

Beccaria Standards for ensuring quality in crime prevention projects

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The Beccaria Standards include measures and requirements for quality planning, execution and assessment of crime prevention programmes and projects¹. They apply to the following seven key steps of a project:

1. Description of the problem
2. Analysis of the conditions leading to the emergence of the problem
3. Determination of prevention targets, project targets and targeted groups
4. Determination of the interventions intended to achieve the targets
5. Design and execution of the project
6. Review of the project's implementation and achievement of objectives (evaluation)
7. Conclusion and documentation.

The Beccaria Standards offer a manual to developers, players in the field and other people with responsibility in crime prevention, to ensure the quality of their crime prevention work. Whoever is responsible should ensure that

- a. they align the planning, implementation and reviewing of crime prevention projects with the criteria for quality outlined in science and literature.
- b. projects are designed in such a way that they can be evaluated.
- c. scientific experts, advisors, contracting bodies and sponsors are at hand to have a technical foundation for judging the project's targeting of objectives and quality

The Beccaria Standards describe an overall programme of requirements to ensure quality. A satisfactory warranty for the quality of a project can only be achieved by complying with the overall programme. The individual requirements are always in step with each other. Selective attention or inattention to particular steps of the Beccaria Standards would be detrimental to the level of quality

The following points are to be considered and implemented in step with the Beccaria Standards:

¹ In the following, only projects are referred to, similarly, the programmes are enclosed.

1. Beccaria Standard: Description of the problem

- 1.1 The existing problem in its current state is recognised and precisely described. It is set out thus:
- What exactly the problem comprises, how it manifests itself, what kind of crime it covers.
 - Where the problem arises in the defined area, over what timescale and to what extent.
 - Who is directly or indirectly affected by the problem (description e.g. by age, gender, social characteristics, background)
 - Which direct and indirect effects the problem has.
 - How long the problem has existed and whether it has changed (especially recently – e.g. growth, special reasons).
 - Whether the solution to the problem is being worked on in a specific place. Who is working on it at present or who should work on it in the future (Youth Help, teachers, Police, State Prosecution Service)? Which methods were chosen to solve the problem and with what degree of success?
- 1.2 Information is provided on who the initiative for the project came from as well as what prompted the project (e.g. complaints/reports from the public, approaches from the Youth Welfare Office or the suggestion of the Police's).
- 1.3 It has been well-established by research that to solve the problem a need to act exists.

2. Beccaria Standard: Analysis of the conditions leading to the emergence of the problem

- 2.1 To explain the problem in question, appropriate theoretical as well as empirical findings are considered.
- 2.2 The variables considered to significantly influence the incidence of the problem are considered and labelled - risk factors² as well as protective factors³

3. Beccaria Standard: Determination of crime prevention goals, project goals, and targeted groups⁶

In determining goals, a basic distinction between crime prevention and project goals must be made. Every project always has to specify its crime prevention goals and its project goals clearly and precisely.

Crime Prevention Goals (sometimes referred to as overall goals, global goals or general goals) are always directed towards the actual crime prevention concerns of the project. This exists in the (objective) containment of crime (prevention and / or avoidance of criminal acts) or in the improvement of subjective security (strengthening the feeling of safety as well as a reduction in the fear of crime). For example the crime prevention goal of a project could be a 30% reduction in youth assaults in the school area of city A.

Project goals, on the contrary, are the direct objectives that a project aims for. The following project goals could exist for a project with the crime prevention goal of reducing youth assaults in schools: Improvement of the general school atmosphere, strengthening of pupils' social skills especially regarding fights, a higher level of social control in school.

Project goals must have a theoretical connection with crime prevention goals: in achieving a project goal, at the same time it must be possible to work towards the existing crime prevention goal.

² Risk factors are influences that can be detrimental to performance, for example child neglect, youth contact with delinquent peers, deterioration of districts.

³ Protective factors can hinder the emergence of crime. For example stable emotional bonds between youths and their parents, alarm systems in parked cars, clear lines of sight and lighting of public places, which are considered trouble spots.

⁶ There can be one or several crime prevention goals as well as one or more project goals and target groups in a project. When describing the Beccaria Standard only the plural form is used.

Using criminological theories as well as theory-based assumptions or using experimental findings, one can demonstrate the project goals: (to stay with the same example) “improvement of the general school atmosphere”, “strengthening of pupils’ social skills especially regarding fights” as well as “a higher level of social control in school” in each case building an applicable crime prevention approach to achieve the crime prevention goal of “reducing youth assaults in schools”.

- 3.1 The crime prevention goals are specified. They are developed from the description of the problem, precisely formulated, measurable, and describe the ideal situation.
- 3.2 The decision is made regarding any particular groups the crime prevention goals are targeting.
- 3.3 There are definitive indicators that are measurable, that show whether (and to what extent) the crime prevention goals will be achieved.
- 3.4 Those strategies or crime prevention approaches are chosen which are judged appropriate to achieve the crime prevention goals adopted. The choice of strategies or crime prevention approaches is explicitly justified. Perceptions from literature as well as practical experiences should be taken into account. The project goals are defined in concrete terms on the basis of the strategies or crime prevention approaches chosen.
- 3.5 The target group to which the project goals relate is determined. The target groups are precisely specified (e.g. by age or social characteristics)
- 3.6 The time-frame as well as the end date (costs over time) for achieving the desired project goals should be determined.

