

“Ruim Baan: Looking beyond a case”

An early detection of social and drug related problems leading to sustainable interventions for offenders of common crime

Dutch probation and public prosecution

- Probation advises judges, public prosecutor's office and the prison system. Executes early interventions, behavioral training and community services. Does the supervision in cases of conditional sentences.
- Dutch public prosecution deals with common crime usually without judicial intervention. This happens in close collaboration with probation services and various different partners, as shown in the short ZSM video.

Why did we start “Ruim Baan; looking beyond a case”

- Probation payed by output: the number of products realized in a year. Leded to a practice that focused on producing products instead of focusing on realizing the actual goals of probation: to support desistance from crime.
- Leded to unsatisfactory results: producing standard products did not meet with the needs of public prosecution, prison system and offenders.
- Due to decentralisation municipality is responsible for youth care, social care, shelter and mental health. Probation needs to connect areas of care, social services and criminal justice.
- Public prosecution likes probation to detect what’s really going on: which social and drug related problems can be seen beyond the case and which possibilities can be found to solve these problems?

What did we do?

- We created two experiment regions
- A team of probation officers and public prosecutors are given a free hand: detect social problems beyond common crime and do whatever is needed to avoid recidivism and support desistance from crime.
- Combine competences of public prosecutors and probation officers: what is needed, how can criminal justice interventions support necessary care and social interventions?
- Professionals were allowed to forget all regulations that could obstruct the necessary interventions.
- A team of researchers of the Utrecht University of Applied Science monitored the experiment regions.

What happened?

- A new group of offenders is targeted in this approach: small offences, large social problems.
- The professionals were like birds in a cage: they kept on asking for rules and protocols.
- They did not come up with new interventions. Instead they developed a new approach: hit and run, onorthodox customization, short and intensive casemanagement.
- Whatever needs to be done can be done to support desistance from crime.
- Due to cocreation unnecessary use of criminal justice is avoided.

- *The young couple on the park bench and the brat.*
- *And what happened with the lady and her liquor?*

Two years after the first experiments. Where do we stand?

- Ministry of Justice enthusiastic after being sceptical first.
- New financial structure: the early approach of offenders with small offences and big social problems can be continued and broadened.
- Cocreation between public prosecution and probation also expanded to serious crime: one size rarely fits, every offender needs a customized approach.
- Policy of customization, cocreation and sustainable interventions also in collaboration with the prison system.
- Professionals of probation, public prosecution and prison system are very enthusiastic: they can act on their competences more freely.

So we are very happy. And we also see some challenges. To be frank .

- Searching for new ways of managing
- Searching for new ways of accountability
- How do we show our public value?
- Do we still have the courage to rely on the mastership of our professionals, even if there are cuts or severe incidents?