

The Beccaria Project: A Vision of Better Quality in Crime Prevention

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The discussion about increased quality is taking place in times of massive financial restrictions. Particularly in the field of crime prevention, the matter of discussion should not be how to reduce but rather how to systematically develop quality further. Terms such as “quality management” have been borrowed from the field of business management. Although they may give the impression that management jargon is increasingly entering into crime prevention, the intent of the project is not to apply economic principles to this field. The further development of quality should rather be understood as a future-oriented task. With the Beccaria Project, the State Prevention Council of Lower Saxony signals the prelude to a qualification offensive.

Initial Situation

Notwithstanding all the previous success in crime prevention, the question remains how to increase quality in crime prevention in the future. The systematic evaluation of crime prevention projects or programmes is still a scarce commodity nationally and internationally. Crime prevention is quite often a “black box”. We often do not know why changes result from a certain project. Does a particular measure achieve the expected effect at all? How can the quality of crime prevention work be measured?

Realising high-quality crime prevention projects requires goals and target groups to be defined at the beginning of a project. The examination of goal achievement should no longer be an exception but a normal part of a project. What is needed in the future is the development of an *evaluation culture!*

Independent methods of quality measurement have not yet been developed in crime prevention. It therefore seems obvious to fill this gap, amongst others, via evaluation research, since there are points of contact between the approaches of evaluation research and quality assurance. One aim of evaluation is to use the results to improve the examined programmes. Evaluation research therefore means immediate and direct improvement of programmes. In quality assurance, this goal is equivalent to the concept of “continuous improvement” of work procedures as a basic principle of quality management.

On a long-term basis, the evaluation and further development of quality in European crime prevention requires a professionally and scientifically sound qualification of the people who work in prevention. Basic and further training in the area of crime prevention has not kept pace so far with the increase in importance which crime prevention has experienced over the last years. Thus crime prevention has not found its way into related professional training yet. However, the impression that “anyone can do prevention” is misleading. Prevention, like every other qualitatively demanding activity, requires professionalisation or sound basic and further training. Only in this way can quality be assured in the process of prevention.

In addition, terms are not used homogeneously by those involved in crime prevention. If we want to exchange information on prevention and evaluation or compare projects across Europe, we first have to come to an agreement on key terms of crime prevention. A homogeneous set of (conceptual) differentiation and

description possibilities – as for example demanded by Werner¹ – is lacking. So far, the search for a common “prevention language” or terminology in Europe has been in vain. A synopsis of the most important specialised terms (for example in the form of a glossary) could be a crucial contribution towards overcoming language barriers in this connection.

The Beccaria Project

Within the scope of the AGIS programme of the EU, the State Prevention Council of Lower Saxony (in the state Ministry of Justice) is implementing the “Beccaria Project: Quality Management in Crime Prevention” in cooperation with institutions from European partner countries such as Belgium, France, Denmark, the Czech Republic and Estonia. The Beccaria Project, which was authorised by AGIS in December 2003, will last until November 2005.

The EU framework programme AGIS supports cooperation among police and courts in criminal cases². AGIS promotes projects in the areas of cooperation, the fight against organised crime, crime prevention and victim protection. Since 2003, this EU programme has replaced five previous EU programmes (Hippocrates, Grotius, OISIN, Falcone, and STOP). The goal of AGIS is to contribute towards a better cooperation among the member states and the acceding countries in preventing and fighting crime as well as in victim protection. Promoted projects serve the above-stated goals dealing with the promotion of cooperation among prosecution services, the basic and further training of people involved in combating crime or contain scientific research.

The “Beccaria Project: Quality Management in Crime Prevention” is named after the crime prevention theorist Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794). He is regarded as a pioneer of modern criminology and influenced the primacy of prevention in law enforcement policy. The objective of the project is to give Beccaria’s ideas a firm basis by constantly improving the quality of prevention implementation. In summary, the following targets are being pursued:

The **main goal** is to further develop quality in crime prevention.

