



DEUTSCHER PRÄVENTIONSTAG

**CRIME PREVENTION IN THE NETHERLANDS  
status quo and future developments**

von

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Dokument aus der  
Internetdokumentation Deutscher Präventionstag  
**[www.praeventionstag.de](http://www.praeventionstag.de)**

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Zur Zitation:

Jammers, V. (2004): Status quo and Future Development in the Netherlands. In: Kerner, H.-J.; Marks, E. (Hrsg.): Internetdokumentation Deutscher Präventionstag. Hannover. [http://www.praeventionstag.de/content/9\\_praev/doku/jammers/index\\_9\\_jammers.html](http://www.praeventionstag.de/content/9_praev/doku/jammers/index_9_jammers.html)

## 1. National crime prevention policy

Crime prevention in the Netherlands is focussing on four subjects: juvenile crime, violence, business-related crime and integrity.

Prevention of different forms of violence at the local level (domestic, in the streets, in public transport) has been given strong impulses since 2000. Local networks against domestic violence, publicity campaigns against violence in the streets, grants for crime prevention measures in public transport.

Prevention of juvenile crime has proven to be difficult at the community level. Many organisations are involved, but it's not easy for parents and their children to decide which organisation to turn to.

To prevent crime aimed at the business community, a new plan of the government and the business community was launched in January 2004. Projects have been started with the retail sector, with jewellers. Prevention concepts for local co-operation against crime have been developed.

Integrity is an important political topic in Dutch politics. Instruments were developed for integrity screening of individual persons and companies.

I will present you the highlights of these subjects. I will not present them in depth, that would take too much time, but I will be happy to answer all your questions during and after this workshop.

At the end of my presentation I will focus on the organisation of crime prevention in the Netherlands.

## 2. Prevention of violence

In recent years, many activities (including preventive activities) have been undertaken on different levels to reduce the level of violent crime in the Netherlands. Despite these efforts, Dutch society hasn't been able to reduce the number of violent crimes.

In response to this, the Department of Justice took the initiative to develop a program 'prevention of violence'. Until now, the different forms of violence are dealt with separately. The program should bring more coherence in the approach to violence, should make the co-operation between agencies at different levels easier and should prevent overlap in activities or inconsistent activities.

We discerned three different domains:

- violence in private space (for example domestic violence)
- violence in semi-public space (for example at school)
- violence in public space (for example in entertainment districts)

It appeared from research that a substantial part of those who commit violent crimes do this in different domains. About 25 percent of the violent supporters are violent at home too. About 15-20% of those who commit street robbery commit other violent crimes too. About 20% of those who are violent at home commit violent crimes against others. These results led us to the conclusion that we needed preventive activities against the specific forms of violence, but also preventive activities that cover the different forms of violence as a whole.

Activities that have to cover the different forms of violence are:

- Codes of conduct
- Activating bystanders

Activating bystanders is relevant for all forms of violence. People should know that something has to be done, that they can't keep standing by.

It is necessary that for example neighbours who are aware of domestic violence take action. They could talk to the neighbours themselves. They could inform relevant social agencies of

the city. Or they could inform the police.

People who witness violence in streets should choose if they want to intervene or call the police.

A few more words on codes of conduct.

In the Netherlands, and maybe in other countries too, a political debate is going on about the norms and values in society. Nobody seems to know which norms are essential for the Dutch society and which values do we prefer. There is a general feeling that in the last decade an atmosphere of disrespect for norms and values gradually arose.

Many citizens think that they are more equal than others. They allow themselves many liberties in their behaviour, liberties they wouldn't accept from others. Those liberties are not necessarily criminal acts. It mostly is improper, offensive behaviour that doesn't take their fellow-citizens into account.

Examples of this kind of behaviour are throwing litter on the streets; urinating in public places; graffiti on walls; nagging each other at school or at work; causing inconveniences to other people by making loud music or talking loudly in mobile phones.

The atmosphere of disrespect for norms and values has boosted individualism. The social cohesion in neighbourhoods in the larger cities crumbles. Neighbours don't know each other anymore. Conflicts in the neighbourhood aren't solved easily, which could lead to violent and/or criminal behaviour.

The Dutch department of Justice invited schools, cities, sports clubs and other organizations to come forward with ideas for the developments of codes of conduct in their domain. They could receive financial support when those who would have to comply with the code of conduct would be involved in the process of developing the code. Nine organizations came forward; six of them were secondary schools.

The students from the secondary schools have to comply with the code not only at school, but also at trainee posts and in the neighbouring shopping centre.

The process and the results of the experiments are evaluated. In a month we will have the first results of the process evaluation; next year the evaluation of the results.

If the evaluation shows that the codes of conduct lead to less incidents and/or criminal behaviour, they will be recommended to other schools/organizations.

It is important that codes of conduct are enforced. Mediation can be used as a first means to enforce the codes.

### **3. Prevention of juvenile crime**

In 2003 the Dutch government introduced the program Youth Correct, an action plan against juvenile crime. It is part of the broader program 'To a safer society' that was launched by the new Dutch government in 2003.

