

Action plan

During the research carried out on behalf of this European project it, became clear that already a lot of efforts are made when it comes to the prevention of Domestic Burglary. Many different actors are engaged in the fight against domestic burglary whether it may be in the field of prevention, police investigation, or justice. However, there has still been an increase of burglaries in Belgium since 2005. We can only conclude that there is still work to be done, if we want to diminish the number of domestic burglaries.

During the different methodological activities such as the focus groups, the world café and the advisory board, we asked the participants to think about possible action points. Multiple action points were thus already formulated throughout the different events of this project. In addition to these points, the cost-benefit analysis showed certain gaps within the policy. This action plan wishes to formulate certain points to amend this.

We will present these points in two complementing ways. First we sum up all possible action points starting with action points that are situated on an international level, followed by action points that are situated on the national level. Within the national level, we will present the different action points on the basis of themes such as action points that thrive on new technology, the importance of cooperation, civil participation and the broadening of the imaging. Secondly we use the same action points to build a scheme that divides them into different categories based on their nature. Action points can be primary, secondary or tertiary prevention (represented by the horizontal axis), or they can be situation-oriented, victim-oriented or offender-oriented (represented by the vertical axis) as shown at the bottom of this document.

European level

From the start, the European dimension of the project has played a major role. Throughout the project there has been a constant effort to overcome national boundaries when it comes to formulating possible future action points. The added value of being a European Project funded by the European Commission was translated in this effort.

During the first focus group, the participants agreed that domestic burglaries, and in particular itinerant groups, is a European problem which can only be solved if there is sufficient collaboration on an European level. Consequently, there is a need to **create awareness** on the same European level. More research about the facts and the figures leads to a better image, which may lead in return to a better policy.

Each Member State has its own strategy to tackle the phenomenon of domestic burglary. However there may be a logic behind these differences - no member state can be fully compared to the other - a certain amount of uniformity is indisputable when it comes to international collaboration. Since, as already stated, itinerant groups are not stopped by boundaries, crime investigation on domestic burglary

should be neither. The European Union should work towards a uniform legislation, since there is clearly a need for more uniformity in law and guidelines in order to tackle domestic burglary and itinerant groups. Some steps have already been taken in the right direction, for example the EU declared minimum security norms that a house should comply to, in order to have more secured and hence safer homes in the future. However these regulations are not made compulsory, which results in an insufficient follow up of the measures taken.

Also, international legislation should try to improve the information-exchange between the member states. All too often the exchange of information is hampered by technical problems, which makes it a time-consuming work of labour. There is a great need for better databases. For example, itinerant groups often make use of identity theft to stay under the radar. A possible way to tackle this problem is to create an **identity database** in which the offenders are described by appearance, by name and by fingerprints. This way it would be easier to identify a person by their past offences. The European Crime and Prevention Network (EUCPN) was identified as a possible promoter for this project. Unfortunately, the EUCPN itself is all too often unknown to the people on the terrain. In response to this, EUCPN could start a campaign in order to raise awareness for their role in crime prevention. Not only the lack of visibility towards the terrain poses an obstacle for EUCPN, they also need to overcome the fact that there is no representation of police forces inside EUCPN. During this project it appeared that police forces were rather distrustful about the EUCPN since it is unclear to them what happens with the information, certainly in relation to the degree of confidentiality of certain documents. This could be overcome by letting the police participate.

Also in regard to the matter of **information-exchange**, we should not forget that every member state has its own system of registering its inhabitants. In order to tackle the problem of itinerant groups, it is crucial to have not only a correct identity of the perpetrator, but also to have a correct address. Not every member state registers addresses of its inhabitants. Ideally, every person has to register his address each time he or she officially moves, and this information should be linked to their ID card.

Another issue on an EU-level is the **prosecution policy**. Itinerant groups are often managed and receive their instructions from within their home country. However, the victimized member state can only prosecute people who reside within its own state borders. Which means that the people at the top of the criminal organizations are often left undisturbed. Having control over the money flow towards the top of the criminal organization is regarded as the most powerful tool for police forces to hit these organizations in the heart of their operations. Exactly this is often lacking. Some degree of cooperation concerning the interrogation in other countries (such as rogatory commissions) already exists, but it needs to be intensified and amplified.

