



EUROPEAN CRIME PREVENTION AWARD 2006

Jury report

Introduction

The 2006 European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA) got entries from 13 Member States. Participation was wider than previous year. Thus, over half of the Member States sent their entries. This was the second year when the competition had a specified theme. Apparently some countries have problems finding strong crime prevention projects, if the theme for the competition is too narrow.

The ECPA competition was incorporated with the EU Crime Prevention Network's annual Best Practice Conference, hosted by the Finnish Presidency in Hämeenlinna on 27 and 28 November. The theme of the ECPA competition was the same as for the conference, Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Related Violence, Crime and Disorder. The theme was discussed in the EUCPN Steering Group and approved by the EUCPN Board. The Member States were informed about the theme in 2005 and later in the Board meetings and by Newsletters. A formal call for ECPA 2006 was published on 14 July, 2006.

The ECPA Jury consisted of representatives of the previous EU Presidency (Austria), the current Presidency (Finland) and the two incoming Presidencies (Germany and Portugal). It met in Brussels on 16 November to review the competition entries against five specific criteria defined by the Rules and procedures for awarding and presenting the European Crime Prevention Award. According to the Rules the project:

- shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the specified theme,
- shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives,
- shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches,
- shall be based on co-operation between partners, where possible,
- shall be capable of replication by organisations and groups in other Member States.

Regarding the second criterion, the Jury evaluated the entries separately on the success of the project in achieving most or all of its objectives and the strength of evidence in this respect. The jury notes that evaluation, in spite of it is essential element in a good project practice, is a problematic requirement. There are many kinds of evaluation. The fact that a project is somehow evaluated doesn't necessarily mean that there is strong evidence of the success of the project in prevention/reduction of the target problem. Therefore the basic question is which kind and how strong evidence the project can offer regarding its achievements.

General observations

The Jury was impressed by the nature and scope of all the projects it reviewed. In spite of the narrow theme, the Member States had found projects well fitting the specified theme. None of the projects was anywhere near to be disqualified because of being off-topic.

The Jury was also impressed by the variety of approaches the entries presented. Some focused more on alcohol, others on drugs; rather many focused on the youth, but there were also projects targeted at persistent offending and addiction. The adopted approaches ranged from primary prevention to tertiary prevention and from social prevention to deploying situational strategies to prevent violence, crime and disorder. Social measures could aim to affect early alcohol or drug use as a risk factor of crime or, more generally, to treat alcohol or drug use as a factor contributing to marginalisation. In some projects increased police control or new methods of such control played a prominent role, some other entries trusted merely on the possibilities of youth cultures in prevention of crime.

Because of the variety of problems alcohol and drugs are related to and because of the variety of prevention approaches the entries represent, there is no single measuring rod to give an absolute answer to the question whether a project using one method in preventing/reducing one specific problem is better than another method in preventing/reducing a different kind of problem.

The Jury was also impressed that all the entries represent good crime prevention practice in the sense that in no case could the Jury advise not to replicate elsewhere the method used. Even regarding those projects which are too recent to show results in terms of prevention/reduction of the crime problem there are good reasons to expect that the project would be successful. The Jury notes that, in particular regarding projects aiming to influence the early psycho-social risk factors of crime, there can be notable difficulties to show crime prevention/reduction impact in the short term and by the project itself. It is, however, important that crime prevention will not be limited only to projects that can show short term results. The general crime prevention knowledge refers to the lesson that early intervention schemes, counteracting marginalisation by supporting the youth at risk etc., could in the long run be the most cost-effective crime prevention.

The entries

Every entry in this competition had strengths that attracted the Jury. Thus, the Jury will especially highlight the following points:

The **Czech** entry "*Joint Word*" from the North-Moravian region is a good example of a wide set of measures to tackle social exclusion and alcohol and drug abuse in the Roma community using local co-operation (police, state and local administration, NGOs and representatives from minority groups). The problem is clearly defined and there is rather strong evidence that at least in some respects the project has reached its preventive goals (clear decrease of the number of registered drug addicts and a clear decline of the number of robberies). The Jury held especially positive the mutual change of attitudes on the part of both the police and the minority group in this integration project.

In the **German** project "*Ausweg*" (Way Out) support systems for alcohol- or drug-addicts seem to be successfully connected to the criminal law systems. Mitigation of the punishment is used for those youngsters who have been caught by the police for abuse of hard drugs for the first time or several times of cannabis products and who take part in the program. The project shows a rather low failure rate; the vast majority of the participants have stopped their drug use and also their criminal career. The method seems to be very promising (compared for example with the very low participation in projects where treatment is offered without privileges). Several Member States could

benefit from adopting it—possibly also for other kind of crime problems. Therefore the Jury wishes a more rigorous impact evaluation with a sufficient number of clients.

