

EPIC LEARNING SESSION JUNE 2026: MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

EPIC
CONFERENCE
2028

First phase (2023)

Second phase (from 2024)

EPIC now (2026)

End of EPIC (2028)

EPIC learning session:

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT YOUTH CRIME AND EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS

EPIC - Explaining, Preventing, and Intervening in organized Crime involvement - is a consortium of researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. The aim of EPIC is to understand and reduce the involvement of young people in serious and organized crime.

On June 18 2026 EPIC organized, in collaboration with the CCV and Young Perspectives (YOPE), a learning session in which researchers, practitioners, young people, and policymakers jointly examined common myths and misconceptions.

Questions? EPIC@nscr.nl



"What do young people need to desist from crime?"

Youth: "Treat the young person like your own brother, sister, son, or daughter. If they go astray, help them get back on the right path. Engage in conversation as if they were your own child. Give them confidence; they are the future."



"Is it useful to create a list of the meanings of words and emojis on social media, such as broccoli meaning 'weed'?"

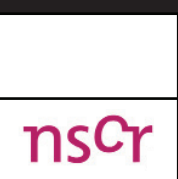
Youth: "Street slang changes every week; the meaning of emojis changes every two seconds."

Kijk hem nou
ja jij
kan je niet normaal kleden trainingspak
uitstraling van zoveel lak
probeer voor een keer
nu eens normaal te wezen
schreeuwen schelden en dat
emoties verre van in de hand
zogenaamde disrespect
en de wereld is te klein
steek alles in de brand
maar dezelfde disrespect
voer je uit met harde hand egocentrisch op de eerste plek
we hebben allemaal een beeld van goed en slecht of van krom en recht
hebben allemaal een mening klaar
als je anders bent
voor degene die mij niet kent
weet dat ik gesloten ben
degene die mij wel kent
weet dat ik open ben
je kan over alles met me praten
in mijn schrift voel ik me thuis
daar deel ik mijn verhalen
ik ben die grote boze jongen
luidruchtig druk
impulsief en onbezonnen
ben een grote blijde teddybeer
met een lach van 1000 zonnen
ik ben ik
maar vanuit jouw perspectief ben ik anders
en jij bent jij
laten we samen elkaars perspectieven veranderen



SPOKEN WORD (IN DUTCH)
Presented and written by
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MYTH 1

ONLY THREE INTERVENTIONS* IN THE NETHERLANDS ARE EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING YOUTH CRIME

Is this correct? No.

- Always start with: **who is your target group**, what is your goal and what is needed?
- When choosing an intervention, it is primarily important to look at the general and specific **active components**. The Netherlands Youth Institute database (NJI.nl) is a good starting point to do so.
- The Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) is a checklist, based on meta-analyses, which can be used to assess **the extent to which an intervention aligns** with evidence-based practices for reducing youth crime (Lipsey, 2018).
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Interventions must **be tailored to diversity of the youth and the local context** in which they are implemented.
- While interventions can be effective in preventing or reducing problematic behavior of an individual or group, this sometimes requires a **long-term, integrated approach involving multiple interventions at various levels** (e.g., individual, educational, neighborhood). Furthermore, addressing youth crime requires a **thorough examination of the problem within the context of broader socio-economic issues, such as poverty and inequality of opportunity**.

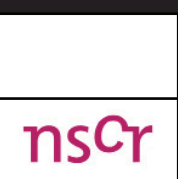
* Resocialization and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Resocialisatie en Cognitieve Gedragstherapie), "Only You Determine Who You Are" (Alleen jij bepaalt wie je bent), and Aggression Regulation Training.

MYTH 2

IF RESEARCH HAS BEEN CONDUCTED, AN INTERVENTION IS PROVEN EFFECTIVE

Is this correct? No.

- Different types of research have different goals: **process evaluation** (investigating whether the intervention is implemented as intended), **action research** (examining the experiences of those involved and the implementation and development of the intervention in practice), and **effect evaluation** (examining the effects of the intervention).
- If an intervention is **theoretically grounded**, it means that based on existing empirical knowledge, **the intervention could in theory have a positive effect**. This is a good first step that calls for further (effect) research in practice.
- To be proven effective, effect research must have been conducted. The NJI (Netherlands Youth Institute) applies several guidelines based on **the hierarchy of evidence** (see NJI.nl).
- The **research design of effect research** must ensure that any observed change is actually attributable to the intervention. For example, a pre- and post-measurement alone is insufficient to do so.
- Effect research is preferably conducted by **independent researchers** (i.e., not the developers themselves).
- Because the context is constantly changing, it is important to have **the intervention re-evaluated after five years**. The recognition of the NJI is temporary.



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MYTH 3

THE RISK OF EXPOSURE TO ORGANIZED CRIME AMONG YOUTH IN THE NETHERLANDS IS HIGH

Is this correct? No!

- EPIC research based on CBS (Statistics Netherlands) microdata shows that **for most young people, less than 1% of their network members** (such as family, household, classmates, and colleagues) **were suspects in organized crime**, and only **0.86% of the nearly 3 million young people were suspects themselves**.
- Geography plays a role: youth **in large cities, port areas, and border regions have a higher risk** than young people of the same age elsewhere. Despite the fact that only a small portion of young people in the Netherlands are exposed to or become involved in organized crime, this has consequences for them and for society at large. It is important that we pay attention to this.
- Although **young people's exposure** to and involvement in organised crime **is relatively low, targeted research is needed** to identify exactly which young people are at risk, how we can support them and how we can help them build a future away from crime.



MYTH 4

YOUTH BECOME INVOLVED IN ORGANIZED CRIME PRIMARILY VIA SOCIAL MEDIA; THE ROLE OF OFFLINE INTERACTION IS LIMITED

Is this correct? Not completely.

- **Both the online and offline worlds play a role**, insofar as they can be considered separate worlds. Interviews with young people who have been involved or at 'at-risk' of becoming involved in (serious and organized) crime, show that the physical environment such as street- and neighborhood ties still plays a significant role in becoming involved in organized crime.
- Social media platforms contain **functionalities that facilitate (organized) crime in various ways**. For example, algorithmic friend suggestions make it easy to add new contacts, allowing young people to quickly expand their networks and find potential accomplices.
- When social media platforms are used to approach young people, it usually involves **relatively simple but high risk offenses**, such as transporting, dealing, or retrieving drugs or planting (firework) explosives.



MYTH 5

YOUTH ARE RECRUITED (UNDER PRESSURE); THEIR OWN ROLE IS LIMITED OR ABSENT

Is this correct? Not always.

- The frequent use of the term 'recruitment' **may create the impression that most young people are victims of those who recruited them**. Under pressure or coercion, most young people would supposedly be forced to commit offenses, such as retrieving drugs, planting an explosive, or carrying out an armed robbery of a store.
- EPIC research shows that **there are various pathways into criminal involvement**, in which the degree of the young person's own initiative varies. Some young people are actively approached, but there are also young people who want to earn quick money and seek out contact on their own initiative to commit crimes.



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