

An integral methodology to develop an informative-led and community-orientated policy to tackle domestic burglary
(A methodology to tackle burglary)
HOME/2012/ISEC/FP/C2

Focus Group Report:

A visible and tangible policy regarding burglary in houses

Victimization in case of domestic burglary

Brussels, 21st May, 2014



With financial support from the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union
European Commission – Directorate-General Home Affairs

1. Agenda

9:00 - 9:15	Arrival & Registration
9:15 - 9:30	Welcome & Introduction to the focus groups by Pierre Thomas, Director of the Directorate Local Integral Security
09:30 - 11:30	Focus group 1
11:30 - 12:30	Lunch break
12:30 - 14:30	Focus group 2
14:30 - 15:30	Roundup + conclusions

During the focus group, the participants were divided into two groups. The following report will list the different discussions that were held based on the guiding statements. Whenever there was a difference between the two groups, this will be mentioned.

2. A visible and tangible policy regarding burglary in houses

Moderated by Paul Ponsaers

Paul Ponsaers first explained the project and the purpose of the focus group:

"We would like to ask you to share all your ideas, views and personal experiences. What do you deem important, what are your ideas, considerations and especially your suggestions? There aren't any right or wrong answers today. It is about what you think and why you think what you do. What we are especially looking for is diversity and possibly also opposite points of view. It is precisely this diversity we are trying to harness on the occasion of these focus groups."

He also verified if everybody knew and approved of the fact that they were being filmed and recorded. An introduction round was done to facilitate the discussion. Everybody explained who they were, where they came from and what they did.

Statement 1: There are already sufficient efforts to guarantee the harmony of the current burglary prevention policy at the European level. What is the added value of an approach at the European level, complementary to a national approach?

Group 1: 10 red cards

Everybody agreed that there are not enough tools on the European level for a harmonised preventive action plan. Europol is a good agency but they do not focus on prevention. There is still a lot of room for improvement. EUCPN is regarded as the correct agency for the prevention policy however there is a lot to be improved; they need to increase their focus on prevention. Not everybody knows EUCPN and the information exchange is not always easy; the website is not clear enough. Theoretically it is a very good institution but in practice, it is more difficult. There are too many interests, you cannot discuss everything.

Group 1

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium declared that it should start at the highest political level. The parliament is the representative of the people and it is a problem for the people. There is a need of prevention in the broad way; for a start there should be more efforts to combat poverty, improve welfare, deployment, education... He also reflects that there need to be a harmonized methodology to survey what works and what does not.

A delegate of the Local Police zone Klein-Brabant states that it is the responsible minister of every country that has to take the initiative in this. A representative of the Bruges Federal Police Judicial Directorate agrees with this, he declares that they should make a list with the priorities of which all the EU countries agree upon.

A representative of the private cooperation Securitas states that the information exchange should be simplified. The justice departments should be clearer so that the police know what they can say without harming the investigation. They need to work more transparently together.

A representative of the Dublin National Crime Prevention Unit agrees that prevention is very important. The European Union already gave directions for standard doors and windows but it is not mandatory. If the EU enforces this everybody would do it, now they can choose to do it and a lot of people do not choose it. The Baltic States and Netherlands already enforce it on their own. The EU should put more pressure on it. A theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) agrees with this whole-heartedly. He states that the EU-mandates have not experienced a lot of inconvenience in regard to burglaries so they are not confronted with it.

The question of who has to enforce this was answered by a delegate of the Local Police zone Klein-Brabant with the suggestion that the insurance companies could do it. A theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) agrees with this. He states that the insurance companies are realizing the benefit of mechanical techno-preventive measures. They used to prefer alarms but this is changing.

A representative of the Local police zone Lier (Belgium) suggests that the local authorities can contribute to this since they are the institution that gives the permits to build or rebuild houses.

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland agrees that the political level is very important since there needs to be a harmonization of the policy because there is a lot of difference in the involvement of private companies. He declares that reduction in taxes could be a positive control for the enforcement of techno-preventive changes.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that mayors are very important too. They have a closer contact in the field which makes them more pragmatic and not too ideological. A city is like a small world, where members of mobile crime groups are staying, hiding or selling their stolen goods. Pauperization and bad social conditions (education, deployment...) make cities incubators for potential future criminals. Professor Paul Ponsaers states that this is a very good idea but that it cannot be forgotten that it is not only an urban problem.

Group 2

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that nations already gather information but now there needs to be a bigger exchange on EU level too.

