

# 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 project is our ECPA entry.

3. What is the title of the project?

Mobile stalking alarm (MSA)

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

- Chief Inspector Marianne De Vuyst, project manager of the pilot project, local police zone Ghent and point of contact for the roll-out of the project, tel: + 32 9 266 67 57, [marianne.devuyst@police.belgium.eu](mailto:marianne.devuyst@police.belgium.eu)
- Chief Commissioner Maria De Sterck, Chief of Police, local police zone Hamme-Waasmunster, [maria.desterck@police.belgium.eu](mailto:maria.desterck@police.belgium.eu)

5. Start date of the project (dd/mm/yyyy)? Is the project still running (Yes/No)? If not, please provide the end date of the project.

In May 2020, the Mobile Stalking Alarm project started as a pilot project in Ghent. In March 2022, the project was rolled out in East and West Flanders with the aim, after a positive evaluation, to roll it out in all of Belgium in 2022-2023.

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).

In English:

- <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/en/2022/03/14/stalking-victims-handed-alarm-button/>
- [‘Stalking alarm’ will allow victims to summon police immediately \(brusselstimes.com\)](https://www.brusselstimes.com)

In French:

- [Alarme harcèlement : alerter la police grâce à un simple bouton | Police Fédérale](#)
- [L’alarme harcèlement peut sauver des vies | ASTRID](#)
- [Alarme harcèlement offre une meilleure protection : alerter la police sur simple pression d’un bouton - Team Justice \(teamjustitie.be\)](#)
- [Décision du gouvernement concernant le déploiement de l’alarme mobile harcèlement | Institut pour l’égalité des femmes et des hommes \(belgium.be\)](#)

In Dutch:

- <https://www.politie.be/5998/nl/nieuws/stalkingalarm-politie-ter-plaatse-bij-eeen-druk-op-de-knop>
- <https://www.blueconnect.be/nl/highlight/74029018386537456>
- <https://www.astrid.be/nl/nieuws/stalkingalarm-kan-levens-redden>
- <https://www.teamjustitie.be/2022/03/14/stalkingalarm-biedt-betere-bescherming-politie-ter-plaatse-met-eeen-druk-op-de-knop/>
- <https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/nl/nieuws/beslissing-van-de-regering-over-de-uitrol-van-het-mobiel-stalkingalarm>
- [Gents mobiel stalkingalarm wordt uitgerold in Oost- en West-Vlaanderen: “21 alarmsignalen leidden al tot 10 arrestaties” | Gent | hln.be](#)

There are also articles in various newspapers about the project.

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

The project Mobile Stalking Alarm started in 2020 as a pilot project in the local police zone of Ghent and was rolled out in the judicial districts of East and West Flanders in March 2022. It is regulated by a ministerial circular of 29 May 2019.

490 victims of stalking in East and West Flanders can receive a mobile stalking alarm. This device will allow them to alert the police when they feel they are in danger. The police should be able to attend the scene within ten minutes.

### ***Who is eligible for a stalking alarm?***

These are victims who are being stalked by their ex-partners or a family member (e.g. in cases of honour-related violence) and are in a life-threatening situation.

Any initial finding of domestic violence requires the completion of a risk assessment tool. This tool was adopted in 2020 by the College of Prosecutors General.

Based on a "bombshell" in the risk assessment tool, the police must contact the prosecutor's office without delay. This risk assessment aims to contain the estimation of the risk of recidivism and/or escalation of violence. Based on this completed tool, a magistrate can take various measures to contain this violence and prevent further violence.

Together with the magistrate, the police consider whether the victim is eligible for the installation of a mobile stalking alarm. The victim must also agree to the installation of such an alarm.

### ***How does this alarm work?***

Via bluetooth, an alarm button is linked to the emergency app 112 on the smartphone of the victim. A push of the button results in an immediate emergency call to 101/police. Both through the info sent along by the 112 app and through the intelligence in the urgent link to the mobile phone number, the operator knows what is going on, even if the victim is unable to speak. The GPS coordinates are sent along immediately. During the call and up to 2 hours after any disconnection of the call, the operator can keep track of it. He receives an update every 10 seconds.

If the emergency call is disconnected before the emergency call centre can answer the call or there is insufficient mobile data available, a ghost call will go through via the SMS option so that the emergency call centre knows that the alarm button was pressed.

This has the advantage that the call is very discreet. The offender is not aware, which means that, for example, no additional aggression is provoked because the victim called the police. The button is small and attached to a clip so that the victim can carry it inconspicuously under her clothing. The idea is that the victim uses the button as soon as the suspect makes physical contact with the victim and before aggression occurs.

