

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Recommendation Rec(2003)21 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning partnership in crime prevention

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 24 September 2003
at the 853rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is the achievement of greater unity among its members, for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the ideals and principles which are their common heritage;

Recognising that the use solely of traditional criminal justice and law-enforcement measures has not proved sufficiently effective in reducing the scale and impact of contemporary crime problems and the emergence of new forms of crime in Europe in general;

Considering that this crime situation and the increasing concern about crime problems contribute to the feelings of insecurity experienced by many people in Europe, which in extreme cases may be associated with a loss of confidence in political authorities, the law and the institutions responsible for enforcing it, and which, furthermore, may give rise to intolerance, exclusion and xenophobia;

Also considering that research has shown that, alongside traditional approaches, the development and implementation of crime prevention strategies involving the community and local authorities are potentially efficient and cost-effective;

Recalling the Final Declaration of the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October 1997, in which "full support [is given] to the Council of Europe with a view to intensifying its contribution to cohesion, stability and security in Europe";

Taking into consideration Recommendation No. R (83) 7 on participation of the public in crime policy, Recommendation No. R (87) 19 on the organisation of crime prevention, Recommendation No. R (96) 8 on crime policy in Europe in a time of change and Recommendation Rec(2000)20 on the role of early psychosocial intervention in the prevention of criminality;

Bearing in mind the CLRAE's Recommendation 36 (1997) on crime and urban insecurity in Europe, as well as Recommendation 80 (2000) on crime and urban insecurity in Europe: the role of local authorities;

Bearing in mind the Parliamentary Assembly's Recommendation 1531 (2001) on security and crime prevention in cities: setting up a European observatory;

Recalling the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice of the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (April 2000);

Bearing in mind the results of the work of the European Forum for Urban Safety and more specifically the Naples Manifesto on Safety and Democracy of December 2000;

Recalling the conclusions of the European Council meeting in Tampere relating to the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice (1999), as well as the setting-up of the European Crime Prevention Network (2001);

Bearing in mind the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (2002) and the central role of partnerships recognised therein;

Taking into consideration the experience gathered in a growing number of countries, which during the last decade have developed and implemented small- or large-scale crime prevention programmes and projects;

Believing therefore that an effective preventive approach to reducing crime and associated harm should involve the establishment of partnerships among the relevant key actors at all levels – national, regional and local – in order to tackle in the short, medium and long term the causes and opportunities for crime, to reduce the risks for potential victims and, consequently, to contribute to quality of life through increased community safety,

Recommends that the governments of member states:

1. recognise that responsibility for crime prevention should be widely shared in society, and that partnership approaches are a practical means to sharing this responsibility and pooling diverse resources;
2. ensure that the legal context is appropriate and enables but does not constrain partnerships, and review proposed new legislation and regulations for impact on partnerships in crime prevention;
3. establish a wider understanding among politicians, administrators, practitioners, private business, the public and the media of the diversity of causes and effects of crime; of the range of crime prevention activities based on the sharing of responsibilities and interests among different people and agencies; and of the partnership approach as a means of bringing those responsibilities together to implement or support these actions;
4. while taking into consideration the separation of powers and responsibilities in society, ensure that partnership arrangements are appropriately supported by consultation, citizen participation and democratic and professional accountability as checks and balances against misuse; and that the exchange of information between members of different partnerships is consistent with the protection of human rights, including personal data protection;
5. identify the areas of public policy and practice which are typically appropriate for partnership work in crime prevention and the agencies and institutions responsible for them (for example law enforcement and the criminal justice system, social welfare, employment, health, education, culture and town planning);
6. in particular explore the scope, and clarify the constitutional and practical limits, for the involvement in crime prevention partnerships of the formal justice system (criminal and other);
7. explore the scope, and the limits, for the involvement of the private sector in local and national partnerships, whether as umbrella organisations or individual companies;
8. clarify the boundary between what is appropriate and inappropriate for collective initiatives involving citizens establishing a form of “social control”, in order to avoid vigilantism and social exclusion;
9. take action to set up and stimulate partnerships at different levels (international, national, regional and local), ensure they are well-designed, constitutionally sound, kept up to date and add value to efficient and acceptable crime prevention;