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland agrees with this. She emphasizes that when a burglar is caught, the police needs to investigate if the burglar has committed other crimes as well and where did he do it. She states that investigations is also prevention because there will be less burglaries when the structures of criminal groups are attacked.

A representative of the local Police Zone Montgomery states that information exchange is very important. She says that the local police zones do not get enough information on what is happening in other countries or on studies performed by universities. A delegate of the Federal Police's "DJB" (Belgium) agrees with this; there are a lot of projects of whom nobody knows about.

The Federal Police Coordination and Support Directorate, District of Ghent, declares that there should be a database with good practices, this needs to be more harmonized. Now every local police zone does it themselves. She also thinks that there needs to be more exchange with the private sector.

A representative of the local Police Zone Ghent (Belgium) agrees with this but he declares there also should be more emphasis on better databases for example for licence plates. Now you need to fill in multiple forms and it takes days before new information is fully added in the databases. This is bad for investigations and fast responses.

A delegate of the Federal Police's "DBJ" (Belgium) states that it is also important to know if good practices actually work. There must be a harmonized way to evaluate them. It too often happens internally which is bad for information exchange. A representative of the local Police Zone Montgomery agrees with this. Annual reports are not enough; the information needs to be captured into databases.

A delegate of the Criminological Research Department, Law Institute of Lithuania, agrees with this. They once did research which stated that less than 10% of the Lithuanian police use EUCPN. This is because of the language barrier but also because there are different perceptions about crime prevention. He also declares that existing crime prevention projects should be evaluated.

A delegate of the Crime Research and Prevention Institute, General inspectorate of Romanian police, acknowledges that exchange of information is important but he states that it should go step by step. It all depends on which database we are talking about. He thinks there is for example a great need for a unified database of fingerprints, not so much of modus operandi since a lot of burglars use the same ways. He agrees that there should be a strategic approach but the execution should remain local since there are a lot of differences between metropolitan areas and the countryside.

Statement 2: On the local level neighbourhood information networks and burglary prevention advisers are examples of methods that have already been developed sufficiently in the different member states.

Which other forms deserve encouragement?

Group 2: 5 red, 3 green cards

There is a greater need for target protection, especially for windows and doors. It is very easy to be a burglar at the moment. There are also great differences between countries. Not every country has neighbourhood information networks. It is also noticed that in many countries the police is the main engine behind prevention.

Group 1

A theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) states that the most important thing is target protection. It is scientifically proven that it works. People should be forced to do it because when they just get a recommendation, they do not do anything with it. A representative of the Dublin National Crime Prevention Unit agrees with this. The vast majority of burglaries happen via doors and windows. Surveillance does not work that good and it is more expensive because you need cameras.

A delegate of the Local Police zone Klein-Brabant states that burglaries now happen more often during the day because the burglars can make a lot of noise since everybody is at work. He thinks Neighbourhood Information Networks are important in this regard so long as people actually call the police when they see something.

A Crime Prevention Police Officer from Croatia states that anti-burglary devices are indeed important but it has no effect when people keep putting their key under the doormat or leave the window open. People need to have a bigger awareness of risks.

A delegate of the Local Police zone Klein-Brabant states that it is indeed important but we cannot go too far with it since it can be dangerous as well. It could increase the amount of home jackings with the burglars waiting until people come home from work.

A delegate of the National Police Chief Directorate of Bulgaria states that in Bulgaria it is important for the police to be present. They try to be present in the most dangerous and vulnerable places. He realizes that you can of course not be present everywhere but criminals are discouraged by it.

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland states that the urbanisation is diminishing the effectiveness of neighbourhood watches. People are not interested in their neighbourhood anymore.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that research needs to be conducted on repeated victimization. There is a great need for a victim survey. This has not happened anymore since 2010.

A representative of the Bruges Federal Police Judicial Directorate agrees with this. However, there should also be a focus of prevention towards perpetrators. They need to be prevented from becoming a burglar.

Group 2

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland states that there are no neighbourhood watches in Germany because Germans think that safety and security is something that the police must do. The burglary prevention advisors are also mainly police officers. She states that there is a great difference between countries. In Germany the private sector is not accepted by the public, prevention is an internal police task.

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that burglary prevention advisors are since recently trained by the police.

