvement 3: Target group orientation

The Network's target groups are focused on three different levels of governance: the local, the national and the European level. In 2017, the Board decided on the main international stakeholders<sup>6</sup> who should receive priority attention. The Secretariat has been working towards achieving this and improvements are visible through signed and negotiated Memorandums of Understanding and improved contacts.

The link with the national level is ensured through the National Representatives, although as is apparent from the area of improvement on governance, this differs greatly between Member States. Nevertheless, overall the Network has the greatest difficulty reaching the local level. This is also the main task of the National Representatives.<sup>7</sup>

The usefulness of the current work programme projects will also be discussed. Based on the evidence-based discussion, criteria can be suggested to which projects should adhere before being included in the work

programme. The projects included could then receive active support by the EUCPN and its Secretariat.

#### Action areas:

- Continuous link to international stakeholders
- Improved focus on the local level
- Implementation of criteria in work programme projects will be discussed

### 2.4 Area of improvement 4: The expertise of the Network

The evidence-based approach discussion should already lead to greater expertise within the Network. Statements from the Network need to be a kind of benchmark for what is good, what works and what is not good or does not work. An advisory board will be created for pitching ideas and for ensuring that the Network maintains a running conversation with the academic world. This will result in the establishment of a centre of expertise for crime prevention within the EUCPN Secretariat.

The main focus of the EUCPN will be divided between EU strategic priorities and local volume crimes. Throughout the discussions preparing for this multiannual strategy, the tension between focusing on organised crime versus volume crime emerged. Focusing on EU priorities is perceived by some as limiting the relevance for the local level. Therefore, the Network will focus on finding a balance on the

continuum. When a topic is placed on the EUCPN's agenda, it should be validated as relevant in multiple Member States. It will be the task of the Executive Committee to safeguard this balance. Furthermore, it is important to focus on topics where the EUCPN can create an added benefit to the EU level and avoid duplication.

#### Action areas:

- Create an advisory board
- Establish a balance between EU and local priorities
- Strengthen the link between local and EU priority topics

## ANNEX 1: summary of the Network's external goals

STRATEGIC GOAL 1	OPERATIONAL GOALS	ACTION AREAS
<p><b>The Network will support and develop crime prevention within the EU using an evidence-based approach</b></p>	<p>1. The Network makes evidence-based information accessible</p>	<p>Make existing and future research accessible</p>
		<p>Maintain a link with the academic world</p>
		<p>Create evidence-based EUCPN output</p>
		<p>Bridge the knowledge gap between research, policy and practice</p>
	<p>2. The Network improves the effectiveness of crime prevention activities within the EU</p>	<p>The Network improves the effectiveness of crime prevention activities within the EU</p>
		<p>Increase the uptake of evidence-based approaches to crime prevention</p>
		<p>Increase the capacity for evaluating crime prevention initiatives</p>
		<p>Support concrete initiatives</p>
	<p>3. The Network, the Secretariat and the National Representatives are the point of reference for crime prevention in the EU</p>	<p>Continue championing crime prevention</p>
		<p>Improve the brand awareness of the EUCPN</p>
		<p>Be accessible to the target groups of the EUCPN</p>
		<p>Overcome the existing communication barriers</p>
	<p>4. The Network contributes to the EU policy and strategy of crime prevention</p>	<p>The Network contributes to the EU policy and strategy of crime prevention</p>
		<p>Take part in discussions on EU crime strategies and policies</p>
		<p>Create EU-wide effective actions</p>
		<p>Coordinate the various crime prevention activities and actors at the EU level</p>

## ANNEX 2: Summary of the areas of improvement for the internal functioning

STRATEGIC GOAL 2	AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT	ACTION AREAS
<p><b>The Network improves its internal functioning</b></p>	<p>1. The evidence-based approach</p>	Create a task force
		Decide on transparent criteria for assessing the evidence base of crime prevention practices
		Implement these criteria in all aspects of EUCPN
		Promote adoption of these criteria in national strategies and funding opportunities
	<p>2. Governance</p>	Clarify the different roles and tasks of the EUCPN members
		Promote the appointment of well-equipped National Representatives
		Leave room for content discussions during Board Meetings
		Discuss the hosting structure of the Secretariat
	<p>3. Target group orientation</p>	Continuous link to international stakeholders
		Improved focus on the local level
		Implementation of criteria in work programme projects will be discussed
	<p>4. The expertise of the Network</p>	Create of an advisory board
		Establish a balance between EU and local priorities
		Strengthen the links between local and EU priority topics

