

Evaluation framework for Dutch strategic country programmes in international police co-operation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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Executive summary

Crime has evolved into a transnational phenomenon; no investigation into organized crime can still focus on a single home country. Effective crime fighting therefore requires international coordination. The Netherlands Ministry of Security and Justice has initiated the strategic country programmes ('Strategische Landenprogramma's' – SLPs) to support international police cooperation.

These programmes were launched the second half of 2013 and it is now important to monitor the performance of these programmes. The programmes will be formally evaluated in three years' time. This report develops a evaluation framework to this end, based on an analysis of policy documents, policing literature, interviews with 22 stakeholders and an expert meeting.

Separate SLPs have been drafted for sixteen high-priority countries. These countries were selected primarily on the basis of the crime relationships with the Netherlands. Some countries were included because of their access to a certain region or their political significance for the Netherlands. Each SLP describes which forms of crime have priority in the discussions with a given country and how international police cooperation could help reduce these forms of crime. Each SLP is detailed further in a Work Programme ('Werkprogramma' – WP), drafted in coordination with the priority country.

In comparison to earlier policies for international cooperation, the SLP-initiatives are marked by four characteristics:

- A focused dedication of resources to a select set of countries;
- A view on the entire relationship with a country, instead of separate cases;
- A comprehensive approach to different forms of crime;
- A clear and consistent approach for all of the sixteen priority countries.

The SLP initiative should be considered against the backdrop of the formation of the National Police within the Netherland. The international cooperation was judged to be too fragmented and the SLPs hope to streamline the interactions. This means there are three principal aims for the SLP initiative.

- Maximize the security effect for the Netherlands ('veiligheidseffect')
- Be a reliable partner in international police cooperation ('betrouwbare partner')
- Clarity and consistency through central coordination ('één stuur')

Due to the organizational changes within the National Police, the SLPs were initially drafted from an internal organizational perspective, rather than starting with the relationship with the priority countries. For the next stage of the SLPs, the programmes will be detailed in in full cooperation with the priority countries themselves.

Policy logics

Due to the internal shifts within the National Police, the policy logic underpinning the SLPs is also evolving, still embodying different perspectives and opinions. The description of the policy logic in this report is therefore a reflection of an ongoing conversation about the international cooperation. For now, the SLPs and WPs do display a central causal logic which seems to form the foundation for the SLP initiative.

- Strengthening non-operational cooperation is one of the ways to sustainably improve operational cooperation;
- Improved operational cooperation is one of the ways to achieve better operational results;
- Better operational results should contribute to a reduction in the crime relationships between the Netherlands and the priority countries;
- A reduced crime relationship should improve the security effect for the Netherlands.

The instruments within the SLPs and WPs mainly focus on different forms of knowledge and intelligence sharing between the authorities of the Netherlands and those in the priority country. The participants in the programmes assume that better information sharing will lead to better operational cooperation and operational results, ultimately reducing the crime relationship and maximizing the security effect for both societies.

These assumed causal relationships cannot be viewed in isolation; they must always be considered within their wider context. This would include other policy initiatives around EU or international cooperation, but also the political contexts of the partner organizations.

When looking at the policy logics and assumptions of the SLPs from the cooperation and network literature, we conclude that the programmes fulfil some of the crucial conditions for effective cooperation, but also still require some further work. This would include; formulating a shared goal, consistency in the allocation of responsibilities, and a constant attention for maintaining a trusting relationship.

The indicator set

Building on the central premises of the new policy, this report proposes a set of twenty indicators to monitor and evaluate the SLPs. The indicators have been formulated as questions, detailing exactly what information is required to answer the question and which sources can be consulted.

- The indicator set focuses on operational cooperation and the translation to operational results. This includes, for example, the question to what extent the countries work together in a targeted, consistent, and responsive manner when dealing with Request for Legal Assistance. The set also explores to what extent the operational information position is strengthened by exchanging intelligence and what the respective impact is on the interception of clandestine goods,

finances or suspects. The indicator set also looks at the costs of the international cooperation, not only in terms of personnel or expenses, but also in terms of reduced policy freedom or human rights.

- The indicator set also looks at the quality of the non-operational cooperation, supposedly underpinning operational cooperation. For example, several indicators questions the exchange of strategic information about crime trends between the Netherlands and a priority country.
- Ultimately, the indicators should demonstrate whether the crime relationships with priority versus non-priority countries has changed because of the SLP and whether the cooperation translated to a security effect for society. This ultimate goal has been included in the evaluation framework so that the end goals for the SLPs and WPs is always kept in mind. However, the evaluation framework does acknowledge that the SLPs will only have a partial impact on the ultimate aims.

Next steps

After drafting the evaluation framework, the question is how the evaluation itself will be conducted. Depending on the resources available and preferences of the stakeholders involved, the evaluation can be conducted in a limited or extended form:

- Ideally, the priority countries which are covered by a SLP will be compared with sub-priority countries which do not have a SLP but do have a significant crime relationship with the Netherlands. This comparison will reveal whether the SLPs made a significant difference for either the priority or the subpriority countries. The evaluation can then measure whether the criminal activities simply shifted to the subpriority countries ('waterbed effect'). A more limited evaluation would only consider the priority countries, but then not all assumptions behind the policy can be tested;
- The evaluation would ideally focus on a broad set of stakeholders involved in international cooperation, but it could also focus on only the most directly involved parties (National Police, Ministry of Security and Justice, Crown's Prosecution, liaison officers);
- A full and nuanced evaluation would employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures. A quick scan evaluation would only draw from a small set of indicators.

To act as a useful tool for learning and development, it is recommended to not only conduct an evaluation at the end of the three year period, but continually follow and inform the ongoing policy process. Such a continuous involvement does require significant support within both the National Police and the Ministry of Security and Justice, including:

- Dedicated resources for gathering and analysing relevant data, for example within the National Information and Intelligence Service (DLIO);

- A good feedback loop about the ongoing evaluation results to the parties in the field, covering strategic, tactical and operational leads.

Finally, to establish whether the SLPs and WPs will indeed improve the cooperation and results, it is necessary to conduct a baseline measurement ('nulmeting') soon. Without a baseline measurement now, it is not possible to properly assess the impact of the programme in three years.