As described above, there is a great variety of actions that the EU can take in order to facilitate the policy of preventing domestic burglary. None of these actions may be easy to establish, but all of them would have a tremendous outcome. Creating

efficient databases and creating a more unified prosecution policy are regarded as the most promising. The EU has already created some norms for the safety of houses, however since these norms are not compulsory, the outcome is uncertain. And last but not least the EUCPN should play a bigger role in the fight against domestic burglary.

National level

The fight against domestic burglary cannot solely be fought on a European level. On a national level, in Belgium that is, there is still room for improvement. Since most of these action plans are easily transferable, they can also be beneficiary for the other member states. In order to present the action point orderly, we have divided the different action points into several themes.

New technology and (techno) preventive measures

The development of new technologies creates new opportunities and new ways of working for the authorities to control crime, but the same goes unfortunately for criminal organizations. In regards to this, there are multiple action points to be taken.

First of all there is a great need for more **research** about the subject. The General Directory for Safety and Prevention of the Belgian ministry of Interior Affairs has commissioned a scientific survey in order to comprehend the consequences of new technologies. Depending on the results of this survey, the policymakers will have to take adequate action. The results should also be communicated towards the police and prevention offices. While using these new technologies, the balance between the rights of the citizens on one hand (controlled by the Belgian privacy commission) and the innovative actions against criminal phenomena using new technologies on the other, should be guarded. Furthermore people ought to be aware of the fact that camera's and alarm systems can create a false sense of security. Policy makers could launch a campaign to raise awareness about this.

Scientific research and experiences in other member states show that taking techno preventive measures in homes effectively reduces the risk of domestic burglary. The demand for more initiative to secure homes by using techno preventive measures was a clear outcome of the project. Up until now, in most member states, the citizens themselves are responsible for the security of their own home. However not enough people take adequate action concerning this. If policy makers want to decrease domestic burglaries, they should make certain **norms for the security of homes** compulsory. This can be done on the European level, or on the national level. The EU has already stated what the minimum norms should be, however it is, as mentioned above, not (yet) compulsory. In case of Belgium, the regions need to take greater responsibility in this regard. In collaboration with the General Directory for Safety and Prevention of the ministry of Interior Affairs they need to establish minimum norms of security for newly constructed houses, which should in turn be made compulsory and required by law. There are multiple ways to do this, but one suggestion is the implementation of a **quality label** on the basis of a gradual default table for security material.

Until these norms are implemented, it is important to keep encouraging the local governments to structurally apply techno preventive advise via the counselling methods applied by the different **domestic burglary prevention consultant**. However the procedure of these domestic burglary prevention consultants needs to be professionalized. This means that the education of the domestic burglary prevention consultants should be updated and standardized.

In line with the techno preventive measures, the theory called **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** should be mentioned as well. This theory states that during the redesign of the public space, one needs to take greater account of the aspects that have a direct impact on safety and security experience, such as the lighting and the plantation. If CPTED would be administered, the citizens would feel more secure and there would be less trouble such as burglaries. Therefore it is advised to work together with the municipalities towards implementing this design. Also worth mentioning is the **broken window effect**. When a certain area shows signs of decay, it is believed that this stimulates more crime. Therefore the message is clear; decay should be grinded to a halt before areas deteriorate and get out of hand.

Social media has become omnipresent, and policy makers as well as police forces need to make use of them in an efficient way if they want to reach out to their audience and deliver their message. But as much as social media is an obvious way to reach out to the people, it also brings risks. Not enough research has been done on this matter. Nevertheless when social media is used, one global communication strategy needs to be put in place. By combining the communication strategy with other actors, more people will receive the message, thus enhancing the number of target groups that are reached. However, social media can also be used by burglars in aid of their offences. We often see that people are quite unaware of the fact that burglars use social media to gather intelligence about the whereabouts of their future victims. Governments should raise awareness about the risks of using social media, and educate people in the correct use of social media in regard to the prevention of domestic burglary.

