

The Netherlands



ECPA/BPC 2006

Please answer the following questions in English.

1. Is this your country's ECPA entry or is it an additional project? (Only one ECPA entry per country plus up to two other projects.)

ECPA entry.

2. What is the title of the project?

The title of the project is "Safety on the Street" (abbreviated VOS, from the Dutch *Veiligheid op Straat*).

3. Please give a short general description of the project.

The VOS project began in 1992. At that time there was a lot of public disturbance during the busiest times for hotels, restaurants and cafés in the Zwolle town centre. These disturbances included quarrels, brawls, public drunkenness and noise disturbance. The VOS project was then revolutionary in the Netherlands, and met with immediate success. Appointing VOS officers was an approach that had an immediate effect. Troublemakers were made to realise that the police meant business, and owners and doorkeepers of hotels, restaurants and cafés also became actively involved in combating the disturbances. VOS allowed the following activities to be carried out successfully:

- drafting of a hospitality and catering covenant
- weapons detection in hospitality and catering
- providing education to youths and parents on alcohol
- establishing of house rules
- drafting of closing time policy
- drafting of a hospitality and catering sanctions policy
- placing security cameras

This approach has been used successfully for years.

Now, however, we must realise that a new period has begun. There are new

hospitality and catering businesses, and municipal policy has changed (e.g. more flexible closing times). People have also become more independent-minded, and there is the need to include the issue of street violence in VOS projects. This all calls for a new approach. Given that it will be linked to VOS, the name VOS2 was chosen for the new approach.

4. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

Prior to the VOS period, there was a lot of public disturbance during the busiest times for hotels, restaurants and cafés in the Zwolle town centre. These disturbances included quarrels, brawls, public drunkenness and noise disturbance. The VOS project was established to combat and to prevent these disturbances.

In order to execute the VOS2 projects in a targeted manner, i.e. where it is needed most urgently, an analysis was made of the problems. The police are carrying out a nightlife violence analysis in connection with complaints about incidents coming from food establishments, such as restaurants. The police decided to keep records of incidents per establishment type, thereby providing a clear picture of where the disturbances take place. The analysis shows where, when and at what time certain incidents have arisen. The results will also be used for the evaluation of the temporary later closing times that apply to food establishments, which will come into effect at the beginning of 2006.

In addition to information acquired via the police, there are also others who are witness to certain situations. Complaints are lodged by neighbours regarding noise, alcohol consumption and/or drug use. These complaints do not always square with police reports. Owners of establishments also witness a lot — they are, after all, right in the thick of it. These accounts do not always correspond to incidents that have been reported to the police either.

For example, over the past year the following complaints have come in:

- people out at night "shop around" from pub to coffeeshop, and vice versa
- increased drug use in pubs and bars
- neighbours are bothered by happy hour
- certain pubs and bars are a source of nuisance in the form of fighting and noise on a regular basis

These complaints are not found in police information (statements and reports). We can, however, infer from police reports that the pedestrian routes between the various establishments are used more often, and the figures show that small nuisances are more prevalent there, such as public urination and minor incidences of violence.

5. How was the project implemented?

After the period of disturbances, the VOS project was begun on the initiative of the hospitality and catering sector. This led to the appointment of two VOS officers, i.e. police officers who are completely available during the busiest times in nightlife areas. They also became the permanent contact persons for hospitality/catering establishments and doorkeepers. Whenever a quarrel or brawl started, a mobile phone

call was made immediately to the VOS officer, who was then quickly on the scene. Cooperation is also a significant element of VOS. Various pubs and bars already had doorkeepers. After the covenant had been signed, a doorkeeper was mandatory if the establishment wished to make use of the latest possible closing time (the alternative was not to have a doorkeeper and close one hour earlier). The doorkeepers were encouraged to get to know each other, for example through aggression management courses which were subsidised by the municipality, and to help each other whenever necessary. The municipality provided an extra incentive for cooperation by providing emergency buttons, allowing doorkeepers to point the security cameras towards the establishment, when necessary.

