

## BE CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY PAGE

Faced with increasing public demands for more effective responses to rising crime and feelings of insecurity during the 1980's, many countries recognized the need to develop an alternative approach in an attempt to make up for inefficient or failed traditional institutional responses to crime and delinquency. Riots against law enforcement services notably by young people and rising antisocial behaviour prompted serious reflection on how to comprehensively address not only the overall increase in crime and delinquency but also the mounting public pressure for an effective response.

In the past 25 years, the Belgian Federal Public Service Home Affairs has also given numerous **impulses** in several fields of prevention such as drug prevention, urban renewal, burglary prevention, antisocial behaviour, theft and many others. Moreover, the security and prevention plans with the local authorities that were created in the beginning of the '90's and have been transformed into strategic and result-oriented plans, have had an important impact. The Belgian security landscape has then also evolved into an integral security policy in which prevention became an **essential link of the security chain** and in which more and more **partners** of divers sectors are involved.

The Federal Public Service Home Affairs choose hereby for an **bottom-up policy** that puts the local level in front. After all, it are the local authorities and the different prevention workers who invest daily in the security and quality of living in their municipality.

Home Affairs plays then also an important role as a **facilitator** for the local integral security policy by **supporting, preparing, following up** and **evaluating** the crime prevention policy of the local authorities:

- ✓ Offering qualitative support to the local authorities for the development of an integral security policy by making the expertise in developing local enacting terms with regard to crime prevention available;
- ✓ Improving the development of pilot initiatives in order to stimulate the emergence of new partnerships between the different links of the security chain;
- ✓ Methodologically following up of the initiatives developed by the local authorities within the framework of different agreements;
- ✓ Financial control of the subsidies granted to the local authorities within the different frameworks of the contractual agreements;
- ✓ Developing public and private, as well as national and international partnerships in order to develop an expertise with regard to crime prevention as well as to spread out the best practices;
- ✓ Coordinating specific initiatives (action plans) which unite the different actors around a common and global security policy;
- ✓ Encouraging new initiatives to stimulate the development of local projects in crime prevention.

### **1. Strategic plan of security and prevention**

#### *Methodological and financial support for local authorities*

In 1992, the Federal Public Service Home Affairs introduced the first security contracts and in 1996 the local contracts were adopted, giving an additional focus on urban renewal and became known as "*security and society*" contracts. Since the beginning of 2002, there is no longer a distinction between these security and society contracts and the prevention contracts.

From 2002 till 2006, the Belgian government's Council of Ministers approved the content and budgets of 73 local security and society plans and 29 drug plans to be delivered throughout the country. Security and prevention contracts are granted to communities based on three objective criteria:

- 1) The urban population (more than 60.000 inhabitants);
- 2) The crime rate relative to a specific group of offences;
- 3) The community's socio-economic situation, particularly the average incomes per resident.

For the new period 2007 – 2010, the Belgian Council of Ministers changed the name and clarified the philosophy of the contract and the drug plan; now both are called Strategic Security and Prevention Plans. Actually, the target of the "old contract" doesn't change: supporting the local authorities to develop their policy in the field of prevention and security. However, based on the acknowledgement that the local authorities have to receive more responsibilities and freedom in the management of their projects, the decision was made to engage a reform. More than a new designation, this reform is based on the following mainlines:

1. Give more **autonomy** to the local authorities who establish their own priorities;  
The choice of their priorities needs to be justified by an objective instrument called local diagnostic of security which underline the criminal characteristics of the local authorities. This diagnostic is a condition of acceptability to receive the support and the grant from the Federal Public Service Home Affairs;
2. Improve the **durability ( a period of 4 years )** and the **stabilization** of the local policy in crime prevention;
3. Simplify and **clarify** the administrative procedure:  
The evaluation of the new strategic action-plan is based on SMART indicators attesting the achievement of the expected results.

These strategic plans are focusing on the following phenomena:

- ✓ Theft: burglary, car theft, pick pocketing, swindling, bicycle theft, extortion and shoplifting
- ✓ Violence: on public transportation, interfamilial violence, in school environments, at gatherings and public events
- ✓ Juvenile delinquency
- ✓ Truancy
- ✓ Antisocial behaviour and drug related antisocial behaviour

Hereby, a maximal synergy between police prevention and other local or supralocal enacting terms for crime prevention is recommended (conventions regarding the European Summits, the community guards,...).

