

Analysis of the Focus groups

Introduction

One of the deliverables of the European project is organizing two focus groups. The purpose of the focus group is to gather expertise and reflections on burglaries in Europe via moderated discussions.

The organization of these focus groups contributes to achieving the objectives of this European project. The purpose of this European project is to control the burglary phenomenon by raising awareness of the problem, exchanging good practices and strengthening the cooperation between the different links in the security chain.

Methodology

Qualitative research

Focus groups are a form of qualitative research. Based on qualitative research, the nature and the context of the incidents can be studied. The point is not as much an evaluation of figures, but a theme or issue is brought to the fore and studied in detail. The purpose of this study is to collect the opinions / views of the respondents, as well as identifying possible causes. ¹

The approach of a focus group is perfectly suited for this; it consists of a structured group discussion with a small number of stakeholders (4 to 12 persons) under the guidance of an experienced moderator. ²

Advantages

Various advantages can be distinguished with this methodology. It is a flexible method and relatively inexpensive to organize. Data can also be collected quite easy. Individual opinions and the influence they exert on the group can be examined as well.

Data from a group discussion stimulates a diverse form of communication. For example, stories will be told or questions will be asked for clarification. The participants will sometimes comment more often. The methodology therefore generates spontaneity and could therefore be seen as emotionally provocative. Focus groups also require very little preparation from the participants; they only have to commit to take part in a debate for a few hours. The participants are rewarded with an enrichment of views and opinions.

The moderator will also have the opportunity to investigate certain opinions more thoroughly. People who would normally be reluctant to a 1 on 1 interview will often

¹ REULINK, N., and LINDEMAN, L., *kwalitatief onderzoek*, [http://www.cs.ru.nl/~tomh/onderwijs/om2%20\(2005\)/om2_files/syllabus/kwalitatief.pdf](http://www.cs.ru.nl/~tomh/onderwijs/om2%20(2005)/om2_files/syllabus/kwalitatief.pdf), 2005, p. 4

² SLOCUM, N., *Participatieve methoden; een gids voor gebruikers*, http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/Files/NL/PUB_1599_Methode_8_Focusgroep.pdf, 2006, p. 135

see this methodology as a welcome alternative and be more likely to take part.³ With these focus groups the performance of the moderators was evaluated positively by the participants. It was stated that there was adequate attention for the participants and that everyone was able to give their opinion proportionally. There was enough time for the various participants to network and contact details were exchanged mutually.

Disadvantages

The moderator is responsible for guiding the group and is also a deciding factor in the end results that are brought forward. The choice of the moderator is an important factor for the focus group to succeed.

The participants themselves may also present a challenge. Some participants will be overcommitted to make their mark in the discussions, others may seem uninterested or are distracting because they have their own hidden agenda. As moderator it is a challenge to continue to guide the course of the discussions. A negative consequence could be that some opinions are simply not addressed or some are held back out of fear.⁴ The group dynamic is decisive for the comments that may be made. This methodology is less suitable for sensitive themes considering that one is expected to share one's opinion as a participant in group activities.⁵

During the group discussions within the European project we were confronted with an additional threshold. English as the working language did not make it easy to express oneself. Especially if specific technical terms were used or discussed. English was only beneficial for one participant as it was his native language.

The focus groups were very intensive and therefore tiring for the moderator and the participants, considering that the focus groups took a whole day. Pragmatically seen, the date on which the focus groups take place could form an obstacle as well. Quite often participants need to comply with a predetermined time that is appropriate for the moderator.⁶

The analysis of the data that were brought forward is not that obvious. There are no objective parameters for the intensity and strength of visions and opinions.⁷

³ KULEUVEN, *Voor- en nadelen van focusgroepen*, <https://associatie.kuleuven.be/altus/seminaries/1112/131011/focusgroepen.pdf>, 2011, 1-2

⁴ KULEUVEN, *Voor- en nadelen van focusgroepen*, <https://associatie.kuleuven.be/altus/seminaries/1112/131011/focusgroepen.pdf>, 2011, 1-2

⁵ KULEUVEN, *Voor- en nadelen van focusgroepen*, <https://associatie.kuleuven.be/altus/seminaries/1112/131011/focusgroepen.pdf>, 2011, 1-2

⁶ KULEUVEN, *Voor- en nadelen van focusgroepen*, <https://associatie.kuleuven.be/altus/seminaries/1112/131011/focusgroepen.pdf>, 2011, 1-2

⁷ KULEUVEN, *Voor- en nadelen van focusgroepen*, <https://associatie.kuleuven.be/altus/seminaries/1112/131011/focusgroepen.pdf>, 2011, 1-2

Analysis of the methodology

The project group experienced the organization of the focus groups as an advantage for the project. The discussions made sure that the European dimension was present. The mentioned disadvantages did not outweigh the advantages.