The **Estonian** project “*Noortekohvik*” aims to establish an alcohol and tobacco free youth café in the city of Tallinn. The need of this kind of alcohol- and tobacco-free atmosphere without pressure to drink and smoke for the youth is well reasoned by a survey research. The careful planning (including notations that the prices have to keep low) attracted the Jury. The Jury was also fond of the idea to use the café as a work place for youngsters sentenced to community service.

The **Finnish** entry, “*Katujen yö 2002*” (Night of the Streets), co-operation project between the Kerava city’s youth department, other municipal departments, parishes, the local police, Finnish Red Cross, sport clubs etc. was considered to be a well planned reaction to the previous year’s fatal violence during the end-of-school-year weekend when vast alcohol consumption and related harms are a problem. The project seems to have clear effect on the local feeling of safety where, in a rather small town, even fatal single incidents can play major role. The methods can be recommended for calming down same kind of annual youth parties.

The **French** entry “*Addiction Prevention Competition*” from the Alsace region attracted the Jury by its strong confidence in the secondary school students’ own ability to create the best pedagogical material against drugs. The competition and rewards for chosen material are innovative. The high participation rates and the satisfaction of the participants found in the evaluation are indications of clear success. The project has several nice fresh elements and has found innovative ways to spread anti-drug information by the youth to the youth.

The **Lithuanian** entry “*Treshold*” aims to prevent repeated criminality by providing social services and rehabilitation programs etc. to released prisoners, many of whom have alcohol and drug problems. Services include professional dependence treatment programs as well as self-help groups and the project as whole is based on wide co-operation between state and other institutions. The methods are proven. The re-conviction rate is very low and the project shows success also according to other performance indicators.

The **Dutch** entry “*Veiligheid op Straat*” (The Streets Safe and Secure) from the city of Zwolle is based on an earlier local project tackling problems caused by bars. The re-born project has analysed the partly altered problems and based on this study and earlier experiences launched a series of measures including, for example, information meetings between the police and the bar owners, weapon detection schemes in a number of locations, anger management lessons to doormen, rules for Happy Hours and a penalty system for bars where drugs are found. The Jury was impressed by the analysis of the problems and the series of well-reasoned subprojects this has led to.

The **Polish** entry “*Yellow and Red Card*” from Elblag is based on an opinion poll which showed that consumption of alcohol and intoxicated persons constitute big nuisance in public places. The project has adopted a clear warning/sanction system in cases licensed premises selling or serving alcohol are violating the law (repeated violation leads to withdrawal of the licence). Reported crime has decreased since the project started and there have been practically no violations on the premises after the warning “Yellow card”. The Jury liked the simplicity and transparency of the administrative sanction system.

The **Portuguese** entry “*Women and Minor Nucleus Project*” (NMUME) is a nation-wide response by the *Guarda Nacional Republicana* to the domestic violence problem. It includes training and coordination at the national level, regional teams with operative functions and local posts with specialized persons for investigating and providing support and protection to female and minor victims of violence. The programme is based on wide partnership co-operation. Thus it has rather complex, well planned and sustainable architecture. The Jury considered the target problem as important. Alcohol and drugs play a significant role also in domestic violence cases. The Jury also noted clear achievements such as improved investigation and counselling of domestic violence cases as well as increased reporting as a sign of attitude change and as a factor promoting prevention.

The **Swedish** entry “*The Växjö Model*” attracted the Jury as a well-planned and clear project which can show results in reduced violent crime. Methods were a zero-tolerance approach towards the possession of alcohol among youths and a control of illegal sale to them. In the last respect alcohol taxes have been used innovatively as tough economic penalties. During the project, impressive amounts of alcohol have been confiscated. Reported street assaults have decreased by 17 per cent in two years, the trend differing from the development in neighbouring cities and nation-wide. The targeted problem, an easy access to alcohol for minors, should be found in many Member States. Also the check-list to the police officers attracted the Jury.

Three strongest winner candidates

The Jury was, however, unanimous that among the entries there were three strongest winner candidates. They are very different from each other but each one excellently satisfies all the criteria mentioned in the ECPA rules. They are Denmark’s Ringsted Experiment, the Hungarian Don’t you dare! and the UK’s the Tower Project.

The **Danish** entry “*Ringstedforsøget*” (The Ringsted Experiment) is exceptional. It is a local school project informing children on tobacco, alcohol, drugs and crime, that is, core areas of primary crime prevention. But the project is a randomized experiment. That kind of design is rare in crime prevention projects in general and especially so in primary prevention projects using information as prevention method. This is without doubt the strongest evidence project among the entries.

