

# Activities to Raise Awareness About Urban Security



## ● Key Words:

#crime prevention

#awareness-raising

#citizen participation

#social interventions

Educating the public by raising awareness on potential threats is one of the most common strategies for crime prevention. Awareness campaigns are efficient because they are based on the premise that we act in accordance with the knowledge we have. Thus, based on the *awareness paradigm*, when somebody does not behave in a certain way, it might be because they lack information.

However, according to research conducted by the [European Crime Prevention Network \(2020\)](#)<sup>1</sup>, knowledge about crime does not necessarily result in decreased crime rates or less victimisation. This is because human behaviour is influenced by a range of factors, such as planned behaviour, rational choices, role models, and social norms. Knowledge is just one factor.

In order to create a successful awareness initiative, it is important to take into account more than just how best to “impart information”. Here are the key points to consider:

- **CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND** - Do not focus exclusively on knowledge transfer, but rather take into account socio-economic and cultural factors (e.g., who is seen as a role model, individual psychology, social norms). Do not ignore subjective feelings and fears.
- **EVALUATION** - Conduct an ex-ante process and impact evaluation to critically examine why the campaign was effective or not. The temptation is to rely solely on process evaluation, but having printed 5,000 posters – the reach – does not say anything about the campaign’s effectiveness.
- **MESSAGE IS KEY** - Draft a message that is relevant, to the point, simple and specific. Do not tell people what they already know, unless there is a reason why they should be reminded of something at that particular time. Call for action rather than only give information.
- **CHOOSING THE RIGHT MEDIUM** - Map out and use the medium that best allows you to reach your target audience.
- **HOLISTIC APPROACH** - Awareness campaigns should be part of a wider, coordinated approach. Given the complexity of security challenges, only holistic interventions can be effective.
- **ACT LOCALLY** - The more localised (the closer it is to citizens) a campaign is, the more chances it has to be effective, so it is better to focus on a particular neighbourhood than an entire city. Use images that are recognisable and relatable to the selected audience in the area.

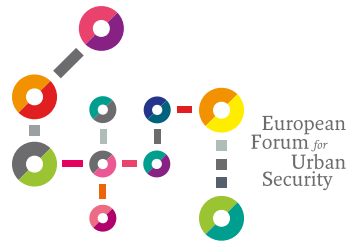
<sup>1</sup>EUCPN (2020). Mythbuster: Awareness-raising never hurts, does it? Brussels: EUCPN.

The [BeSecure-FeelSecure \(BSFS\) project](#) (2019-2023) implemented in the Greek city of Piraeus, but replicable elsewhere, also used awareness initiatives (including social, spatial, and IT measures), to make the city safer.

TOPIC	Students awareness of bullying and cyber-threats	Training for local shop owners
<p><b>HOLISTIC APPROACH</b></p>	<p>Actions to raise awareness among students and the training of shop owners are part of a broader holistic approach on urban security implemented in the city of Piraeus through the BSFS project. This holistic approach includes the design and implementation of social mobilisation actions (students’ awareness actions, shop owners’ training, consultation meetings, training sessions for civil servants, sport events); spatial actions based on the CPTED approach, actions at the cyber level (CURiM), and the establishment of the Local Council for Crime Prevention and of the Victim Support Unit. All these actions require the development of a wide and robust network of local stakeholders and citizens as well as their active engagement in the co-production of urban safety. In this context, diagnostic research was conducted (with representative samples of citizens on the one hand and shop owners on the other, in the two districts of the city) in order to record the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of crime and insecurity in the area under examination. In addition, meetings with citizens and local stakeholders were organised to get insights into local issues of crime and security, and to hear about what citizens propose to improve the quality of life in their city.</p> <p><i>(To learn about the BSFS practices, which were implemented simultaneously, please see the Efus factsheets on baseline assessment, CURiM, Victims Support Unit, Local Council for Crime Prevention, and spatial interventions).</i></p>	
<p><b>EVALUATION</b></p>	<p><b>Ex-ante evaluation:</b> Before the design and implementation of the awareness-raising sessions, meetings were organised with the Directorate of the Education Department of the City of Piraeus and the school committees, as well as with parents and guardians’ associations in order to understand the state of play on bullying and the use of internet by students.</p> <p><b>Process evaluation:</b> 4 high schools and 680 students reached</p>	<p><b>Ex-ante evaluation:</b> Before the design and implementation of the training sessions for shop owners, consultation meetings were organised with the Piraeus Commercial Association. Diagnostic research was also conducted using a sample group of local shop owners and employees in two districts of the city of Piraeus.</p> <p><b>Process evaluation:</b> 100 local businesses reached</p>

TOPIC	Students awareness of bullying and cyber-threats	Training for local shop owners
<b>MESSAGE IS KEY</b>	Bullying can take different forms and appear both on- and offline. Advices and support can be provided to prevent it and react to it.	Business owners can take effective measures, presented during the workshop, according to their needs and the challenges they face in their everyday business life to protect themselves from victimisation and repeat victimisation (especially regarding thefts, burglaries, and robberies) and actively engage in the co-production of urban safety in their community.
<b>CHOOSING THE RIGHT MEDIUM</b>	Hybrid sessions (both online and in-person) for students.	Online workshop - due to Covid-19 restrictions - for Piraeus local shop owners.
<b>THE MORE LOCAL, THE BETTER</b>	Carried out in schools from two districts in the city.	The training was given to local shop owners in Piraeus.

## Project Partners



**EUROPEAN UNION**  
European Regional Development Fund

This project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative under grant agreement number **UIA04-274**

The dissemination of results herein reflects only the author's view and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.