Sub-goals³ of the project are:

1. **Sensitisation** to the topic of quality in crime prevention
2. Development of **(minimum) standards** for quality and evaluation
3. Improvement of **actions**
4. Promotion and establishment of **further training**

The general target group of the Beccaria Project consists of all interested participants and people responsible for crime prevention in Europe. After all, only a concerted

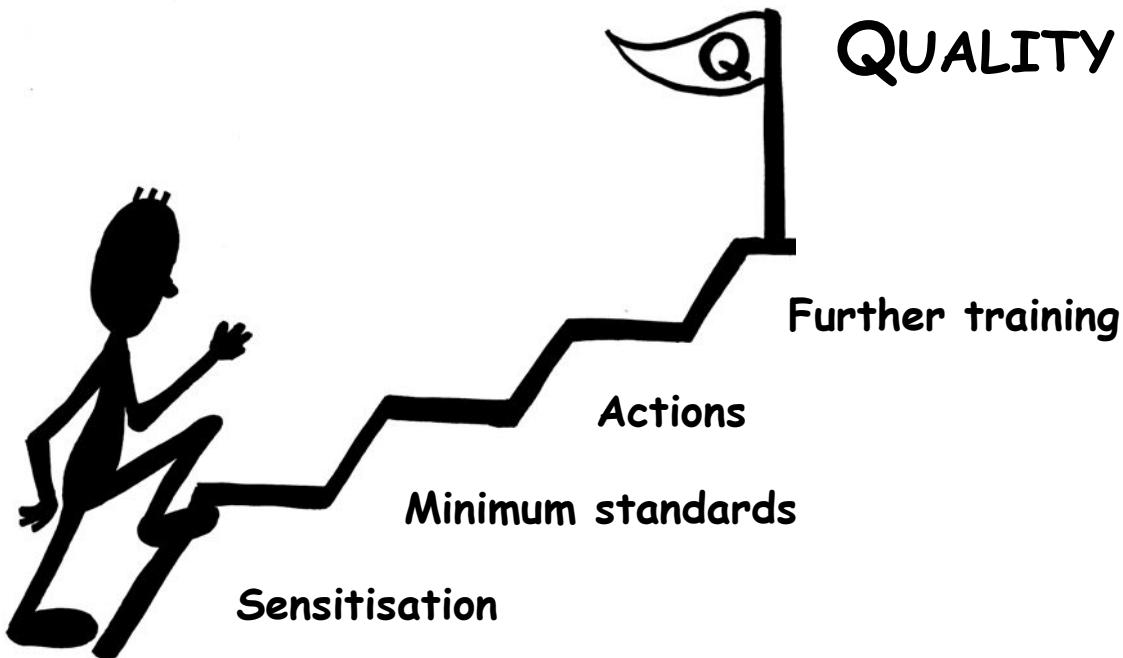
¹ Cf. for this Werner 2003, p. 7.

² http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/agis/funding_agis_en.htm

³ The four (sub-)goals are understood to be of equal importance.

effort by the numerous people involved can make quality and quality assurance a matter of course in crime prevention.

Step by Step to the Top: Quality



Beccaria Measures

The aims of the Beccaria Project have been laid down on a long-term basis and cannot be achieved overnight. For this reason, an action plan has been developed within the project to help further develop and improve crime prevention in all of Europe step by step. This catalogue of measures considers the needs and requirements which have to be satisfied on a short-term as well as on a long-term basis. It includes, amongst others:

1. A **quantitative and qualitative survey** and assessment of needs
2. An **internet glossary** with homogeneously defined prevention terms
3. An international **Beccaria Conference** to exchange information and establish a network of European participants in crime prevention
4. A fundamental course of studies or, in the long term, an **academy** for the professional training of prevention specialists.

In the following, the chosen measures are briefly described and explained. Whilst this is not the entire programme of the Beccaria Project, it effectively illustrates the realisation of the whole project.

1. Quantitative and Qualitative Survey

The quantitative and qualitative survey as well as the needs assessment within the Beccaria Project have several intentions. On the one hand, they ascertain the actual condition of the quality orientation in crime prevention. On the other hand, they also determine the potential for improvement and the qualification needs as well as the specific desires and requirements of the target groups: What do the interviewees believe we should do? Are the planned measures of the Beccaria Project in line with the requirements of the participants? Of course, the questions of the survey are also meant to provide a basis for deriving an outlook and guidance for action in the future.

The quantitative survey is carried out via a standardised questionnaire and the qualitative survey via guided interviews with experts. In May 2004, a central survey round took place at the 9th German Prevention Day in Stuttgart. The results will be published in the form of a synopsis at some later point of time.