A representative of the local Police Zone Montgomery explains that this is not the case in Belgium. There are burglary prevention advisors from the police but also from the municipalities. The latter are civilians which mean they do not wear a uniform. Because of this they are less trusted by the people than the burglary prevention advisors from the police. A representative of the local Police Zone Ghent (Belgium) however states that there is only one burglary prevention advisor in the Ghent police and 4 with the municipality of Ghent.

A delegate of the Crime Research and Prevention Institute, General inspectorate of the Romanian police, states that there are not that many burglary prevention advisors in Romania because there are too few policemen dealing exclusively with crime prevention. There are not more than 200 crime prevention advisors and they deal with all crime prevention issues. Specialised prevention is still in its infancy. However, the Romanian police cooperate closely with NGO's, security firms, insurance companies... Sadly enough they also get comments that they then promote certain firms. Nevertheless they have a good cooperation with the private sector because they help pay for prevention campaigns. The Romanian police also try to focus on young people through videos, website, education games... They need to be creative to make people more receptive of crime prevention campaigns.

A delegate of the Criminological Research Department, Law Institute of Lithuania, states that the police is always involved in prevention. However the local police have many tasks. This leads to the fact that prevention is only sometimes taken on. There are certain projects but it stays very small and there is not often done an evaluation. The mayors, for example, do not have any involvement in prevention. The prevention policy is decided at a high political level but it often does not get down to ground level.

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that since the reforms of the police there is now more consultation with policy and even with civilians.

Statement 3: A European database needs to be developed with all existing best practices regarding burglary in houses. If so, who should take the initiative for this?

Group 1: 10 green cards

Group 1

A theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) states that it should not only be the police that do this. He states that EUCPN is the best place for this. A Crime Prevention Police Officer from Croatia agrees with this. However, are we prepared to share this knowledge?

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland states that he is not sure of this. They are willing to give it to the police but not to private companies.

A representative of the Dublin National Crime Prevention Unit states that it could indeed be performed by EUCPN however he states that a lot of police zones are not working with them because the EUCPN needs to be more differentiated. There is no police force represented in the agency. Therefore there is no trust in the institution.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that before they can exchange good practices there need to be a standard answer to the question 'what are good practices?'. A representative of the Bruges Federal Police Judicial Directorate and a theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) agree with this. If EUCPN wants to gather good practices, than they need to be on top of this.

A representative of the Local police zone Lier (Belgium) thinks this is a very good idea. However, he is of the opinion that there needs to be a separate database for good practices from the police and from policy. However, this is difficult because there are so many differences between the countries. He states that it is also possible that some people do not wish to exchange their good practices.

A delegate of the Local Police zone Klein-Brabant states that there are a lot of good practices that are easily exchanged and transferable.

A small discussion followed between the delegate of the National Police Chief Directorate of Bulgaria and the representative of the private cooperation Securitas. The delegate of the National Police Chief Directorate of Bulgaria states that the police cannot share all the information with the private sector. They can only give analyses because of fear that the information would fall in the wrong hands. The policemen have been checked, the employees have not. There are laws in Bulgaria concerning this but he states that not all the information can be exchanged. The representative of the private cooperation Securitas states that private companies have a lot of information that the police does not have, so a cooperation should be beneficial to both parties and that it should not be forgotten that a lot of information is already public knowledge. He also states that in Belgium there are good laws and agreements between the ministry of home affairs, justice and the private sector. They need to have a security clearance before they can work together with the police.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that they have noticed during the EMPACT project that not a lot of people put their good practices on the database. He supports the methodology of inspecting the good practices before they are put on the database. Because offering a good practice is extra work, on top of the regular tasks, there should be a support in collecting good practices. The organization of a "community of practice (COP)" is maybe a good idea.

Group 2

This statement was already discussed during the answer for statement 1.

Statement 4: The following new strategies need to be employed to deal with the burglar: control when entering and leaving burglary sensitive neighbourhoods with police controls and perpetrator sensitive neighbourhoods with police controls (think of stop and search actions, the use of intelligent cameras, ...).

Group 1: 3 red, 2 green and 3 both cards

Group 2: 2 red, 2 green and 4 both cards

It is generally perceived as a good idea, however there are a lot of practical problems. It is very difficult to fully control a neighbourhood; you have to watch all the entrances. It is often also very expensive because of the need of cameras. Next to these objections there is also the fact that it has not been proven that it actually works. There need to be some empirical research. The main perception is that it is a very temporal measure and that the burglars will just go to another area where there is not a lot of police. However, it is good for the victims to see the police while they are doing something against the burglaries.