Furthermore, to reduce the emotional and economic impact of domestic burglary, there should also be attention for the **recovery of stolen goods**. The owners often lack the correct identification-elements such as serial numbers, therefore the police finds it often impossible to locate the rightful owners of stolen goods. In regards to this it would be beneficiary to develop a national, or even an international, **registration system for valuable goods** which is then connected with a database. However before this can be implemented a system like this needs to be research especially in regards to the privacy rights of the citizens, the costs and the sensitization of the citizens. Also in connection with **handling stolen goods**, other member states have already developed good practices from which Belgium can learn. For example in the Netherlands they use social media and new technology to detect stolen goods. It could be advantageous to implement this in Belgium. Nevertheless there are already some good practices in Belgium but they can always be improved. For

example there is a need for the digitalization of the system in which jewellers register what they buy.

As described above, there is a vast amount of actions that can be taken in connection with new technology and techno preventive measures. The implementation of certain security norms for houses is probably the most effective in regards to techno preventive measures. In connection to this CPTED and the professionalizing of the domestic burglary prevention consultant are also very important. However there are other technologies that also can be used such as social media and registration systems for stolen goods. Nevertheless before these can be implemented, there needs to be more research conducted about them.

Civilian participation

Civilian participation is important in order to have an effective prevention of domestic burglary. However engaging citizens in prevention has not appeared to be easy. As mentioned above techno preventive measures are not compulsory, which implies that citizens are still responsible for the security of their own home. However there is still a great need to raise awareness for these and other measures.

One of the initiatives to improve the civilian participation in the fight against domestic burglary, is **neighbourhood watches**. This is a well working and increasingly popular initiative. However there is a need for uniformity of the neighbourhood watches. This would diminish the reserves some people still have about the initiative. Therefore the working of the neighbourhood watches would benefit from drawing up a deontological code with clear limits of their influence and from formulating a clear job description of the coordinators. Furthermore in order to give a uniform prevention message to the citizen, the domestic burglary prevention consultants and the neighbourhood watches ought to be aligned with each other. Therefore there should be joined meetings to discuss this. Moreover neighbourhood watches could be valuable partners in preventing the repeat victimization. Whenever a burglary happens they ought to be contacted to help to raise the awareness of the neighbours since they are the potential next targets because there is a **heighted risk** period after a burglary.

Despite the above mentioned initiative there are still a lot of civilians who are simply not concerned with domestic burglary. To increase this awareness, the policy makers could erect a national **prevention campaign** about domestic burglary, preferably with the use of an eye catcher so that civilians know directly what it is about. Moreover it is important to intensify this by trying to reach the civilians in all sorts of ways in order for them to become incited to take action. In Belgium, a campaign called 'one day not' was organised in 2014. The purpose of the campaign was to try and raise awareness by stimulating local initiatives, so that, on the 11th of December 2014, no burglaries will happen.

Also, civilians could be included in the prevention of domestic burglary by contacting local stakeholders such as youth movements, neighbourhood committees... By focusing on local stakeholders, **social control** could increase. This is

important since social control is considered a good remedy to decrease domestic burglary. By contacting local stakeholders, the awareness of the importance of social control could be raised, especially in regards to different target groups such as elderly, people who live in apartments... It is important to try and reach these target groups since they are often more vulnerable for domestic burglaries.

Concerning the implementation of techno preventive measures in homes, there should be a stimulate for the civilians to take action in relation to this. One of the possibilities to do this, is by giving the civilians **tax advantages** if they implement certain techno preventive measures. In the case of Belgium, this has already been implemented. However the 6th state reform of Belgium shifted the empowerment of these tax advantages from the federal to the regional government. This means that the continuity of this financial advantage is not certain. Therefore the regional government needs to take responsibility in regards to the continuity of the tax advantages.

All the above mentioned action points are designed to stimulate the civilians in taking precautions for domestic burglary. This can be rendered by raising awareness and by letting the civilians participate in crime prevention through neighbourhood watches. Their participation in crime prevention will raise the willingness to act upon their responsibilities. However until some prevention norms are compulsory, it will stay difficult to fully engage the citizens.

Cooperation

In order to have an effective prevention policy in regards to domestic burglary, Belgium has implemented an integrated security policy. This implies that all the applicable actors work together in order to get a better grasp on the phenomenon. Therefore cooperation is an important pillar of this policy. In regards to this, there are multiple action points to be taken.