This project is a fine example of integrated cooperation between local and federal police where an important task lies with the CIC's (communication and information centres).

The stalking alert is one of the tools to put an end to serious forms of domestic violence and has already saved several lives in the Ghent police zone!

The stalking alert however does not stand alone. Victims receive counselling from a multidisciplinary team, which will include local police, local government, counselling, victim reception services, the prosecutor's reference magistrate for domestic violence and existing multidisciplinary consultation systems for domestic violence.

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

8. Which **crime prevention/ reduction mechanisms** were used in this project to contribute to crime prevention and/or the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? Multiple answers are possible.

**Establishing and maintaining normative barriers to committing criminal acts**

e.g. 'Offenders, we are watching you' campaigns

**Reducing recruitment** to criminal social environments and activities by eliminating or reducing the social and individual causes and processes that lead to criminality

e.g. social and financial support for disadvantaged families

**Deterring** potential perpetrators from committing crimes through the threat of punishment

e.g. decreasing the time between arrest and punishment

**Disrupting** criminal acts by stopping them before they are carried out

e.g. increasing police patrols in vulnerable areas

**Protecting vulnerable targets** by reducing opportunities and make it more demanding to carry out criminal acts

e.g. placing locks and cameras

**Reducing the harmful consequences** of criminal acts

e.g. initiatives to recover stolen goods

**Reducing the rewards** from criminal acts

e.g. restorative justice programmes

**Incapacitating** (or neutralising) perpetrators by denying them the ability (capacity) to carry out new criminal acts

e.g. imprisonment of key gang members

**Encouraging** desistance from crime and rehabilitating former offenders so they are able to settle back into a normal life

e.g. prison rehabilitation programs

Explain how this/these crime prevention mechanisms were used (**Max. 300 words**)

***Protecting vulnerable victims:***

The purpose of the mobile stalking alarm is to prevent femicide, reduce the risk of violence and give the victim the chance to lead a normal and safe life. The victim is given the opportunity to leave the home again, go back to work, study, etc.

By installing the stalking alarm, both the physical and psychological integrity of the victim and witnesses/children are safeguarded.

When the stalking alarm is initiated, the suspect is included in the national police databases with the mention of the guidelines regarding the restraining order.

***Deter potential perpetrators and set up and enforce normative barriers:***

Based on the risk assessment tool, the magistrate can impose measures such as installing the stalking alarm as a protective measure to which a restraining order with the victim is inherently attached.

Each intervention, in which the alarm was used, leads to a quick enforcement response policy, with the suspect being arrested. After which often the Investigating Judge demands a pre-trial hearing. On the one hand, the Investigating Judge may decide that the person concerned should be arrested and sent to prison or that the person concerned should seek targeted help to address the cause of his criminal behaviour (e.g. aggression therapy, substance abuse treatment with a view to rehabilitation in society, etc.).

In short, by using the risk assessment tool and the MSA, the magistrate takes a protection measure much more quickly.

***Encouraging desistance from crime and rehabilitation:***

Both victim and offender are acutely referred to counselling services.

Among other things, the application for a stalking alarm can be made to the police by counselling services themselves. For example, a victim refuge center will make the assessment and contact the police services in those cases where additional protection is needed.

**II. The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.** For more information on evaluation, click [here](#)

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**)

Figures from the College of Prosecutors General show that every year around 20 people are killed by their (ex-)partner in Belgium. Adding attempted murder and manslaughter, that number comes to 150 to 160 victims. The fact that serious forms of partner violence between ex-partners are often preceded by a long history of stalking explains the birth of the stalking alarm.

A murder of a woman by her violent ex-partner who stabbed her to death, in front of her children in a public place, was the immediate reason for the launch of the Mobile Stalking Alarm. In Ghent, an alarm button linked to the fixed device was already operating in the home of the victim of serious partner

violence by an ex-partner. However, when the victim left the house, she no longer had a way to notify the emergency services.

As a result, a tool was sought to allow such victims to use the alarm outside their home. Because the emergency app 112 was already under development and provides for the transmission of necessary information to the emergency services, a button was provided to notify the police without manipulating the smartphone.

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

The **main objectives** of launching a Mobile Stalking Alert (MSA) are:

- to avoid femicide and family tragedies;
- to stop stalking and reduce the risk of violence;
- to ensure the safety of the victims and witnesses of stalking within a domestic context and give the victim the opportunity to lead a normal and safe life. This allows the victim to leave the home again, return to work or study.