Youth Correct contains 58 activities aimed at the prevention of crime and the reduction of recidivism. It is aimed at results. Every young person that commits a crime will be subject of some form of punishment or corrective measure. Only corrective measures that have been proven to be effective will be used.

Youth Correct contains five sub-programs, one of which is aimed at the prevention of juvenile crime. This sub-program has two elements:

- The approach towards **first offenders**. This requires quick action focused on preventing repeated criminal behaviour.

Criminal behaviour of young people is often a signal that there is something wrong in the family situation. In such cases it is crucial that the parents become involved, that the underlying problems are identified and that parenting support and assistance is given. Referring a family to a youth care organization as a result of the first contact of the

offender with the police can be more effective in preventing repeated criminal behaviour than a fine or a community service order. But the family must also be aware that it must take action if it wants to avoid some form of punishment for the young offender.

- In the case of **juvenile persistent offenders**, the approach is focused on preventing a long lasting criminal career. It will be necessary to screen these juveniles in order to obtain a good picture of them and their environment so that interventions are well targeted.

Goals of the sub-program are:

- Prevent young people who have an increased risk to commit crimes from actually committing them.
- Prevent young people from who have committed a crime to repeat their criminal behaviour.

Means

- Recognize the risk factors at an early stage.
- Refer the young people (and their family) if necessary to relevant social or educational organisations.
- Accepting interventions is not compulsory, but pressure is exerted.
- Evaluate the effectiveness.

Target group

- Young people (and their parents) who have not (yet) committed a criminal act (youth at risk).
- Young people (and their parents) who have committed a criminal act (first offenders).

Responsibilities

The approach to juvenile crime is a joint responsibility of many parties. The Minister of Justice is responsible at the central level for the co-ordination and implementation of the action programme.

Each sub-program has a program manager. In order to anchor the action program within the implementing organisations as good as possible, a co-program manager with practical experience in these organisations is appointed per sub-programme.

For controlling the programme and monitoring the progress and consistency, all relevant implementing organisations are represented by one of their senior managers in a strategic top-level committee. The Department of the Interior and the Department of Health, Welfare and Sports are also involved in this committee.

Operation YOUNG, under the management of the Department of Health, Welfare and Sports, the Department of Education, Culture and Science, the Department of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Department of Social Affairs and Employment and the Department of Justice, is used to secure the interdepartmental co-operation.

At the regional level, co-operation is sought with the regional juvenile crime platforms. In these platforms, partners co-ordinate their operational activities and priorities with each other at the tactical level. Via these platforms, national policies can find acceptance at the regional level. Conversely, problems in the implementation process can, via these platforms, be brought to the attention of the top-level committee.

The State, the province and the municipalities have a joint responsibility for the youth policy. The municipality is responsible for the management of the broad, general youth policy and the prevention policy for vulnerable groups.

#### **4. Prevention of business related crime**

The prevention of business-related crime has been one of our main topics for the past twelve years. It is a natural objective in view of the high victimization rate of large areas of the business community. Research shows that especially the areas of retail, transport and entertainment districts suffer disproportionately from a wide range of crime, including theft,

vandalism and violence.

To combat business-related crime a public-private Platform was established in 1992, chaired by the Minister of Justice and the President of the National Employers Federation. Other members include representatives of the business community, the police, the public prosecutor and other ministries.

This cooperation led to a number of successful initiatives of which I will name a few:

- a permanent and successfully operating public-private organisation was formed to police and prevent car thefts;
- a special telephone line was installed, named 'M' to enable people to report crime anonymously;
- a public-private organisation was established in which public and private partners work together to promote integrity in organizations;
- regional platforms have been established, those pursue the same goals as the National Platform, albeit directly targeted at the problems and needs in the region.

Seen over the past 12 years our public-private partnership has been very successful and intensified the co-operation between all those involved.

Recently, however, there has been a new surge of activity centered on the prevention of business-related crime. One of the causes of this surge is the recent involvement of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. According to their newly developed policy, business related crime is an essential issue due to the harmful effect on business in particular and the economy in general. Seen from this perspective, crime control is an essential aspect of economic policy.

Another cause of the recent surge in activities is the active involvement of the regional chambers of commerce. This has enhanced the working of our regional platforms and the realization of regional goals.

Seen from a public perspective the police too have recently taken more notice of business-related crime. There is by now within the police a greater awareness of the issues involved in preventing and tackling crime in business areas.

In our opinion the involvement of all the key public and private partners is the only way to seriously control business-related crime. This involvement has certainly played an essential part in view of the negative attitude we sometimes still encounter in some of our contacts with the business community. In some areas crime control is seen solely as a public responsibility, especially of the police. Crime prevention and private responsibility are therefore hardly taken serious.