There are multiple preparations that have to be taking if the focus groups are to succeed. In the next paragraph we will go deeper into these preparations.

Step-by-step plan

Before one can proceed with the organization of focus groups, various steps have to be taken. These are discussed further below.

Writing the “purpose statement”

A first step is to define the objectives of the focus group. These should be clear considering that it will simplify the further process.⁸ The specific purpose statement of this European project is bundling the expertise and reflections in focus groups that are composed of domestic and foreign experts in burglary. These experts include both field workers and policy makers.

The focus groups concentrate on four specific themes: “*Viewing itinerant crime groups from an integral perspective*”, “*new technologies regarding burglaries*”, “*Victimization in burglaries*” and “*A visible and tangible policy on burglary*”. In this way possible issues in these matters may be further identified and actual proposals may be made for the future policy.

Identification of the participants

Several things should be kept in mind during the selection of participants. There should be a sufficient diversity in participants to encourage a discussion. Then again, the heterogeneity can also be a stumbling block as it might cause conflict and could suppress the views of individuals. A too diverse public can also lead to certain topics not being dealt with in depth.⁹

As stated in 2.1 *Qualitative research*, the aim is to keep focus groups limited to several participants. It was therefore decided to split the participants in two groups of maximum 12 persons. These groups were maintained throughout the day. Two blocks of 2 hours were provided. The moderators of the group changed after 1 session. There was at least one person present from the project group that took care of the reporting in every group. This way the results could be processed as best as possible. These persons also served as timekeeper.

During selection of the experts it was important that the European and national dimensions were equally represented. Consequently a representation of the

⁸ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999

⁹ BLOOR, M., FRANKLAND, J., THOMAS, M., and ROBSON, K., *Focus groups in social research*, London, Sage Publications, 2001, 20-22 .

different actors of the safety chain was anticipated. Therefore, representatives were invited from the federal police, local police, crime prevention, the private sector and the justice department.

An appeal was made to the participants on the Advisory Board so that they could spread the invitation further in their network. Some members of the Advisory Board participated personally. Almost all links of the chain were represented. The judicial aspect received a lot less attention during the focus groups since there were no actors present to represent this aspect.

Various partnership declarations were made with Romania, Bulgaria and Germany for the European dimension within this European project. Thus the representation of these countries was definitely guaranteed. A call was also made via the EUCPN secretariat ¹⁰to encourage other European experts involved in burglaries, to participate in these focus groups. It were primarily police experts who have signed up to participate in the discussion, yet, as a result of this call, Denmark, Lithuania, Croatia and Ireland were also represented during these two discussion groups.

A total of 26 people participated during the first session. There was a total of 27 persons in the second session.

Selection of a moderator

Selecting a good moderator is an important phase in the focus groups' step-by-step plan. This facilitator should be able to cope well with the potentially excessive dominance of certain participants. A moderator should keep the discussion going as well. It is also advisable to select someone who has practical knowledge on group dynamics and has a reputation of being a good moderator. ¹¹ It was therefore decided to attract academics to lead these focus groups. They are often experienced in the implementation of this methodology. In addition, persons were asked who are familiar with the burglary theme and who have already done research in this domain.

More specifically, three professors from Belgian Universities were chosen. These three professors have extensive research experience within crime prevention. Paul Ponsaers and Els Enhus were promoters of the following studies, among others:

- "*Woninginbraken (Home burglaries): diefstalpraktijk en preventiebeleid (theft prevention practices)*" UGhent / VUB Promoters: ENHUS E., PONSAERS P., VERWEE I. (2007)
- "*Lokaal integraal veiligheidsbeleid (Locally integrated security policy): onderzoek naar een geïntegreerde aanpak (research into an integrated approach)*" VUB / UGhent- Promoters: ENHUS E., PONSAERS P., REYNAERT H. (2009)

¹⁰ EUCPN stands for the European Crime Prevention Network

¹¹ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999, 5

- “Gewapende overval op zelfstandige ondernemers (*Armed robbery of independent entrepreneurs*): een bevraging van daders (*a survey of offenders*)”
-Promotors : COOLS, M. , ENHUS E. & PASHLEY V. (2012)