The **additional objective** is to improve the psychological well-being of the victim and children/witnesses. When initiating counselling, all facets and causes of the violence problem can be addressed.

11. Has there been a process evaluation?<sup>1</sup> 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**)

There is a continuous process evaluation discussed in a **technical working group** where each incident is analysed. The process is improved/adjusted adhoc with each incident. The working group consists of the telecom provider of the emergency services for radiophony and telephony, NV Astrid, as a partner in the technical aspect, the Federal Police namely the Communication and Information Centre (112 dispatch) and local police project members.

***Intended process (activity)***

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<sup>1</sup> **Process evaluation:** Also called *implementation evaluation*, or *monitoring*, this process documents **how the activities were implemented** in order to determine any deviations from the original planning. It facilitates finding explanations for when the results of the intervention are not as expected.

All domestic violence reference persons/file managers from the police zones are aware of the operation of the mobile stalking alarm.

***Process achieved (activity)***

Two information sessions were conducted for the benefit of the reference persons domestic violence. This information session was given by the operational project manager (Chief Inspector De Vuyst) in cooperation with the Communication and Information Centre.

***Reason for adaptation***

Not all reference persons domestic violence attended the online information session.

***Need for further change (recommendation)***

The manual and necessary documents have been made available to all reference persons and will be made available via a Sharepoint page for the benefit of all staff of the integrated police.

Furthermore, a seminar will be organized for the reference persons where the procedure will be repeated and all questions can be answered.

The majority of new cases in East and West Flanders can be started on the basis of the manual and the information session. In case of any questions or problems during start-up, Chief Inspector De Vuyst can be contacted via email, service phone or Microsoft Teams. Reactions from the other zones have been positive.

For victims that don't have sufficient financial resources for a SIM card or for sufficient mobile data, the Centre for Social Welfare or local police zone can provide a SIM card. In the future, this will be solved by a borrowed device provided with a subscription funded by the Institute for Equal Opportunities.

12. Has there been an outcome<sup>2</sup> or impact<sup>3</sup> evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method

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<sup>2</sup> **Outcome evaluation:** Measures the **direct effect** (i.e., extent of the changes) **of the intervention on the target group, population, or geographic area**. The information produced by the outcome evaluation determines at what level the **objectives were achieved**.

<sup>3</sup> **Impact evaluation:** Measures **long-term effects** of the intervention on the target group, as well as **indirect effects** on the broader community. The information produced by the impact evaluation determines at what level the **ultimate goals** of the intervention were achieved.

were used and what were the main results? Which indicators were used to measure the impact? (**Max. 300 words**)

The technical working group evaluated the pilot project in Ghent, which ran from May 2020 to March 22, based on the data provided by the local police zone Ghent.

The evaluation was a **quantitative evaluation** with the **indicators** being the number of alarms installed, the number of calls, the number of interventions and the consequence of the intervention.

#### **Main results**

After the internal evaluation of the pilot project in Ghent, it was found that mobile stalking alarms were connected 40 times. In the process, 21 times the alarm was effectively used, resulting in 10 arrests immediately or shortly after the events. Physical violence could be avoided and interventions stopped in most of these cases after the first arrest of the suspect.

After this positive evaluation, the roll-out started in all police zones of East and West Flanders.

The evaluation of this phase of the project will be done by Ghent University. This scientific evaluation will involve qualitative and quantitative analysis. One of its aims is to refine the process with a view to national roll-out.

#### **Additional results**

As many as 89.6% of women felt significantly safer because of the alarm button. On average, after six months, they found that the stalking alarm was no longer needed. After that, 70% of victims no longer reported the crime, which may indicate that the stalking alarm has a deterrent effect.

Moreover, the victims were able to take their lives back into their own hands because the fear had subsided. They were able to give meaning to their lives by daring to go out again, have social contacts with family and friends and try to build a future financially by going back to work or studying. In short, a beginning of a life without fear.

An additional positive effect for the police services is the drastic reduction of the many interventions, which often precede the Mobile Stalking Alert and the associated restraining order.

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

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



The project is innovative through the use of the 112 emergency app, which allows an external alarm button to transmit all data without having to take the smartphone in hand and ensures that the police immediately know about the danger, the crime scene and the victim's information.

This is part of a holistic approach to protecting the victim.