Group 1:

A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland states that it could be a good idea but that it would never be accepted in Germany. If you want to do this you will need a very good reason.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that it is a good way of giving the neighbourhood some rest but that there is a need for more structural measures afterwards.

A representative of the Dublin National Crime Prevention Unit states that they already have smart cameras in certain neighbourhoods but that they are only placed there where the people agree with them.

Group 2:

The biggest part of the group emphasised that it is important, when you undertake an action like this, that you give good information to the civilians. A representative of the local Police Zone Ghent (Belgium) states that when they do this, the people, for the most part, are happy to see the police.

A delegate of the Crime Research and Prevention Institute, General inspectorate of Romanian police, states himself partly against the statement because they have usually tried it, but the results are not always the most effective. He also states that they cannot give information to civilians because most burglars would then hear of it and just stay home. He also makes a difference between action in uniform and anonymous actions. The first one is good for the safety perception of civilians, the second one for the effectiveness towards catching burglars.

Statement 5: Which priority target groups do we need to distinguish when we want to make our burglary prevention policy more directed? (Examples of possible target groups: pharmacists, seniors, town halls, ...)

Generally speaking, most participants state that there need to first be a broad prevention strategy, preferably coming from the EU. Next to that there is indeed a need to focus on specific target groups. Especially elderly people came forward as one of those groups since it is proven that seniors who have experienced a burglary, die on average 5 years earlier. However there

are analyses necessary to find out with groups need this special attention, the police and policy advisors cannot just choose it.

Group 2

A delegate from the Local Police zone Montgomery (Belgium) states that we should be careful in allocating a special policy to a certain group since it can be distressing and fearful for them.

Statement 6: What are good manners to increase the support of sensitizing campaigns by calling in policy makers?

The participants remark that the best way to get the attention of policy makers is via the media. If a project or campaign is successful and there is media coverage than the policy makers will get involved. This also happens when there are elections coming. However everybody remarks that the police are for the biggest part the engine behind prevention campaigns. There are also many differences between the countries for which the policy makers are responsible.

Group 1

A representative of the Dublin National Crime Prevention Unit informs us that it is the minister of justice that works together with the police, especially because the mayors are not elected in Ireland.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium states that there is quite a lot of cooperation between the police and the policy makers in Belgium because they work together on the national security plan. The federal police also have a lot of partnerships with the policy makers and with private companies, professional organizations, communities of interest....

A representative of the Local police zone Lier (Belgium) remarks that they are working together with burglary prevention officers employed by the municipality. However a theft prevention officer from police zone Rupel (Belgium) states that because of the crisis a lot of the burglary prevention officers have received multiple tasks which are dangerous because knowledge can be lost.

The Head of Department "Organised Thefts & ART" from Belgium and a representative of the Bruges Federal Police Judicial Directorate declare that it is also possible that a bottom-up approach helps to influence the policy makers. The initiative '1daynot' came originally from civilians and pressures the policy makers. It also happens that self-employed victims go, in a group, to complain to the mayor and then the mayor gets more involved.

Group 2

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that in Denmark they are trying to involve the district councils more often. They are convincing them that it is important by saying that they will save money eventually.

Statement 7: An effective burglary prevention policy beforehand always needs sufficient analysis. What are relevant analysis indicators (e.g. committed crime/attempts, loot, target, time, etc.)

group 1: 10 green cards

Analysis' is perceived as very important. However there is often not enough information for these analyses. In order to have enough information there is a need for good registration of crimes and there is a very great need for a new victim's survey, especially to have a better view on the 'Dark Number'. There should also be more research on fencing of stolen goods.

Group 2

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that in Denmark they have now started to include attempted burglaries in their analysis because there is a lot of information to gather there as well.

A delegate of the Federal Police's "DJB" (Belgium) states that it is very difficult to work on the economy of stolen goods. It is a very pro-active domain. A delegate of the Crime Research and Prevention Institute, General inspectorate of Romanian police, agrees with this. He states that it is especially difficult to control the pawn shops.

A representative from the Danish National Police, National Centre for Crime Prevention, states that in Denmark they now have started cooperation with the internet markets. They give information to the police when they suspect a stolen item is sold on their site. A representative of the State Criminal Police Office Nordrhein-Westphalia Deutschland states that there is an internet platform in Germany where all the descriptions of stolen goods are kept. However it is not always easy to identify a stolen item.