Sofie De Kimpe published the following publications, among others:

- “Op weg naar een Europese politie samenwerking voor de burger (*On the way to European police cooperation for the civilian*)”
-Authors: De Kimpe Sofie, De Moor Alexandra, Bruggeman Willy
- Reference: *Order of the day of the Belgian Presidency in 2010, Critical considerations on Justice, police and Internal Affairs*, issue 53, page 2 - 4, eds. DE KIMPE, S., BRUGGEMAN, W., DE MOOR, A., published by Kluwer
- “Professionalization and socializing of the police”
-Authors: DE KIMPE Sofie, Gunther Moor Lodewijk, Smets Lotte, Van Reenen Piet, Vlek Frits
-Reference: *Professionalization and Socialization*, from *Cahier police studies*, page 22, page 7 - 10, eds. DE KIMPE, S., GUNTHER-MOOR, L., SMETS, L., VAN REENEN, P., SPOT, F., published by Maklu
- Prof. Dr. Em. Paul Ponsaers led the focus groups on “*Migrating criminal groups viewed from an integral perspective*” & “*A visible and tangible policy on theft in homes*”.
Prof. Dr. Sofie De Kimpe took care of the subject “*New technologies on burglaries*”. Prof. Dr. Els Enhus supervised the theme “*Victims of burglaries*”.

Development of the questions / propositions

Various points should be kept in mind when preparing the propositions. The participants must be stimulated in order to start the discussions properly. Adequate preparations are necessary for the questionnaire and the sequence of the questions; they should be flexible to respond to the natural course of the group discussions. The clarity and the length of the questions are therefore important. Sufficient background and contextual information must be provided, to make the concept clear to the discussion group. Too many ‘why’ questions should be avoided.¹² The purpose of these focus groups is to examine burglaries from different viewpoints: from the perpetrator and the victim’s perspective. One of the objectives of this project was to evaluate the recent trends and developments in burglaries. Hence the choice of the theme “*new technologies regarding burglaries*”.

The current prevention policy regarding burglaries was also discussed in the last focus group. This can be clearly linked to another step within this European project, namely the cost-benefit analysis of the current policy regarding burglaries. This way it was not only information that was collected on this theme via websites or policy documents but direct visions and opinions regarding this subject were likewise collected from experts.

¹² SLOCUM, N., *Participatieve methoden; een gids voor gebruikers*, http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/Files/NL/PUB_1599_Methode_8_Focusgroep.pdf, 2006, 138

Below is a summary of the prepared propositions per theme. The development of this took place in close consultation with moderators. It wasn't possible to discuss all propositions during the discussion groups. These preparations did however form a guide for the discussion groups.

Itinerant crime groups in an integral perspective

The phenomenon of itinerant crime groups varies in seriousness according to the Member State. At European level, the phenomenon of itinerant crime groups is not put forward with enough emphasis as a priority.

1. *Too much time and too many means are invested in the phenomenon of itinerant crime groups whereas a great deal of domestic burglaries are committed by occasional thieves too.*
2. *An overall European police service – competent for dealing with cross-border crime – has to be created. Thus it will be possible to pursue the fight against the phenomenon of itinerant crime groups.*
3. *Too little is invested in feeding the international data banks.*
4. *Concerning itinerant crime groups, the present legislation has shortcomings*
 - *at national level*
 - *at international level*
5. *The actual execution of sentences should preferably be carried out in the country of origin.*

Local

6. *At local level, there ought to be the creation of a reinforced administration.*
 7. *In order to provide a better follow-up, the harmonization between victim relief and police services should be designed differently.*
 8. *If we are to tackle this phenomenon from an integral context perspective, it should be noticed that there is already a sufficient investment per link in the security chain, nevertheless the problem is located in the interactions between the links in the chain.*
- **New technologies regarding domestic burglary**
 1. *The introduction of new technologies must be tested according to impact criteria for the market.*