## ANNEX 3: full declaration of intent from the Working Group on evidence-based approach

“The WG-EBA has decided that focusing on an evidence-based approach to crime prevention not only encompasses the adoption of this approach in the EUCPN’s own products and services, but also creates and supports a culture of evidence-based working in crime prevention practice in the European Union.

The first step will be to create a small task force, composed of academics and practitioners, which will be responsible for drafting a strategy to fulfil the aforementioned goals. This strategy will be incorporated into the MAS 2021-2025 and will as such follow the same timeline. The members of the task force will be approved by the WG-EBA. The EUCPN Secretariat will be able to fund their activities and will also make suggestions for its participants. However, all WG members are invited to propose potential candidates.

Among other things, the task force will need to establish transparent criteria for assessing the evidence base for crime prevention practices. This will ensure that innovative projects that have not yet had the ability to evaluate their effectiveness thoroughly are not excluded from the outset. Some minimum standards, e.g. needs assessment, underlying theory, etc., will be put forward. Projects that do not meet the minimum criteria should not be promoted by the EUCPN. It will be up to the task force to devise these minimum standards and the wider criteria for evidence-based practices. It will report on this work and the strategy to the ExCom and final decisions will be taken by the Board.

It is only in a second phase that these criteria will be implemented in the work and tools of the EUCPN, such as

the database and the ECPA. Before these criteria have been agreed upon, the Secretariat will focus on an evidence-based approach in their publications and crime prevention initiatives. This will be a transition period.

The underlying idea is that, by establishing minimum standards and criteria for evidence-based projects and by using these criteria in all of the EUCPN’s tools, the Network can make full use of its power to promote an evidence-based approach to the crime prevention field. This, however, will only work if these criteria, once they are adopted, also find their way into national strategies and funding opportunities. This would mean that the crime prevention field further evolves towards the examples of drug prevention (e.g. through the work of the EMCDDA) or public health, where prior testing is usual practice for every activity ranging from diagnostics to treatment. The task force will incorporate this into its strategy.

The WG-EBA realises that this is going to be a work in progress for many years and that all levels of the crime prevention field will need to be trained and educated further. Therefore, the Secretariat will develop an (online) training course that will help practitioners understand how to evaluate and how to set up crime prevention projects that can be evaluated. Furthermore, this process will be encouraged by circulating positively evaluated practices and information about which theoretical frameworks and methodologies work, and which do not.”

## Endnotes

- 1 The Network was set up in May 2001 by Council Decision 2001/427/JHA to promote crime prevention activity in Member States across the EU, and to provide a means through which valuable good practice in preventing crime, mainly “traditional” crime, could be shared. With the adoption of the MAS 2016-2020, the focus on traditional crime was supplemented by organised crime and EU priorities.
- 2 More information about the structure of the Network and the different roles and responsibilities can be found in the Rules of Procedure and the Council Decision 2009/902/JHA
- 3 The Network operates based on a Council Decision which stipulates the institutional framework, defines its roles and mandates and establishes the framework for planning, implementing and reporting its activities. The Council Decision serves as the foundation for the multiannual strategy. Furthermore, this strategy refers to and complies with some of the obligations that directly or indirectly arise from the Stockholm Programme, the Lisbon Treaty, the external evaluations and the Security Union Strategy 2020-2025.
- 4 {European Crime Prevention Network, 2020 #1489}
- 5 More information in {European Crime Prevention Network, 2020 #1489}
- 6 Europol, CEPOL, UNODC, EFUS, ENAA and ICPC
- 7 Article 5 of the 2009 Council Decision lists the Network’s needs in order to accomplish its information exchange tasks and states the following: “be in close contact, through the National Representatives and the contact points, with crime prevention bodies, local authorities, local partnerships and civil society as well as with research institutions and nongovernmental organisations in the Member States”

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