

# EPIC WORK PACKAGES: WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY INVESTIGATING?

EPIC  
CONFERENCE  
2028

EPIC

Explaining, Preventing, and  
Intervening in organized  
Crime involvement

First fase (2023)

Second fase (2024 - present)

End EPIC (2028)

Julie Erber

Together with: Arjan Blokland,  
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## WP4: Exposure of youth to and involvement in organized crime

A sample of nearly 3 million young people in the Netherlands (ages 12-26) shows that exposure to organized crime through family, housemates, classmates, and colleagues increases the likelihood of youth becoming involved themselves. Family and housemates have the greatest influence on youth involvement in organized crime, followed by classmates and colleagues, while neighbors seem to have little influence.

**Follow-up Questions:** To what extent do factors such as educational level and a history in mental health care influence the relationship between exposure to and involvement in organized crime among youths?



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## WP5: Offline and online pathways to youth involvement in organized crime

Professionals and young people indicate that the online environment has expanded the social network of youths, possibly increasing the chances of encountering organized crime. At the same time, respondents point out that existing offline contacts often still play an important role in the process of becoming involved in criminal behavior. For youths, there is no such thing as a strictly online or offline world; these are completely intertwined.

**Reaching Youth:** Although many have said, "this group will never engage in conversation with you," experience has shown otherwise. It takes time and effort, but there are certainly young people who are willing to share their stories.

## Steering committee of EPIC

Arjan Blokland, Sjoukje van Deuren, Fleur Souverein, Edward Kleemans, Eva Mulder, Annemiek Harder, Jessica Asscher and Veroni Eichelsheim

## WP9 Communication

Dissemination, valorization, and implementation of science into practice and policy with: Eva Mulder, Veroni Eichelsheim, Sjoukje van Deuren, Fleur Souverein and Janna Kool

## Effectively reducing youths' involvement in organized crime

A consortium of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners is jointly involved in the EPIC-project (Explaining, Preventing, and Intervening in Organized Crime Involvement), supported by the Dutch Research Agenda. The goal of the project is to better understand and effectively reduce youths' involvement in organized crime.

In the second phase of this project, empirical research is being conducted within five different work packages to describe and explain the involvement of young people in organized crime, as well as to examine what works (and what doesn't) in preventing or reducing their involvement.

[www.nscr.nl/epic](http://www.nscr.nl/epic)



Alexandra de Meijere

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## WP6: Evaluating and further developing interventions targeting youth in organized crime

As part of action research—where science and practice collaborate—participatory observations were conducted in the past year at IPA in de Wijk and Credible Messengers. Additionally, 12 interviews were conducted with new Credible Messengers. The Theory of Change has been mapped out in collaboration with both initiatives. Soon, interviews with parents, youths, professionals, and partners will follow.

**Learned Lessons:** The importance of critically reflecting on my own position and background as a researcher. Science and practice are inextricably linked and this should always be considered in how we understand, evaluate, explain, and act in research.



Wenda Sleijpen

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## WP7: The effectiveness of prevention programs aimed at entry into organized crime

Each intervention, such as the Educational Center, Boundary-Setting Youth Work, and Trauma Treatment for Mothers, is studied using a mixed methods design. For each youth, changes are examined in relation to the specific goals of the intervention, such as increased self-control or a stronger sense of social support. In the past year, we developed research designs and discovered that existing tools, like questionnaires, do not always align well with our target group, especially youths with a mild intellectual disability. Data collection for the interventions will start next year.

**Valuable Insights:** It is surprisingly fun and meaningful to actively involve youths in the research process. Young people enjoy thinking along with scientific research and sharing their opinions, thus making them important in the research.



Marit van de Mheen

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## WP8: What works to strengthen youth against organized crime?

The data collection for the impact study on Kapot Sterk was completed last year. Questionnaires were administered at three points in time to primary school students in grades 7 and 8. In total, nearly 260 youths completed all three questionnaires, with 142 in the experimental group and 115 in the control group. Next year, the results will be analyzed, while data collection for Buit in de Klas and Prospect4Cash is in full swing.

**Sample Description:** The experimental group of Kapot Sterk consists of 49.6% boys (average age 11.7 years), compared to 50% boys in the control group (average age 11.2 years). The participating schools are spread across central Netherlands, with most students coming from Utrecht (n = 128), followed by Boskoop (n = 54) and Huissen (n = 52).



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