

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

RECOMMENDATION No. R (83) 7

OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO MEMBER STATES ON PARTICIPATION OF THE PUBLIC IN CRIME POLICY

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 June 1983
at the 361st 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 a crime policy directed towards the prevention of crime, the promotion of alternatives to custodial sentences, the social reintegration of offenders and the provision of assistance to victims should be followed and developed in the Council of Europe's member states ;

Considering that such a policy is an appropriate response to the crime problems currently facing member states ;

Considering that the implementation of the policy presupposes first that this policy is taken up and actively complied with by all professionals directly concerned, in particular judges, magistrates, prison staff and police officers ;

Considering, however, that such a policy cannot be effective without a favourable public attitude and even active participation of the public ;

Considering that it is important to overcome the indifference, indeed hostility, towards such a policy shown by certain sections of the public and to secure the greatest possible degree of support for the policy's objectives ;

Considering that it is essential to involve the public, within the framework of appropriate structures, in the drawing up and implementation of such a policy ;

Having regard to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms ;

Having regard to Resolution (73) 5 on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners ;

Having regard to the proceedings of the 13th Criminological Research Conference (on public opinion in relation to crime and criminal justice, 1978),

Recommends that the governments of member states promote participation of the public in the drawing up and implementation of a crime policy aimed at the prevention of crime, the use of alternatives to custodial sentences and the provision of assistance to victims, particularly in the following ways :

1. Information and research

1. Extending the scope and improving the quality of criminal statistics and developing scientific research on crime and criminal justice, including studies on victimisation.
2. Disseminating the above-mentioned information among the general public in order to counteract prejudice and preconceived ideas concerning both crime and criminal justice.

3. Incorporating the rudiments of criminal law and criminology in school curricula to this end and generating an awareness of the real problems of crime and criminal justice by the most appropriate means, such as co-operation with the mass media.

II. Participation of the public in the drawing up of crime policy

4. Involving the public in the drawing up of crime policy at both local and national level through *ad hoc* advisory committees, permanent bodies as well as through wide-ranging consultation, in particular by public debates.

5. Explaining the trends of the crime policy followed by the authorities and trying to obtain the observations of the public on this policy.

III. Role of the public in the implementation of crime policy

A. In general

6. Alerting the public by means of appropriate information and structures to the fundamental role it should play in implementing a policy for the prevention of crime and the social reintegration of offenders, notably by involving it in alternatives to custodial sentences and in assistance to victims.

B. Social prevention

7. Promoting, through courses or advisory services for parents, proper information on the problems of juvenile delinquency, with particular reference to its causes and symptoms and the prevention thereof.

8. Providing teachers with fuller training in these matters so as to enable them, in the course of their work, to deal with their pupils' adjustment and behaviour problems.

9. Giving priority to the employment of young people and promoting vocational training for those who have exhibited delinquent behaviour in order to help them to obtain jobs and encourage employers to engage the latter.

10. Encouraging architects and town planners, at national and local level, to give cities a more human face and a layout aimed at crime prevention.

11. Taking account of suggestions by citizens' associations regarding community development in cities and neighbourhoods and giving them opportunities to contribute to town planning in order to improve the quality of life and reduce the criminogenic aspects of urbanisation.

12. Encouraging local authorities to promote a dialogue on these issues with the public in order to strengthen the latter's role in social prevention.

13. Compiling an inventory, in consultation with insurance companies and security specialists in particular, of the elementary precautions and technical means to be taken to prevent opportunities for crime, publicising them widely and encouraging the public to adopt them.

C. General and special crime prevention—application of alternatives to custodial sentences

14. Making the public conscious, through publications and conferences as well as the mass media, of the penal and social consequences of committing various offences, so that a knowledge thereof may act as a deterrent.

15. Encouraging public participation in the reintegration of prisoners by helping them, as far as possible, to contact individuals willing to provide them with assistance.

16. Increasing the involvement of prison staff in the reintegration of prisoners through the provision, for example, of appropriate courses and seminars.

17. Ensuring that prisoners' ties with their families remain unbroken, for example by facilitating contacts between the appropriate staff in the prisons and prisoners' families as far as possible.

18. Making the public conscious of the advantages of non-custodial treatment of offenders from the point of view of their resocialisation.
19. Encouraging the public to play a practical part in the non-custodial treatment of offenders :
 - by providing appropriate structures, such as social reintegration boards, welfare associations and committees of assistance for offenders on probation and on conditional release ;
 - by having increased recourse within these structures to the use of volunteers ;
 - by making better use of the particular competences of these volunteers ; by trying to define their exact role in relation to that of the professional social workers.
20. Urging employers and other persons concerned not to discriminate against offenders on probation and released prisoners.
21. Promoting an appreciation of the policy of alternatives to custodial sentences, among judges, magistrates and police officers, particularly :
 - during their initial and further training ;
 - through their participation in local crime prevention committees, conferences, seminars or round tables ;
 - through publications intended for specific professional groups.
22. Encouraging by meetings and seminars the families of convicted offenders to prepare the offenders' reintegration.
23. Co-operating with the associations concerned with the social reintegration of offenders by providing them with moral and material support.
24. Establishing contact with associations concerned with protecting the interests of victims in order to secure their support for a crime policy aimed both at fostering the reintegration of offenders, especially through non-custodial treatment, and at making appropriate provision for victims.

D. A crime policy taking account of the victims' interests

25. Encouraging the public, through an appeal for solidarity and through the provision of information on the technical facilities available and the appropriate action to be taken, to prevent offences from being committed and assist victims both during and after the perpetration of the offence.
26. Drawing the attention of the police to the need :
 - to show consideration for the victims of offences in all circumstances, especially by giving them a sympathetic reception ;
 - to put victims quickly in contact, if they wish, with local services or associations able to assist them or inform their families ;
 - to advise victims on measures to be taken to avoid similar occurrences.
27. Setting up services able to provide victims with appropriate psychological, moral or material assistance.
28. Providing, so far as it is practicable, special reception or waiting rooms for victims in police stations or court buildings.
29. Establishing an efficient system of legal aid for victims so that they may have access to justice in all circumstances.
30. Facilitating the compensation of victims by offenders, for example by providing, as an alternative to a custodial sentence, the payment of such compensation.
31. Making state compensation more widely available to victims in the absence of compensation by offenders.
32. Supporting associations that provide the victims with psychological, moral and material assistance and encouraging them to make greater use of volunteers.