

## **Crime prevention in Germany**

Crime prevention in Germany covers all measures aimed at preventing punishable offences by preventative measures, reducing the damage caused by punishable offences or containing the fear of crime felt by citizens. The traditional distinction between primary prevention (change of social conditions, education, organisation of the living environment etc.), secondary prevention (reducing the occasions for the commission of criminal offences e.g. by alarm systems, electronic immobilizers etc.) and tertiary prevention (influencing the criminal offender to prevent relapses through imprisonment, probation assistance and aid for offenders) is no longer accepted by some, as the borderlines between preventative and repressive measures are becoming increasingly blurred.

In Germany, the following views are shared by crime prevention experts:

- Repressive means are indispensable for the successful fight against crime, but they are increasingly coming up to limiting factors.
- The options of non-repressive crime prevention have not been fully exploited as yet.
- Crime prevention is a task for the entire society, faced by the Federal Government, the Länder, municipalities and all other relevant actors.

Since the early 90ies, the first prevention councils have been set up at municipal and Land level, which are exclusively dedicated to crime prevention. Overall, there are some 2,000 crime prevention bodies in Germany. Under the federal structure of Germany, the focus of competencies and activities lies with the federal states (Länder) and the municipalities in particular, as crime is primarily a local phenomenon. But the Federal Government, too, performs important functions in this field and provides an overview of the prevention landscape at national level.

The German Forum for Crime Prevention (DFK) was set up in 2001 as a foundation under civil law ([www.kriminalpraevention.de](http://www.kriminalpraevention.de)). The Federal Government, the Länder as well as private companies and associations are the founders. The purpose of the foundation is to exploit the options of prevention as fully as possible and to promote it in all aspects. Core tasks are networking and co-operation across Germany, the pooling of all forces, knowledge transfer and public relations for criminal prevention activities. Especially in view of the federal structure and the widespread responsibilities and activities at municipal and Land level, this body plays a major role.

The “programme police crime prevention of the Länder and the Federal Government (ProPK)” is a prevention programme aimed at informing and educating citizens, multipliers and other responsible bodies about the various forms of crime and relevant prevention options across regional boundaries. The focus is on secondary and police prevention ([www.polizei.propk.de](http://www.polizei.propk.de)).

The “Prävis” prevention management software is an information system developed in close cooperation of Land prevention bodies and/or Land criminal police authorities as well as the German Forum for Crime Prevention with the aims, inter alia, to create an overview of the existing prevention landscape at national level, to offer actors a platform for networking and to publicize the idea of prevention ([www.praevis.de](http://www.praevis.de)).

The German Prevention Day ([www.praeventionstag.de](http://www.praeventionstag.de)) intends to present crime prevention within a broad social framework at an annual congress. It contributes to the exchange of topical and basic issues of crime prevention, the exchange of experience gained by experts and practitioners from all sectors responsible for crime prevention, and to communication between national and international contact partners. The responsible body is a non-profit organisation as a subsidiary of the German Foundation for Crime Prevention and Assistance for Offenders (DVS).

Crime prevention also has the task to strengthen the feeling of security of citizens, which sometimes deviates greatly from the objective threat situation. An objective presentation of crime development is a means to reduce exaggerated fear of crime. Also with this objective in mind, the Federal Government presented its Second Periodical Report on Crime and Crime Control in Germany in November 2006. This report studies all essential fields of crime and gives a comprehensive picture about the situation and development of crime in Germany. Alongside this analytical approach, concrete practical implementation steps are carried out in many areas such as the overt use of video surveillance at crime hot spots in public areas, the reduction of “crime caused by prejudices” which is an important element for the integration of migrants through protection against xenophobic attacks, and the reduction of domestic violence, to name but a few examples. What we need to a greater extent in Germany, though, is an evaluation of crime prevention projects. This is an important instrument to assess and develop activities in this field further. In order to counteract this deficit, the evaluation of crime prevention projects is increasingly being promoted.