

Good morning,

your Excellency, Mister Minister of Justice, esteemed specialists in the fields of crime prevention and cost-analysis, ladies and gentlemen!

My name is Timo Kvist. I am the chair of the National Council for Crime Prevention and my main “civilian profession” is being the mayor of the town of Naantali.

We at Finland’s National Council for Crime Prevention are extremely delighted to have all of you here at this seminar. Our plenary speakers include first class international experts – and we were very lucky in finding them and none that we invited turned us down. Our program may look somewhat packed because we received several interesting proposals for which we wish to give the floor also.

(Despite some unfortunate last-minute cancellations) The participants of the seminar come from nearly all current EU member states and you cover fairly well even the acceding countries. I think this shows that the event has been seen as interesting and worthwhile.

This seminar is organised by the Finnish National Council for Crime Prevention. It is financially supported by the European Commission through its AGIS programme. We have also been supported by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the European Forum for Urban Safety. As we have pledged to keep visible the role of the commission and its AGIS fund, I cannot resist mentioning that in its recent communication to the European parliament, the Commission names our seminar as one example of “successful proposals” – one out of a total of over fifty projects they funded last year. We hope that this seminar will be a *successful proposal* also from your point of view.

The Finnish National Council for Crime Prevention has operated in its present form for five years. However, it was actually founded ten years earlier, fifteen years ago. Hence, it is not among the very youngest national agencies for crime prevention. The Finnish Council is a forum for cooperation for the significant ministries, the municipalities, industry and commerce, non-governmental organisations and

research agencies. It is an expert and planning organ. The council has a modestly staffed secretariat which simultaneously also serves as the crime prevention unit of the department of criminal policy of the ministry of justice. Together with the ministry of justice, the council forms a national contact point for the European Crime Prevention Network. I want to point out this, because the topic of this seminar is one that is mentioned in the work programme of the EUCPN.

Currently, the most challenging task facing the council is that of cutting down on violence in our country. Overall, Finland is placed reasonably well in European crime comparisons. The risk of victimisation is lower than the EU average for most types of crime, and fear of crime is relatively low in Finland. However, the volume of serious violence is an exception; high rate of serious violence is a particular problem for Finland and it is a problem we want to get rid of.

In preparing for this seminar, we made an attempt to collect data on the cost of crime in the EU member states. We knew the questionnaire – that was drawn up by an economist – was ambitious. We expected – and said so – that it would be difficult or impossible to provide data on many or even most questions but we encouraged responses to be given on those issues on which data were available. Nevertheless, the response was very slim, almost nonexistent. In a way, this may be taken as one result. The data requested seemed fairly straightforward and normal for any economic planning. However, perhaps the fact that at this time the Euros and Pounds and Crowners were to do with crime and criminal policy made them seem so strange that the questionnaire was found impossible to fill out. Now at this seminar we have a chance to try to promote a more minimalist approach, we can try to review what kind of data on costs *are* available and what data would be most urgently needed. We do probably share the view that our knowledge on the cost of crime is not very good and that we need data that are comparable at the European level.

As organisers of this event, our role is no more than trying to provide an appropriate setting for a European seminar. The theme of the seminar is one reason that much of the organisation of this seminar has been very cost-conscious. Instead of outer splendour we chose surroundings that we hope will contribute to a familiar

atmosphere and to spontaneous free discussion. It is now up to all of us to make the best use of this possibility.

Apart from the unsuccessful cost survey, there is another failure that we can already note. We expected that, by this time, spring would have advanced much further in Finland than what we see is the case. This year Helsinki received a record snowfall of one and a half meters. Piles of dirty snow are still characteristic of the cityscape. However, maybe this helps us to work more intensively indoors.

With these words I wish to welcome you all to the first but hopefully not the last European seminar on the costs of crime. I wish us success in our work.

I will now give the floor to the Finnish minister of justice, Mr. Johannes Koskinen. Please welcome.