

## Summary

*Selecting police-officer trainees*

*Evaluating the selection procedure of police officers at level 2 to 4*

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Each year, the Dutch police academy receives hundreds of applications from candidates who want to become a police officer. Before candidates are hired however, they need to go through a selection procedure in which their suitability for police work is tested. The goal of the present project was to evaluate the quality of the selection procedure at the police academy. One of the important aims of this evaluation was to examine whether the requirements in the selection procedure are still in accordance with current scientific insights in the area of personnel selection and with changed societal demands.

In order to evaluate the selection procedure, various sources of information were available. One source of information was formed by interviews held with employees from the police organization. Another source included the selection data of all applicants from 2001 until 2012, and training outcome measure from applicants who were hired between 2005 and 2012. In addition, several research reports were available that were provided by the police academy.

A first step in the evaluation of the selection procedure consisted of analyzing the so-called criterion profile for a police officer. This theme relates to the question which personal characteristics are necessary to conduct adequate police work. It could be concluded that in the police organization, the criterion profile for police officers is well developed. The extensive list of requirements for police work shows substantial overlap with the police officer requirements as described in the scientific literature and in acknowledged sources such as O\*Net. Possibly, the list of requirements may be extended by measures that assess the occupational interests of the candidates.

To assess the effectiveness of the selection procedure, empirical analyses were conducted that tested the predictive validity of the selection instruments. One of the major conclusions from the empirical tests is that there is a lack of clear and valid criterion-information. Specifically, no clear information was available that provided direct insight into the performance of police officers in practice. Due to this limitation, the present project used the following training outcomes as criteria, i) the performance of the trainee on the tests during the police academy, and ii) whether the trainee dropped out of the training.

One general finding from the empirical research was that none of the selection instruments that were evaluated showed strong predictive validity. For example, the cognitive capacity test could not predict the training outcomes. The majority of the personality and competence measures also did not show significant predictive validity. In those cases, where significant predictive validity was found, effect sizes often were small. The low predictive validity found in the present project should be interpreted with great caution. One of the main reasons for this is that it cannot automatically be assumed that the reported validities reflect the true validities. The quality of the criterion-information was too unclear to draw strong conclusions.

In line with the above findings, one of the main recommendations in this project is that the police organization would benefit from clear and valid criterion-information regarding the performance of police officers. Such information is essential in any evaluation of a selection procedure and can also be helpful in evaluating the effectiveness of the police training.

Besides the general recommendation presented above, the report contains 41 conclusions and recommendations that relate to specific parts of the selection procedure. One of these conclusions is that the psychometric properties of the cognitive capacity test could not yet be established. Furthermore, it is argued that it is imperative to monitor the effect of any adjustments in norm scores on the composition of the police force. Moreover, it is argued that relatively small adjustments in the norms on selection instruments can have large effects on the selection ratio.

The selection interviews conducted by representatives of the police force that candidates have to go through in the final stage of the selection procedure has gone through a major revision in January 2013. The effects of this revision have to be carefully monitored as the final selection interview has a prominent impact on the selection ratio. Previously, the dropout rate of candidates in this selection interview varied widely among the different police districts. In its present form, however, it is expected that the dropout rate in this selection interview will be approximately 12 percent.

In one of the last chapters of the report, several new scientific developments are discussed. Specifically, information is provided about the general factor of personality, emotional intelligence, and the dark side of personality. The police may wish to examine the possibility of using these new psychological construct in the selection procedure for police officers.

Although the lack of clear criterion-information prevents conclusive statements about the effectiveness of the selection procedure, it has to be noted that the police academy has adopted a thorough approach in developing the selection procedure. Specifically, the majority of instruments and procedures used are in line with recent scientific developments in personnel selection. Moreover, the department of recruitment and selection at the police academy has an organizational culture supporting the continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality of the selection procedure.