

## European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

### Annex I

Approved by the EUCPN Management Board in 2018

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the Rules and procedures for awarding and presenting the European Crime Prevention Award (Par.2 §3).

#### General information

1. Please specify your country.

Belgium

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

This is an additional project.

3. What is the title of the project?

GO-team

4. Who is responsible for the project? Contact details.

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5. Start date of the project (01/09/2014)? Is the project still running (Yes)?  
If not, please provide the end date of the project.

September, 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 the GO-team started. The project is still running.

6. Where can we find more information about the project? Please provide links to the project's website or online reports or publications (preferably in English).

We made a short video-reportage about GO-team with testimonials of families. We believe it's a very good way to get to know the goals and approach of GO-

team. You can find it here:

<https://vimeo.com/236442571> (NL)

<https://www.reddust.be/work/social-housing-mechelen> (EN)

We are still in the process of writing a scientific publication about GO-team.

7. Please give a **one page** description of the project (**Max. 600 words**)

"*Gezinsondersteuning*" means Family Support in English. 4 years ago, the social welfare services of Mechelen have created a new team that supports vulnerable multiproblem families in a holistic way in order to safeguard the children for the consequences of poverty, deprivation of changes, neglect, criminogenic environments and/or unhealthy housing. The name "GO-team" has since then been used for as well the team of 7 outreaching family supporters as for the project itself. The origins of the project are situated in a few observations. Firstly, the local police is confronted over and over again with severe situations of child neglect or domestic violence that seem hopeless for any change whatsoever. Secondly, social services and welfare workers are insufficiently adapted for these situations and too much orientated towards specialisation. Finally, the communication gap between police and social work inhibits the necessary change in life conditions for children and youngsters growing up in extreme poverty and severe social deprivation. Key concepts in this innovative way of social welfare work are "low threshold", "intensive parental coaching", "accosting", "demand-oriented" and "hands on". For social work, it was a groundbreaking idea that local police officers determined which family is referred to this family support program. The involvement of police in the project is crucial, because 1 out of 2 families reported by the police weren't known to social welfare services before. The family supporters of the GO-team are not presenting themselves as experts who are going to tell or convince parents what to do, how to educate children or where to find help getting a job. Instead, they are generalistic care-takers who's first step is to provide concrete solutions for acute problems mentioned by parents in multiproblem situations. They do things together: cleaning the house, register children for daycare, doing the dishes, helping apply for a social income, ... This hands on approach creates trust between parents and social worker and is the start for a long term engagement. Since 2015 a total of 115 families with children were helped by the GO-team: 35 were referred by the local police, 60 by school and 20 by Kind & Gezin (child welfare service). In 7% of the cases children were outplaced by juvenile court. In most families had several issues: domestic violence, relational problems between parents, poor housing conditions, poverty, unemployment, mental health problems, drug addiction and children's behavioural problems. In May 2018 there were 41 families in guidance: 8 of them since 2014 and 6 since 2015. The average duration of coaching is almost 22 months. Change takes time because gaining trust from parents takes time. Very often parents themselves have had very bad experiences with police, teachers, judges, social workers, etc. It takes time to overcome this mistrust. Therefore the family supporter of the GO-team have a low caseload: max. 6 families at the same time. Their administration is minimal and they get a lot of support from their back office colleagues. Each member of the GO-team dispose of a own budget for small expenses: cleaning products, transportation costs, hygiene products, etc. The change in perspective on how family support can be organised differently did provide structural change for children in multiproblem situations. This is an important lesson learned from this practice.

**I. The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.**

8. How does the project contribute to crime prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? Does it focus on raising citizens' awareness or does it apply other mechanisms? (**Max. 200 words**)

As shown by criminological studies family risk factors are related to future crime, violence or gang involvement. This project aims to alter criminogenic environments in which children grow up and by doing so stopping the individual exposure to criminality, poverty and violence. We know that parental support programs help reduce behavioural problems and criminality among children. Moreover, domestic violence and child abuse are known to be persistent and passed over from one generation to another.

