



Mayors Miguel Concha Manso of Peñalolén and Diego Costarelli of Godoy Cruz sign a memorandum of cooperation between the two cities during the PIOC program exchange.

Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén City Exchange Report

Executive Summary

The exchange between Godoy Cruz, Argentina, and Peñalolén, Chile, contributed to the strengthening of the partnership between the two cities and between them and Peace in Our Cities (PioC). It offered both cities valuable insights into local strategies for violence prevention, highlighting the critical role of strong local leadership to drive cities to invest in violence prevention and the fact that quality data is crucial for informed and efficient decision-making and community engagement. Both cities emphasized the importance of institutionalizing observatories, integrating diverse data sources into them, and continuously adapting their data systems to local needs. The experiences emphasized the need for tailored, context-sensitive interventions, investment in local technical capacity, and a balanced approach that combines evidence-based social prevention programs with other public safety tools, including preventative community policing. These lessons will inform both cities' commitments to effective and inclusive urban security policies.

Overview of Exchange

The exchange between Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén took place from June 17–19, 2025. Mayor Miguel Concha Manso of Peñalolén, Chile, and the city's Secretary of Human Security Carlos Aguirre Catalán—as well as three members of the Peace in Our Cities (PioC) Secretariat, Jai-Ayla Sutherland, Flavia Carbonari, and Sydney Sanchez—traveled to Godoy Cruz, Argentina. These representatives met to exchange knowledge about city-led violence-prevention initiatives, including community alert systems and local observatories, early childhood and youth violence-prevention programs, and hot-spot policing. The exchange aimed to strengthen the relationship between Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén, and between the two cities and PioC.

The [City Exchange Program](#) is an initiative facilitated by Peace in Our Cities, which, as a network, invests in cities learning from and inspiring one another. Focused exchanges help participating cities deeply engage with promising work being done to reduce violence, assess applicability to their own contexts, and develop direct partnerships to advance prevention and peacebuilding.

Why These Partners: Similar Contexts, Challenges, and a History of Cooperation



Locations of Peñalolén, Chile, and Godoy Cruz, Argentina. Google Maps

Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén are alike in many ways, including their population sizes, geography, security challenges, and approaches to human security. Both are located at the foot of the Andes Mountains in South America and have a population of approximately 220,000 each. Both cities have low homicide rates (5.3 per 100,000 in Godoy Cruz and 4.4 in Peñalolén) but face security challenges related to robberies and thefts, substance abuse, and interpersonal violence, among others. They also have complementary economies, tethered to their wine-producing industries. And both face challenges from climate change, including extreme weather, droughts, and fires, and anticipate [security challenges](#) emerging from those extreme events.

Godoy Cruz has a strong history of community engagement and citizens' demand for security policies, which has created the right environment for their community alert system to work. Peñalolén has a history of evidence-based violence-prevention policies focused on children and youth, as well as a long-standing observatory that has evolved throughout the years to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities to strengthen violence-prevention efforts. Both cities have had significant degrees of success with their programs, with important lessons learned, but also challenges, making them great partners for an exchange.

Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén are both members of the [Mercociudades](#) network, through which they have collaborated for years. The network is made up of 400 cities around Latin America whose mission is to strengthen the regional identity and integration of these cities to ensure urban development and well-being in South America. Godoy Cruz is currently the head of the Mercociudades Technical Group focused on citizen security, and Peñalolén will most likely be next to lead the same group.

Key Objectives of the Exchange

In alignment with the strategy behind the PioC [City Exchange Program](#), the agenda identified key objectives to guide the knowledge exchange between Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén, including:

- Officials from Peñalolén gain knowledge on the community alert system used in Godoy Cruz, the work with the community, and the application of technologies used for prevention.
- Officials from the local government of Godoy Cruz, civil society, academia, and officials from the Ministry of Security of Mendoza Province gain knowledge on the experiences from the observatory for human security of Peñalolén.
- Officials from Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén identify challenges associated with the climate impact on security in the two cities, which experience droughts, fires, and torrential rains that can affect overall security.
- Officials from Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén strengthen the institutional threads between the two municipalities and PioC and identify potential opportunities for further cooperation.