To tackle this, the insurance companies could demand to get ID-numbers and photographs of the valuable goods before the people get insurance. However the delegate of the Federal Police's "DJB" (Belgium) states that the insurance companies are not very willing to do this.

Statement 8: at the start of for instance burglary prevention projects, a cost-benefit analysis of the deployment of the different actors (think of the deployment of neighbourhood inspectors, community workers, municipal detectives,...) is hardly ever made. How can we convince less evident partners (think for instance of the private sector) to join in the burglary prevention policy? How do we create win-win situations?

There are enormous differences between the countries in regard of cooperation with private partners. In Germany it is perceived as impossible because of historical reasons, agencies have to be very transparent. In Belgium cooperation already exists between the police and private security partners as a project during full integrated police actions in the district (FIPA) against burglars. The exchange of information in that case is possible concerning alarms at the clients of these security partners and possible suspect behaviour or cars in the direct vicinity of these alarms. However it is very important to build mutual trust before they exchange information and it is mostly on a local level, the policy makers are not yet fully convinced. In Croatia and Denmark they can exchange strategic information but they cannot cooperate fully because it would be perceived as promoting a certain company, which is not done. In Romania however there is much cooperation with private companies, especially when they are involved in

prevention campaigns. In Lithuania this depends on the willingness of the municipalities since there is no cooperation between the police and the private sector.

Group 1

A representative of the private cooperation Securitas states that it is indeed a win-win situation since the private sector has different information than the police. Both have good ideas and when they work together they can achieve more. Of course it all depends on the willingness of the company and on the material of the project; producers of gold will be more willing to work together than producers of for example chocolate. There is much that private companies can do to aid the police in their struggle against criminals; however there is a need for proper regulation of this cooperation, which is the case in Belgium.

Statement 9: In the prevention of burglary in houses, the emphasis is often put too strongly on the importance of techno-preventive means.

What are the means that work in other countries and why do they work? Are there any good evaluation studies on the subject?

Group 1:

There have not been a lot of studies concerning techno-preventive means. Internally it is sometimes evaluated but this presents a problem for further research because they cannot access results. There is a need for empirical studies.

Conclusions

- There is a great need of harmonization of the policy concerning domestic burglary on a European level. There are many differences between the countries which make it very difficult to do this. We need to learn from each other.
 - o A database with best practices should be more accessible to all. It should be promoted more to participate in it.
 - o EUCPN is regarded as the correct agency for the exchange of information however there is much to be improved. Many people still do not know EUCPN or use it. The police also do not completely trust the agency because there is no police involved in what happens with the information.
- The position of the private sector depends on the country. Some think it is logical, others completely not. There is also the important question of 'who is to control the private institutions?'. Should the police do this or the policy makers? The changes in this regard are happening very fast, we cannot outrun it so a 'feet to the ground' policy is needed.
- The position of the civilian, with burglary prevention officers in municipalities, is also changing. They are becoming more important. Making the policy makers more accountable is not only the task of the police.

3. Victimization regarding domestic burglary

Moderated by Els Enhus

The discussion in both groups was sometimes so extensive that it deviated from the statement. This led to interesting extra subjects and opinions. However, to maintain the overview, additional statements were added in the report. The discussion about the additional subjects was not equal or as extensive in both groups so not every additional statement was discussed in each group.

Statement 1: According to research, 65% of the victims still experiences consequences 4 to 10 weeks after the burglary: there are feelings of insecurity and discomfort. One also remains mentally occupied with the burglary. How important are these feelings?

Group 1

A delegate of the police zone Montgomery works with victims every day: We explain to the victims that they have to be surrounded by people they trust after the burglary. They should acknowledge that it is indeed a problem and no matter what, they did not ask for it. They became a victim because of a series of causes. Maybe partly because of their own behaviour but still they never asked for it. People do not know what to do after it happens to them. And the only thing we can do, is revisit them.

There is a project running in Denmark involving these victims, states a representative of the Danish National Police. They are trying to cross the whole country to talk to citizens. Those researchers want to discuss the burglary situations with police officers. Together they can research the criminal history in certain areas and find an answer to the question: why this area? They also want to help the victim with the overall feeling of 'why me'?

You feel safe in your house and you expect to be safe. People are more affected by losing this feeling than by the stuff the burglar took. A representative of the Romanian police points this out. He knows of a case where burglars entered a house but left without stealing anything. These victims feel as bad as other victims.