10. recognise, in particular, the need to involve local authorities and local communities in crime prevention activities, as constitutionally appropriate, both as initiators and participants;
11. support the allocation of sufficient resources, so as to create and maintain partnerships, as well as to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency; develop appropriate financial frameworks and regulations to allow for pooling of resources, with suitable checks and balances;
12. forecast the effects of new technology and social and economic change on the development of crime and at the same time recognise the potential positive or negative impact they may have on crime prevention and partnerships, and respond appropriately;
13. recognise that the vision, philosophy and rhetoric on the notion of partnership must be matched by practical arrangements if real crime prevention gains are to be achieved and sustained;
14. foster motivation, education and training of staff, and the mobilisation and empowerment of social responsibility in private and public institutions, volunteers and ordinary citizen participants;
15. gather and make available reliable and valid knowledge and data and facilitate the exchange of practical expertise and experience among actors across crime prevention partnerships while respecting professional confidences and data protection;
16. promote scientific research and evaluation of the partnership approach in crime prevention in terms of its operation, results and legitimacy;
17. encourage the development of a systematic and rigorous knowledge base on partnerships; share, disseminate, and apply that knowledge nationally and internationally; and support an evidence-based, innovative, evolutionary and improvement-oriented approach which is capable of adapting to changing crime problems, social conditions and legislation;

Considers that, for the purposes of this recommendation, the following definitions should be used:

- “partnership” shall mean a way of enhancing performance in the delivery of a common goal, by the taking of joint responsibility and the pooling of resources by different agents, whether these are public or private, collective or individual. The partners seek to act together without loss of their separate professional identities, without unacceptable or illegal blurring of powers and interests, and without loss of accountability;
- “crime prevention” shall mean an intervention in the causes of criminal acts and related problems, to reduce the risk of their occurrence, their evolution and the seriousness of their potential consequences;
- “community safety” shall mean a situation in which people, individually and collectively, are sufficiently free from a range of real and perceived risks centring on crime and related misbehaviour; are sufficiently able to cope with those risks which they nevertheless experience; or where they cannot cope unaided, are sufficiently well-protected from the consequences of these risks that they can still lead a normal cultural, social and economic life, apply their skills and enjoy well-being and the receipt of adequate services;
- “partners” are those agents, whether individual or collective, that may jointly intervene, directly or indirectly, in the causes of criminal acts and related problems, or who may facilitate those interventions;

And encourages the governments of member states to make use of the following guidelines for the implementation of the above recommendations:

Guidelines

I. Creation of an auspicious partnership environment

1. Nationally, governments should commit themselves and co-ordinate their initiatives to develop and implement policies and strategies for crime prevention and community safety (for example, by way of creating national crime prevention councils, adopting national crime prevention programmes etc.).
2. Governments should also facilitate the equivalent co-ordination by political authorities at regional and local levels.
3. The creation and maintenance of partnerships should be promoted as an important means of achieving this co-ordination, through the pooling of competences and a clear definition of responsibilities.
4. The need for political support for partnerships should therefore be acknowledged, and this should be reflected in efforts to create and maintain conditions in the political, legal and/or structural environment to aid their smooth operation.
5. Co-ordination of the political efforts and initiatives, as well as strategic planning, is a requirement that is not confined to the start of a partnership; it must be done on an ongoing basis in order to provide the adaptability to develop solutions to emerging problems and even in some cases to anticipated problems.
6. The need should be recognised to balance institutional, legal and financial change with the consistency and medium-term stability that partnerships require in their working environment to establish themselves and maintain good performance; this is especially important where partnerships' tasks are long-term in nature.
7. It should be widely recognised that partnership arrangements involve innovation, creative tension and some risk-taking, and that any legislative framework should be enabling rather than too tightly prescriptive, to allow for adaptation to local circumstances and changing conditions, and for improvement.
8. The establishment of partnerships can be aided at a practical level by methods including the development of model codes of practice, protocols of agreement or contracts for execution of specific initiatives, and where appropriate, appointment of paid co-ordinators.
9. It is necessary to develop wider networks of institutions and individuals interested in crime prevention, from which useful partnership arrangements might grow.
10. An environment conducive to the success of the partnership presumes a close connection between these and the decision-making bodies. The best practices so far point to the creation of a legal and/or structural framework, (for example, crime prevention councils, contracts for co-operation and joint action, creation of joint working groups etc.).
11. Authorities at appropriate (normally national or regional) levels should develop good support schemes, including funding of activities, establishing expert bodies or information centres on good practice, training facilities and programmes, and evaluation of projects and partnerships and their work.
12. It is essential to take into consideration the diversity of the concept of "community" and the variety of ways in which it relates to crime and its prevention.

