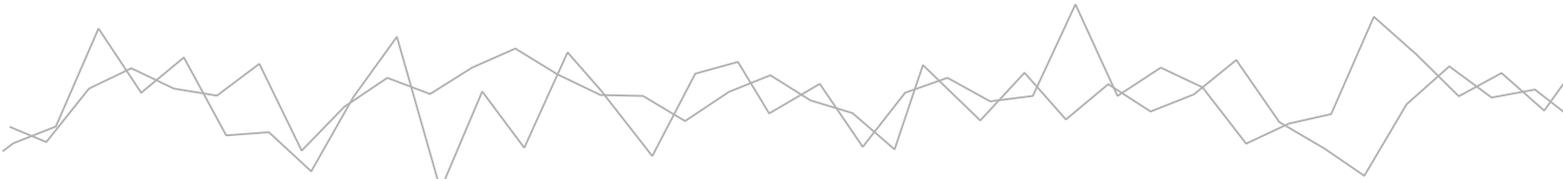


Amsterdam, december 2020
In opdracht van het Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC)

Inquiry into an SCBA-Guide for Justice and Security

Summary

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Summary

Social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) can be applied in various forms to policies of the Netherlands Ministry of Justice and Security. This raises issues that are not answered by existing SCBA guidelines. It is therefore desirable to draw up a CBA guide for the Ministry.

Background

In the Netherlands, social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA) has been used more and more often in decision-making over the past twenty years. A General SCBA guideline has been drawn up and SCBA guides are available for various policy areas. Occasionally, SCBAs are also carried out for the Ministry of Justice and Security. However, there is no guide yet for SCBA of policies of the Ministry.

SCBAs provide a better picture of the merits of policy and help to inform decision-making. A CBA can be used to fill in a regulatory impact assessment (Integraal Afwegingskader), as a basis for policy plans and legislative proposals. SCBAs are also in line with the operation “Insight into quality” (Inzicht in Kwaliteit), which is aimed at better insight into the results of policy and the use of these insights to increase the social value of policy.

Research questions

Against this background, the Research and Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Justice and Security (WODC) has formulated the following research questions:

1. *Is a SCBA guide for the Justice and Security domain necessary?*
2. *Which follow-up steps are necessary to arrive at such a guide (or to better tailor existing SCBA guidelines to the JenV domain)?*

Method

In order to test the applicability of SCBA in policies of the Ministry, five (potential) measures were selected, based on criteria such as availability of information about policy effects, options for monetizing policy effects and the importance of the subject within the policies of the Ministry:

- More police surveillance
- DNA testing of suspects
- An area ban for troublesome persons in entertainment areas
- Extra guidance and surveillance locations for asylum seekers
- A longer maximum sentence for murder

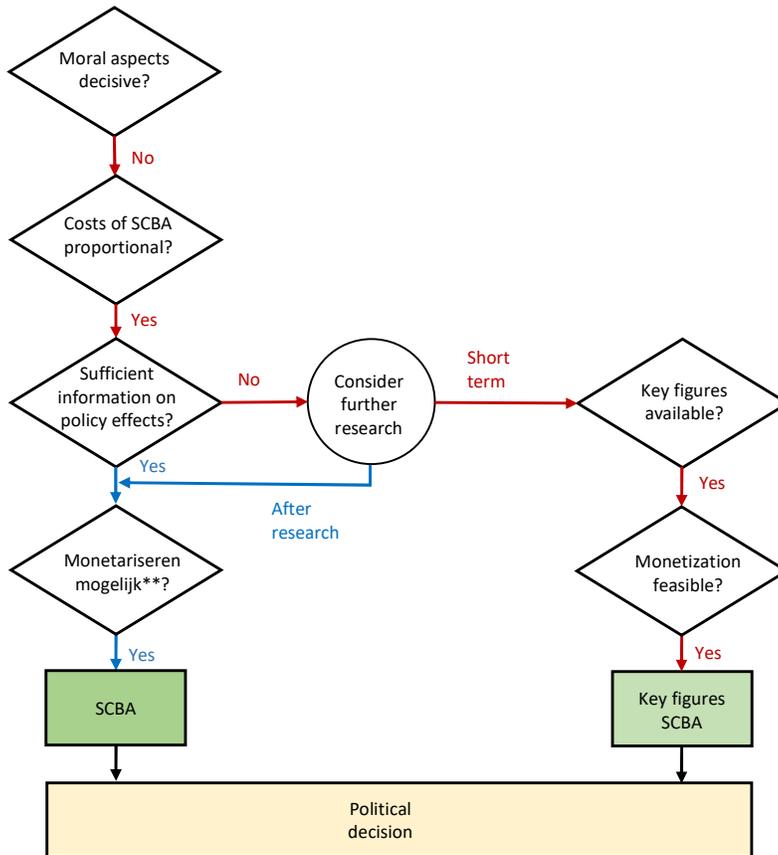
Subsequently, we examined whether these measures lend themselves to SCBA. To assess this, the importance of moral and ethical aspects versus economic aspects was weighed. We also checked whether the costs of performing SCBAs are in a good proportion to the costs of the policy examined. This analysis also raises substantive issues that may be relevant to an SCBA guide for the Ministry. Based on this analysis, we advise next steps.

Applicability of SCBA in Justice and Security policies

For most of the five measures a (light form of) cost-benefit analysis is possible. The example below shows how this was analyzed for the measure “More police surveillance”. There is insufficient

'hard' information about the effects of this measure for a complete SCBA. A cost-benefit analysis based on key figures from foreign literature is, however, possible. Moreover, SCBAs can set the agenda for research into policy effects in the Netherlands.

Figure S.1 An example: The measure "More police surveillance" lends itself to a cost-benefit analysis based on key figures



Source: SEO Amsterdam Economics

Substantive issues for an SCBA guide

When analyzing these measures, various issues arise that can be addressed in an SCBA guide for the Ministry:

- Should any decrease in the benefits of crime for the perpetrators be counted? This issue also applies to the disadvantages of punishment for offenders.
- Can the effect of measures on security (apart from crime) be monetized?
- Is it desirable to include an increased sense of security (apart from actual security) or a sense of too much police control in an SCBA?
- Should costs and benefits for, for example, asylum seekers and foreign prisoners be included, or are they treated as foreigners in the cost-benefit analysis?
- Is it desirable and possible to include a sense of (un)fairness (regardless of the other effects) in an SCBA?
- Can key figures be advised for monetizing costs and benefits of policies of the Ministry? Examples are the costs of crime for the Ministry and for society.

The first question, whether the benefits of crime for offenders should be included, is particularly relevant. The offenders are part of society. This implies that the benefits for offenders are, in principle, also benefits for society. However, counting the benefits of undesirable behavior is difficult to accept from a policy perspective. This subject deserves attention in SCBA guidelines, for example in an SCBA guide for the Justice and Security Ministry. The costs and benefits that potential offenders experience themselves may also determine the choices that they make, and thus the effect of policy measures.

Conclusion

We recommended that further guidelines be drawn up in which these issues are addressed, in the form of an SCBA guide for JenV.