

Titel rapport:

Jihadism and the immigration process. A closer look at the identification of possible jihadists among asylum seekers and jihadist activities in and around reception centres (Jihadisme en de vreemdelingenketen. De signalering van vermoedelijke jihadististen onder asielzoekers en jihadistische activiteiten in en rond asielzoekerscentra nader onderzocht)

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Summary

Since the end of 2014, a broad political debate has emerged within Europe about the increase in the number of migrants and jihadism-related risks. Whereas initially, national security agencies and other experts in Europe expressed themselves cautiously about the risk that jihadists would be among migrants entering Europe, the tone changed after the attacks in Paris in November 2015. Currently, at least three “risks” are circulating: 1) the risk of jihadists traveling with “migratory flows” into Europe (and applying for asylum); 2) the risk of forced recruitment by jihadi among asylum seekers and 3) the risk that applicants simply radicalise during their stay at reception centres.

As a result of the abovementioned political debate the Dutch government required further insight into the identification of jihadism in the immigration process. This resulted in the following research question:

What is the current set up regarding identification and exchange of information regarding jihadism in the Dutch immigration process, how does this work in practice and are there any possible improvements to be made? If so, which?

The research focuses specifically on foreign nationals requesting asylum. In order to answer the abovementioned question, different research methods have been combined. On the basis of an analysis of public sources such as media reports and policy documents and a query through the European Migration Network (EMN), the national and international contexts have been described. In order to map the structural set up regarding identification and exchange of information, the researchers have analysed policy documents and interviewed policy officers and senior staff within relevant organisations. In order to be able to mirror the existing set up to existing (academic) insights about identification and information exchange, literature has been reviewed. In order to get an idea of actual practice, both executive staff and frontline professionals have been interviewed. In total, 49 respondents have been interviewed.

The data collection for this study took place during the period February to July 11, 2016. The report contains no references to events or developments that occurred afterwards and it cannot be ruled out that the described context and/or practice has altered thereafter. The context in which the research was conducted can be characterized as dynamic. For this reason, it is important to place the findings of this study squarely within the relevant time period.

The structural set up

The Netherlands does not have a single integrated framework for the identification of jihadism in the immigration process. Instead, over a period of years various measures and methods have been adopted.

The latter, can be considered collectively as one system. This system is constantly being developed and adapted and has changed during the writing of this report.

The creation of the Counterterrorism Infobox (*CT Infobox*) in 2005 has enabled information sharing within specific frameworks between the investigative and intelligence/security services, and the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND). In the period following its introduction, targeted agreements and covenants have been introduced which facilitate information exchange between the IND, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) and the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V) on the one hand and the intelligence and security services on the other. Liaisons have been appointed to give effect to these agreements on the ground. A multidisciplinary team (MDT) has been established which, inter alia, aims to strengthen information exchange on jihadism between various stakeholders in the immigration process, the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), and investigative and intelligence/ security services.

Within National Police, the information organization (DRIO/DLIO) is to share signals relating to jihadism it receives from the Alien Police department (AVIM) and the local police with the regional or national criminal investigation departments or the police information services working for the intelligence and security services. Employees of the military police (KMar) are to act in conformity with an operational manual on foreign "Jihad fighters" (*Handelingskader Jihadgangers*), which prescribes alerting the department of military police connected with the intelligence and security services (BD-KMar). Between the IND, COA and DT&V, a 'reporting structure' has been set up for matters related to national security, including indications of jihadism. All signs identified by these three organizations are in principle sent to the IND liaisons, who forward these to the intelligence and security services. Employees of the COA are asked to also share relevant signs with the local police. Employees of the Custodial Institutions Agency (DJI) must forward signals relating to jihadism to the director of the institution concerned, who can consult with the local police. Municipalities should forward indicators from the emergency shelters to the local police and, if the asylum seeker is already known to that organization, to the COA. Within the Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk), it has been agreed that, in consultation with the local manager and where necessary the individual's attorney, relevant information may be forwarded to the COA. Within the Nidos Foundation (which fulfils the guardianship task for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers), it is now established protocol that signals end up with the managing board who may bring worrying signals to the attention of other relevant authorities. It is possible that investigative and/or intelligence/security services may share information with stakeholders in the immigration process in the context of an investigation of criminal offences and/or protection of the national security.

