

'Loafers' – The prevention of juvenile delinquency among risk prone youth in the endangered suburbs of Pécs

The city of Pécs has an average position of criminality in Hungary. The City Council of Pécs passed the city's crime-prevention concept in April 2004, and this model project was the first step in complying with the tasks based on the legal obligations of the concept. The model project received financial support from the National Crime Prevention Board of the Ministry of Justice.

The project aims at decreasing the number of youth (who are between the ages of 16 and 25, outside of the formal education system and unemployed) who spend their spare time on the streets, without doing anything useful or meaningful. These youngsters are at a significant danger of becoming juvenile criminals and victims. The number of acts of violence related to the consumption of alcohol and drugs (street robbery, breach of the peace, nuisance and assault) committed on the streets of two of Pécs' suburbs by youth between the ages of 16 and 25 has significantly increased in the last few years. To achieve this aim the project would like to prevent the members of the target group from becoming offenders and victims of these crimes.

As a first step, a survey was conducted on the number and the composition of these youngsters, and also about their problems and needs.

The project set-up an alarm-system among organisations and authorities dealing with youth at risk.

A network of youth work volunteers was established, composed of local youth.

By organising free-time activities the project created possibilities for the youth to spend their spare time on a creative way. The youngsters involved entered into a personal relationship with the partner organisations and authorities.

Trainings related to drug and alcohol prevention, healthy lifestyle, self-esteem, career and legal counselling were organised in the youth clubs and at the partners.

The project did not aim at inventing new methods of crime prevention, but at coordinating the already working programmes managed by the partners and to establish links among the partners and between the partners and the target group.



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Please answer the following questions in English.

1. What is the title of the project?

'Loafers' – The prevention of juvenile delinquency among risk prone youth in the endangered suburbs of Pécs

2. Please give a short general description of the project.

The project, which has a duration of 12 months (01/12/04-30/11/05), aims at decreasing the number of youth (who are outside of the formal education system and unemployed) who spend their spare time on the streets, without doing anything useful or meaningful. These youngsters (between the ages of 16 and 25) are at a significant danger of becoming juvenile criminals and victims. The number of acts of violence related to the consumption of alcohol and drugs (street robbery, breach of the peace, nuisance and assault) committed on the streets of two of Pécs' suburbs (in the Eastern-part of Pécs, called Meszes, and in a residential area, called new Garden City) by youth between the ages of 16 and 25 has significantly increased in the last few years. Based on the concept of crime prevention and public security approved by the Municipality of Pécs in April 2004, an alarm-system was elaborated in cooperation with organisations and authorities dealing with youth at risk. The partners are meeting regularly to ensure that close cooperation is realized. As part of the project training has been held regularly in connection with self-esteem, healthy-lifestyle and legal matters in two newly equipped locations in the two mentioned suburbs. Other events have also been organised, such as regular free-time activities, a camp, clubs and cultural and sport events. At these events the partners tried to get close to the youth and to collect important information about them (what would they like to do, in what kind of problem areas do they need the help of professionals, etc). The events also aimed at giving the youth advice – with the assistance of social and youth workers – on how to get over personal problems, and to give them alternatives on how to spend their spare-time.

3. Please describe the objective(s) of the project?

The objectives of the project are the following:

- To decrease the percentage of crimes and acts of violence committed by youngsters.
- To establish a continuous dialogue among the cooperating partners (organisations and institutions dealing with youth at risk) and a personal relationship between the partners and the target group given that these youngsters (outside of formal education and unemployed) have no official connection with any state or local institutions.
- To get an overall view regarding the situation of the youth, their problems and needs and to be able to handle their problems.

- To inform the youth about the danger of drug and alcohol consumption, and the negative results of committing a crime.
- To give the youngsters living in urban area alternatives on how to spend their free-time. This can help their mental development in a manner which is in line with their needs and expectations, and also to prevent them from using their spare-time for committing crime or consuming alcohol or drugs.
- To form a personal relationship with them, to increase their confidence and to give them support by professional social and youth workers to be able to solve their own problems.
- To redirect them to the world of education and work.

4. How was the project implemented?

To achieve the aims of the project:

- A new and effective communication was initiated between organisations and authorities already trying to do some separate crime-prevention youth work.
- This network also functions as an alarm system signalling the possibility of deviant behaviour to the concerned authority or organisation in order to be able to prevent a youth from becoming an offender or a victim of a crime.
- Youth clubs were founded in the two suburbs involved in the project, equipped with computers and board games. Currently these are the most attractive tools to make the youth come in, and the first step in starting communication between the youth and the social workers running these clubs. Through the personal relationship established this way the youth are involved in already existing programmes that help them to get back into the education system or into the labour market.
- Trainings about drug and alcohol prevention, healthy lifestyle, self-esteem, career and legal counselling are held both in the youth clubs and at the partners.
- From this year youth living in Pécs are involved as volunteers to the work. The organisers are trying to build up a network of volunteers, and they also have two international volunteers helping them in the clubs organising some intercultural workshops. In this way racism among the youth should decrease, and their attention is also turned to other cultures. A new system is being established to remunerate voluntary work by so-called youth cards, that would allow the youngsters working as volunteers to use some services such as movies, swimming-pools, internet points, etc. with a discount. (new partners are still sought for in this field).
- Cultural and free-time activities have been organised:
 - so-called photo-walks, where the kids took photos of their suburb and made an exhibition of the photos in the youth club afterwards,
 - a Kid's Day, where parents and kids could play together,
 - an Extreme-sport Day, where the kids could show their skills in cycling, climbing and could also meet policemen, firemen and their equipment. Also some concerts were held that represent their sub-culture (the number of participants was around 200-300)
 - a Miner's Day, where they could meet again with our partners and partake in some sport games as well as manual activities with teachers and volunteers (the number of participants was around 50 kids and their parents)
 - a Loafers-camp (the budget for this came from another source, but the target-group was recruited from the youth clubs), where our partners were working with around 60 kids on issues like crime-prevention, healthy life-style, etc.
- The whole project was documented. A documentary film has been prepared in order to collect all the experiences and to be able to promote and distribute them, especially given that the organisers wanted this project to be a model for other cities as well. As a result of this model-project another project on the same topic has already begun in the county, based on similar ideas and structure.

5. Were partners involved in planning and/or development and/or implementation of the project? If so, who were they, and what were their roles?

The partners were involved in all phases of the project from the planning to the evaluation. The partners and their activities are the followings:

- The Municipality of Pécs: coordination and co-finance and management of the project, the execution of the concept on crime prevention and public security, providing for the sites of the activities (buildings, public places).
- Public Company for the Youth of Baranya county: implementation of the project – coordination, administration, project-management, the management of the alarm-system and of the youth clubs.
- The Headquarters of the Police of Pécs – Crime-prevention department: giving information about deviant youth, sharing their experience, participating in the advisory service and in other events.
- Probation Service of Baranya county: giving information about their clients, involving them in the programmes of the project, organisation of information forums.
- Unemployment Office of Baranya county: giving information about their clients, sharing information on their activities, helping in the advisory service.
- The Council of Roma Minority of Pécs: giving information about youngsters, sharing their experience and participating in the advisory system.
- Kethanipe Foundation: involving Roma youth in the events organised by the project.
- 'Grundsulí' Foundation: management of programmes reintegrating youth into the world of education and work
- Family and Child-welfare Service: crisis management and problem solving when prevention is not effective any more.
- Civil Guards: helping in the target group survey .

The project is opened to any youth clubs, NGOs, schools and professionals working in this field. They were involved in the activities on a case-by-case basis.

6. How did you build in plans to measure the performance of the project?

The following indicators were built in the project:

Measuring:

- the number of youth involved in the programmes,
- the number of volunteers,
- the number of youth getting job, or going to school, or courses,
- the monthly reports of the police about the crimes committed by youth,
- the statistics of the partners about youth attending their activities.

There was also a web-site launched on this project www.csellengok.pecs.hu, where the number of visitors are counted. Also the youngsters entering the clubs, courses and events were registered. The media followed the entire life of the project with articles appearing in newspapers and interviews on the local TV. There was also a documentary prepared and the programme is promoted in accordance with it. The big events, such as Miner's Day and the Extreme Sports Day were planned to call to the attention of everyone living in that area that there is a programme for the youth and also to take it closer to the youth themselves. As experienced, the name of the programme, 'Loafers', got another meaning. It no longer has pejorative connotations but instead the youngsters now initiate communication with our youth and social workers by using the name of the programme.

7. Has the project been evaluated? How, and by whom?

The project was monitored by the National Crime Prevention Board, from where the project won its financial support. Based on documents and interviews with the coordinators of the programme the auditor has done an evaluation, according to which the project was found successful and deserves to be continued. At the end of November the project will be evaluated in the framework of a conference. The Assembly of the Municipality of Pécs will also evaluate the project results.

8. What were the results? How far were the objectives of the project achieved?

The results were very impressive given that in the last 30 years there were no constructive youth social work programmes built with such a wide participation of authorities and NGOs. The project became widely known, and the street-work resulted in youngsters who have confidence in the youth workers and who have started to use the facilities realized in the project. The objectives of the programme have fully achieved: the alarm-system is up and working, the youth clubs and the courses have great interest, and the target group can be addressed. This is only the first step, and it needs continuation. It is almost one year since the project has been functioning and this time is not enough to show long-term result, but the programme is needed to decrease juvenile crime for sure. On the 13th of October, 2005 the Assembly of the Municipality of Pécs decided to continue of the project. The project did not aim at inventing new methods of crime prevention, but at coordinating the already working programmes managed by the partners and to establish links among the partners and between the partners and the target group.