With the aid of the aforementioned partners our current policies focus on four areas:

1. Firstly, the tackling of crime in a number of business sectors: the transport-sector, the retail-sector, jewellers and business parks, which suffer from high-crime rates.
2. Secondly, the development of area-related public-private partnerships. Namely, partnerships for business-parks and shopping-areas, partnerships for entertainment districts, and finding solutions for problems relating to free riders, those that do not financially participate in community measures but nevertheless enjoy the rewards.
3. Thirdly, the improvement of crime fighting. This includes the improvement of policing in high crime areas and the reporting of crime by electronic means.
4. Finally combating internal crime (theft and fraud within businesses).

In the near future our efforts focused on business-related crime will most probably intensify. More and more we realize that combating business related crime not only influences the companies concerned but also enhances the security of all other parties concerned in the same neighbourhood.

## **5. Integrity**

Legal persons and government organizations are increasingly interested in screening the integrity of the legal persons and the natural persons they want to do business with. Government organizations don't want to grant permits to criminal organizations; they don't want to grant a contract for building or for delivering services to criminal organizations. Legal persons who take great pride in their integrity don't want to do business with legal persons who don't care about integrity. Neither governments nor legal persons want to hire people who are a risk factor because of their criminal record.

The department of Justice provides the Dutch society with three instruments for screening integrity.

- The Permission to register a limited company
- The Statement of moral conduct
- The Integrity advice

### ***The permission to register a limited company***

In the Netherlands, you need to obtain a permission from the Minister of Justice to start a limited company. This permission can be refused if there is a risk that the company will be used for illegal purposes or that the activities of the company will lead to financial losses of its creditors. The criminal records of the people who start the limited company and the criminal records of the people who will form the management of the company are checked for this purpose.

In 2003 about 64.000 limited companies wanted to start. In about 300 cases the permission was refused. In about 500 cases, questions for further information asked by the department of Justice were not answered, or led to the withdrawal of the request for permission.

The system is criticized. The most important critical remarks are:

- The system only sees on limited companies, not on other forms of legal persons.
- The system is a random picture at the start of the company.
- The system is not effective against money laundering and (international) terrorism.
- The system doesn't check foreign legal persons.
- The system doesn't exist in other countries of the EU.

The Dutch government started a project to find answers for these critical remarks.

- Maybe all legal persons should be checked.
- Maybe the check should be repeated at critical moments in the life cycle of a legal person.
- Maybe the system should be skipped, as it doesn't exist in other EU-countries.

### ***The statement of moral conduct***

Another instrument of integrity is the Statement of moral conduct. Until recently, this statement was provided by the mayor of the city where the applicant was living.

In the last ten years, the Department of Justice received an increasing number of requests for information on criminal records, mostly by companies who wanted to hire people for positions of confidence. These companies often stated that the statement provided by the mayor of the city was unreliable.

After two years of preparation a new system is in effect since April 1, 2004. The statement is now provided by the Department of Justice. Centralizing the system made it possible to screen in an objective way, not influenced by local political views. It is expected that the statement will be more reliable for companies who want to hire people than in the past and that it will lead to a reduction of internal crime.

The Statement is provided when the criminal record of the applicant contains no crimes that are relevant for the position the statement is asked for.

Two examples:

A person who wants to be a taxi driver and has been convicted once for drunk driving once, ten years ago, will receive the statement. When he has been convicted three times for drunk driving in the past four years he won't get the statement. A bookkeeper with the same criminal

record will receive the statement.

It's also possible to ask a Statement of moral conduct for a legal person. In these cases, the criminal records of the legal person will be checked, and the criminal records of the management of the legal person. With this statement companies can provide information on their integrity towards business partners.

### ***The integrity advice***

BIBOB is the acronym for the Dutch law named 'Encouraging Integrity Screening by the Government'. The law is in force since July 1, 2003.

The BIBOB-office helps (national, regional, local) governments who don't want to facilitate criminal organisations by granting permits, subsidies or contracts. The BIBOB-office, part of the Department of Justice, provides these governments with an advice on this kind of risks. The office uses a standardised screening process. It uses information provided by the company itself en information from open and closed sources.

Sources are called open when their information is freely available for everybody. For example information from the Chambers of Commerce.

Sources are called closed when their information is only available for those who are entitled to it by law. Examples of closed sources are for example criminal records, police information, tax information.

The BIBOB-office gives an advice to the government that asked for it. It weighs the information from open and closed sources and takes into account the relevance and topicality. The government that asked for the advice is free in the decision it takes.

If the advice is 'no risk' the government can grant the contract, but it could refuse the contract on other grounds.

If the advice is 'some risk' the government can grant or refuse the contract, or grant the contract under additional conditions.

Even if the advice is 'high risk' the government can grant the contract, or grant the contract under additional conditions, refusing the contract is possible too.

## **6. The organisation of crime prevention**

Organisation of crime prevention - responsibilities

- The department of Justice and the department of the Interior
- Other departments
- Municipalities
- Individual citizens, businesses and their organisations

Organisation of crime prevention - responsibilities

- Centre for Crime prevention and Safety
- Starts July 2, 2004
- Helps to implement crime prevention
- Pushes to implement crime prevention