

Dendermonde

Project burglary prevention SDNA Forensic Marking

I. Project description

A. Context

The initiative started after a high number of domestic burglaries occurred in certain submunicipalities, especially in Sint-Gillis, and the considerable feeling of insecurity this caused with the population. After the huge interest and demand from the population, the pilot project was extended from Sint-Gillis to the whole of the town of Dendermonde.

B. Functioning

S-DNA is a means to prevent domestic burglaries from happening, and to be able to track down possible stolen property more quickly. With the aid of a unique substance, the so-called synthetic DNA, owners can provide their valuable goods with a unique DNA codification. Since the liquid lights up under UV light and contains microdots with a unique code that is impossible to erase, it allows identifying the owner more quickly and unambiguously. The code in these microdots corresponds to data of the owner that is stored in a database, and can already be visualised in the police station with a small microscope. If no microdots can be found on the object, it is sent to the National Institute of Criminalistics and Criminology (NICC), where the synthetic DNA and its code will be analysed in the lab and passed on to the police.

Communication on the project was done via local and national media, and the local police went from door to door to offer the S-DNA package for the price of 10 euros. The package contains a bottle with the S-DNA, a couple of swabs to apply the substance on the valuable objects, and several sheets of stickers to put on the objects and doors/windows for deterrence.

C. Objectives

- Deter potential burglars
- Restore sense of security

D. Target audience

Residents of the town of Dendermonde.

II. Means

Partners:

- The town of Dendermonde took care of publicity, and contributed financially in the product itself. This way, the package cost 10 euros per piece for the citizen, while the normal cost per package is 89 euros.
- The local police of Dendermonde took care of publicity and the distribution of the product, and is still the first point of contact for the population.
- Selecta DNA is the company that offers the product and that manages the database with the codes and its linked personal and contact data.

Cost:

The cost for the first 2,500 packages and the necessary material (UV lamps, microscopes, signs, etc.) was 50,000 euro.

III. Evaluation

Evaluation 2010 - 2013 project Sint-Gillis: -51.43% completed burglaries in the delimited area.

Evaluation 2011 - 2013 project Dendermonde Centre: -51.02% completed burglaries in the delimited area.

Positive points/benefits:

- Great effect on the number of completed burglaries in the delimited areas.
- If the marked objects are resold, the owner's contact data can be easily modified.
- Easy to use and to apply.
- The project is also used with success abroad.
- The DNA is odourless and colourless.
- With one bottle, 50 to 100 objects can be marked.
- Once dry, the DNA is almost impossible to remove without damaging the object, which would make it lose its value for a receiver of stolen property, as well as on the black market.
- During various actions, the local police checks objects systematically with a UV lamp.
- Life cycle of 15-20 years.
- Microdots can already be checked at the police station.
- It allows quick tracing of the rightful owner of a stolen object.
- The low price of 10 euros caused big interest and demand from the population.
- The residents who did not purchase the package, or who live in the surrounding neighbourhoods, benefit from the deterrent effect of the signs, stickers and media.

Recommendations:

- Ideally, this would be applied all over the euro zone, and every police zone would routinely check possibly stolen objects with UV light.
- A disinterested government body should manage the database; the company Selecta DNA itself asks for this.

IV. Transferability

Attention points:

- Problems with regard to scale leveraging, because it is done in cooperation with a specific private company.

- There are similar products available on the market that are not stored in this database, and/or have a different operation mode with regard to analysis and identification.
- If the product is to be offered at the same low price, then the rather high purchase price should be taken into account.
- The cost for an analysis by the NICC is added to the judicial costs.

V. More info?

A. Contact person

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B. Support material

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