

Ronse Speed TPA

I. Project description

A. Context

In 2009, there was a wave of burglaries in the town of Ronse, so there was an urgent need for taking security measures. Citizens were not satisfied, as they thought that police and municipality did nothing. The police and the municipality wanted to provide an answer, but this had to be an efficient one. The police regularly gave information evenings, but too few people attended these.

"It is genius in its simplicity"

Hilke Van Gijssel,
Prevention Official

B. Functioning

The goal is to provide fast and accurate techno preventive advice at home for all citizens of the four BIN (neighbourhood information network) neighbourhoods (this was the situation in 2009; meanwhile, there are already 10 BINs). This is the principle of Speed TPA (techno preventive advice): citizens did not come to us, so we will go to them. The whole town was too big as territory, so the BIN operation was chosen as a stepping-stone. All residents of the BIN neighbourhoods (thus also the non-members) were contacted.

First, a letter from all the involved parties was put in the mailbox of these residents, containing the explanation of the project, and the date they would pass by. During that weekend, a tent with tables and chairs was mounted in the centre of the neighbourhood. The teams left from there to provide advice door-to-door. About 300 homes were visited per weekend.

The goal of a door-to-door visit is to explain summarily the home's risks, seen from the outside. The option to receive an extensive TPA at a later time and after arrangement was immediately offered, and a general information brochure was handed. Residents who were not at home received a card in their mailbox. This card said that the advisors had passed by, and it listed in short the positive and negative points of the outside part of their home with regard to burglary prevention.

The neighbourhood was flooded by the presence of police and prevention, both in uniform and civilian. This was the objective; it showed to citizens that 'we are here'. Via this action, the residents got to know the prevention service, and there was a positive contact with the police and the community police officer.

The tent in the centre of the neighbourhood turned out to be a huge benefit for the project. People could have a coffee, talk, and meanwhile get to know the operation better. In the tent, there were also various folders, and information was provided about e.g. the tax deductibility of modifications to the home to prevent burglaries.

Inside the tent, domestic burglary prevention consultants, BIN mandatories, the community police officer, the prevention official, and BIN coordinators were present (and sometimes community guards as well). So, there was an extensive cooperation between police, municipality, and citizens. Because of the tables, chairs, and coffee, the tent was also very accessible, and the threshold to get information was considerably lowered. The project was sometimes combined with other projects, e.g. bicycles were sometimes engraved in the tent. There were also absence monitoring forms to request one's home to be monitored in case of absence, e.g. due to holiday or a stay in the hospital.

For merchants and bars, there was an adapted operation. The police made its own packages containing a checklist and a book containing tips and tricks on burglary, shoplifting, money transport, etc. A card was always handed containing the positive and negative points of the establishment. The police visited all merchants in the town centre. At the end of the action, an information meeting was organised for the merchants and bar owners, where the results were presented.

After the action, the results were published in the media. This open communication towards the citizen is important, this way everyone can see what the action has produced.

C. Objectives

- Reduction of the number of domestic burglaries.
- Increase of the feeling of security thanks to the visibility of police and prevention service.
- Raising awareness of the population to secure their homes better.
- Repeating and reminding of the techno preventive tips.
- Reaching as many citizens as possible in a short amount of time but still via a personal contact.
- Making the non-BIN members aware of the BIN operation.
- Showing that burglaries are indeed an issue for the police and the municipality, that work is being done on the problem.

D. Target audience

- All citizens with a private home in the municipality of Ronse, but limited to the BIN neighbourhoods (members and non-members).
- Merchants who are members of BIN-Z (Union of Merchants).
- Bar owners.

II. Means

Partners:

BIN steering groups

- Providing practical support on site

BIN mandatories

- Action execution
- Community police officers
- Contact with citizens
- Two domestic burglary prevention consultants
- Providing advice
- One prevention official
- Practical organisation
- Union of Merchants
- Practical support

Costs:

- It mainly concerns working hours. However, these are working hours that yield something, unlike e.g. the organisation of an information meeting that takes a lot of time but is attended by few people.
- Folders: before, these were received from the Federal Government Service of Internal Affairs, Directorate Local Integral Security. However, this distribution will stop, so the organisation will have to produce these folders itself.
- Administration costs for copies, sending of letters.
- The tent, tables, coffee and cookies are all paid by the municipality.

III. Evaluation

Positive points/benefits

- 963 homes were visited; 143 quick advices were given on site, and 106 appointments for an extensive advice at a later time were made on site. After the action, the DPAs always have a busy time.
- About 25 citizens informed the police that they followed the advices, and already contacted a locksmith.
- With regard to merchants, a techno preventive advice was given in 59 businesses.
 - ➔ However, these numbers are outdated already; the new numbers are currently being processed.
- The community police officers had very positive contacts through the action.
- There was a reduction of the feeling of insecurity, and citizens got to know the police in a different way.
- Many requests for full visits were received. This option was presented explicitly to the people, and it was made clear that this visit is free. This led to bigger enthusiasm with citizens. Some even passed by to prove they indeed implemented the modifications.
- With merchants and bar owners, the answer often came that the property was not theirs, and they were only the manager, or it was a franchise, and therefore, they could not make any modifications. In those cases, clear recommendations were drafted so that this person could take these to a higher level, hoping for a positive reaction. In several bars, modifications were done after the visits.
- Burglary attempts were already established that were foiled because of the modifications done after an advice.
- The action is a cooperation between police, municipality (prevention service), and citizen. The project has wide support, and thus it can maintain its low threshold.

Recommendations:

If there would be more capacity, then it would be better to remain not only limited to the BIN neighbourhoods. It is a good thing that non-members of BINs are informed about the functioning of these networks. Only one visit was done per BIN neighbourhood, and it would be better to do this more often in the long-term.

IV. Transferability

Points of attention:

The project has already been taken over, which proves its transferability. It is a low-budget project; it is effective, and it is simple. These are the three main reasons why transferability is definitely possible. However, it needs to be well prepared. It is useful to use a BIN network, but this is not necessary. There has to be a small, delimited territory where clear action can take place. It is important that the project be supported by everybody who is involved in it.

V. More info?

A. Contact person

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B. Support material

- Folder on burglary prevention





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