I.   Premise

Premise 6: How do new technologies contribute to the prevention of domestic burglaries?

> **"WhatsApp and 1000 eyes in the neighbourhood: a suspicious situation is discovered"**

   a. Is enough being done to provide non-wealthy people with new technologies? If not, what should be done?
   b. Do cameras provide a false sense of security?
   c. Cameras are there for your safety, or is Big Brother watching you?
   d. Does safety come before privacy?

II.   Discussions

To be able to answer the premise, it was important to verify first **which technologies** are referred. New technologies that were discussed, included cameras, alarm systems, ANPR cameras, tracking and marking methods, house automation, etc.

For the attendees, it is of great importance that there would already be taken a minimum of measures to prevent a domestic burglary, before proceeding to the deployment of new technologies. This may include organizational measures, as well as mechanical and construction measures. If these are applied well, electronic measures can be a good complement to increase the security level. A home automation system can simulate the presence of the residents by lowering and raising the shutters, switching on and off lights, etc.

Taking a number of measures can ensure that a potential burglar decides to choose an easier target, or to adapt his method.

Concerning the marking of goods, there is agreement that this can be a useful tool to find back the owner. However, one needs to be aware of the different marking possibilities, as these are not always visible. Some can be made visible with UV light, while for others, an RFID reader or an analysis in a lab is necessary.

It is not only knowledge of **technologies** that is important in their success, but also the **technical qualifications**. E.g., it has to be possible to exchange data between two police zones with an ANPR system, and cameras need to give qualitative images of what is wanted. The identification of a person requires more detailed images than a camera giving a view of the number of persons on a square.

Some were of the opinion that with burglaries and the implementation of new technologies, the **Matthew effect** can play a role. Here, it is assumed that people with modest incomes can invest less in security and thus run a greater risk to become the victim of a burglary. However, one can also reason that with wealthy families, there is more loot to be found that yields more profit. As such, it can also occur that **casual thieves** focus on simple thefts, while professional gangs of thieves target large villas with a safe, a lot of expensive jewellery, etc. These burglaries often require a lot more preparation, and the thieves need to invest more time to gain a larger loot. There is not necessarily a direct relationship between the risk to become the victim of a domestic burglary and the price ticket of the home's security. There can be a displacement effect to another home, but also a change in the modus operandi of the burglar. It is almost impossible to exclude a burglary completely.

The question if cameras provide a false sense of security was often answered positively. People can feel safer through the installation of cameras. On a square with cameras, people can have the feeling someone is watching over their safety, and can do what is necessary in case of an incident. However, it is impossible to monitor all the images continuously, and often the images are only used after an incident has happened. Moreover, camera images do not always allow the identification of a suspect because of several reasons: images of insufficient quality, limited storage, blind spots, etc.

On private terrain, the owner or tenant installs cameras, and it is assumed that everyone agrees with the installation of the cameras, since it is a proper choice. The installation does not easily pose a threat for privacy. The installation is bound to a number of rules, such as the announcing of the camera via a pictogram, in order to guarantee privacy as much as possible. These rules also apply in public. Due to the large increase in the number of cameras, it is becoming increasingly difficult to evade the image. However, the general opinion is that in **Belgium,** there is currently a **good balance** between **privacy** and the **use of cameras**. People realize that it is almost impossible to monitor every camera image, and thus it is assumed that one is constantly watched.

Several apps make it possible to track objects remotely. This often allows victims to retrace their stolen possessions. Even though these can often give a precise location, it is still not that easy to retrieve stolen goods with the presumed offender. The rights of all parties also need to be respected here, and this may lead to frustration with the victim as well as with the police forces.

It was noted that **new technologies** cannot only help with fighting crime, but **can also help the potential thieves**. E.g., Google Streetview can help with the pre-reconnaissance of a target, or data shared via the worldwide web can be misused.

Not only in Belgium, but also in The Netherlands new technologies are being used. In The Netherlands, more and more WhatsApp groups are created and used by citizens to warn each other for suspicious persons and to alert the police.

III. Conclusions

The attendees agreed that **new technologies** in the future could offer many possibilities for fighting crime. However, these means should be considered as an **aid** to prevent a potential thief from proceeding to a theft, or to increase the chances of catching the offender. They can decrease the chance of someone becoming the victim of a theft, but **completely**

excluding the risk is virtually impossible. An illustration: a burglar can be scared off by a camera and prefer the neighbour's house where there is no camera, but he can also make himself unrecognizable by e.g. using a balaclava to diminish the chance of being recognized.

The **emergence of new technologies** that make it possible to **trace objects** provides many **opportunities** for the **detection** of stolen objects. However, the **related costs** can form a barrier, and besides this, it is important that there be a **regulatory framework** leaving space for new tools, without thereby posing too much a violation of the citizen's privacy.

IV.   *Action points*

Some action points based upon the discussion that was held:

- o The **knowledge** on new technologies plays an important role in the success and the added value they can offer for fighting crime. **Monitoring** of the current developments in this domain, and **exchanging** information with the police and prevention services thus also is an important action point.
- o A healthy **balance** between safeguarding the **rights** of citizens, e.g. via the privacy legislation, and **innovative action** against criminality using new technologies should be watched over.
- o In communication, the message should be given that technologies such as cameras and alarm systems should be part of a broader security philosophy. After all, a camera does not prevent from receiving an unwanted visit when the door is unlocked.