The representative of the Federal Police's "DJB" (Belgium) believes that we should differentiate between cases where the inhabitants were at home during the burglary and those cases where they were not. The representative of Ghent agrees because the questions you get from the victims are different in both cases.

Els Enhus agrees that psychologically a burglary is very hard on the victims but she also implies another question. How does this conflict with the relationship with the police?

A delegate of the State Criminal Police of Germany confirms that people lose trust in the police after a burglary. The police try to find a way to rebuild this confidence in the police.

Els Enhus emphasizes that there are 3 effects we should work on: Feelings of insecurity, the psychological feeling and the confidence lost in the police.

Group 2

The representative of police zone Rupel says this is very important for the fieldworkers to know: they should make clear to the victim that what they are feeling is normal. Some victims think that it is just them feeling like that and that they are going mad. But it is not, a burglary has a high impact on a person even if they did not even see the burglar. Burglars, however, do not realize what the impact of their crime is and they do not really care. In the Netherlands there has been an investigation concerning the relation between victim and burglar: with home invasions more than 50% of the cases burglar and victim knew each other. It is important for the detectives to know that in a lot of cases there is a link.

It is important to revisit the victims, says the delegate of police zone Lier. Often the victims first say that they do not need any help but after some days/weeks they do.

The representative of police zone Klein Brabant agrees that revisiting is necessary. The victim can deal with his problems by making use of the revisit. That way you can give them the right information about services that can help them recover from the trauma. However, many colleagues are not doing revisits.

In Germany revisiting is totally different from Belgium. After two weeks the police come by to ask about the stolen goods. Revisiting does not happen.

The representative of Dublin agrees that revisiting should happen after a domestic burglary. However, if a victim is really psychologically affected you should refer him, because a policeman is not a social worker.

In Croatia a police officer contacts the victims multiple times and gives them information on where they can get professional help.

The national police chief directorate of Bulgaria says that the contact keeps going after the first visit. But it is not really on the question how they are feeling but more on how the case is going. They tell you how the case is proceeding and ask if you have new information to add. It is important that the victim knows the police care and they are working on the case. Victims can choose to be updated about their case weekly.

The representatives of Belgium and Germany cannot imagine doing that, it does not happen in their countries.

The head of Department "organized thefts & ART" Belgium explains what local police service once did. They organized a reassurance meeting after an epidemic of domestic burglaries. The police was there but also a prosecutor, a psychologist, ...

Els Enhus repeats the words said: it is a high impact crime. It is important that everyone realize this.

*Extra Statement: Do the protection measures stop the burglar?**Group 1*

Els Enhus did research with burglars themselves. She asked them: 'Are you hindered by obstacles like gates, fences, dogs, alarms?' The answer was no. Time is the most important factor. If it takes too long to get in, they quit. They are only inside for 3 to 5 minutes, not more. People can take measures but they also need to behave according to those measures. If you have a good lock,

do not put the key under the mat, if you have an alarm system, switch it on. Burglars often get in like that. A big part of the reason why people do not behave accordingly is they do not want to constantly think about the possibility of being burgled. You cannot live with this constant feeling of fear.

The representative of the Danish national police points out that we must find a balance between giving advice and making people afraid.

A representative of police zone Ghent brings up an important issue: nowadays people post everything on social media. Where and when they are going on holiday. This is very helpful to the potential burglar.

Group 2

The representative of Dublin says it is easy to fall into bad habits. People know what they should do but they do not do it. People know it is not good to just close the door without locking it but still they do it because it is a habit.

Statement 2: Which instruments should we develop to sound them out on victimization? How can we measure the psychological, social and economic effects?

Group 1

The delegate of the Danish National Police: 'what signal does your house send to potential burglars?' What can they do themselves? For instance they can open up the area so there is the possibility of social control.

We start from each individual person, says the delegate of police zone Montgomery. We look at their way of life, what they want for quality of life. We watch their situation. We take time and talk to them. We notice that people are more and more afraid. When there is a burglary somewhere, the neighbours come to us to ask what they can do to be proactive. To help them we organize information sessions. But we still try to adjust the information to the individual people.

Extra statement: Why do burglars go back to the same place?

Group 1

The answer is clear: the first thing victims do is to replace the goods that were stolen. The burglars know this and it is even better because everything is new.

People do this because when they pass for instance the empty table where the TV-set stood they are constantly remembered of what happened, says the delegate of police zone Rupel. Another cause of this multiple victimization is the virus effect of burglaries. If your house is attractive to burglar A, it is also for burglar B, C, ... They will keep burgling you if you do not change your protection or behaviour.

