YOUR ALLY AFTER A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT
Getuigen onderweg
(“Witnesses on the Way”, aka “Traffic Informers”)

Program to raise traffic safety awareness amongst 3rd grade pupils (high school)

from here: GOW
Today’s topics

• About Rondpunt
• The ins and outs of the GOW program
Flemish Centre of Expertise
for the support and care of all persons involved in a traffic accident, directly or indirectly

Victims, bereaved, relatives, offenders, emergency staff, social workers, employers, ...

starting from their experiences
Flanders in (traffic) numbers

- Densely populated: 6.5 mio inh./13.522 km² (481 inh. / km²)

- Extensive road network: 75.000 km / 883 km motorw.

- European traffic junction: 16 E-roads

- Aggravating circumstances: Economic hub
  - Appr. 1 car/inhabitant
  - Linear settlements
Dire consequences

24 978 traffic accidents
28 767 lightly injured persons
2 871 seriously injured
318 fatalities

Source: www.statbel.fgov.be Verkeersongevallen dossier 2016
We provide GUIDANCE

For victims and all others involved in a traffic accident

- Website
- Direct contact (e-mail & phone)
- Guide: ‘Als het verkeer je raakt’ (‘When traffic hits you’)
- Various training courses
We provide SUPPORT

• Primarily aimed at re-integration of ABI patients
• Close cooperation with peer associations
• Dedicated programs
  o FIVE2NINE
  o GELIJK-SPEL ("Even Score")
  o VERLOOOND TALENT ("Talent rewarded")
We try to INFLUENCE

• General public
  o Make people aware of their own responsibilities in traffic and make them act accordingly
  o e.g. GOW, “Week without hit-and-runs”

• Policy makers
  o Improve the rights of traffic victims
  o e.g. EU-project to improve information for traffic victims
    See: https://rondpunt.be/projecten/eu-project-victims-of-road-traffic-offences/
Programs aimed at 12-18-year olds

• Booster  
  Education pack 1\textsuperscript{st} en 2\textsuperscript{nd} grade

• Fractie van een seconde ("A split second")  
  Theatre performance 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade

• Getuigen onderweg (GOW)  
  Classroom testimonials 3\textsuperscript{rd} grade
Getuigen onderweg (GOW)
GOW – The program

Large-scale school-based road safety education program using testimonials

Started in 2012, running till 2018 (at least)

Organized by Rondpunt, subsidised by the Flemish Ministry of Transportation and Public Works

Targeted at 16–18 year old high school pupils of three education types: general, technical and occupational
The targeted pupils are

• at an age where they become more active in traffic (pre-driver training from 16 ¾ yrs)

• at an increasing risk of becoming an offender (moped, car, professional driver)

• to be made aware of:
  o their own responsibilities in traffic
  o the possible consequences if they do not take traffic seriously
Human factor in accident causes: 98.5%
GOW – The Set-up

A victim, bereaved person, relative or offender tells her/his story of the traffic accident (s)he was involved in and its consequences

Event is organised in the classroom (max 35 pupils)

Rondpunt provides preparatory materials to teacher(s)

Teacher(s) organise pre- and post-sessions
The testimonial structure

My life before the accident → The accident → After the accident → My future → Message to you
The testimonial process

A few days in advance
- Preparatory lesson manual

1st tuition hour
- Teacher introduces witness
- Witness presents testimonial in the presence of the teacher who will do the follow-up

2nd tuition hour
- Pupils pose questions to the witness
- Follow-up discussion guided by a corresponding tuition sheet

Possible follow-up
- In different subject classes and/or by means of a specific assignment
Active number of witnesses = 61

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Bereaved</th>
<th>Relative</th>
<th>Offender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antwerpen</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oost-Vlaanderen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limburg</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>West-Vlaanderen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlaams-Brabant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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Vlaanderen verbeelding werkt
Coaching the witnesses

Candidate-witnesses receive a concise formal training, to be able to:

- Establish an empathetic connection with the audience
- Use a serene style, not a sensational one
- Aim for maximal impact by emphasizing the long term effects of a physical, emotional, social, financial, professional nature
- Stress main message: a traffic accident is never just a matter of bad luck

Witnesses are assigned a personal coach and, if necessary, a personal companion
GOW: Results and outlook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Number of testimonials</th>
<th>Number of persons reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Via schools</td>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2.216</td>
<td>68.696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via companies</td>
<td>18-65</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Via offender courses</td>
<td>16-45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTALS:</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.289</td>
<td>70.190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback from participating schools

The testimonial

- was clear: Totally agree 56, Agree 46, Neutral 31, Disagree 49
- was sufficiently aimed at prevention: Totally agree 67, Agree 41, Neutral 32, Disagree 62
- made the pupils reflect: Totally agree 65, Agree 28, Neutral 26, Disagree 70
- provoked questions: Totally agree 70, Agree 26, Neutral 26, Disagree 70
- corresponde to the social environment of the pupils: Totally agree 70, Agree 26, Neutral 26, Disagree 70
- had a form geared to the audience: Totally agree 70, Agree 26, Neutral 26, Disagree 70
- was suitable to treat the topic of traffic safety: Totally agree 70, Agree 26, Neutral 26, Disagree 70
Feedback from participating schools (2)

Thanks to the testimonial the pupils can estimate the impact of an accident on the victims and their environment.

