

Summary

In January 2001 the municipality of Venlo started Hektor, a programme to tackle the (soft) drug trade and drug related nuisance. This project consists of a three course policy in order to establish a substantial reduction of (soft)drugs related criminality and nuisance: 1. an enforcement trajectory, focused on the drug related criminality and nuisance; 2. a real estate trajectory, focused on controlling real estate objects in possession of malafide owners; 3. a coffeeshop trajectory, focused on the relocation of some tolerated coffeeshops to the outskirts of Venlo.

Research design

In commission of the Ministry of Justice and the municipality of Venlo, bureau for social-scientific research and consultancy INTRAVAL developed indicators to measure developments of both the efforts of the Hektor programme and the expected results. After a first measurement in 2001 (year of reference) subsequent measurements for 2002 and 2003 have been carried out. The measurements include the following research methods: analyses of police and municipal registrations; a questionnaire among entrepreneurs; and observations by members of the city watch.

Efforts

In the Hektor programme government, police, Department of Justice, customs and several other (governmental) agencies collaborate in the implementation of the three course policy. The police and the Counsel for the Prosecution have investigated a large number of drug dealing related estate in the city centre. This has led to several closings of shops, bars and private residencies. Furthermore an intensive tackling strategy towards drug runners and drug dealers was implemented in the problem area 'Q4'. This has led to a great number of apprehensions and prosecutions.

Results

Drug related nuisance in the city-centre has, according to citizens and entrepreneurs, not changed significantly in the period 2001-2003. Entrepreneurs outside the Q4-area of the city centre indicate an increase in drug related nuisance, especially the annexation of public space by drug addicts, dealers and drug runners.

Furthermore, drug related nuisance seems to have transferred to the south part of Venlo. Here in some streets the number of drug nuisance reports (drug addicts, drug dealing) has increased in 2003. Also more drug related nuisance has been reported on the Maaskade in the city centre. Camera surveillance, in effect since 2002, could be partially responsible for this. The police has not received any signals indicating a transfer of drug related nuisance to surrounding municipalities.

Between 2001 and 2003 citizens report less feelings of unsafety. In 2001 50% state to feel unsafe now and then against 37% in 2003. However, the rate of victimization (threat, theft, assault etcetera.) for both citizens and entrepreneurs has not changed significantly.

The diminished presence of drug addicts, dealers and drug runners in the city-centre has led to an increase in the number of visitors and shopping public. Also the number of entrepreneurs in the city centre has increased with 3% since 2001, while the number of sold houses and retail businesses on the real estate market doubled between 2001 and 2003.