- a. To what extent does technology contribute to solving a problem?
 - b. In this respect, impact factors have to take sociological effects into account.
 - c. What are critical success factors for a new technological instrument?
 - d. What are the advantages and drawbacks you have experienced with which techniques?
 - e. Which criteria should 'a scheme and/or market survey' include at least?
 - f. With which legal standards do new technologies have to comply?
2. To keep a sufficient view on the technical quality of new technologies, there has to be scientific testing of the new technology which is used in the framework of domestic burglary (e.g. scientific-technical test at universities or scientific research centres). Need for quality control? Standardization?
- a. The police miss out on the new technological revolution.
 - b. The police are not able to cope with the new technological revolution as they do not know which position to take up on privacy-control in crime dilemma.
 - c. Which policy objectives should the police set for themselves with regard to the development of a new technological action policy?
 - d. How can they implement this?
 - e. Which legal standards or lines of force have to be woven into the legislation to safeguard a minimum of citizens' rights?
3. The implementation of a camera system which is to increase among others the visibility of burglaries, but also other forms of crime (and which therefore also brings about a preventive effect), provides a false feeling of security, but does not actually lower the objective security.

- **A visible and tangible policy regarding domestic burglary**

1. There are already sufficient efforts to guarantee the harmony of the current burglary prevention policy on the European level. What is the added value of an approach on the European level, complementary to a national approach?
2. On the local level neighbourhood information networks and domestic burglary prevention consultants are examples of methods that have already been developed sufficiently in the different member states. Which other forms deserve encouragement?
3. A European database needs to be developed with all existing best practices regarding domestic burglary. If so, who should take the initiative for this?
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, ...).

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

6. What are good practices to increase the support of sensitizing campaigns by calling in policy makers?

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

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 surveillants, ...) 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?

9. In the prevention of domestic burglaries, 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?

10. The different burglary prevention actors get a training of sufficient quality. Who needs to strengthen this training and who should be responsible for the financing of the training?

Should one take initiatives on the European level?

11. How do you make a communication strategy of and to the government more visible? And more vigorous? What are possible new means for the communication?

- **Victimization in case of domestic burglary**

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?

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

3. *Victimization cannot be disconnected from the perpetrators. All criminal offences need to be seen in a relation between victim and perpetrator.*

4. *What is the personal part of the victim in a burglary?*

5. *Is solving a committed domestic burglary a determinant factor for the victim to get over it?*

6. *In different member states a perpetrator is brought to court after it was proven that he or she committed a certain number of domestic burglaries. Yet, this way certain cases are never solved. How can this be tackled and who can play a role in this?*

7. *What is the weight of domestic burglary at the social level in regard to for instance domestic violence? Proportionally, is the effort to fight crime sufficient?*

8. *What are the pros and cons of surveillance in case of absence? How does this relate to other techniques to avoid victimization (think of for instance "contamination letters")? And which techniques are used in other European member states?*

9. *What are the minimal security measures that should be present in every house?*

10. *How can preventive measures be routinely built in at the houses of victims so that there is no repeated victimization? Often the victim proves to be very alert shortly after the domestic burglary, but afterwards this behaviour diminishes again.*

Development of the script

It is very important to provide a script for focus groups. The development of a script namely has various benefits. It ensures that the questions are placed in context for the participants. The results are also more reliable given that one is certain that the various focus groups are conducted in the same way. It provides a guideline for the moderator.¹³

There are three specific components that can be distinguished into a focus group script:

- (1) **The introduction**, in this part the moderator welcomes the participants and sketches the context of this specific focus group
- (2) **The propositions and questions** that can be found under part 2.4.4

¹³ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999, 4

(3) **The completion**, clearly explaining how data will be processed and used.¹⁴

The script developed for one of the focus groups is represented below. The second part "propositions and questions" is not included as this was already dealt with in the previous chapter. This general framework was each time used in the four different themes.

*"The organization of these focus groups fits in with the European project "**An integral methodology to develop an information-led and community-orientated policy to tackle domestic burglary.**" This project officially started at the beginning of October 2013, and is oriented towards the development of a methodology to have sway over domestic burglary. Here the entire security chain, from prevention over police measures to judicial measures, is taken into account.*

These goals take shape in a series of methods, which are also 'deliverables':

- Analysing the objective and subjective sources, and evaluating the existing policy by means of a cost-benefit analysis.*
- Collecting and evaluating several best practices from the different fields through visits on the spot and a related evaluation checklist.*
- Joining the expertise and reflections from focus groups with domestic and foreign experts.*
- Using the interactive methodology of "World Cafés", and taking advantage of the participation of stakeholders/ policy advisors and experts in the field.*

As we further look at the expected output of the project, we see among others the following elements of expectations:

- A methodological step-by-step plan (which will include a scheme of the different above-mentioned methods).*
- An action plan with concrete proposals as good practices.*
- A conference aimed at presenting the results.*
- A webpage which includes all the expertise.*

One of the 'deliverables' of the project, as already mentioned, is bundling the expertise and reflections in focus groups that consist of domestic and foreign experts. These experts include both practitioners in the field and policymakers. During the first meeting, these focus groups will concentrate on two specific themes: itinerant crime groups as seen from an integral perspective and new technologies regarding domestic burglary.