4. Beccaria Standard: Determining measures to achieve the objectives

- 4.1 Appropriate measures are derived and justified to achieve the project goals.
- 4.2 The measures are considered appropriate for reaching the determined target groups of the project goals (e.g. can this be assured through the participation of the target group?).
- 4.3 The availability of important temporal, personal, expert, financial and physical resources for implementing the measures is realistically set out.
- 4.4 There are particular indicators that can be validated, that show whether (and to what extent) the project goals will be achieved.
- 4.5 There are particular indicators that can be validated, that show whether (and to what extent) the target groups can be reached.

5. Beccaria Standard: Project design and implementation

- 5.1 The project design is set out in written form. It covers all the relevant considerations and plans which are essential for the establishment, running, and review of the project.
- 5.2 The likelihood of collaboration (with partner organisations) as well as synergies are clarified. The networking is target oriented, sustainable and well invested.
- 5.3 A plan of resources is prepared which sets forth which timed, personal, professional, financial and physical resources are likely to be needed to implement the measures.
- 5.4 The running time of the project is determined.
- 5.5 The project is appraised as well as checked by an external expert in the field, and a group (external or part of their own organisation).
- 5.6 The cost benefit of the project, how it arises from the project plan and the expected results and effects (and the targeted project goals) are checked and found to be beneficial as well as sustainable by those involved with the project and/or by some external, professional person/group checked. Option appraisal of practicable alternatives to the planned project is undertaken.
- 5.7 Responsibilities for implementing the individual measures are determined. Agreements are put in writing between the participants (contractors, project planners, if necessary the target groups, and co-operation partners)
- 5.8 A project work plan is prepared with a detailed depiction of the individual work steps for those responsible and the time schedule .
- 5.9 A review of the implementation of the project (monitoring) as well as a review of the effects of the project (evaluation of impact, if it is designated) is included from the beginning of the project plan.
 - A process evaluation needs to be carried out. A plan for the review of the running of the project as well as reaching the target groups is prepared and included in the project design.
 - The case is made for whether the project goals and crime prevention goals of the project should be appraised in terms of how attainable they are (advance appraisal of effects). In the event that the evaluation is carried out, a plan of investigation is drawn up, and the evaluation plans are taken into

investigation is drawn up, and the evaluation plans are taken into account in the project design.

- The case is made for whether a self evaluation and/or an external evaluation is planned. In the case of a self evaluation, the requirement for external professional methodological advice is assessed.

5.10 The running of the project is documented from the very beginning; every step of the project is set out and justified, as are deviations from the original plan.

5.11 The structure of the project can adapt to changing conditions. Methods for improvement are determined and implemented if shortfalls appear.

6. Beccaria Standard: Review of the implementation of the project and the achievement of its goals (Evaluation)

- 6.1 The extent to which the designated target groups are reached is determined (number, proportion). Attempts are made to account for the degree to which the target groups were, or were not, reached
- 6.2 Which changes occurred, and to what extent, are determined. How far were the targeted crime prevention goals achieved (from comparison between the actual and expected situations)? How far were the targeted project goals achieved (from comparison between the actual and expected situations)?
- 6.3 Whether, and to what extent, the observed changes can be attributed to the implemented measures is determined and reported. What can the achievement or failure to achieve the crime prevention goals be connected to? Likewise for the project goals?
- 6.4 The occurrence of any unforeseen side-effects is determined: If so, which, and to what extent?

7. Beccaria Standard: Conclusion and documentation of the project

- 7.1 A thorough project report is prepared at the end of a project. In this, the main findings from the project are edited, conclusions are made, the end report is drawn up, and the project documentation as well as project results are made accessible to a professional audience.
- 7.2 The main project findings are brought together and edited:
- To what extent were the targeted goals achieved (project and crime prevention goals)?
 - What do the results imply for the project?
 - What can the achievement/failure of the project goals be attributed to?
 - Which difficulties emerged in the planning and implementation stages; which positive and negative lessons can be drawn?
 - Which other main findings could be deduced?
- 7.3 Conclusions are drawn from the experiences, results and findings of the project:
- Did the chosen approach prove of value? Is the approach applicable elsewhere?
 - Which suggestions for improvement, recommendations for action or possible solutions for known flaws can be concluded?
 - Are there particular problems which should be a.) The subject of future projects as well as b.) The subject of evaluation for future projects?
 - Which project partners or other organisations could especially benefit from the results?
 - Do the findings apply with an adaptation/modification of the existing project or in a further development of a possible continuation of the project?
 - How could it be guaranteed that the project can be sustained for its planned lifespan? (e.g. by integration in an existing set of arrangements)?
 - Can the project be transferred to other target groups and social conditions?
- 7.4 A project report is written which outlines:
- Project design
 - The implementation of the project
 - Project results
 - Results of evaluation

- A plan of evaluation, if necessary analysing a range and quantity of samples as well as indicators and criteria to review the achievement of the project goals.
- Conclusions.

7.5 The project documentation is accessible to others. The results of the project are published.

- At the very least, a summary of the project documentation is put on a data-bank (for example PräVIS).