We need to work more with predictive policing according to the head of Department "Organized thefts & ART" Belgium. If we put science and police records together we can find hot spots and hot times.

The representative of police zone Rupel points out that we should also work the other way around. If people move, a police officer should tell them: these are the risks. Because they may be different from their old neighbourhood.

A delegate of the Police Zone Ghent addresses the problem with social housing. We cannot convince the corporations (which are responsible for the doors and locks) to buy better (and more expensive) locks. Because that is inconvenient for them.

Maybe we need to force the corporation to buy better locks, says the delegate of Germany. In Germany the insurance can force people to do this. If they do not, the insurance will not pay. In Denmark we have neighbourhood watch in collaboration with foundation of the insurance. We created a website with a check-in area. 80,000 households have registered. When something happens, the police leave a message on the website.

Extra statement: Should a difference be made between victims who are owners and those who are not?

Group 1

The delegate of the police zone Montgomery says that people who rent will not spend a lot of money to secure the house. But often the owner does not do it either because he couldn't care less because he does not have to live there. So people change their organization of life: they take their laptop to their work, they do not leave (a lot of) valuables in their house.

Group 2

The representative of Ireland thinks we should make a difference between domestic burglaries and burglaries of shops and companies but not between victims of domestic burglary who are owners and those who are not. It is always an enormous violation when someone intrudes in your home.

The Head of Department 'Organised thefts & ART' Belgium does think we should make a distinction in some cases. Some people do not have the means to protect themselves like tenants who already have to pay a high rental price. Then we should put the responsibility with the owner.

However, the representative of Ireland points out that the owner couldn't care less if they burgle the house. Because he is only a secondary victim, he does not live there.

So that is why we need the same standards so that everybody is obliged to build in prevention. This says the representative of police zone Rupel. In the Netherlands, where this is a national rule, the standards are normal now.

In Bulgaria standards are not realizable. People do not have a lot of money or stuff to protect. The representative of Ireland also believes that standards are a very good and important measure.

Extra statement: The number of domestic burglary is not going down in Belgium. What more can we do?

Group 1

The representative of Romania says we should not blame the victims but on the other hand people should take every measure they can to protect themselves. In Romania there is 1 police officer for 500 people: Although this number complies with the European standard, that is just not enough. People should be aware of the fact that the police cannot protect them constantly. Also the police are limited because even the offenders have their rights to be respected in the process of investigating. The burglars get more and more professional, they mostly do not leave traces and if they do, it is hard to identify who is the burglar. A burglar needs to do more than one burglary before we can identify them.

Els Enhus describes how it is in Belgium. Burglaries were not seen as that important by the police. 69% of cases were classified just by seeing the term 'burglary' on the file.

In Romania domestic burglary is seen as a very important crime and is a top priority for the police.

People knew that it was not important and that the burglars were likely not to be found or prosecuted says the representative of police zone Montgomery. No one saw or heard anything, there were never any traces. That was very frustrating for the police because they could not find the burglars and the numbers were only useful for the statistics.

The representative of the police zone Ghent says that that changed: every burglary now goes to the justice department.

In Romania there is a different reason: many people do not want to give permission for the procedure. People, if they saw something, do not want to be a witness in court because they are afraid of the offender or because they must go to testify in court, but also in front of the police officers and prosecutor. It is a difficult procedure for witnesses.

Group 2

The representative of police zone Rupel says that we really have to tell people to build in prevention. A lot of people think they are invincible: it is not going to happen to me, they are not going to burgle me.

When you build a new house, it is a small step to build in prevention says a representative from Germany. Why can we not make this a rule in Europe?

A representative from Ireland asks the same question: we have fire regulations so why can we not have regulations for building in prevention of domestic burglaries?

The representative of police zone Rupel points out that in the Netherlands it is already a national rule. They also calculated the cost of doing this, it is only €400. That is a very low cost in proportion to the cost of building a new house.

In Croatia the police did a special campaign: if they saw a window open, they left pamphlets there which said that the next time it could be a burglar entering instead of them.

The representative of Bulgaria asks why we do not do these discussions with citizens. Then we can ask: why do you leave your door open, why do you act this way? A lot of citizens have the same answer: 'I do not have anything valuable, I do not have anything to protect so why should I protect my house, I do not have anything to steal.'