13. In order to maintain the viability and usefulness of partnerships it is essential to look out for future national and international developments which might affect the partnership approach as a whole as well as individual partnerships.

II. Initiation of partnerships

14. The life-cycle of partnerships, from initiation to possible termination, should be considered.

15. Partnerships can come together in different ways, and begin at different stages of the cycle of Identifying and tackling crime problems.

16. When initiating a partnership it is necessary to clearly identify the nature of the crime and disorder problem(s) to be tackled and to determine whether suitable methods of prevention exist or can be developed; and then to consider whether:

- an existing single agency or partnership (with adjustment if necessary) can take responsibility for tackling the problem(s);
- a new agency is needed; or
- a new partnership is needed.

17. Proliferation of overlapping partnerships may be wasteful and sometimes even damaging. Where overlaps between partnerships are found to exist, action should be taken to resolve these in constructive ways.

18. The criteria for choosing the set of potential partners should relate to the goals of the partnership and should include:

- their competence and wider resources, including, where appropriate, the capacity for leadership;
- their access to information;
- the coverage they provide on the ground (that is, whether they cover the right type and size of territory);
- their acceptability/legitimacy for carrying out the role, including a certain detachment;
- their readiness to collaborate on the basis of an appropriate balance of economic or organisational power and expertise between partners;
- an appropriate balance between independence and involvement, whether in the political world or the private sector;
- the closeness of the partnership goals to their existing responsibilities;
- their possession of sufficient corporate, professional or personal motivation to assume responsibility;
- their potential for flexibility to explore new ways of working both initially and throughout the life of the partnership.

19. Partnerships should also consider limited or ad hoc involvement of other individuals and organisations who might support their activities, for example through sponsorship of specific events or sharing experience and advice.

20. It should be recognised that effective partnerships require the prior existence of trust between partners, or its development, which may take time and special effort. (This is one reason why a policy of establishing a series of shorter-term partnerships may be less efficient than a single, longer-term one, although perhaps more flexible.) A compromise could involve long-term partnerships combined with short-term flexible “satellite” partnerships.

21. It should be acknowledged that a range of alternative partnership arrangements are possible at local, regional and national levels, and that different arrangements may suit different crime problems and different circumstances. One size or type does not fit all.

22. The organisational basis of the partnership should be determined as follows (the list, however, is not intended to suggest a fixed sequence, or a particular order of importance):

- an initial analysis of the crime problem(s) should be conducted as rigorously as possible;
- based on this analysis, both immediate and more strategic action should be considered;
- common goals for reducing the crime problem should be agreed, and appropriate success criteria defined (both for monitoring of partnership performance and evaluation of results);
- in appropriate circumstances, there should be some consideration of the kinds of preventive intervention which fall within the remit of the partnership; however, in other cases, partners may decide on suitable preventive approaches only once they are in operation;
- the issue of fund-raising for running costs (for both overheads such as premises, and for implementing the preventive action) should be carefully considered because experience has shown that too much time can be spent by partnerships in seeking financial support;
- funding of any independent evaluation should be considered;
- the lifespan of the partnership should be considered – short, medium or long term;
- initial goals could include some that are achievable quickly or easily in order to demonstrate action and success, both to inspire and motivate the partners and to generate support externally;
- a framework of working procedures should be set up, including those covering the exchange of information and knowledge within and outside the partnership, as well as the process of decision-making and handling possible conflicts between partners. However, as a general principle, an appropriate position should be adopted on whether the partnership should seek to identify internal problems in advance and prepare procedures accordingly, or whether it should merely aim to tackle problems as they arise:
 - clear definition and delimitation of partners’ individual competencies should be achieved (and any role confusion avoided), and initial training needs assessed;
 - ethical standards should be drawn up/adopted;
 - common working terminology should be defined;
 - reciprocal expectations among the partners should be discussed;

- commitment from partner organisations should be obtained.
- fair and appropriate distribution of partners' inputs (funding, staff numbers and time, use of premises etc.) should be agreed and, if appropriate, procedures should be established for resolving any grievances;
- the structure of the partnership should be designed, including consideration of the benefits of a two-level arrangement such as operational and planning groups, the appointment of paid co-ordinators, and the more general balance between salaried and voluntary members, and between member agencies funded in different ways;
- the number of partners should relate to the scope of the partnership's goals and the practical considerations of collaboration (too many partners may be unworkable without special arrangements to facilitate co-operation);
- ground rules for dealing with the media should be developed, and a media launch strategy devised and implemented.