The practice; bottlenecks and areas for improvement

With the stated reservation that the data obtained are not necessarily representative due to the applied nature of the methods there are no current indications of substantial problems in the implementation of the information exchange design in actual practice. Respondents generally indicated the problem receives attention within their organisations and that they have sufficient means to act in the event they believe to recognise possible signals relating to jihadism. The report, however, does identify several bottlenecks in the execution of the design and provides suggestions that may possibly enhance or improve the existing system.

- Some respondents expressed that the expectations of the outside world (the general public and politics) regarding the contribution of stakeholders in the immigration process for identifying jihadism are (too) high;

- The practical implementation of the design could be improved. For instance, the increased number of asylum applicants since late 2014 resulted in capacity problems. In actual practice the existing reporting structure and internal agreements are not always followed;
- Several respondents were critical of the design and/or operation of the multidisciplinary team as a means to gain insight into jihadism in the immigration process;
- The Ministers of Security and Justice and Social Affairs and Employment informed parliament that in relation to the risk of forced recruitment in reception centres asylum applicants are given information to make them resilient in contacts with third parties and to make them aware where they can report abuses. The COA informs asylum seekers in general terms about safety and possibilities to report situations of (social) unsafety. None of the respondents indicated that they were aware of *specific* initiatives with regard to radicalisation, forced recruitment or jihadism;
- Frontline professionals do not receive feedback after reporting signals. This can partly be explained by the fact that much of this information could be considered a state secret. Some respondents nonetheless expressed an interest in receiving such feedback. To improve the quality of the identification process and maintain willingness to report, one idea worth exploring could be whether it is possible to provide general feedback to frontline professionals;
- An uneasy relationship exists with respect to the promotion of awareness and expertise of frontline professionals. On the one hand training serves to make them aware of the risk of jihadism and to equip them to recognise signals relating to jihadism as much as possible. On the other hand, providing professionals with indicators to identify signals should not lead to tunnel vision and/or over reporting;
- There is no structured 'horizontal' exchange of information of all signals relating to jihadism between all actors in the immigration process at the local or national level. To overcome this difficulty, stakeholders should collectively identify whether (mutual) information exchange is necessary and/or possible;
- The existing system for reporting signals relating to jihadism from the immigration process is primarily aimed at informing the intelligence and security services, while the police indicate they (also) have a need to receive such signals;
- Due to their (independent) role and function of counsellor and advocate, the Refugee Council and Nidos experience moral and legal conflict when faced with the decision to share signals of possible jihadism with other stakeholders. It is important that these organizations are well informed about the legal (im)possibilities for sharing information and possible further consequences;
- There is potential conflict and confusion regarding the usefulness, necessity and desirability of providing indicators and indicator lists to frontline professionals as guidance in identifying possible jihadism. In academic literature questions are raised with regard to the effectiveness of such guidance. It is furthermore highlighted that the use of such tools could have negative side effects, such as privacy breaches and stigmatisation. At the same time some stakeholders exposed to relatively short contact moments with asylum seekers indicate they need guidance. When use is made of such lists and tools, regular monitoring and evaluation of relative advantages and disadvantages is recommended;
- Finally, the report identifies a potential bottleneck with regard to the processing of signals that relate to a person's religion or belief, received during the immigration process (and beyond). On the basis of the Law on the Intelligence and Security Services (WIV), information relating to someone's religion may only be processed in addition to other data, and only in so far as it is inevitable for the purpose of the data processing. A question for future research is how this takes shape in actual practice.