The GO-team is in essence a family support program and has intrinsic parental training aspects in its practice. We therefore believe that the GO-team as a measure triggers a mechanism of reducing recruitment to criminal social environments or exposure to criminal activities for young children. The model can be labelled as an early intervention program.

**II. The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.<sup>1</sup>**

9. What were the reasons for setting up the project? Was this context analysed before the project was initiated and in what way (How, and by whom? Which data were used?)? In what way did this analysis inform the set-up of the project? (**Max. 150 words**)

The creation in 2010 of the unit Youth and Family within the local police Mechelen-Willebroek led to a better overview of domestic violence issues and poor educational environments for (young) children were detected more adequately. Officers on the field were confronted with poignant situations even when help and social work was yet installed. The responsible police officer pulled an alarm bell. This led to house visits by Mayor Somers and his top level management. The instruction were giving to set up a new proactive and innovative form of social work and family support. The context was analysed by internal experts on poverty and management of the Social House. They based their ideas on insights of Mullainathan & Shafir about "Scarcity" (2013) and the idea that child poverty is in essence altered by talking family poverty. Next to substantive ideas on poverty and deprivation, insights skills for social workers and social work *an sich* were taken into account.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on evaluation, see Guidelines on the evaluation of crime prevention initiatives (EUCPN Toolbox No.3): <http://www.eucpn.org/library/results.asp?category=32&pubdate>

10. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

There are 4 principal objectives:

- Development of a hands-on method for a holistic and intensive coaching for families with children in extreme social deprivation
- Mapping and reaching out to those multiproblem families who stayed until then under the radar
- Effective and visible amelioration of the living conditions in order to alter the negative impact on the development of the children
- Creating an open and improved collaboration with local police force, primary schools and *Kind & Gezin*

11. Has there been a process evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?) and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the process? Did you make changes accordingly? (**max. 300 words**) - *for more information on process evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.9-10 & part 2 - section 2A*

There has been an external process evaluation conducted by Bérénice Storms, Phd sociology and research coordinator of CEBUD (Thomas More). The results are to be published soon. The results show insights on the intrinsic features and success factors of the GO-team: strong collaboration with the local police force, generalistic and result-oriented approach, intensive and long-term engagement, low case load, decentralised decision making and budget and minimal administration social workers. The research is based on interviews with the family support team and their clients. This led to 7 concrete recommendations.

- For the families in need:
  - o more financial support
  - o more referral of families to the GO-team
- For the GO-team
  - o Strengthen the holistic approach even more
  - o Provide some methodological guidelines
  - o Being Attentive for self-care
- For the Social house
  - o Incorporate the lesson learned in the regular team
  - o Improve the collaboration with Youth Care program

12. Has there been an outcome or impact evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method were used and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the impact? (**Max. 300 words**) - for more information on outcome or impact evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.7-9 & part 2 - section 2A

There is an outcome (no impact) evaluation of the 4 objectives. This study is conducted externally. The first objective (new method) was measured through qualitative interviews with family supporters and their clients. The project has created a bottom-up, non-structured method based on gut feelings of social workers. This means that the aspect 'who makes it work' becomes more important than the aspect 'what works'. Care takers got to have the right skills instead of knowing how to implement a pre-set program. The second goal (finding those under the radar) is evaluated through document analysis. This showed that 46% of the families and 45% of the children referred to the GO-team wasn't previously known by social welfare. Families referred by the police have more than other referrals a substitute income or budget-management trajectories. The results of the third goal (improvement life conditions) a specific instrument (scale model) is developed for the domains: security, housing, health, social capital, cultural capital, income and debt and environment for kids (school, leisure and health). Security: in 6 out of 10 families referred by police there was domestic violence; after 1 year there is no violence in 4 of the 6. Housing conditions improved (refurbishments done or ongoing), no more homelessness (before 20%). Debts: more than 50% augmentation in families who have down payment plan for debts. No situation deteriorated. Health: situation, employment rate and financial situation of parents didn't improve during the measured 1 year period (2017 - 2018). Social capital: no results because - to little information. Cultural capital (language, reading and digital skills): about 80% has no or little disadvantages. Environment for kids improved: families with 3 problem-areas decreased over 50%.

