

Executive summary

In the Netherlands¹ 23 Regional Platforms of Crime control (RPC) are active. RPCs are collaborations of public and private parties, including among others small and large entrepreneurs, the Chamber of Commerce, the police and the local government. The platforms focus on the prevention of crimes against businesses.

Each RPC is different and not all RPC's are equally successful. The Ministry of Justice, wanted the RPC's to be evaluated. This evaluative research investigates the functioning of the RPCs as well as aspects of the platforms that contribute to their success or failure.

Methods

In order to gain insight into the functioning of the RPC's and to discover the differences between them, information was gathered in several ways; through a literature search, written sources on the RPCs, interviews and a questionnaire. Thirty interviews were held with contacts of each RPC and with several other people concerned. The questionnaire was sent to all 351 members of the Dutch RPCs, with a response rate of 70%.

RPC in practice

The initiative to start a RPC in a given area is almost always taken by the Chamber of Commerce and/or the police. These parties both send two participants to the platform. An average RPC also includes two representatives from the local authority, a representative from the Public Prosecution Service, a representative from national organisations representing business interests (MKB and VNO/NCW) and four local entrepreneurs or representatives of local associations of entrepreneurs. There generally is a balance of parties representing public and private interests.

The participants in the RPCs generally have high positions in their own organisation. Participants spend between 1 and 5 hours a month on their RPC membership. RPC chairmen spend slightly more time on the project. There is not much difference between the parties in the time spent on the RPC.

New RPCs receive a 10.000 euro subsidy from the Ministry of Justice. Apart from this, they have no structural income and none of the platforms ask for a fixed contribution from their members. Most receive contributions from some parties, either for a specific project or for general use. Twelve RPCs have a permanent project manager, ten of whom have been detached for 0.4 fte or more by the police for their RPC-work. All platforms have a part-time secretary (0.05 – 0.2 fte). The majority of secretaries have been provided by the Chamber of Commerce.

Each RPC is involved with up to six projects, combined with several other activities such as providing information to entrepreneurs. Many of the projects that started in 2005 are about supplying information on crime prevention to local entrepreneurs. At the start of 2006 around 245 Certificates of Safe Enterprise were being obtained. In these projects shopping centres or industrial areas become safer

¹ As of januari 1st 2006.

through the cooperation of public and private parties. The RPC gets the partners together and facilitates the process for these projects.

The RPC according to the participants

The goal of the RPCs is a fall in crime against entrepreneurs, but the effects of preventive measures are difficult to measure and there are only a few RPCs who systematically collect data on local crime. The opinion of the participants is therefore counted as an indicator of result in the present research.

According to most participants the main goal of the RPC is to cooperate in a public-private setting. Benefits from these activities have been widely noticed; many parties have developed a greater understanding of other parties in the cooperation and have gained more insight into their work. Moreover network structures have appeared that did not exist before they participated in the RPC. This becomes clear from a network analysis that has been conducted on each RPC. In interviews project managers and secretaries pointed out that entrepreneurs have furthered their interest in prevention due to RPC-activities. As far as the public-private cooperation is concerned the RPCs appear to bring parties closer together. Over half of the participants think that the police, local government and associations of local entrepreneurs gain the most from the RPC-cooperation.

Factors for success and failure

In the present research four general indicators of success have been created based on the number of activities undertaken by the RPC and the opinion of the RPC participants. These indicators have been analysed on several explanatory aspects.

The amount of fte available to a RPC appears to be the most influential factor for the number of activities an RPC undertakes, especially when combined with a permanent project manager. Budget does have an influence on the results of the RPC, but not as much as fte. RPCs that do not have subdivisions of 'working groups' and 'steering committees' have better results than those that do. RPCs seem to benefit from a solid structure such as a foundation and/or a project manager. Those RPCs that are made up of a majority of high ranking participants function slightly less well than RPCs with a majority of lower ranking members. RPCs chaired by a local businessman have better results in terms of output and the participants are more contented. The absence of certain parties does not appear to be crucial for the success of an RPC, though some participants do mention missing the provincial authorities in the RPC. Strikingly, lawyers and notaries play a very limited role in the cooperation.

Conclusion

By and large the picture that appears of the RPCs is not a negative one even though the effect of the RPCs is hard to trace due to the lack of monitoring of their activities. In particular the public-private cooperation is reasonably successful and those who participate as project managers and secretaries of different parties are positive about them. The insight parties gained into the work of other parties is also a positive result. With a small budget, RPCs have undertaken significant activities in the area of crime prevention. A few RPCs lag

behind, both in terms of activity and insight. These RPCs have hardly any fte available and lack the commitment of certain parties.

Generally it can be said that the local authorities and entrepreneurs in the cooperation seem to lack the necessary commitment.