This way, possible difficulties regarding this matter can be further identified and concrete propositions can be made towards the future policy.

In this specific focus group, we will concentrate on itinerant crime groups.

¹⁴ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999, 4

- We would like to ask you to share all your ideas, opinions 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 the reason why you think that. What we are especially looking for is diversity and possibly also opposite points of view. It is precisely this diversity we are trying to obtain with these focus groups.
- Dictaphones are provided during these focus groups so as to make recordings of the conversations.
- On the basis of the group discussions, we will write a report and talk about which critical reflections, proposals and/or good practices can contribute to the future policy.
- Everyone will receive a final report regarding this gathering. At the end of the day, the first conclusions will already be put forward concerning the topics discussed in the different small groups.

Organizing and reserving premises for the session and preparing specific requirements (refreshments, placement of chairs, overhead projector,...) and session material

When choosing a venue for the focus group one should bear in mind that it should be a comfortable room that encourages the exchange of opinions and visions. There should be room for up to fifteen persons. ¹⁵

It was decided to have the focus groups take place in the facilities of the FOD Local Affairs since these complied with the aforementioned requirements. Tables and chairs were placed in such a way that they encouraged discussion. The moderators were given a central seat at the table so that they were visible to every participant. Adequate information was also provided. A PowerPoint presentation was projected with a view of the script. An information folder was provided for every participant with a summary of the project, an attendance list (with specific division of the groups when indicated), note pads and the program.

Labels were provided for the participants, listing their name, function and their group. Name tags were also placed for every participant during the discussion, provided it was easy for the moderators to speak to these persons during the discussions.

Coffee and water was present for the participants so that there were enough refreshments at all times. Sandwiches were served during the lunch break.

Recording equipment was also provided during the sessions. A dictaphone

¹⁵ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999, 5

was placed in the one room and a camera in the other. This way the collection of information could be guaranteed to a maximum.

2.4.5 Writing and sending the invitation

Every guest received an invitation letter via e-mail. A roadmap to the location was also provided. The program of the first session of the focus groups is represented below.

Agenda

9:00 – 9:15	Arrival & Registration
9:15 – 9:30	Welcome & Introduction to the focus groups by Pierre Thomas, director of the Direction Local Integral Security
9:30– 11:30	Focus group 1
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch break
12:30 – 14:30	Focus group 2
14:30 – 14:45	Coffee break
14:45– 15:30	Round up + conclusions

The proposed program opted for blocks of maximum 2 hours each. This time frame was chosen since at least 1 hour was needed to start the discussion and some time was also needed for an introduction and to round off. More than 2 hours is also not appropriate since it would be too tiring for the participants and the moderators. There is also the risk that one goes overboard and no longer brings up relevant information on the subject. A short break was provided within this time frame of 2 hours. Thus everyone was able to digest the information and to start the second part with an open mind. ¹⁶

After the invitations were sent out the entries were followed up by the project team. Not long before the focus groups were to start, a reminder was sent out to all attendees to ensure the maximum number of participants.

¹⁶ SIMON, J.S., How to conduct a Focus Group, http://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Conduct%20a%20Focus%20Group_0.pdf, 1999, 4

Taking notes of the sessions

As mentioned above, 1 or 2 observers were present to take notes at the focus groups during the discussion groups. They also had the role of timekeeper. It was decided not to have any transcripts typed out of the recorded audio material. The notes that were taken were quite comprehensive and provided an adequate representation of the views and opinions that were raised. The audio material was mainly provided as back-up. The participants were informed of this.

Making a summary of the session and sharing these reports with the participants

The first focus groups were held on 28 March 2014 with the themes itinerant crime groups and new technologies being central. The second and last session was subsequently organized on 21 May 2014 revolving around victimization and burglary prevention.

A single global report was drawn up of every day. In these two reports, it was decided each time to review the addressed discussions per statement or theme. Various conclusions were also made per specific subject.

These reports were also sent to the participants for approval and in these mails the participants were also thanked each time for their participation in the focus groups.

The full versions of these reports can be found on our website:

www.domesticburglary.eu .