VOS2 also includes the following projects:

- Prohibition to assemble: the prohibition to assemble allows the police to take action against groups of two or more people in cases where there is a disturbance of the peace. The police make sure that this prohibition is enforced quickly and effectively.
- Information meetings: the police organise a meeting twice yearly for hospitality and catering establishment owners. The aim of these meetings is for the police and the hospitality/catering sector to get to know and continue to recognise each other. Information is exchanged relating to new regulations, new police/VOS officers and priorities.
- Doorkeepers: in the past, the cooperation between doorkeepers and police/VOS officers has often been cited as an effective part of the VOS project. Both of these groups now include new people, and the expectation is that everyone is aware of his/her responsibilities. The cooperation between doorkeepers and police is an important part of VOS, and must continue to improve. A contribution to this process is a document outlining where doorkeepers' responsibilities (on the street) begin and end.
- Training courses: in the past, hospitality and catering staff have taken training courses. Doorkeepers took aggression management courses. All parties stated that follow-up courses are necessary.
- Weapons detection: in 2005, it was agreed upon by the hospitality and catering sector, the municipality and the police that weekly checks shall take place at a number of locations.
- Youth and Alcohol: recently the Youth and Alcohol project began, which includes research into the state of alcohol consumption in the region.
- Happy Hour: complaints from neighbours have shown that happy hour is a source of consternation. At certain times, alcoholic drinks can be purchased at a discount. The hospitality and catering covenant states that happy hour may not take place after 12:00 am. Also, the discount on drinks sold during happy hour may not exceed 50% of the normal price.
- Youth alcohol consumption: enforcement concerning youth alcohol consumption (15 years and under) has until now fallen under the jurisdiction of the Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (*Voedsel en Waren Autoriteit*). The police are not authorised to take any action in this regard. A change to the Licensing and Catering Act (*Drank- en Horecawet*) is currently being created to address this and other issues.
- Drug use: in Zwolle the municipality, Public Prosecutions Department and the police have together established the Damocles Enforcement Agreement (*Handhavingsarrangement Damocles*). One part of this agreement is that the discovery of hard drugs in a hospitality/catering establishment will result in a

one-year closure of the establishment. If soft drugs are found, an official warning will first be given, and for a second offence the establishment will be closed for 6 months.

6. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

The parties implementing VOS are: hospitality/catering establishments (owners and staff), the police, the municipality and the Public Prosecutions Department. The municipality is responsible for the action plan; the projects are carried out by the various establishments and the police.

In some sub-projects, other institutions or companies also participate. These include bus and taxi companies, care and treatment centres for drug addicts and the Zwolle Hospitality and Catering Events Foundation (*Horeca Evenementen Stichting Zwolle*).

7. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project?

At the end of 2008, the municipality will conduct an interim evaluation of VOS2. All participants will be involved. At the beginning of 2011, a final evaluation of VOS2 will be drawn up. At that time it will be considered how to proceed with the issue of safety in the sector.

As of 2007 we will also be working with a one-year plan that is linked to the budget. This will inform all parties (including the municipal council) in advance of what they can expect and what the budget will be spent on, and also allows the success of these aspects to be evaluated afterwards. The one-year plan will be drawn up by the municipality and funds will be used in those areas where police figures and other sources have shown that it is needed. The police, municipality, and hospitality and catering sector will discuss the one-year plan during the VOS meeting. The plan will be municipally adopted in the Safety steering group (*stuurgroep Veiligheid*).

8. Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

Many parts of the VOS project have been evaluated separately. The evaluations of use of the public urinals and the hospitality and catering sanctions policy are currently being finalised. The security cameras, weapons detection and closing time policy were already evaluated at an earlier stage. The municipality is responsible for conducting evaluations, which it does in close consultation with the other relevant parties. Occasionally the decision is made to call in an external party to perform the evaluation.

9. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

The VOS project was revolutionary in the Netherlands, and met with immediate success. Appointing VOS officers also proved to have an immediate effect. Troublemakers were made to realise that the police meant business, and owners and doorkeepers of hotels, restaurants and cafés also actively combated the disturbances. This approach has been used successfully for years.

Now, a new period has begun. There are new hospitality and catering businesses, and municipal policy has changed (e.g. more flexible closing times). People have also become more independent-minded, and there is the need to include the issue of street violence in VOS projects. Therefore, a new approach has been adopted. Given that it will be linked to VOS, the name VOS2 was chosen for the new approach.

There is still much activity around (nightlife-)violence. When the relaunch was organised, alcohol consumption was hardly seen as a problem. Now this problem is being taken on at a regional level, with Zwolle leading the way. The problem will be tackled in a tangible way over the coming year, which will most probably have effects on the hospitality and catering sector. Parties in the sector have also stated that they are prepared to participate in a project for teaching 12 to 16-year-olds (young people who often do not yet go out) what the sector is all about, and what the dangers are. If this education project is carried through, alcohol and drugs will undoubtedly be a main focus.

10. Are there reports or documents available on the project? In print or on the Web? Please, give references to the most relevant ones.

The Safety on the Street Relaunch Memorandum (*Nota Doorstart Veilig op Straat*) 2006-2010 is available as a PDF file.

Please, write here a one page description of the project