The project had two objectives: first, to reduce children’s exaggerated beliefs about other children’s risk behaviour and, secondly, to examine whether reductions in normative misperceptions of other children’s risk behaviour would impact the children’s own actual risk behaviour. A large questionnaire was distributed among both the treatment and control classes in Ringsted schools. The results regarding smoking were discussed in the classroom with children from treatment classes, as were reasons for the exaggerations found. Follow-up questionnaires were distributed six weeks and a year after the intervention. Results: both misperceptions about other children’s risk behaviour and children’s own actual risk behaviour (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, criminal activity) were significantly reduced (penal offences halved) in the treatment classes.

The project has a strong theoretical foundation and it increases our understanding of the risk behaviour of the youth and of how different kinds of risk behaviour are inter-correlated. The thesis of the effects of normative misperceptions is known among experts but seldom notified and, as far the Jury knows, this is the first time it has been properly tested. As a whole, the project is strongly innovative.

From a co-operation point of view there is only necessary co-operation between the academic researcher team and the local 24 school classes. The project itself requires special skills for replication, but its lessons are replicable everywhere and even in wider connections.

The **Hungarian** entry "*Don't you dare! crime prevention model project*" is part of a bigger youth project in Esztergom. One subproject is specially targeted to prevention of drug use and related crime. The project is complex. Mixed groups of peers (girls from Roma minorities, some involved in minor offences, students with supportive attitude, girls from foster homes etc.) have been trained to work as supporters. These groups, co-operating extensively with the municipality, with film experts, jurists etc. made four short films. One subproject film *Drug slide* was more specifically the contest of the competition entry. Films were in turn played and analysed in the classes of the educational institutions taking part in the program. The success was evaluated by the participation and motivation of the participants and by public hearings. The project states with reason that this kind of project has to be merely evaluated by qualitative changes. As such it is mentioned that the initial passivity of the directly delegated youngsters turned into active participation. The integration of the mentally slightly defective young and Roma, their involvement and acceptance in the group work, or improvement of learning skills, are also mentioned as achievements.

The Jury viewed the short film *Drug slide*. The film is strong evidence that film shooting, writing the manuscript and playing with peers and adults have been in several respects important integrating and educating experience for the socially weak minority members of the groups. The Jury believes that the films also better work as educational material when created by the youth to youth.

Especially the Jury was fond of the well planned and implemented co-operation and high-spirited confidence on youth cultures and cultural tools in crime prevention. This kind of youth work should be promoted in spite of difficulties in showing quantitative results in crime prevention.

The **United Kingdom's** entry, "*The Tower Project*" from Blackpool, focuses on reducing repeated offending by drug dependent offenders. The background of the project was a rapid increase of crime typical for drug addicts, linked to the increase in the use of crack and heroin. These prolific offenders commit a lot of crime. It was estimated that each offender in the target group committed from 5 to 50 offences per month. A local multi-agency team of the Police, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service and NACRO worked together from the local police station to manage the target offenders and to offer interventions to stop their criminality. Offenders were given immediate access to drug treatment and support with housing, benefits and lifestyle. Those offenders that continued to offend despite interventions were subject to police surveillance, stop checks and disruption tactics.

The aim of the project was to reduce by 30 per cent within the first year the number of offences of burglary, robbery and vehicle crime committed by the target group and reduce the average illegal drug use of the target group also by 30 per cent. Both goals were reached and the project has shown also its cost-efficiency.

The project is very clear and professional with professional partnership structure, structured performance and good intelligence. There were clear numeric reduction goals that were reached. There can be elements which are peculiar to the British legal and administrative environment, but the main lesson of the project is important and replicable in every society where drug addiction is a problem: a lot of crime is needed to fund

heroin (or other hard drug) addiction and repeated offending is hardly prevented without tackling the dependence. The Tower Project is one successful model to be considered.

The 2006 ECPA winner

Finally the Jury, pointing that the choice between these three strong candidates was not an easy one, decided unanimously that

the 2006 ECPA winner is the Ringsted Experiment.

Ringsted Experiment is awarded the prize not only because the project presents the strongest possible evidence of effectiveness by using an experimental design. This was considered to be only one merit of the project. The Jury selected the project because it gives us a new lesson to be considered especially in educating the youth on crime and other risk behaviour. The lesson may be important also more generally for crime and crime prevention information.

The Danish project, the Jury believes, has best promoted our knowledge of good crime prevention.

November 2006

On behalf of the ECPA Jury

Hannu Takala
Chair