What We Did: Overview of Discussed Programs and Visited Sites

On the first day of the exchange, following a reception hosted by the mayor of Godoy Cruz, Diego Costarelli, the city's director of traffic and control (and former police chief), Roberto Munives, presented its recently launched hot-spot policing program. After the presentation, Leonardo Mastrángelo, director of prevention, community participation, and human rights, presented on the community alert system (Sistema de Alerta Comunitaria, or SAC). On day two of the exchange, the Godoy Cruz delegation facilitated tours of the municipal and provincial observatories. After the tours, Peñalolén Mayor Concha Manso and Secretary of Human Security Carlos Aguirre Catalán made a presentation about their city's approach to community security with an emphasis on early childhood and youth violence-prevention programs. These programs are described in more detail below.

Like all cities, Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén face challenges to improving human security in their communities. The two cities took time during the exchange to discuss some of these key challenges. Godoy Cruz highlighted the lack of integration of its observatory's information with other databases and a lack of sustained social prevention policies. They also mentioned that the data between their municipal and provincial monitoring systems doesn't always interact, which hampers information sharing. Godoy Cruz also mentioned that coordination between the municipal and state services, including the police services, can be a challenge. Peñalolén highlighted its challenges related to the organization of emergency services, since there are multiple emergency numbers in Chile, and also the inequality of distribution of national police resources per neighborhood.

Godoy Cruz's Municipal-level Observatory and Mendoza's Provincial Citizen Security Observatory

There are two observatories in Godoy Cruz, one the city has created to enact a city-specific protocol that alerts the community and provincial police forces of alerts submitted via the community alert system. The second is a Citizen Security Observatory, which serves Mendoza Province as a whole. Operationally, the municipal observatory receives alerts from the community alert system (SAC), dispatches the community police, and alerts the provincial police force. It serves as a connection point between various institutions. One aim of the municipality is to gather information that will continue to inform its city-based policing programs on preventative measures it can take in the community. Separately, the provincial monitoring center responds to 911 calls that come through within the entire province of Mendoza. It uses the data it collects to build a broader analytical picture of what types of crimes are occurring throughout the province, which is shared at the national level, to inform state-level violence-prevention strategies.

Godoy Cruz Community Alert System (SAC)

One of the main tools the Godoy Cruz municipal police force relies on is the community alert system (SAC) the city has in place. Godoy Cruz first established the system in 2016 and has made significant improvements since then. To engage with the current version of the system, a user must first download an app, within which there is an array of different alert types to choose from. Each alert enacts a different protocol and response type from the community enforcement apparatus, which includes the community and provincial police forces and the alert-specific response teams dispatched by the observatories. The system is tied to the municipal monitoring observatory, where reports are sent so the observatory can initiate the proper protocol based on what type of report was submitted. The app uses geomapping to pinpoint the location of the person who submitted the report, as well as identification information for the person. In some cases, the alert also sounds an alarm in the community and alerts neighbors on the same block to what type of report was submitted and who sent it in.

Godoy Cruz currently has 662 central units with hardware installed in the community, with 16,350 users. It also has five alert systems units installed in five schools, as well as community alert systems in public spaces. The aim of the community alert system is not only to provide a key resource to citizens for reporting incidents but also to generate citizen engagement and social cohesion. The idea is for people to be able to rely on the community alert system rather than needing their own private security tools. The system is an integral part of the community's strategy to tear down barriers of communication between neighbors and to make people feel safer in their homes and in public spaces.

The main exception to this system is intrafamilial/gender-based violence reports. When a gender-based or familial report is made, a silent alarm is triggered, which does not alert the surrounding community in order to preserve the victim's identity, which is only disclosed to the response team so it can provide adequate support and referral to specialized services.

Godoy Cruz + Policia Hot Spot Policing

The hot-spot policing program Godoy Cruz + Policia is the flagship security program of the current administration. It relies on a police force that responds directly to the municipal government, something relatively unique within the Argentine federal system. Members of this force are retired officers from the provincial police force ages 45 to 55 and with good track records. The force has ten police cars, which the city purchased from the provincial government.

