THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PHYSICAL URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND CRIME REDUCTION AND PREVENTION

Conference in

Szczecin, Poland

19-21 October 2000

FINAL DECLARATION

adopted at the Closing Session
1. Approximately 150 persons from 22 countries, both in Europe and outside, attended a Conference held in Szczecin, Poland, 19-21 October 2000 on “The relationship between the physical urban environment and crime reduction and prevention”;

2. The conference was organised by the City of Szczecin in close cooperation with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE);

3. It formed part of a continuing work programme of the CLRAE on the identification of local policies for the reduction and prevention of crime in Europe, a programme characterised by:-

- Conferences held in Erfurt (Germany) on “Crime and urban insecurity in Europe: the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities” in 1997; Newcastle (United Kingdom) on “Tackling crime and urban insecurity in Europe through co-operation between local authorities and police” in 1998 and Petrozavodsk (Federation of Russia) on “The role of local authorities in combating crime” in 1999;

- a series of reports on the subject presented to the plenary sessions of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the CLRAE, 1997-2000;

- the preparation of a Guide for local authorities on good practice in crime prevention and reduction policies;

4. The conference themes were:

- housing and crime;
- open space, street planning and design;
- planning urban transport to reduce crime;
- sporting facilities and crime;

structured around a number of case studies and reports.

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Following their discussions, the conference participants:-

5. Recorded their appreciation of the commitment of the City of Szczecin and the CLRAE in the organisation of the conference;

6. Express their concern at the continuing high levels of crime in Europe;

7. Consider that political and social change in Europe, with increased freedom of movement, has resulted in a change in the type of crime, with a high incidence of drug abuse and drug offences; racist attacks; a spectacular extension and sophistication of international organised crime; illegal smuggling of immigrants and clandestine immigration; economic fraud; diverting of raw materials; covert arms dealing, and concentration of criminal activities along new borders;

8. Recall that the European Urban Charter asserts the right "to a secure and safe town, free as far as possible, from crime delinquency and aggression";
9. Consider that whilst major cities traditionally have been the arena for economic development and cultural achievement, that they are also the places where the problems of society, such as crime, are most acutely felt;

10. Emphasise the significant role to be played by local authorities in preventing and combating crime and that accordingly, they be allocated the necessary resources and responsibilities to permit them to meet this challenge;

11. Stress the importance of policies for crime prevention and in this context wish to highlight the significance of:

- multi-agency approaches, with local politicians, the police, relevant professional categories, universities and educational authorities, working in partnership;

- the preparation by local authorities of an overall community safety plan;

- the harnessing of the contribution of the private and voluntary sectors;

- an emphasis on a pro-active approach, anticipating and preventing problems rather than addressing them afterwards;

- an insistence that crime reduction is cheaper than repression and that a safe community contributes to local prosperity;

- the key role for municipal police;

- a renaissance of moral standards and the belief that citizen duties must accompany citizen rights;

- working directly with inhabitants and involving the public closely with crime prevention;

- dealing with the fear of crime which reduces public confidence in a community, affects adversely economic development and inward investment, and diminishes the quality of life in towns;

12. Concerning the theme of the Conference “The relationship between the physical urban environment and crime reduction and prevention” call for a number of policies to be conducted by local authorities, in partnership with other relevant agencies;

**Housing**

13. Reduce uncertainty about housing ownership and facilitate ownership in order to bring about investment, satisfactory levels of maintenance and a sense of commitment and belonging;

14. Discourage continuing construction of high-density and monotonous housing, often accompanied by bleak, open windswept spaces; and vast soulless housing estates often in suburban areas, breeding grounds for despair, loneliness and violence;

15. Avoid the destruction of old and familiar buildings and their replacement by buildings of little social and architectural merit, with a consequent destruction of man's continuity;
16. Encourage a community safety dimension in policies for urban planning and housing; through, for example, mixing residential and commercial functions; the provision of shopping facilities in housing areas; the provision of good quality open space, with vegetation and attractive street furniture; the retention of the architectural heritage with older buildings being given a contemporary viability, whilst respecting their original flavour.

