

SUMMARY

For years already Venlo is dealing with a considerable amount of drug nuisance. This nuisance is largely caused by German drug tourists who frequently visit the town's city centre. Between 2001 and 2004 the drug problems and drug-related crime were tackled by means of a three-track policy named Hektor. This policy is aimed at enforcement, real estate and policies concerning coffee shops. The Hektor approach was formally continued in 2005. In commission of the municipality of Venlo and the Wetenschappelijk Onderzoeks en DocumentatieCentrum (WODC) of the Department of Justice, INTRAVAL, Bureau for Research and Consultancy, has carried out an evaluation of Hektor in 2005. Special attention was given to the (intended) actions and the results of the project, while at the same time a process evaluation of the implementation and execution of the project was conducted.

Research questions and methods

The central question of the evaluation is: to what extent have the intended approach of Hektor in 2005 and the intended results been realised? For the evaluation the following research methods have been applied: interviews with persons in the project organisation and the existing (standing) municipal and police organisation; study and analysis of policy documents, recorded minutes and reports of municipal agencies; analysis of registrations from the police, the municipality and the Public Prosecutor; observations and counts of the city watch; and a questionnaire among entrepreneurs in the city centre of Venlo.

Process

With the continuation of Hektor in 2005, the tackling of drug nuisance in Venlo has largely been carried out as planned. The three-track policy has largely been carried out in the same way as in the first period. The governmental enforcement has been intensified, as intended. Furthermore, the intended amount of resources has been used and the embedding of the (enforcement) tasks in the existing organisations has also taken place. The designing phase of the real estate track has been rounded off in 2005 with the Wijk Ontwikkelings Plan, a plan to redesign and rebuild parts of the inner city (including the area Q4). The intention to make a decision about the initial Hektor assignment concerning coffee shops - developing a policy for an additional two coffee shops in the periphery of Venlo (as an experiment) - has not been carried out in 2005.

Results

Hektor's results for 2005 are somewhat ambivalent. On the one side the drug nuisance from cannabis customers in the area's Q4 and Venlo-Zuid has decreased, while on the other side the number of reports of drug nuisance are still substantial. Furthermore, the nuisance experienced among entrepreneurs has barely changed since the previous year. The increasing number of drug nuisance reports are partly caused by a temporary expired mandate to restrain the presence of drug dealers and drug runners in the public sphere. It seems that the area Q4 - also because of the transference of two coffee shops from the centre to the border area of Venlo - has been relieved by the efforts of Hektor, but that other parts of the city perhaps experience slightly more nuisance. Due to the intensified governmental enforcement, more premises have been closed down because of the trade in soft and/or hard drugs than in previous years.

Successes and failures

It seems that, compared with the first period of Hektor, a more integral vision is shared by all parties concerned. This has had a great positive influence on the collaboration. The collaboration in enforcement was successful, and the results for governmental enforcement of drug dealing premises, illegal outlets (of soft drugs) and the application of the Bibob policy were good. However, the intended strategy concerning the tackling of organised crime has not been carried out in 2005. Also, an intended collaboration with the municipal youth programme Achilles has barely taken shape in 2005.