Co-production and co-management of community security are at the very heart of Belgium's strategic plans. These conventions not only seek offer well-thought and efficient solutions to public security problems but also to effectively encourage local actors to recognize the role that they can play and the responsibility that they are sharing in the collective endeavour of improving community security.

## 2. Zonal Security Plans

### *Preparation and follow-up of the local police policy*

The Zonal Security Plan (ZSP) is a **strategic plan** that has as goal the planning of the **local police activity within an integral and integrated security approach**. To fix the proprietary tasks and objectives, the local police takes into account the different planning tools of federal authorities (policy guidelines from the authorized ministers, national security plan) as well as

on local level (policy guidelines from the mayors, strategic security and prevention plans, big city planning, social cohesion plans, ...).

The plan is put for approval by the Ministers of Home Affairs and Justice every **4 years** .

### 3. Local plan of Integral Security

*Process guidance for setting up a local integral security policy*

In the same framework as the strategic plans of Security and Prevention, but without any kind of financial support, all Belgian municipalities are encouraged to carry out their own local plan of Integral Security. To elaborate this, the Municipalities officer will receive an adapted monitoring of an expert from the Federal Public Service Home Affairs. This expert will, through +/- 20 visits a year, deliver the Municipalities a process guidance for the conception and implementation of a local integral security plan.

### 4. Community Guards

*Professionalizing new security professions*

Our prevention policies created a number of new security professions such as city-coachers, town guards, park keepers. As a result there were a "colourful" multitude of uniforms on the streets, which causes the citizen to wonder which are the competencies of these non-police security professions. They each had their own denomination, their own job description and their own uniform, though there was no specific regulatory framework. However, they often pursue a common goal.

For the sake of coherence and clearness, there was urgent need for a uniform and consistent legal framework. Since May 2007, a federal law organizes the functional relations between these officials and the police services. This law improves the visibility of these officials by providing them an uniform work outfit with an identical emblem and entrusts these new security officials to their tasks. It is important to keep in mind that they are only allowed to act in the public space and without any kind of pressure (no weapon, tiny hand torches, ... ). Their four missions consist of:

- ✓ Informing and making the citizen more sensitive to some crime issues;
- ✓ Reporting security issues to the relevant authorities;
- ✓ Assessing behaviours or offences sanctioned with an administrative penalties;
- ✓ Insuring a notable preventive presence during the big public event organized by the local authorities.

### 5. Safe European Summits in the capital of Europe

*Preparing and following up the measures taken to face efficiently the European Summits*

In 2002, the Belgian Council of Ministers decided to foresee financial means according Brussels' new role as European capital. Because the organization of European Summits demands specific security measures, additional funds were allocated to Brussels police departments and municipal crime prevention services by the Federal Public Service Home Affairs.

### 6. Coordination of specific action plans

*Mobilising diverse actors for a global prevention approach*

On the initiative of the Federal Public Service Home Affairs, many **specific integral action plans** are being developed, implemented and coordinated in response to several criminal

phenomena that are linked to theft, antisocial behaviour and violence. This global approach of prevention is always developed in cooperation and consultation with **diverse public as well as private partners and actors**. Therefore, a variety of expertise networks is being built and impulses are given to innovating and creative projects.

The Federal Public Service Home Affairs is **prioritizing** the following issues:

- ✓ Theft of both property and data, such as computer crime, pick pocketing and traceability;
- ✓ Burglary prevention;
- ✓ Vehicle crime, such as car theft, bicycle theft, public transportation and parking lot security;
- ✓ Hospital crime;
- ✓ Security in (semi-) public buildings, such as local government offices, schools, administrative buildings, child day care and social services;
- ✓ Neighbourhood mediation;
- ✓ Antisocial behaviours and street work;
- ✓ Drug prevention.