We should not only see how we can prevent burglaries but also see how we can prevent people becoming burglars. This says the representative of police zone Rupel: crime prevention is more than securing your house. We, as a society, also have our responsibilities.

The delegate of police zone Lier thinks this is very visionary but he does not think it is possible because we will need a lot of money to implement this.

Extra statement: Is neighbourhood watch a form of prevention that will be able to tackle burglaries?

Els Enhus emphasizes that we will never tackle crime when we only take one measure. One of the measures that is currently quite popular in Belgium is a neighbourhood watch.

Group 1

The delegate of the Criminological Research Department of Lithuania says we need to put the neighbourhood watch also in a cultural context. The police often have good contacts in neighbourhoods where they do not really need it. A policeman has different functions.

The delegate of the police zone Montgomery says the minister of interior asked to start up a neighbourhood watch formally in Wallonia. We have to ask ourselves the question why a neighbourhood watch works in Flanders and not in Wallonia? It is because people see all the formalities and they lose interest. On that front, citizens are not responsible.

In Ghent we do not have a neighbourhood watch. We have a lot of patrols so if people call to report suspect behaviour, the police is there within two minutes. We used to have a neighbourhood watch but after a week people lost interest and the information stopped coming.

Group 2

The delegate of the Dublin national crime prevention unit says we need two systems of neighbourhood watches. One for the smaller region and one for the city. A neighbourhood watch is effective if it is run correctly. We should also realize that a lot of domestic burglaries are in the daytime, not like before where it was almost always at night. The problem is that during the day no one is at home because everyone is at work.

That is why we should make a mix in neighbourhoods because now all similar people live in similar neighbourhoods. We should make a mix: young, old, rich, poor, all together in one neighbourhood. In the Netherlands they do this in some neighbourhoods.

In Bulgaria we now have a neighbourhood watch project going on but there is a problem: people want to carry a weapon during the watch. Of course this is not allowed. But we really need the neighbourhood watch in small towns because of the cuts in policing.

Extra statement: Is there a place for social media in the prevention of domestic burglary?

Group 2

The representative of police zone Klein Brabant gives an example of a project where people get a message when there is suspect behaviour in their neighbourhood.

People use 'Whatsapp', so why should the police not use it, asks the representative of police zone Rupel.

In Dublin we have 'Textalert' and this works very well. It connects the people with the police. However, we could improve it by also going on Twitter, Facebook.

Els Enhus speaks about a specific app on your phone that detects movement in your house.

When there is movement in your house, you are already a victim. They already intruded into your safe space so it is already too late, says the representative of police zone Rupel.

Croatia also believes that social media has big potential for crime prevention.

The police in Bulgaria do not use social media for crime prevention.

A delegate of the police of Bruges believes, as a detective, that social media could be useful.

There are always things that can help with an investigation. We use it to communicate now but it is not really used in the investigation.

Conclusions

-The perpetrator and the victims are connected. All criminal offences need to be seen in a relation between victim and perpetrator. The crimes are not at random.

-The feelings of insecurity can't be neglected. Domestic burglary is a high impact crime, not only on an economical level. The victims are also confronted with different psychological effects. Victims have sleeping problems, some even move. It is very important that field workers are aware of these consequences. This way they can raise awareness for people.

People often lose trust in the police after a burglary. It is important that the police try to find a way to rebuild this confidence in the police.

Specifically for Belgium there is a great need for a victim survey. This has not happened anymore since 2010.

-After a burglary has been committed we also see that different preventive measures are taken by the victims. Unfortunately after a period of time the people fall back in their old routines and the alertness fades to the background. We have to ask ourselves from a preventive point of view how we can anticipate this problem?

-Something that often occurs with second and third victimization is that people want to restore the situation as before. They want to reconstruct their environment by for example buying the same television. This attracts burglars to go back to the same place.

-The approach of victimization (e.g. revisiting victims) is different in the different countries. In Germany is it not implemented at all. In Bulgaria for example the focus is on the evolution of the investigation not on the psychological effects.

-Obliged standards to build in prevention is seen as important, however this need to be seen in the specific context of each country.

-Neighbourhood watches can be seen as an effective support to promote prevention of domestic burglary if certain factors are taken into account, for example the urbanization of the region.

- Creating synergy between scientific research and practice for an evidence-based approach of measures/projects.



With financial support from the Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme of the European Union
European Commission – Directorate-General Home Affairs

Legal notice

The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the official opinions of any EU Member State or any agency or institution of the European Union or European Communities.