Physical urban environment

17. Accept that crime and opportunities for crime can be reduced by a good quality urban environment and that the social stability of towns and cities is influenced by the environment;

18. Promote pleasant surroundings by night and day, in all weathers, with particular attention being given to scale, form, colour, landscape, materials and maintenance of buildings and space;

19. Ensure that open space, river and canal banks, parks, pavements, pedestrian zones, are conducive for human activities and presence in order to give a sense of community control and security;

20. Prepare and distribute explanatory brochures for the public on the causal relationship between crime and the environment;

21. Promote collaboration between the police and professional designers and ensure that police officers are given training and advice on the relationship between crime and the built environment, through, for example, the appointment of architectural liaison officers;

22. Encourage local authorities to develop a "Lighting Plan" for their towns which illuminates public places - bus depots, railway stations; blind spots; dark corners in order to give citizens a sense of safety; and ensure that there is an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to maintain and repair lighting systems;

Urban transport

23. Underscore the need to achieve harmonious balance between all street users - public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and the private car;

24. Note and regret the saturation of towns by private transport, with accompanying increased risk to life and limb and uncertainty about journey times and pollution;

25. Emphasise that an alternative good quality public transport system, offering reliable and frequent services, can significantly reduce private car use, improve the quality of the surrounding environment and improve security, as has been shown, for example, by the reintroduction of high quality tram networks in some European cities;

26. Emphasise the need to reduce public concern about crime and fear of crime associated with travelling on bus, cab, underground, rail or by walking, cycling or driving;

27. That there is, as a consequence, a role for "transport safety officers" and security and information agents travelling on or working in the vicinity of public transport; use of CCTV and a satisfactory reporting system for cases of anti-social behaviour on public transport;

28. Underline that there is a need for improving and extending the education of children about public transport and the need to respect it;
Sporting facilities

29. Local authorities, either directly or by enabling others to do so, have a responsibility to improve access to sport and sports facilities for all people, irrespective of social background, economic situation and income, age, or ethnic group;

30. Such facilities include small-scale units within easy reach of homes, fitting into local communities so that local populations can identify with them, encouraging a sense of ownership and thus reducing vandalism and delinquency;

31. Major sports facilities, such as football stadia, attract large numbers of visitors to cities and should thus be considered as one of the greatest assets of a community. They should therefore be designed in order to guarantee spectator safety, minimise delinquency and violence;

32. This approach requires managers of the stadium, the club that plays there, the police, the fire and medical services, and the national and local authorities to act together in accordance with a common strategy;

33. Local authorities play a key role in safety considerations, defining the permitted capacity of stadia, safety procedures, equipment and personnel;

34. Local authorities should also provide the forum in which the work of the police, fire and ambulance services and the responsibilities of the stadium management are coordinated.

Ask the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) to:

35. Ensure that the reduction of crime and urban insecurity continues to be considered as a priority activity in its work and asks specifically its Committee on Social Cohesion to organise the next conference in the series on “Local authorities and transfrontier crime” in Enschede (Netherlands), 20-22 September 2001;

36. Bear in mind, in its future work on crime prevention, the problem of crime in rural areas;

37. Support and cooperate with the initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to create a European Observatory for Crime Prevention;

38. Present the Manual on local authority good practice in crime reduction and prevention at the Session of the Chamber of Local Authorities in 2001 and to consider the establishment, in this connection, of a continually updated series of examples of case studies in member countries, illustrative of the principles contained in the Manual;

39. Take steps to distribute the reports and material of the CLRAE’s work programme on local authority crime prevention and reduction to a wider audience of local and national authorities, universities, professional categories and agencies concerned by the subject

40. Ask the CLRAE Committee on Sustainable Development to pay particular attention to the question of urban public transport within its future work programme;

41. Support and cooperate in the development of a Website on crime prevention through urban planning and environmental design;
42. Encourage the promotion of a European standard on the reduction of crime and fear of crime by urban planning and building design, based on the work of the European Committee of Normalisation, with the active participation of National Standardisation Institutes and police, urban planners, architects and local authorities;

   **Ask the European Union to:**

43. Devote an increased percentage of EU programme funds (PHARE and INTERREG) to the question of crime prevention and reduction at the frontiers of the Schengen area and, in anticipation of political EU enlargement, to devote funds and strengthening of policies for crime prevention as a priority in applicant countries;

44. Ask its Committee of Regions to examine the possibilities of active cooperation and joint initiatives with the CLRAE in relation to the proposals contained in paragraphs 35-42 above.