The program design followed the Inter-American Development Bank's guide to [hot-spot policing](#), released in 2024, and was adapted to fit the needs of Godoy Cruz based on detailed diagnostics, including a perception survey applied to the community. The aim of this program is to ensure law enforcement responses are more proactive and preventative rather than reactive and repressive, building trust in the police and the city government and increasing people's perception of safety. Officers work part-time, roughly 20 hours a week, and police officer units are dispatched throughout the community following a strict schedule. They are stationed in fixed points for 14 minutes each hour; within those 14 minutes, they are encouraged to make connections with the local neighbors. For the remaining 46 minutes, they are scheduled to patrol their quadrant before being placed at a new fixed point.

The Godoy Cruz + Policia program and the SAC complement each other. SAC is one of the main tools the Godoy Cruz police force relies on to plan deployment strategies and respond to emerging alerts. Police are placed in hot-spot areas with high levels of crime that are defined based on data gathered from the alert system. Officers also often ask people in the community questions such as "Do you feel safe at night?" or "Is the trash pick-up system working well?" and

this information is gathered and analyzed by the local observatory that manages the SAC information.

These police officers go through an innovative training program under the city, focused on soft skills such as communication, active listening, and conflict resolution. Godoy Cruz emphasizes the importance of strong communication between police officers and the community, presenting the proximate policing program as a public service focused on prevention. The emphasis placed on communications reinforces the program goal of changing the perception of the police and integrating them into the community.

“It's one thing to reduce crime, it's another for people to feel safer, and we need people to feel safer.” —Roberto Munives, director of traffic and control of Godoy Cruz

Since the start of the program, the city has seen a steep decline in crime, with more than a 25 percent decrease in overall crime and a 60 percent decrease in robbery of public lights, an issue that has been prevalent in [other Argentine cities](#).¹ Godoy Cruz's police response time has also improved greatly. Before the program was implemented, the provincial police's response time was around 25 minutes; it is now seven minutes or less.

Peñalolén's Violence Prevention Programs

Peñalolén has several violence-prevention programs in place. Its Office of Human Security has a specific department focused on social promotion and prevention. One of the department's flagship programs is the [Early Warning System against School Dropouts \(Sistema de Alerta Temprano contra la Deserción Escolar, or SAT\)](#). The SAT initiative aims to prevent youth from dropping out—a key risk factor for youth engagement in crime and violent behavior—by improving attendance for students who have repeatedly missed school. According to the government, in 2022, 70 percent of youth who had committed any type of crime had not completed primary education, and 63 percent of those in jail had abandoned school before age 16.

Established in 2013, the SAT program first identifies students from communities with higher levels of violence who are also at risk of abandoning the educational system and then assigns a professional team that offers individual and familial support to help the student stay in school. The support is done through home visits and parenting training, psychosocial support to the

¹ Robbery of public lights and cables have become such a problem in the province that in 2022 Mendoza enacted a new law to regulate the commerce of these goods and its components. See more at “Bajo una modalidad delictiva: Mendoza, qué hay menos robos y dónde se sintió el impacto.” Los Andes, July 27, 2025. https://www.losandes.com.ar/politica/bajo-una-modalidad-delictiva-mendoza-que-hay-menos-robos-y-donde-se-sintio-el-impacto-n5949008?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

youth and the family, and close interaction and monitoring with school staff, among other activities. It follows an integrated approach that includes several municipal offices and agencies that work with children and youth. The program also involves the community through awareness campaigns and training workshops to encourage students to stay in school and promote the program to parents and guardians. Over 90 percent of the students who participated in the program have stayed in school. The program has an overall annual municipal budget of about \$124,000, with an estimated \$218 spent per youth participant over the course of 24 personalized psychosocial support sessions targeted at the individual and/or the family.

Peñalolén also has a community prevention-strategy aimed at children, youth, and their families. Launched in 2005, Building on Time and in Community ([Construyendo a Tiempo en Comunidad, or CATC](#)) provides activities to promote sensitization about violence against children and youth. The activities include sports and cultural events, which create a protected environment where positive parental training can also be given to parents and guardians. Over 20 neighborhoods have benefited from this program, which has transformed spaces that used to be used for drug and alcohol consumption into public places where children can safely play sports and parents or guardians can gather. CATC has a municipal annual budget of about \$203,000, excluding its psychosocial component provided by pairs of psychologists and social assistants, which can amount to approximately \$2,640 per month.

