



## Recommendation 1531 (2001)<sup>1</sup>

# Security and crime prevention in cities: setting up a European observatory

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Insecurity has become a major concern of urban societies. In the face of the growth in both petty and serious crime, violence and anti-social behaviour, what is expected of political authorities is rapid action and practical solutions.
2. This situation, in which most European countries find themselves, has made security an essential issue in elections; the contenders are obliged to react to their fellow citizens' concerns.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is aware that this phenomenon is mainly a result of persistent unemployment, changes in the family unit, the pressures of the consumer society, social exclusion, the often difficult integration of immigrant population groups and inadequacies in urban policy.
4. Unfortunately, growing concern among the public enables extremist movements to expound their xenophobic and racist theories, to lay the blame on scapegoats such as young people or immigrants, and consequently to place in jeopardy the principles of democracy, social cohesion and tolerance in which our societies must have their basis.
5. The Assembly believes that both genuine insecurity and the sense of insecurity and desertion felt by many people in Europe should stir the political authorities to action at all levels – local, national and European – with the aim of promoting security policies and developing instruments geared to the simultaneous implementation of specific neighbourhood policies and joint international measures.
6. From this point of view, it endorses the new strategies to combat insecurity based on improved co-ordination of preventive, repressive and solidarity-oriented measures. These strategies rely not only on the commitment of the authorities concerned, but also on active partnerships between economic and social operators and restoration of the traditional roles of the family, schools, businesses and civil society.
7. Furthermore, the Assembly is firmly convinced that appropriate responses to these challenges can but result from concerted action by the main national authorities concerned, but must at the same time involve greater co-operation between municipal authorities both within individual countries and at European level.
8. In this connection, it is important to verify the usefulness, at least in certain countries, of giving mayors increased security powers, so that, without weakening responsibilities exercised at national level, they can take all the action needed to ensure the chosen policy's success.
9. It is therefore a question of ensuring the integration, at European level, of security and crime prevention policies and urban development programmes, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity
10. With this aim in mind, the pooling of knowledge must become a key focus of security strategies, so that the positive experience already acquired by certain countries and municipalities can be of benefit to as many people as possible and comparisons between different situations make it possible to choose the most appropriate solutions in matters of urban security on the basis of similar experiences.

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1. Assembly debate on 24 September 2001 (25th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9173](#)[Doc. 9173](#), report of the Committee on the Environment and Agriculture, rapporteur: Mr Bockel). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 September 2001 (25th Sitting).



11. To that end, it is necessary to promote exchanges between municipal authorities, to foster training of local administrators and to design and implement joint policies in respect of transnational phenomena such as racism, drugs, prostitution, clandestine migration and the trafficking in humans that it gives rise to.

12. It is in this context that the European Union has taken the initiative of establishing a European crime prevention network. The Assembly welcomes this initiative and is of the opinion that its extension to a larger number of countries should be possible.

13. Moreover, the Assembly points out that at the intergovernmental level the Council of Europe has done some important work in this field, in particular with regard to crime, drugs and social cohesion, which would constitute a significant asset in such a venture.

14. Crime and urban insecurity have also been addressed in reports of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), which has recognised experience in the field of training local authority staff and elected representatives. The Congress is, moreover, currently preparing a manual on local government policies aimed at reducing crime.

15. The Assembly also welcomes the holding of the Safety and Democracy Forum (Naples, 7 to 9 December 2000), which brought together 120 European towns and cities to discuss these themes. It concurs with the conclusions set out in the manifesto adopted at the forum, in particular the proposal to establish a European observatory that could draw comparisons between municipalities, offer training courses for various public officials and improve knowledge in the field of urban security.

16. The Assembly is also aware that neither new measures nor the political determination of decision makers to solve the problems of urban security can produce results in practice unless additional funding is provided.

17. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

17.1. give appropriate priority to urban security problems in the intergovernmental work programme and at the level of other Council of Europe bodies;

17.2. establish a European observatory on urban security, which, at the level of Council of Europe member states, would be responsible for:

- a. gathering, analysing and making available to all parties concerned information on crime and the operation of systems of justice in the different countries;
- b. keeping a regularly updated register of the security practices which bring the best results;
- c. organising exchanges between those in charge of security policies;
- d. offering training courses for security policy agents;

17.3. invite the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe to pursue its work in this field and become involved in the establishment of an observatory;

17.4. ensure proper co-ordination between initiatives of this kind, to be taken at the level of the Council of Europe, and the creation of a network as proposed by the European Union.