

Kortrijk Wij-kk-ijken

I. Project description

A. Context

From the objective crime image analysis of 2007 of the local police zone Vlas, it seems that in that year 4869 crimes against property were registered in the city of Kortrijk. Thus, property crimes took the number-one spot in the list of all registered crime facts, i.e. 63%.

B. Functioning

This project wants to approach burglary prevention from an integral point of view. Via a complete package, it wishes to inform citizens about how they can better protect themselves against burglary, and on the other hand, it wants to increase the chances of burglars being caught.

1. Based on crime numbers, areas within the city of Kortrijk are chosen by the local police. The local police (directorate of operations) delimits an area. At a previously agreed moment, this area is closed by the local police. All incoming and outgoing traffic within this delimited area will be checked by inspectors of the local police.

Meanwhile, employees of the crime prevention department (police) and community guards (city prevention team) ring the bell at all residents within that neighbourhood. They do this to inform people about this action, and to hand them a leaflet containing an offer for techno-preventive advice. For residents who are not at home, this document is put into their letterbox. This part of the integral approach is called "NEIGHBOURHOOD ENCLOSURE."

2. Within other burglary-sensitive neighbourhoods, the residents receive a personal letter from the city prevention team. This letter includes the announcement of the "Wij-kk-ijken" action ('we watch over our neighbourhood' - 2nd part of the integral approach). The local police is aware of this and can thus put at ease concerned residents who call to receive more information about this action. During this action, all residents receive a visit from community guards. The residents receive tips to prevent burglary, and on request, the community guard can do a basic check of the front door to see if it has a burglary-proof lock. The tax deduction for securing a home against burglary and fire is also presented, and the offer for the advice of a domestic burglary prevention consultant (the consultant of the city of Kortrijk as well as within the police zone) is communicated.

To be clear, community guards do not give techno-preventive advice; they only check if the front door lock is burglary-proof. Via the community guards, residents can request a personal techno-preventive advice, and the domestic burglary prevention consultant for the city of Kortrijk or for the VLAS police zone will then make an appointment with this person.

3. At the request of the residents, they receive a complete techno-preventive advice. Thus, this project consists of two parts: a repressive one and a preventive one.

Since 2013, some adaptations have been made. The operation has now been split in a 'light' version and a 'heavy' version. The difference is in the light version, where action will be taken quickly and without announcing it, reacting on a burglary (attempt). This light version happens weekly, and it also aims at increasing the social control between the neighbourhood's residents.

C. Objectives

1. Increase the chances of burglars being caught, and this mainly to counter the phenomenon of afternoon burglaries.
2. Providing burglary prevention tips to as many residents of the city Kortrijk as possible, especially within the risk neighbourhoods.
3. Announcing the tax deduction for securing a home against burglary and fire.
4. Providing personal techno-preventive advice by the city prevention team and/or the crime prevention department of the local police.
5. The directed actions of the local police and the campaign "wij-kk-ijken" ('we watch over our neighbourhood'), increases the quality of life in a residential area. This campaign contributes to a safer neighbourhood. A safer neighbourhood, where solidarity is stimulated, leads to a neighbourhood with a higher quality of life.

D. Target audience

Neighbourhoods within the whole city of Kortrijk that have a higher chance to become the victim of burglary. Based on police figures, the local police chooses neighbourhoods where the action will be started.

II. Means

Partners:

- Local police VLAS:
The directorate of operations is responsible for the repressive part. The directorate police care department of crime prevention is responsible for a preventive part regarding the provision of tips and techno-preventive advice.
- City prevention team:
Responsible for the preventive part: checking of doors, distributing brochures with prevention tips.
- Citizen:
Securing the home better against burglary. Developing a network in the street whereby everyone is vigilant for suspicious behaviour.

Costs: the costs consist mainly of the costs for preparing publicity material: brochures, invitations, folders, leaflets, letters, etc., together with personnel costs for executing the action, giving tips and techno-preventive advice.

III. Evaluation

The number of burglaries in the city of Kortrijk remains almost constant. The number of citizens who submit a request for a burglary prevention premium increased considerably with the start of the action in 2008.

Furthermore, we see a significant correlation between the action and the effective execution of techno-preventive measures. More measures are being taken after an action has taken place in the neighbourhood.

In 2008, the action was undertaken nine times. 1404 citizens were notified. In the end, 890 homes were visited, and from these, only 279 front doors were equipped with a burglary-proof door lock. 140 requests for providing an extensive techno-preventive advice in these neighbourhoods followed. These TPAs were done by the domestic burglary prevention consultants of the local police (102), and by the city prevention team (38).

In 2009, the action was organized five times, and 1370 citizens were notified. 923 homes were checked, and only 334 locks were burglary-proof. In these neighbourhoods, 137 requests for providing an extensive techno-preventive advice followed. These TPAs were done by domestic burglary prevention consultants of the local police (95), and by the city prevention team (42).

More recent data:

- In 2010, about 1800 homes were checked.
- In 2011, there were 1200 checks.
- In 2012, there were 1200 checks as well.
- In 2013, this number doubled; there were 2400 checks, with 1500 front doors equipped with a burglary-proof lock.
- In 2014, there were 600 checks up to now.

Positive points / benefits:

- Knowledge, flexibility, speed of execution.
- The campaign "Wij-kk-ijken" ('we watch over our neighbourhood') stimulates residents to take their responsibility. Residents need to take their proper responsibility as well as their collective responsibility.
- A joint approach pays off.
- Cost-saving.
- By personally taking a couple of simple organisational measures, the chance for a domestic burglary can be reduced. A bigger individual alertness can reduce the chance to become a victim. If necessary, by carrying out (or having carried out) some normal techno-preventive measures, a home can be even better protected.

- Knowledge transfer: this will be further elaborated in the future. There are plans to organize an information evening per street, providing tips to organize a better social control in the neighbourhood. This part will be called SAVE ('together alert for each other'), and it will be elaborated this spring.

Recommendations: continuing this cooperation, with attention for a quarterly adjustment and intervention where necessary. In case of a burglary wave, direct action must be possible.

IV. Transferability

Points of attention: provided there is a good understanding between the various partners and clear agreements regarding responsibilities, this action can be applied everywhere. Of course, persons need to be specifically trained, e.g. to check doors on lock resistance, how to inform people, how to deal with professional secrecy, etc.

V. More info?

A. Contact person

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B. Support material

Information brochure: "Tips for a safe home"



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