## **7. Secure Home**

*Investing in expertise and quality of prevention advice*

The Federal Public Service Home Affairs already started in 1995 with the development of a policy for situational burglary prevention and the objectives for security advice by the domestic burglary prevention advisors. These domestic burglary prevention advisors are police, town or municipal personnel trained in the practice of domestic burglary prevention. They give free, objective and tailored advices to citizens, self-employed entrepreneurs or providers of (semi-) public services about the way they can optimally secure their homes, work spaces or (semi-) public buildings. Attention is paid to three 3 different kinds of measures that, for an optimal security, need to be applied in that order:

### **1. Organizational measures**

Security starts with adopting good habits. These measures are cheap and simple to carry out. Examples are efficient key control, increasing the visibility of the habitation and concealing valuable objects.

### **2. Mechanical measures**

Strengthening and securing frontage elements, by placing for example shatterproof glass or a security cylinder, also make up an extra obstacle for burglars.

### **3. Electronic measures**

Installing alarm and detection systems are a completion of the other measures.

Recent research on the effectiveness of the project scientifically supports this service and has shown that these qualitative advices have a positive effect on the prevention of an actual burglary. The citizens for the most part carry out advices they have been given to a large or complete extent. They also feel more secure after hearing the technical-preventive advices. For these reasons, the Federal Public Service Home Affairs is investing in the quality and expertise of advices given with regard to burglary prevention:

### **1. Network of burglary prevention advisors**

To facilitate the contacts and the mutual exchange of information between the more than 600 Belgian advisors mutually and the Federal Public Service Home Affairs, a network is created. That way, all the advisors are kept up to date with novelties in the domain of prevention.

## 2. Training

To fulfil their function in an adequate way, domestic burglary prevention advisors are obligated to follow a **specialized training**. This training focuses on the philosophy of domestic burglary prevention, the existing legislations and the different types of security measures. Practical exercises and internships give them the opportunity to apply their knowledge.

The training goes beyond a single training: every two years the advisors have to follow a **refresh course** to stay up to date and guaranty the quality of domestic burglary prevention service.

## 3. Enhancing expertise

In order to guarantee the quality of work of domestic burglary prevention advisors, the Federal Public Service Home Affairs **organizes information sessions and trainings**. The focal point lies on exchanging good practices and determining the state of play in a specific matter concerning domestic burglary prevention.

**Different tools** have been developed:

- Many publications regarding domestic burglary prevention, such as a brochure living securely, leaflets concerning tips before leaving on holiday, renovation/construction of habitation,...
- Does your home resist three minutes to domestic burglary? The citizens can get an electronic, personalized domestic burglary prevention advice by visiting the website [www.testezvotrehabitation.be](http://www.testezvotrehabitation.be).
- The citizens can also visit the virtual home ([www.maisonsure.be](http://www.maisonsure.be)). By a single-clicking, they can obtain accurate advices on the security of different rooms in the house against domestic burglary and fire, an amusing way to get people to start thinking about both security and safety of their home.
- To illustrate their advice to the citizens, the domestic burglary prevention advisors have trolleys with security material at their disposal, composed of examples of cylinders, pieces of shatterproof glass, etc.
- Fiscal advantages for investments in securing against domestic burglary stimulate the citizens to invest in security and safety.

In order to approach the entire home as a whole as a 'secure operating base', other issues apart from burglary prevention such as neighbourhood mediation, computer crime and domestic safety (among which fire safety and accident prevention) need to be addressed as well. Security and safety under the same roof, allows to create an intense cooperation between both.

## 8. Centre of Expertise

By offering a specialized training, making a list of good practices available and developing information and learning networks, the Federal Public Service Home Affairs wants to grow towards a centre of expertise for prevention and integral security for the municipal and provincial authorities, the police zones, the prevention workers and other actors involved. An extended network of experts on the federal, provincial and local levels is an important step to achieving this goal.

The yearly **Belgian Security and Crime Prevention Award** is an important event that allows to stress this even further by giving recognition to the most successful and appealing projects regarding crime prevention. This award was brought to life to stimulate promising and innovative projects and to give recognition to the prevention workers who, day in, day out, commit themselves to its cause and cooperate with the Federal Public Service Home Affairs in a constructive manner...

For additional information: [www.besafe.be](http://www.besafe.be)