**III. The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.**

16. How is the project innovative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project has created a bottom-up, non-structured method based on gut feelings of social workers. This means that the aspect 'who makes it work' becomes more important than the aspect 'what works'. Care takers got to have the right skills instead of knowing how to implement a pre-set program.

The very close collaboration and communication between social services and police in situations where childrens safety is at stake, seems to be unique. The "brick walls" between the 2 sectors have been teared down: professional secrecy,

voluntary help requests, need of fragmenting complex problems into separated specialities, lack of trust and respect for social work, the soft (left wing) approach versus the reality based (right wing) approach, ... all seem to be fallacies and solidified ideas or opinions.

**IV. The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.**

18. Which partners or stakeholders were involved in the project and what was their involvement? (**Max. 200 words**)

The Social House organises the GO-team and coordinates the project.  
Local police (division youth and family) initiated the need for better action and is the most important detection of multiproblem families  
Schools, Kind & Gezin (child welfare) are also important in early detection of problems.  
The municipality is stakeholder

**V. The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.**

19. How and by whom is the project funded? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project is funded by the municipality. Next to the regular financing there have been extra temporary project funds from the *kinderarmoedefonds* (Child poverty fund – Flemish community)

20. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material and human resources? (**Max. 150 words**)

Personnel cost on annual basis amount 388.856  
Action costs on annual basis amount 14.000,-

21. Has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out? If so, describe the analysis, including how and by whom it was carried out and list the main findings of the analysis. (**Max. 150 words**)

There was a limited cost-benefit analysis carried out by the research coordinator of CEBUD. She compared the financial cost of police interventions in a couple of families that GO-team supported to those in families that were not supported by them. There appeared to be a difference of 65%. We suspect that this effect also occurs with other services besides the police. This needs to be further examined, but right now, it appears that GO-team yields better results for the families while

costing less to society.

22. Are there adjustments to be made to the project to ensure a successful replication in another Member State?

No, we believe it's quite easy to replicate and we are also always willing to help other cities or states in replicating this approach.

23. How is the project relevant for other Member States? Please explain the European dimension of your project.

The project is very valuable for other Member States because it shows that the focus on what works isn't important. Europe should invest in training and skilled prevention workers. Europe should create an environment in which the prevention thought can thrive. Simple but groundbreaking initiatives that lead to concrete results need to be put forward. The GO-team is not an exotic or complex program: every European city can organise their work in a similar way on the condition that they dare questioning solidified bureaucratic realities and find an openness of mind to tear down an *idée fixe* on what is good police work and what is good social work.

Please provide a short general description of the project (abstract for inclusion in the conference booklet – **max. 150 words**).

"*Gezinsondersteuning*" means Family Support in English. 4 years ago, the social welfare services of Mechelen and the local police have created a new team that supports vulnerable multiproblem families in a holistic way in order to safeguard the children for the consequences of poverty, deprivation of changes, neglect, criminogenic environments and/or unhealthy housing. The name "GO-team" has since then been used for as well the team of 7 outreaching family supporters as for the project itself. Key concepts in this innovative way of social welfare work are "low threshold", "intensive parental coaching", "accosting", "demand-oriented" and "hands on". The involvement of police in the project is crucial, because 1 out of 2 families reported by the police weren't known to social welfare services before. The family supporters of the GO-team are generalistic care-takers who provide concrete solutions for acute problems mentioned by parents in multiproblem situations. They bond by doing things together and they book results where none were deemed possible.

