



Ghent 'Trammelant': combatting anti-social behaviour on public transport

where: Ghent, Belgium
policy area: social affairs, mobility

Ghent, like many cities, deals with disorder caused by young people on its public transport system. As well as being an inconvenience for public transport employees and fellow passengers, Ghent faced significant financial implications due to vandalism of the network. Problems included graffiti, damage to vehicles including torn seats and broken windows, and anti-social behaviour by young people.

Mutual respect

De Lijn, the Flemish public transport company, recognised that the most effective way to get the message across to young people was not by delivering lectures but by engaging them in constructive dialogue. This meant opening discussions between teenagers and public transport employees, rather than dictating a set of rules.

"From now I will declare my love to my boyfriend on paper and not on the back of the bus seat".

student, Ghent

According to De Lijn's research, scolding young people has a counteractive effect, while educating them about the consequences of their actions is a much more effective method of achieving results.

View from the other side

A key aspect of De Lijn's 'Trammelant' programme is 'role reversal', whereby during a visit from De Lijn employees, students are invited take on the part of a De Lijn employee whilst the employees act as young people.

"The main objective of this project to create a platform for communication. Controllers have contact with youngsters in the school environment, and the students learn from the controllers and drivers. In this way, direct communication and mutual understanding is created".

student, Ghent

This is especially effective as it teaches the students how to treat the transport employees with courtesy while also generating more respect between the two parties. Students and transport staff also get the opportunity to look at their behaviour and its consequences from a different perspective.

The 'Trammelant' programme consists of four stages:

- A team of three De Lijn employees visits a school. Two ticket collectors and one driver engage in structured role



reversal with the students in order to give each side a taste of how they are being treated by the other, and how to improve these relationships.

- Students are invited to visit the De Lijn depot for a hands-on learning experience. They participate in a range of activities, including a demonstration of the emergency stop procedure and a visit the mechanics area where students are allowed to spray graffiti on metal plates and then attempt to clean it. A visit to the dispatching unit is also included.

- Students board the 'Trammelantbus', developed in late 2009, where they participate in a cost-price game, tagging parts of the bus (torn seats, broken windows) with an estimated price for repair. They also experience a simulated fire evacuation, which demonstrates the implications of students leaving their belongings all over the bus.

- Peer-to-peer communication is widely accepted as one of the most effective forms of spreading a message, so the scheme is disseminated by the students themselves. Following the depot visit, the Trammelantbus visits the school and the students act as a training team for others, explaining to their peers the importance of safety and the effects of vandalism and anti-social behaviour on others.

Is it working?

The Trammelant programme, which is funded in part by the EU's CIVITAS initiative, has

delivered tangible results for the city of Ghent. These include a reduction in the number of complaints about minors in the neighbourhoods surrounding the schools participating in the scheme. De Lijn monitors safety on its fleet on a regular basis, and has noticed a change in the pattern of disturbances according to the uptake of the programme. Another nod to the scheme's success is its roll-out in other Flemish cities. There are now four other branded Trammelant buses in operation, visiting schools in Antwerp, Limburg, Brabant and West Flanders. Now in its fourth year, it is estimated that the programme reaches around 2,000 school children in Ghent and surrounding areas.



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