- **Totally agree**: 44 pupils
- **Agree**: 54 pupils
- **Neutral**: 15 pupils
- **Disagree**: 3 pupils
- **Totally disagree**: 2 pupils
- **No answer**: 6 pupils

Schools are better aware of the needs of injured victims or bereaved persons.

- **Totally agree**: 39 pupils
- **Agree**: 54 pupils
- **Neutral**: 15 pupils
- **Disagree**: 3 pupils
- **Totally disagree**: 2 pupils
- **No answer**: 6 pupils

Schools have a better insight in the risk of particular behaviour in traffic.

- **Totally agree**: 34 pupils
- **Agree**: 49 pupils
- **Neutral**: 15 pupils
- **Disagree**: 3 pupils
- **Totally disagree**: 2 pupils
- **No answer**: 6 pupils

Schools realise that they carry an own responsibility for their traffic behaviour.

- **Totally agree**: 41 pupils
- **Agree**: 50 pupils
- **Neutral**: 9 pupils
- **Disagree**: 3 pupils
- **Totally disagree**: 2 pupils
- **No answer**: 1 pupil

Schools will behave more safely in traffic.

- **Totally agree**: 25 pupils
- **Agree**: 54 pupils
- **Neutral**: 21 pupils
- **Disagree**: 4 pupils
- **Totally disagree**: 2 pupils
- **No answer**: 1 pupil
Empirical evaluation of the program’s effectiveness

• Research conducted by the Transportation Research Institute (IMOB, UHasselt)
• Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour
• Executed during the first session of the program (2012-2013)
• Reported in A. Cuenen et al: *Effect evaluation of a road safety education program based on victim testimonials in high schools in Belgium.*
  In: *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, Vol. 94, September 2016, Pages 18-27, cf.: [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2016.05.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2016.05.006)
Findings of the study

• Program received positively by the participants
  ✓ Informative, useful and credible
  ✓ In some cases also frightening and worrying

• Positive effect on all participants
  ✓ Attitude towards traffic safety
  ✓ Traffic behaviour (decreases with time)

• Participants were affected both cognitively and emotionally
  ✓ Female pupils more affected than male pupils
  ✓ BSO (occupational) rather emotionally, ASO (general) rather cognitively
What we learnt - Strengths

• Interactivity of the testimonials (max. 35 pupils)

• Direct confrontation with an actual witness

✓ very educative and effective

✓ leads to increased awareness of:
  o Need for safe behaviour in traffic
  o Risk of lifelong consequences of an accident
  o Impact of physical limitations / Process of mourning
What we learnt – Strengths (2)

• Possitive effects for the witnesses

✓ An important step in the process of coping (‘giving it all a purpose’)

✓ A meaningful occupation of their time
What we learnt - Weaknesses

• Often an individual initiative of a single teacher → not all pupils in the participating school are reached

• Price of a testimonial (75 €) can be an obstacle

• Intended impact is not always achieved

• Notwithstanding the coordinated and active coaching, not all testimonials are given in the same way

• Some witnesses are hard to understand (due to ABI)
What we learnt - Pitfalls

• Risk of too much focus on the personal story
  ➔ traffic safety message gets lost

• Not possible to send Rondpunt associate along for each testimonial
  ➔ only indirect monitoring
What we learnt – Pitfalls (2)

• Stories do not always relate to the pupils’ world

• Not all teachers organise proper preparatory and/or follow-up sessions

→ Pupils do not know what to expect

→ Pupils are left with their questions and worries (also outside the traffic safety subject, e.g. ABI)
Planned improvements & expansions

• Increase promotion of the program

✓ Go via the 3rd grade coordinator of the schools
  → all pupils can attend a testimonial

✓ Increase effort in provinces with low number of requests

✓ Dedicated focus on the safety managers of companies
Planned improvements & expansions (2)

- Continuous improvement of testimonials
  - More focus on interaction with the pupils
  - Stress importance of preparatory session and follow-up sessions more actively
  - Organise focus group with pupils
    - Planned for this school year
    - Use feedback to further improve the program
Thank you!

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