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

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

**Persons in charge of the project:**

- **Police:**
  - Chief Inspector Marianne De Vuyst, project manager of the pilot project, local police zone Ghent and point of contact for roll-out, [marianne.devuyst@police.belgium.eu](mailto:marianne.devuyst@police.belgium.eu)
  - Chief Commissioner Maria De Sterck, Chief of police, local police zone Hamme-Waasmunster, [maria.desterck@police.belgium.eu](mailto:maria.desterck@police.belgium.eu)
  - Chief Commissioner Joost Duhamel, Chief of Police, local police zone Oudenaarde, [joost.duhamel@police.belgium.eu](mailto:joost.duhamel@police.belgium.eu)
- **Prosecutor's Office:** Attorney-General Serge Malefason at the Prosecutor's Office General ressort Ghent, [serge.malefason@just.fgov.be](mailto:serge.malefason@just.fgov.be)
- **Institute for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:** Marijke Weewauters, coordination by order of the federal government

**Partners involved in the project:**

- **For the technical elaboration:** we count on the Institute for Gender Equality, NV Astrid and the Federal Police, more specifically the CIC (Communication and Information Centre/112) and the local police for the technical start-up of the file.
- **For the operational functioning:** we count on the public prosecutor's office, assistance, various services within the local police (intervention, neighbourhood service, project manager) and the Federal Police (Communication and Information Centres).

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

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

The project is funded by the following federal institutions/ministries:

- Institute for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
- Federal Public Service Justice
- Federal Public Service Home Affairs

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

The **start-up and coordination** of the system cost €100,000. This was paid by the Institute for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

The **cost of the alarm buttons and telephones for the further roll-out** of the project will be borne by the Federal Public Service Justice at a cost of 90,000 euros. One button costs 26,45 euros.

The cost of **a second batch of 60 additional telephones** was paid for by the Federal Police, on behalf of the FPS Home Affairs.

However, the biggest capital is **human resources**, but this cost cannot be measured as these are tasks that local police add on top of their other tasks and duties.

17. Has a cost-benefit analysis<sup>4</sup> 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**)

Experience from the pilot project shows that installing a stalking alarm does add security. The victims all experienced a great sense of security thanks to the mobile stalking alarm and broke through their social isolation. Moreover, the effective use of the alarm button demonstrated the necessity of the mobile stalking alarm and the rapid possible intervention of the police.

During the six-month test phase of the mobile stalking alarm with victims, ten alarms were granted. Thanks to the mobile stalking alarm, quick catching the perpetrator in the act was made possible in very precarious life-threatening situations.

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

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<sup>4</sup> **Cost-benefit analysis:** A type of economic evaluation that compares the direct and indirect cost of the resources employed in the intervention, with the equivalent economic value of the benefits.

The Mobile Stalking Alarm can easily be implemented in other Member States.

The use of the 112 app is already known in many Member States and can be adapted per Member State to the respective app to ensure rapid connection to local emergency centres.

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

The project is relevant to other Member States because the same positive results can be quickly and easily rolled out and is a quick-win in preventing femicide.

It also fully frames the roll-out of the European Convention of Istanbul ratified by all European Member States. It also ensures that a victim of serious assault can move freely within Europe with an alarm whose operation is known everywhere.

In 2020, many European countries saw a high number in the reported cases of femicide. In that year there were estimated to have been 400 feminicides in Poland, 117 in Germany, 102 in Italy, 99 in Hungary and 90 in France.

The Istanbul Convention (*Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*), was signed by 46 countries, as well as the European Union.

This human rights convention aims to eliminate violence against women and domestic violence, promote equality between women and men and establish a comprehensive framework for all victims of violence against women and domestic violence (article 1). To this end, the Istanbul Convention requires, among other things, that states adopt integrated policies, collect data and adopt measures for prevention, protection and support of victims.

The Istanbul Convention also suggests that states should extend its scope to all victims of domestic violence, in other words, all forms of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that take place within the family or household or between former or current spouses or partners, regardless of whether the perpetrator resides or has resided in the same home as the victim (articles 2 and 3 of the Istanbul Convention).

The operation of the mobile stalking alert implements article 34 on stalking, article 50 on immediate response, prevention and protection and article 51 on risk assessment and risk management of the Convention of Istanbul.

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

The Mobile Stalking Alarm is initiated for victims of life-threatening partner violence where the risk of serious stalking with physical violence and even family tragedies or feminicides are real.

The Mobile Stalking Alarm consists of a discreet alarm button that links via bluetooth to the emergency 112 app. If the victim pushes the button when in danger, the 112 app launches an emergency call via the smartphone. In doing so, the alarm centre (112) immediately sees that it is a stalking alarm and immediately transmits the necessary information, such as the victim's details, suspect's details, measures imposed, etc. The 112 app also transmits the location of the victim and can also locate the victim when moving. In this way, the police can intervene quickly and efficiently to avoid escalation and stop the violence.