Peñalolén's [Local Management Observatory](#)

Like Godoy Cruz, Peñalolén also relies on a local management observatory, which is led by its Office for Human Security. The observatory combines multiple sources of data to inform and help monitor and evaluate security and violence-prevention policies and their effectiveness. The observatory focuses on producing, compiling, organizing, and analyzing information to support informed decision-making. Its purpose is to optimize policies, plans, programs, and projects used in local city management. It uses external records from other agencies—like the criminal prosecutor's office, the national police force (Los Carabineros), health and education departments, and the undersecretariat of crime prevention—to inform evidence-based approaches to municipal challenges, including those related to security. The manuals for SAT and CATC, for example, which include a diagnostic of the problem these programs respond to, have been developed by the observatory. Another example of how Peñalolén is able to utilize the data collected is its lighting initiative. It used a survey, focus groups, and participatory maps to identify poorly lit areas where women felt unsafe, and it was able to improve lighting in those areas. The data gathered by the observatory informed how Peñalolén targeted this problem.

Concerns About Impacts of Climate Change on Urban Safety

The two cities share a concern about climate change in the Central Andean region. Rising extreme temperatures, droughts, severe storms, and wildfires are impacting people's safety and posing challenges for coordinated prevention and adaptation planning in response to these phenomena. Unfortunately, this topic was not discussed during the exchange because of time constraints; however, it is a topic that the two cities will take forward as part of their continued collaboration.

What We Learned: Key Takeaways from Exchange

The experiences and challenges discussed during the exchange program led to several lessons for both city partners, who committed to taking forward some of those learnings to improve their own policies to reduce and prevent violence. Below are some of the key takeaways highlighted by Godoy Cruz and Peñalolén:

Local leadership is needed to drive cities to invest in violence prevention. Local leadership plays a crucial role in driving cities to invest in violence prevention. The commitment of mayors and other local authorities is essential, as they allow for the prioritization of funds for programs to address local security challenges and set the strategic view and incentives for public officials and technical teams to sustain prevention efforts. The sustainability of efforts is also directly linked to strong local leadership, as the example of the different observatories shows. They were able to evolve and show results thanks to their institutionalization within local administrations, which required political will and the allocation of necessary financial and technical resources.

Quality data is crucial for decision-making. The experiences of the Godoy Cruz, Mendoza Province, and Peñalolén observatories reinforce the principle that having data to inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of citizen security policies is crucial. Local-level efforts to gather geospatial data about crime and violence allow for the identification of patterns, dynamics, and risk factors that are key to preventing violence. These three observatories' experiences also show the importance of having multiple sources of data when addressing violence, such as citizen reports, survey responses, focus groups, etc., beyond standard police records. While the Godoy Cruz observatory offered a great example of how citizens can help feed these systems in real time through its community alert system, Peñalolén's integration of multiple data sources, including health, education, and social assistance systems, innovates in its ability to track risk and protective factors in social prevention programs.

“One of the main lessons learned was the need to deepen the strategic use of information for decision-making in security matters. In Godoy Cruz, the main source of data is currently the community alert system. However, information regarding social interventions and policies—such as those gathered by the local management observatory of Peñalolén—is not integrated into the system and reflects a conceptual and technological limitation of how to address security at the local level.” —Martin Appiolazza, director of institutional relations of Godoy Cruz

Local observatories/data systems need to be constantly revised, adapted, and improved.

Both cities explained that their experience with the observatories evolved with time, and acknowledged, after listening to each other’s cases, that there are still several improvements needed in their respective observatories. For example, since 2016, the Godoy Cruz system evolved from a traditional alarm system by replacing pushbuttons with mobile apps and cables with cellular networks, eliminating the need for expensive infrastructure. While the initial software and hardware were municipally owned, small local businesses also invested in their development and provision. In addition to that, throughout time, and thanks to the community engagement, they learned how to prevent neighbors from using false alarms/reporting, for example by requiring that people be formally registered to be able to access the app; and through community awareness and sensitization, promoted a responsible use of the system, without creating a sense of hyper alertness. Based on Peñalolén’s experience, during the exchange, Godoy Cruz was also able to estimate the costs to aggregate different data sources to its observatory, adding adequate software, and now intends to move forward with this idea.