III. Operation and maintenance of partnerships

23. Efforts should be made to maintain, and thus monitor, all the beneficial conditions established under "initiation" above.
24. Good management practices should be adopted concerning review, monitoring and adjustment of goals, methods, action plans, etc.
25. Steps should be taken to ensure minimal (or optimal) turnover of individual people in partnership roles, in order to maximise efficiency (by preserving a common pool of knowledge) and maintain trust.
26. Training of partnership staff should be maintained to ensure continuity of competence and facilitate adaptation to wider changes in partnership activities and organisation.
27. There is a growing need to respect and foster both political and professional dimensions of the partnership approach to crime prevention whilst attempting to define a clear boundary between them, for example by establishing ethical rules and frameworks.
28. There should be broad agreement upon the principles for priority-setting by partnerships, and the administrative and democratic mechanisms behind it.
29. The proper exchange of information between members of particular partnerships should be facilitated through development of protocols consistent with data protection, privacy and human rights legislation, and the particular professional obligations of individual partners, namely as regards the observance of professional confidence.
30. There is a need for regular scrutiny of the added value of partnership arrangements, especially under changing conditions. Mechanisms should also be developed for undertaking these reviews and acting on their findings in consultation with all stakeholders, that is, partners and others affected by the activities of the partnership.

IV. Communications between partnerships and wider society

31. Communication between partnerships and their member organisations should be actively managed, both to maintain the support of colleagues and to transmit new perspectives and ideas to the wider member organisations and the relevant professional groups.

32. The partners need to work with the media and the general public to ensure the continued acceptance of the partnership and its specific activities, in particular reporting progress on implementation, the delivery of results and the outcome of external evaluations.

33. Partners should consider using both traditional and new communications media to communicate internally, with the wider set of stakeholders and with the general public.

34. National organisations should take the lead in establishing clear quality assurance standards for the content of their websites, particularly in the provision of reliable information on partnership experiences.

35. The administrative and political authorities should be kept informed of the work of the partnership to ensure their continued support.

36. Each partnership should establish horizontal communications with other partnerships in order to exchange information and ideas.

V. Termination of partnerships

37. Partnerships could be terminated for several reasons, for example:

- the goal for which they were created has been achieved;
- the crime situation and crime problems have changed beyond the scope of the existing partnerships to organise or deliver solutions;
- the partnership's cost-effectiveness or efficiency is very low and cannot be improved.

38. At or before termination an exit strategy needs to be decided, covering:

- assumption or transfer of remaining legal and moral responsibilities, liabilities and commitments, including to clients and staff;
- liquidation or transfer of ownership of other assets including material resources and data;
- preservation and/or transfer of knowledge and experience;
- media handling.

VI. Methodology, assessment and evaluation

39. Regular scientific research on partnerships and partnership projects should be supported and funded both nationally and internationally.

40. It is recommended that national and international crime prevention networks be created or encouraged to collaborate with partnerships in order to enhance communication and exchange of information, to train and brief staff and to promote research.

41. Techniques should be developed for partners to collaborate on crime impact assessment and crime risk assessment, on forecasting of new crime problems and opportunities for their prevention, as well as relevant trends of a wider nature.

42. An appropriate methodological and conceptual framework should be developed for evaluating partnerships and their performance, and, in particular, for distinguishing between the performance of the partnership itself and the performance of any specific projects run by other organisations, that the partnership supports or initiates.

43. Methods should be developed for cost/benefit assessment of projects and partnerships, and standard approaches adopted to enable comparative assessments to be made between different types of activity.

44. An appropriate balance should be struck between internal self-evaluation and administrative monitoring by partnerships, and external, independent evaluation.

45. Any evaluation should be fit for purpose: therefore an appropriate level of sophistication, cost, effort and timescale should be determined for the particular context.

46. The cost and effort put into an evaluation should be determined by the risk, and cost, of acting on the wrong conclusion. Funders of evaluations should, however, consider raising the standard of their evaluation beyond immediate local requirements in circumstances where the results are deemed to contribute to collective knowledge of good practice.

47. The various kinds of knowledge which derive from evaluations should be systematically gathered, assessed for scientific quality, synthesised and fed into education, training and on-the-job guidance of partnership members.

Such knowledge should be made more widely available on a non-profit basis or free of charge. Where management of partnerships or specific crime prevention schemes is done on a contractual or commercial basis, specific conditions may be required to uphold this availability and to promote information sharing between the contractors themselves.