In order for a policy to work, one needs a basis with the local authorities who have to implement those policies. As an intermediate institution, the Belgian provinces could play a more coordinating role in this. The provincial commissions for crime preventions needs to be a consultation platform where representatives of policy, academia and practice meet each other. This ought to increase the scale of prevention work. Furthermore the provinces should also initiate more prevention projects on the provincial level.

Moreover in order to have an effective and integrated prevention policy, one needs an **effective prosecution and punishment policy**. In the cost-benefit analyses there can be read that there have been taken multiple steps in order to improve this. The effect has been that more burglary cases have been prosecuted. This development shows that better cooperation between the police and the justice system works. However during the focus groups we came across a hiatus concerning this. It appears that when an offender or an itinerant group is caught the police and magistrates research the offences of which they have immediate evidence. However most offenders and itinerant groups have committed far more crimes in the

past. Sadly enough there is often not enough time and budget to investigate these other offences. Nevertheless in order to give all victims closure of their frightening experience this should be avoided. Therefore all the actors should try and increase the amount of solved cases.

Also, the government ought not to stand alone in its fight against domestic burglary. **The private sector** could contribute to this. However the position of the private sector differs between the member state, some are more sceptic than others. Especially the question about who controls the private institutions is very vivid. In order to solve this, there ought to be a uniform international regulation.

Nevertheless, in Belgium there is already some cooperation with the private sector but there is still a lot of room for improvement and expansion. The private sector (this includes but is not limited to: locksmiths, architects, insurance companies...) ought to be better informed about domestic burglary prevention. This could be achieved via education, by raising awareness and via informative platforms. This would not only benefit the cooperation between the government and the private sector, it would also create an extra possibility for the propaganda of techno preventive measures towards the citizens. The private sector could even promote the working of the domestic burglary prevention consultants. Furthermore, Belgium has already implemented a PPS-System (public-private-cooperation system). However there needs to be a focus on making an overall operational structure for this, in which a reinforced and modernized information position should be included.

Within the private sector, the architects are especially important in connection with the techno preventive measures. Currently most architects pay little attention to the integration of burglary protection measures in the concept and design of a house. Although using protective measures in the design of a house could decrease the amount of domestic burglaries vastly. In this regard architects could also play an important role concerning the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design-principal. Therefore it is important to raise their awareness about their important role concerning this. One of the possibilities to do this is by inform them already during their university education. Furthermore there should be cooperation between the General Directory for Safety and Prevention of the ministry of Interior Affairs and the assembly of architects to further promote the prevention of domestic burglary.

Other important partners are the insurance companies, namely because they can diminish the effects of a burglary and stimulate the citizens to take techno preventive measures. They can do this by promoting the burglary insurance more vividly so that the economic impact of a burglary decreases. In addition an **adjustment of the security premium** could stimulate the citizens in taking preventive action. This could mean that when a civilian installs techno preventive measures (for example a special lock, doors, alarm system...) there insurance premium would diminish. Nevertheless the partners of the insurance companies stated that this is difficult to implement unless there is one uniform security label, such as discussed in the part about techno

preventive measures. This means that if the government takes the first step, the insurance companies will follow.

Moreover, we need to realise that the cooperation with the private sector is not always obvious. One of the worries of the police concerning the private sector is, that it is often the private sector who is responsible for the industry of prevention measures. This has as an indirect consequence that people who try to protect themselves must have money. However the police attempts to control this when they make a partnership with private companies. It is important to continue and expand this since the less fortunate people may be more victimized if they cannot afford the means to protect their homes. The police absolutely needs to be on top of this, especially because the changes in new technology are happening fast.

Another problem concerning the cooperation between the police and the private sector is mutual distrust. Exchanging information is a cornerstone in the fight against crime. However the exchanging of information is often hampered because institutions fence with the concept of professional secrecy. This does not only happen from the public sector to the private sector. It even happens between the different branches of the public sector (welfare sector versus police to give just one example). It is very clear that this is a counterproductive way. This narrow vision on the usage of professional secrecy needs to be drawn open in order to come to a professional secrecy shared under professionals. This would facilitate the exchange of information between the professionals and thus help in the fight against phenomenon of domestic burglary.