Peñalolén’s observatory, on the other hand, has also evolved substantially since its initial creation. It has grown from a simple system to gather data at the local level, to the current version of the Observatory of Local Management and Analysis, which involves the cooperation of several areas of the government; keeps adding new sources and indicators (e.g., cybercrime is now monitored); is also fed by systems that identify people or contexts at higher risk of victimization (e.g., the school-based early warning system, which identifies kids at higher risk of dropping out); and produces analyses that help to inform the mayor’s strategic decisions. However, the observatory does not have a direct permanent mechanism to gather citizens’ inputs.

“We learned about how important it is for Peñalolén to improve its data/digital capacities to make public safety decisions and how we can use data to inform prevention strategies instead of reactive policies. Godoy Cruz’s Community Alert System is very interesting in the way it generates data immediately when an alert is submitted, with citizens’ participation, allowing them to have more information on incidents”. —Miguel Concha Manso, mayor of Peñalolén

Local governments need to invest in strengthening the capacity of technical staff to analyze data. The effectiveness of local observatories in informing strategic decision-making relies on having well-trained high-level professionals and access to the needed tools and technological resources. Beyond the existing data systems discussed, the cities agreed on the need to have an adequate team in place to be able to analyze the data appropriately and help decision makers use it strategically. Godoy Cruz is currently sending two officials from its observatory with a background in statistics to take a course on criminal analysis.

Community engagement is key. Godoy Cruz’s successful experience with SAC is a result of its historic and permanent community engagement and investment in communications. The community feels strong ownership of this tool, and citizens have become protectors of their own public spaces. They are also constantly voicing their concerns and demands related to public safety both to the city’s Office of Prevention, Community Participation and Human Rights workers, at their periodically facilitated meetings and thematic working groups, as well as to the Godoy Cruz + Policía officers.

A balanced and tailored approach is needed. Godoy Cruz discussed its challenges in sustaining violence-prevention efforts targeted at youth and women, especially since the pandemic, and other social and situational prevention programs. Some interventions focused on trekking with youth groups from different gangs, for example, had worked well in the past, while others, such as hip-hop and graffiti, did not. Learning from those experiences, the city is currently relaunching some of their interventions, including a program focused on improving the mental health of groups at higher risk of victimization.

“Trekking for mixed youth groups worked well in Godoy Cruz because it is a very common activity in Mendoza, which has the perfect geography for that; the community alert system worked well because of our strong community engagement in public policy; and Rosario, another city in Argentina, had a great violence interruption hospital-based program because it has a strong healthcare system. These examples show that we need to adapt policy responses to local contexts.” —Martin Appiolazza, director of institutional relations of Godoy Cruz

The Godoy Cruz mayor and his team explained that the decision to invest in its own community policing program was initially based on the need to respond to increasing citizens’ demands but also inspired by the desire to offer a different type of policing, more respondent to what society needs and less structured by the old ways police worked, and following a robust methodology that has proven to work.

Yet they acknowledge that more needs to be invested, and with adequate resources, in robust social violence-prevention programs. Peñalolén’s experiences in this area—especially through targeted sports activities in public spaces with a focus on children and adolescents, and an alert system, accompanied by dedicated work with individual families—were highly inspiring. The Godoy Cruz team recognized that these lines of action had been postponed in their city because of crises or budget cuts, but today there are the resources and the political will to reactivate them and again have a more balanced approach to the city’s security strategy.

Peñalolén, on the other hand, was very impressed by the impact of the hot-spot policing program with a strong community engagement component and its impacts on building trust in the government and increasing the perception of security.

Annex 1

Members Present at the Meetings

Diego Costarelli, Mayor of Godoy Cruz

Miguel Concha Manso, Mayor of Peñalolén

Carlos Aguirre Catalán, Secretary of Human Security of Peñalolén

Alejandro Zlotolow, Secretary of Government of Godoy Cruz

Darío Falcone, Secretary of Works and Environment of Godoy Cruz

Florencia Santoni, Secretary of Human Development of Godoy Cruz

Julián Villa, Director of Social Communication of Godoy Cruz

Leonardo Mastrángelo, Director of Prevention, Participation, and Human Rights of Godoy Cruz

Martín Appiolaza, Director of Institutional Relations of Godoy Cruz

Miguel Catalano, Legal and Technical Secretary of Godoy Cruz

Roberto Munives, Director of Traffic and Control of Godoy Cruz

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