An analysis of the results of the focus groups

Many different conclusions were reached in these focus group reports . The most important of these are discussed below, per theme. A pure scientific processing of the focus group data is not opted for here. With various conclusions, a link is however made to the scientific literature or reflections are cited from the project group. These comments are reflected in italics to make a clear differentiation between what emerged in the focus groups and the opinions emerging afterwards from the project group.

Itinerant crime groups

The most remarkable claim that was made during the focus group was that everyone perceives itinerant crime groups as a European problem. This is very important considering that it implies there are common opportunities and international awareness should be created in this way. This could for example be pursued by more statistical research, facts and figures.

*This claim that was discussed during the focus group is also reflected in the literature already published on the phenomenon of itinerant crime groups. We see this reflected, for example in publications from the local and federal police who have developed 6 action areas in the context of addressing itinerant crime groups. One of these action areas is an intensive offender oriented approach. Within this domain one of the basic principles is a focus on an international dimension. There is, for example, the EMPACT project that is also discussed in the cost benefit analysis.*¹⁷

*The scientific literature also states that there is increasing focus on the phenomenon of itinerant crime groups within the Belgian and European safety policy. A detailed description has been drafted in Belgium to address the phenomenon. However, in the neighbouring countries there is also mention of these groups, but rather seen from a practical point of view.*¹⁸

*However, if we then look at figures, the details accessible to the public seem rather limited. Policing analyses often also happen in a different way.*¹⁹ *More statistical research as mentioned above is certainly in order.*

Identity theft was also discussed as an important issue during the discussion groups, but also who lives where?

*We see this again reflected in one of the action fields of the federal and local police where area 4 refers to establishing a correct identity. Under this we understand among others establishing a qualitative application of the triptych of fingerprints, photos and individual description.*²⁰

Besides the phenomenon of identity theft, the slow and stalling legislative information exchange was also brought forward as important issues. *Publications on this also confirmed this finding. Within the current EMPACT action plan, for*

¹⁷ DIENST GEORGANISEERDE DIEFSTALLEN EN KUNST, "Naar een effectieve en efficiënte aanpak van woninginbraken gepleegd door rondtrekkende dadergroepen", *Het Politiejournaal*, April 2014, p. 10

¹⁸ VANDAELE, S., VANDER BEKEN, T., and DE RUYVER, B., "Rondtrekkende dadergroepen: een empirische toets", *Panopticon*, 2008, 25-27

¹⁹ VANDAELE, S., VANDER BEKEN, T., and DE RUYVER, B., "Rondtrekkende dadergroepen: een empirische toets", *Panopticon*, 2008, 25-27

²⁰ DIENST GEORGANISEERDE DIEFSTALLEN EN KUNST, "Naar een effectieve en efficiënte aanpak van woninginbraken gepleegd door rondtrekkende dadergroepen", *Het Politiejournaal*, April 2014, p. 10

example, the promotion of international data transfer and the resulting cooperation is given a first place. ²¹

To address all these issues we can say that an extensive cooperation between scientists, the police and civilians should be strived for.

New technologies.

With the discussion of the theme 'new technologies' it was remarkable that the same technologies are used in all countries. The differences are in the amounts and the implications. This is often due to the legislature because every country has its own privacy laws.

It was also mentioned that the importance of basic security and the interests of victims may not be forgotten. *The importance of victimization in the discussion of the fourth and last theme was further elaborated on.*

Four specific clusters of problems were also identified during focus groups:

1. The industry of prevention is for the majority private: This has as an indirect consequence that people who try to protect themselves must have money. However the police tries to control this when they make a partnership with private companies. This is important because the poorer people may be more victimized if they cannot afford the means to protect their homes.
2. We must be aware that the implementation of new technologies may lead to a false sense of safety. There is a contradiction between the crime control and the expectations.
3. There is the problem of displacement. The amount of crime is not reduced, the crime just displaces from zone to zone, from city to city.
4. There must be found a balance between privacy legislation, crime control and how the police uses new technologies. Therefore there must be implemented a control system and we must have trust in the police (i.e. as a result of/due to the accountability and good awareness of using databanks).

*If we link these findings back with the literature we find that criminologists and observers even go a step further by stating that we are only in a start phase of a technological revolution and that the function and the organization of police services are already changing drastically and will change even more in the future.*²²

During the focus groups it was also concluded that there was an even greater need for scientific research regarding new technologies. Not enough is known about the effectiveness of their efficiency.

