

Presentation title:

## Group-based violence in Belgium: a mapping exercise

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Group-based violence merits priority attention from policy-makers and practitioners. Not only does violence very often take place in groups, violence committed by multiple offenders is also generally more violent than offences committed by single offenders and more likely to involve weapons. Group violence also has a significant impact on the criminal career of offenders, as those involved in group violence are more likely than solo offenders to develop longer, more active and very violent criminal careers. The Flemish Peace Institute conducted a mapping exercise of group-based violence in Belgium. The goal of this mapping was threefold: (i) to map which forms of group-based violence are committed; (ii) to outline how, how often and where these manifestations of violence occur; and (iii) to identify recent developments in these manifestations of violence. The analysis was conducted through an online survey, to which more than 3/4th of the local police zones in Brussels and Flanders participated. We also conducted focus groups with the aim to delve deeper into the dynamics and context of various types of group-based violence, in particular violence in a criminal setting (e.g., organised crime, Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs, and hooliganism), violence against police and other first responders, and youth-based violence. One of the outcomes of this study is that – contrary to theories linking group-based violence to urbanisation – group-based violence could be identified in both highly urbanised as well as very rural police zones. Differences are noticeable, however, with regards to the types of group-based violence that occur, as well as the safety and the manageability of the violence as perceived by police officers.