

MINISTERIAL MEETING - PANEL #6 – NORWAY

Statssekretær Røsjordes

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Cooperation with the Public and Private Sectors

New partnerships for a safer World

Today's crime picture is increasingly characterized by advanced technology and complex structures. Criminals often use the best of electronic equipment and work methods. We also witness the use of proforma employment and hidden networks. The availability of rapid payment and location of insiders in financial institutions have also contributed to law enforcement authorities are faced with highly demanding tasks in the effort to combat more organized and serious crime in the community.

In Norway we have taken consequences of this and we have realized that the police alone can not deal with solving many types of offenses. There is a growing understanding that we may need to establish a close and constructive cooperation with special public regulatory bodies - such as tax and excise authorities, customs and labor inspection.

Moreover, we are inspiring the police to seek active cooperation with relevant stakeholders from the private sector in efforts to prevent and investigate economic crimes. We think particularly of the financial sector, but also other services from the commercial and corporate markets are invited in as partners in this process.

As a "superstructure" to stimulate inter-agency cooperation, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security in Norway has appointed a cooperative committee consisting of key law enforcement agencies.

This forum is mandated to provide extra budgetary contributions to intensive investigation cases. There are usually police forces from several regions involved, not seldom supplied by personnel from other government agencies.

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This forum has an obligation to hold regular consultations with the management of relevant control bodies - and with key representatives of the private sector. The idea is to keep each other updated on the development of organized crime, the methods used and what measures can most effectively be implemented. We have good experience with this system and I strongly believe that there is a right thing to do.

An additional point in this context is the fact that our National Criminal Investigation Service, with a special responsibility for combating organized crime, has been strengthened with a police officer whose only task is to keep close contact with private sector. This officer shall serve as a contact point to exchange relevant information with representatives from the private business. We hope in this way to capture new trends in crime threats and methods. In return police can provide private sector with guidance and support when it comes to prevention of crime that seriously hits private companies.

Especially considering the national efforts against money laundering my Government recently decided to establish a special interministerial Contact Forum for developing our national strategy and point out relevant measures. In addition to the ministries concerned also private sector will be invited to submit relevant contributions in this important work.

We are in these days working on a package of national measures specially directed against economic crime, not at least when it comes to what we now call working life crime.

During the last years we have seen an increase of criminal acts in business life like black labor, tax evasion, and exploitation of human beings often without resident permits on the territory. These conditions ruin competitive conditions for legitimate businesses, and they are demeaning to workers who can not enjoy statutory rights. Also our community by this loose significant tax revenues.

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I can mention as an example that the Norwegian police these days runs a comprehensive investigation aimed at a particular chain of shops of grocery stores. It is suspected tax evasion, breach of the rules on foreigners' work permits, trafficking in human beings and there are also suspicions of drug trafficking.

It has been established an investigation project involving both the police and other government regulatory agencies that work closely together.

Faced with these new trends in crime it will be essential to draw more public and private stakeholders closely into a fruitful cooperation with law enforcement.

The Prime Minister therefore recently held a meeting with heads of the police and prosecutors as well as the management of the central agencies that have a supervisory responsibility within the labor market. The purpose was to discuss strategies and measures to combat crime in working life.

Essential parts in this meeting were also the two main organizations for employers and workers. These parties, which has great influence in Norway on the social development, has been asked to contribute actively in drafting the forthcoming strategies and measures to combat crime of this kind.

Let me conclude by pointing out that the government has recently prepared an action plan to combat radicalization and extremism. The goal of this plan is to make a community effort to prevent young people from being recruited to radical groups and driven into extreme violence situations. This plan emphasizes that the police should work closely with a range of social actors. This applies first and foremost to the municipalities. Representatives and professionals who are rooted in local communities is often best to go into direct dialogue with vulnerable youths.

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The prime Minister has therefore now urged all municipalities in Norway to engage actively in efforts to prevent radicalization and violent extremism. The commitment should take the form of close consultation with all relevant non-governmental organizations, religious communities and minority communities. The police are also part of this cooperation. The goal is to create a platform for dialogue and exchange of knowledge in this field.

In summary: A open and trustful cooperation between the police, other government agencies and the private sector will in future be a natural and necessary part of efforts to prevent and solve crimes.