²¹ WECKHUYSEN, K., "Internationale gegevensuitwisseling in de strijd tegen rondtrekkende daders, Een praktische kijk op de middelen voorhanden", *Het Politiejournaal*, April 2014, p. 25

²² CHAN. J., "The Technology game: how information technology is transforming polic practic" in: *journal of Criminal Justice*, 2001, p. 140

It can be stated at a Belgian national level that the FOD Domestic Affairs, Executive Board of the Local Integral Safety can play an important role in this by stimulating and issuing scientific studies into new technologies and burglary prevention. This should also be further applied at European level.

A visible and tangible policy on theft in homes

During the third theme of the discussion groups the need for harmonization of the policy on burglary prevention on a European level also became noticeable. There are indeed many differences between the countries, which makes it difficult to accomplish this. We have to learn from each other. It was also concluded that a database would be made available for everyone, it would also have to be promoted more.

From this project we already strive to do so by summarizing good practices. This way we also wish to contribute to creating a comprehensible database. We also want to contribute to a visible and tangible policy. The cost-benefit analysis is a first step in this, since it provides a summary of all actors involved in tackling burglaries, the existing policy instruments, initiatives taken and available figures.

It was also stated that the EUCPN is considered as the correct agency for information exchange. A few improvements should however still be made. Many people do not know EUCPN or do not use it. The police force is also suspicious of this agency considering there is no police involved in the handling of the information.

These proposals for improvement will certainly be taken into account. These critical objections were also transferred from our project group to the EUCPN-administration.

During the focus groups it was also obvious that the position of the private sector is country dependent. Some find it logical, others not at all. There is also the important question: "who controls the private institutions?". Should the police do this or the policy makers? The changes in this perspective are changing very quickly, therefore a "feet to the ground" policy is necessary. The position of civilians with domestic burglary prevention consultants in municipalities is changing. They are becoming ever more important. Making policy makers more responsible is not only a task for the police.

From this we can conclude that the government is not alone in the fight against burglaries. The private sector also has an important role to play in this.

Victimization in burglaries

Following the discussion of the fourth and last theme, the following findings emerged specifically :

-Criminal violations never happened at random. The perpetrator and the victim are connected. The violations should be seen in relation between victim and perpetrator.

This will also be covered by the concept of "repeat victimization". We come back to this below.

-The feelings of being unsafe should not be ignored. Burglaries are a high impact crime, and not only at an economical level. The victims are often confronted with various psychological effects. Victims often have sleeping problems; some even move. It is important that practitioners in the field are aware of these effects. This way people can be sensitized. *Scientific studies have shown that burglaries can have an enormous impact on a victim. According to Lamet and Wittebrood, burglaries are often perceived by victims as an infringement on their privacy. The emotional consequences can also be considered as fairly large. Feelings of injustice, disbelief and anger are experienced. Sleeplessness and lack of concentration are also one of the symptoms. After several weeks or months, most complaints disappear again. Changes in behaviour could occur, for example one becomes more alert in locking doors, among others.* ²³

-People often lose their trust in the police after a burglary. It is important for the police to try to find a way in which to rebuild the faith in the police. There is a great need for a victim survey, specifically for Belgium. This has not happened since 2010.

*We also see these statements repeated in the literature. Becoming the victim of a crime can lead to a loss of confidence in the police and also make the victim less willing to cooperate with the police. The efficiency of the police is however also determined by this co-operation. It can thus be stated that it is not only important for the sense of justice of the victim that one remains confident in the functioning of the police. A decline in confidence can namely also lead to secondary victimization in the victims. The degree of satisfaction on the function of the police directly after the burglary is a deciding factor in this.*²⁴

- After a burglary was committed we see that several preventative measures are taken by the victims. Unfortunately people tend to relapse into their old habits and their alertness fades into the background. We should ask ourselves from a preventive point of view how can we anticipate this issue?

²³ LAMET, W., and WITTEBROOD, K., *Nooit meer dezelfde. Gevolgen van misdrijven voor Slachtoffers*, Den Haag, Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 2009, 15-21.

²⁴ KNIJF, E., *Slachtoffers van woninginbraak. Een kwantitatieve analyse onder slachtoffers van woninginbraak naar hun tevredenheid over het politiefunctieneren en vertrouwen in de politie*, Leiden, Universiteit Leiden, 2011, 7-8.

Something that often occurs in second and third victimization is that people want to restore the situation to what it was before. They want to reconstruct their environment by for example buying the same television. This attracts burglars to return to the same place.