2. Internet Glossary

A further measure of the Beccaria Project is the preparation and production of an internet glossary containing key prevention terms. As a rule, a glossary defines a terminology of specialised words and contains terms and definitions. This is meant above all to produce standardisation and promote a common language of prevention, in order to make international and intercultural exchange in criminal prevention easier.

To be precise, the glossary will be arranged in alphabetical order and contain the most important specialised terms for European crime prevention. It is meant to enable the user to find an adequate translation as well as an explanation of a particular term. Furthermore, it can contribute to understanding other legal, social and cultural systems and overcoming language barriers. At first, the glossary will be presented in a bilingual form (German-English) in the internet. It is meant to give a comparative view of the different prevention terms as well as to show what the overall context looks like in other countries.

3. Beccaria Conference

In addition to the standardisation of the language, a process of personal exchange among the participants plays an important role in the further development of quality in crime prevention. For this reason, the first Beccaria Conference will take place in Hanover in 2005. It will serve the exchange of information and the establishment of a network among supraregionally active participants, responsible parties and experts in crime prevention from the whole EU.

As one of the declared aims of the conference is to adopt (minimum) quality and evaluation standards as well as corresponding recommendations for action in crime prevention, suggestions for action criteria within the Beccaria Project will be developed in advance to standardise the quality of projects. Thus "golden rules", or possible guidelines for action, will be discussed and developed at an internal meeting of the European partners of the Beccaria project in November 2004. These rules are meant to serve as a resolution model or basis for discussion at the conference. Moreover, a further aim is to pass an agreement or resolution at the conference in

which the participants commit themselves to ensuring that the developed criteria or standards will be applied and evaluated within the framework of quality assurance in the future as well. Furthermore, the conceptual planning for establishing a European academy (see below) will be put into concrete form with a basic course of studies for quality assurance in crime prevention,. All results and resolutions of the conference will be published in a document afterwards.

4. Course of Studies / Academy

Exchange and networking alone are not enough to assure quality in crime prevention in the long term. Furthermore, it is of central importance to establish basic and further training which teach competences for quality assurance in crime prevention according to the needs. The medium-term aim of the Beccaria Project is therefore to offer a European course of studies which prepares students specifically for management positions in prevention. One possibility, for example, would be a master's degree program in "Crime Prevention Management".

In this connection, possible contents and curricula elements which such a course of studies would have to offer will be discussed at the conference. A master's degree course should include central problem areas of criminology, scientific law enforcement policy, and crime prevention. In addition, relevant theories from sociology, psychology and education (poss. other fields as well) should be taught. In practical projects / practical training, the implementation of crime prevention work or projects can be conveyed from the planning stage, through implementation, and up to evaluation. If necessary, partner institutes and organisations are to be recruited for this purpose that admit trainees regularly in cooperation with the academy. All of this raises topics for discussion at the conference. Moreover, the formal structure of the course of studies (for example its European basis, a possible ECTS regulation⁴, modulisation of the course contents, etc) must still be clarified.

Such a course of studies is a foundation for the declared long-term aim of the Beccaria Project to set up and establish a European "Crime Prevention Academy". This academy would offer basic and further training to enable people to perform specialised and executive functions in crime prevention as well as be a place for advocating and developing the topic of quality in prevention

The target group for the course of studies and, on a long-term basis, for the academy comprises students at home or abroad (mobile network) as well as working people without a degree who are active within the scope the "Crime Prevention" course or who are confronted with crime prevention matters in their professional work.

It is not yet clear how long it will take to implement such an academy that is supported by many European partners. The measures planned within the Beccaria Project are certainly the right steps towards more quality in crime prevention. Furthermore, it goes without saying that such a European "Crime Prevention Academy" is necessary and practical: the professionalisation of crime prevention is still in its infancy. At the same time, the pressure for quality assurance will increase even more in the future, especially in the field of prevention. The discussion about high costs and a lack of funds is a contributing factor. The participants in crime

⁴ European Credit Transfer System: The use of a homogeneous standard of assessment, the credit system, is meant to ensure the international recognition of course achievements.

prevention need to be prepared for this, especially with a sound knowledge of evaluation and quality.

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