Cooperation is an important pillar in the prevention of domestic burglary. Effectively decreasing domestic burglary can only be established with the help of the entire security chain. On that account an integrated security policy has been implemented for many years now. However there is still room for improvement, especially concerning the cooperation with the private sector.

Imaging

A correct imaging towards a phenomenon contributes greatly to an effective policy. This correct visualisation consists out of two different levels. On the one hand there is a need to know the developments on the terrain. And on the other hand there is a need to know the operations of the different actors. Within both of these levels, information exchange is essential.

In connection to the necessity of the knowledge concerning the operations of the different actors, the cost-benefit analyses should be cited. The cost-benefit analyses gives a good overview of the facts, figures and actors concerning domestic burglary. It is advised to update this document each year. In order to make this succeed, all the actors and institutions need to exchange rating data so that an up-to-date view on the phenomenon can be provided. This, if done correctly, will not be time-consuming and the document can thus be widely used. The cost-benefit analyses should also be used to find hiatus in the policy so that the policy makers can undertake concrete actions to solve this.

In expanding the already existing image it is important to have good police statistics. However this is only possible when the dark number¹ is not too high. A victim survey can provide a good view on the problem of 'underreporting' crime. However, the last victim survey dates from 2008-2009, therefore a new one is in order. Via a victim survey, the dark number can be calculated.

Another way of increasing the imaging of domestic burglary is by executing more **scientific research** about the phenomenon and its remedies. Sadly enough there are not that many surveys concerning domestic burglary. In Belgium, the General Directory for Safety and Prevention of the ministry of Interior Affairs needs to increase the amount of scientific research. Furthermore there needs to be a better flow of the results towards the people on the terrain and between the different member states. It happens all too often that the result of a national survey stays with the policy makers of the member state in question. However other member states could learn from the experiences of their neighbours. Moreover if we want to make sure that the research does not end with the delivery of the survey to the policy makers, than we should insure that the results are implemented on the terrain. This can be achieved by continuing the various scientific researches together with a city/municipality/police zone by means of a pilot project that applies the concrete research results. The involvement of the researchers would make sure that the pilot projects become part of the surveys. This would insure that the surveys acquire a practical application.

Via a good imaging of the phenomenon, the policy makers could formulate an adequate answer towards the challenges. Therefore the policy needs to be continuously updated about the developments of domestic burglary. By analyzing the rating data, the policy makers can acquire a better understanding of the evolutions in the phenomenon. Furthermore it is very important to keep investing in scientific research and applying this research to the terrain.

Schedule

Most of the above mentioned action points will be placed in the following prevention matrix. The purpose of this, is to give a clear overview of the different action points. Especially because most action points do not focus on the complete phenomenon. It often happens that an action point is focused on one element such as the prevention for a specific group or situation-oriented prevention.

That is why the action points are divided between by on the one hand the kind of oriented prevention, the possibilities are situation-oriented, victim-oriented and offender-oriented prevention, and on the other hand via which part of the society the prevention is for, this can be for the complete society (primary prevention), for a specific group of the society such as elderly (secondary prevention) or for one person or one area (tertiary prevention). However it is not always possible to divide all the action points in this matrix. Because of this not all above mentioned action

¹ You can find more information about the 'Dark Number' in the cost-benefit analyses which is published on the website of the project.

points will be found in the matrix. The action points that did make it in the prevention matrix are accentuated in the text via making them bold.



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	Primary prevention	Secondary prevention	Tertiary prevention
Situation-oriented prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building codes 2. Label secure living 3. Scientific research 4. increase awareness 5. Information exchange via uniform databases 6. Cooperation with private sector 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design 2. Target hardening (special doors, locks, alarms...) 3. Social control 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Closing down criminal places 2. Elevated surveillance (hotspot, -times) 3. Broken windows effect
Victim-oriented prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevention campaigns (social media, videos...) 2. Registration of goods 3. Lowering insurance premium 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Neighbourhood watches networks (flagrante notifications – fast reactions) 2. Social media campaigns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domestic burglary prevention consultant 2. Federal tax advantage 3. Burglary prevention measures for municipalities
Offender-oriented prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handling stolen goods 2. Identity database 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Effective prosecution and punishment policy