

CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN ITALY

The law enforcement strategy aimed to enhance overall security and public order over the Italian territory is mainly based on re-launched **prevention**.

Talking about prevention today means being able to remove real or supposed risks from any territory and establishing safe environmental conditions so as to raise widespread confidence in the people frequenting them.

Besides territory policing through the activities carried out by law enforcement agencies based on **coordinated territory control plans** (foreseeing the rotation of National Police and Carabinieri officers in each set area) as well as through an ever increasing involvement of the **Municipal Police** with regard to the checks within the areas of their responsibility (local administrative police, urban traffic regulations, commercial areas, and so on.)¹, the concept of “**neighbourhood policing**” is more and more gaining ground and being integrated at national level according to new operational models. The aim is to bring institutions closer to citizens in order to better understand their needs and find, possibly with the active involvement of the parties concerned, solutions that are shared by them and, as such, more useful and appropriate.

In this connection, in 2002 the “**neighbourhood police and carabinieri officer**” service **was launched** - first in 28 provincial chief towns and then progressively extended to cover 748 areas within such towns and in further 79 urban centres, involving 3,701 operators - which seems to meet with public approval and represents one of the many initiatives based on a new way of approaching security, which also means security “extended” to all social actors capable of making a positive contribution to ensure the peace and liveability of our towns and cities.

The distinguishing feature of the “neighbourhood police and carabinieri officer” consists in generating a closer link with their policing areas, providing further opportunities for collaboration with citizens, communities and other institutions, thus maximizing their ability to instil confidence. This is, therefore, a familiar and reassuring figure who provides support to territory policing activities carried out by the various patrolling and emergency units.

The primary tasks entrusted to the “neighbourhood police and carabinieri officer” are to establish and maintain stable contacts with citizens, traders and any leading figure within the community, give advice on security matters, direct anyone seeking information to the appropriate service for further action, provide information on persons or offices or, in any case, orientate citizens to meet their specific requirements, accurately control the territory to get to know its distinctive elements, early notify the office of any emergency in order to both provide useful information and allow for possible further developments in the investigations, take direct action in case of absolute necessity and, in so doing, without substituting for first-response services.

This new operational model has proved successful in preventing predatory crimes (thefts, bag-snatching, pick-pocketing and robberies) with a dramatic drop

¹ For instance, in Calabria a project has been launched for the establishment of a *Regional School for Local Police Forces*.

recorded in the three-year period from 2004 to 2006 in a number of cities in Northern, Central and Southern Italy as well as in a few islands included in a recent sample survey.

Within the “neighbourhood policing” scheme, the enhancement of operational modules is being implemented in order to ensure a more and more visible and widespread law enforcement presence all over the territory. In particular, a set of new initiatives has been undertaken such as the establishment of district police stations, the “home reporting service” for the elderly and the disabled, the Children’s Office, the “secure parks” project with the deployment of special national mounted police patrols, consisting of a policeman and a State Forester, controlling the green areas of major Italian cities, the opening of the offices for relations with the public within the Police Provincial Headquarters, the organisation of “football fans teams”² to prevent incidents on the occasion of football matches, the project named “the policeman is another friend of yours” in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Education and the Italian Committee for Unicef, aimed to spread the culture of legality and social solidarity among elementary school children. Besides that, “neighbourhood policing” has been considered a sort of “e-policing” through the enhancement of the Internet websites of the National Police and the Carabinieri Corps, operating an online desk that enables the public to directly report thefts or losses along with computer crimes and also provides information on administrative issues thanks to the assistance of an online operator.

To optimize general prevention services, preference is given to the use of **state-of-the-art and well-established communication and visualisation technology**, as well as to the increased utilisation, also by “vulnerable” private entities of technical equipment capable of reducing the risk of criminal attacks connected to this activity. In this context, mention should be made of :

- **The interconnection of the Police Forces’ control rooms** designed to conduct targeted operations through a timely overview of the men and means deployed over the territory, with a view to promoting recovery of human resources, thus making the operational work more rational. In this regard, an objective to be achieved is the connection of the control rooms of the Police Forces having general responsibility with those of the Municipal Police.
- **The use of video-surveillance systems** which have been installed in sensitive urban areas in agreement with the local bodies concerned and which make it possible to accurately monitor target public places where public order disturbance cases are mostly recorded.

However, prevention cannot be regarded as the exclusive duty of Police Forces. To be perceived as a social stability factor, this activity requires the involvement of all public and private actors that, to a different extent, can contribute to making every territory in which citizens live and work a more secure and safer place.

In the light of the development of the collective thought and of the synergy between institutional and non-institutional components, **collaboration with institutional bodies as well as with both private and public entities** is being fostered

² Football fans teams act according to two parallel strategies: the former intends to provide a sort of protection to those fans who want to dissociate from violent acts; the latter aims at finding the reasons motivating violent minorities and, if appropriate, at activating judicial police services.

in order to undertake effective initiatives within the framework of the so-called **dedicated security**, that is conceived to address the needs of specific economic and production-sector categories such as traders, entrepreneurs, the banking and insurance sectors and so on.

Within the framework of the measures for re-launching the economic and social development of Southern Italy, in relation to which security of the territory and of the economic operators is a pre-requisite, the **National Operational Programme on “Security for the development of Italy’s Mezzogiorno”**, funded by the European Union, has been designed to combine the enhancement of technologies (infrastructural interventions with a marked interforce connotation), the development, training and updating of personnel, the involvement of civil society (through strong awareness-raising action and cultural adjustment) and enlarged partnership with social and economic actors (in order to combat social disruption, marginalisation and deviancy).

In addition, it is worth mentioning the various **urban security memoranda of understanding** and the agreements between local bodies and the Ministry of the Interior for the definition of security standards and the promotion of initiatives directed at guaranteeing appropriate security conditions in the framework of the actions aimed at the re-qualification of productive areas, the development of entrepreneurial activities and the establishment of a balanced and sound economy.

Finally, in March 2007 a "**Security Agreement between the Ministry of the Interior and the National Association of Italian Municipalities**", involving all Italian Municipalities, was signed for the purpose of implementing shared projects to foster subsidiarity between State and local governments.

With regard to the prevention of sexual violence in urban areas, it was agreed that the best possible intervention strategy should be supported by synergic action from territorial bodies resorting to **general prevention measures** (such as lightning enhancement and extended video-camera surveillance network, street furniture interventions, connection of all radio-taxi central control rooms with law enforcement agencies’ ones, introduction of “social caretakers” in housing estates).

Furthermore, in order to assist the victims of intra- and extra-familial violence, the “Antiviolence Network among the Urban-Italy cities” project has been implemented. In this context, the “Arianna Project” has been conceived to fight all forms of violence against women all over the national territory, through the activation of a national telephone line (namely number 1522) to combat violence against women and designed to provide support, protection and assistance to women who have been victims of ill-treatment and abuse. This service is staffed by special trained and exclusively female personnel, operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, is multilingual (Italian, English, French, Spanish and Russian are spoken), and can be accessed free of charge by all male and female citizens throughout the national territory, using both the fixed and mobile telephone network. Any woman resorting to this service is guaranteed absolute anonymity.