The above findings are also confirmed in scientific literature. For example research in Australia shows the chance of a recurring burglary in a household after initial victimization is six times as big as the chance of becoming a first time victim. ²⁵

Studies have also been conducted in Belgium into the prevention of repeated victimization as well as neighbouring repeat victimization in burglaries. Based on police records the results show that there is repeat victimization in almost one in five burglaries in Belgium. ²⁶ *We may be able to make some reservations here, but action points also flow forth, more about this in the action plan.*

*Repeated burglaries, according to Polvi et al, include the following procedures:*²⁷

1. *After the realization that there is a chance to commit a crime the perpetrators often return. Or they strike in the same place because they assume that certain goods have already been replaced.*

2. *The first offenders inform other offenders what else the house still has to offer. They then decide to burgle the house.*

3. *Certain characteristics of the house ensures that it is seen as an attractive target and this could lead to repeated victimization* ²⁸

-Addressing victimization by revisiting is different in different countries. In Germany it is not implemented at all. In Bulgaria for example the focus is on the evolution of the study, not the psychological effects.

The satisfaction of victims on the first contacts with police agencies has already been investigated by Skogan. He came to the conclusion that, when it involves satisfaction with the authorities, victims are more focused on the process and not as much on the outcome of the case. Under the process is understood: providing a listening ear, showing understanding, a positive approach but also honest and complete information. These are all aspects

²⁵ SIDEBOTTOM. A., "Repeat Burglary victimization in Malawi and the influence of housing type and area-level affluence" in: Security Journal, 2012, p. 266-267

²⁶ KERKAB, R., and DEROOVER, M., "Naburig herhaald slachtofferschap bij woninginbraken. Een verkenning van nieuwe paden voor het inbraakpreventiebeleid" In: CHRISTIAENSEN, S., DORMAELS, A., and VAN DAELE, S., (eds.), *Diefstal in woningen. Bijdragen voor een geïntegreerde beheersing vanuit beleid, praktijk en wetenschap*, Antwerpen/Apeldoorn, Maklu, 2012, 65-66.

²⁷ SIDEBOTTOM. A., "Repeat Burglary victimization in Malawi and the influence of housing type and area-level affluence" in: Security Journal, 2012, p. 266-267

²⁸ SIDEBOTTOM. A., "Repeat Burglary victimization in Malawi and the influence of housing type and area-level affluence" in: Security Journal, 2012, p. 267

that weigh heavily when one proceeds to evaluate the police authorities.
²⁹According to Bradford the contact with and the information supply by the police is a deciding factor for the satisfaction of the victim in general. ³⁰

-Compulsory standards included in prevention are considered important, this should however be seen within the specific context of every country.
The theme and the specific context in Belgium is also further elaborated on in the analysis of the World Café.

-Neighbourhood watches can be seen as an effective form of prevention of residential burglaries if certain factors are taken into account for example the urbanization of the region.

It is also quoted in the literature that the Neighbourhood watches play an important role in the prevention of neighbouring repeat victimization. The Neighbourhood watches can basically provide the neighbourhood with information as soon as possible on the chance of possible repeat crimes in a specific area. ³¹

And now!?

After the discussion of all these results it is also the intention to use this. All too often it is forgotten after organizing these focus groups to also convert these to action points. Different action points were already put forward above, but we have also established an extensive action plan.

²⁹ KNIJF, E., *Slachtoffers van woninginbraak. Een kwantitatieve analyse onder slachtoffers van woninginbraak naar hun tevredenheid over het politiefunctioneren en vertrouwen in de politie*, Leiden, Universiteit Leiden, 2011, p. 7.

³⁰ KNIJF, E., *Slachtoffers van woninginbraak. Een kwantitatieve analyse onder slachtoffers van woninginbraak naar hun tevredenheid over het politiefunctioneren en vertrouwen in de politie*, Leiden, Universiteit Leiden, 2011, 5

³¹ KERKAB, R., and DEROOVER, M., "Naburig herhaald slachtofferschap bij woninginbraken. Een verkenning van nieuwe paden voor het inbraakpreventiebeleid" In: CHRISTIAENSEN, S., DORMAELS, A., and VAN DAELE, S., (eds.), *Diefstal in woningen. Bijdragen voor een geïntegreerde beheersing vanuit beleid, praktijk en wetenschap*, Antwerpen/Apeldoorn, Maklu, 2012, 68-69.

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