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/ State of affairs governance structure Emergency Control Rooms - Executive summary

Since July 2020 the Dutch Emergency Control Rooms (ECRs) have a new governance structure
On July 1, 2020 the ECR Amendment Act came into force. This Act determines that the Dutch national police is responsible for the maintenance of the ECRs. Previously, the Safety Regions (*Veiligheidsregio's*) were responsible for this. The *Landelijke Meldkamer Samenwerking* (National Emergency Control Room Cooperation, or LMS) performs this task within the police organisation. The new governance structure has come into effect with new outlines for policy and management of the ECRs. The goal of this research is to report on the progress of the implementation of the governance and to make clear whether the new structure functions in practice as it was intended.

The following **research questions** are answered in this report:
1. What is the current situation regarding the implementation of the (multi) governance?
2. Does the (multi) governance for the maintenance of the ECRs function as intended?
3. If not, when is the governance expected to function as intended?
4. Are stakeholders sufficiently able to influence the maintenance?
5. Are there elements of the functioning of the governance that can be improved?

Design of the governance

In the multi governance 54 parties jointly manage the policy and management of the ECRs, with the national police functioning as administrator of the ECRs. The ECRs are essential for the functioning of all emergency services, as they accept and handle notifications from citizens who request immediate deployment of emergency services. That is why the Amendment Act provides that, apart from the police, all parties in the ECR field (the 25 Security Regions/fire brigades, the 25 Regional Ambulance Facilities, the Royal Netherlands Marechaussee and the responsible ministries (Justice and Security, Health, Welfare and Sport, and Defence) can influence the management of the ECRs. These disciplines jointly ('multidisciplinary') manage the LMS: hence the term 'multi' governance.

The new model takes the form of an intensive network collaboration between the parties in the ECR domain. By merging the ECRs, they are working towards a total of 10 ECRs. These are connected to a single national ICT facility, so that if necessary they can take over each other's activities and offer one standard national quality service level. Citizens throughout the Netherlands must be able to count on the same service. Another central feature of the model is the distinction between the **ECR function**

and **ECR maintenance**. The LMS is responsible for facility services, accommodation, management, maintenance and development of the shared ICT facilities. The various users of the ECRs (the emergency services) remain responsible for the proper performance of their own ECR function: receiving notifications and coordinating the deployment of emergency services.

The multi governance structure is designed such that the parties involved jointly shape the 'outlines of policy and management' of the ECRs and manage the LMS. Central to this is the policy and management cycle, in which the parties jointly develop and lay down the annual policy and spending plan for the ECRs. Various decision-making bodies play a role in this:

▸ The relevant parties are represented at an executive level in the Administrative ECR Body (*Bestuurlijk Meldkamer Beraad*, or BMB). The BMB is responsible for "national management of the policy and maintenance of the ECRs". The BMB monitors the operation of the policy and maintenance of the ECRs and decides on proposals from the SMB (see below) "that require administrative assurance within the adopted policy plan and budget."

▸ The Strategic ECR Council (*Strategisch Meldkamer Beraad*, or SMB) is the body for "policy-making and multidisciplinary consultation" of the national policy and maintenance of the ECRs and acts as an advisory body to the BMB. The SMB is responsible for drawing up the policy plan and budget.

▸ Each ECR has its own management meeting in which the various users and the LMS are represented. These consultations also have a role in shaping the national policy and management and in translating this to the service area of the relevant ECR.

▸ In addition to formal decision-making bodies, the governance structure has a number of 'auxiliary structures'. They do not have a formal role in decision making, but contribute to effective management. The most important are the Discipline Consultation (*Discipline Overleg*, or DO) and the Consultation ECR Heads (*Overleg Hoofden Meldkamers*, or OHM).

Governance implementation

Based on an analysis of the agendas and reports of the **national decision-making bodies**, we conclude that on paper the BMB largely fulfils the roles provided for in the ministerial regulation. It is striking, however, that the BMB does not always focus on the administrative outlines as intended, but also relatively often discusses (relatively operational) technical topics. The SMB also largely fulfils the roles described in the regulation, but does not yet do so in all respects. In practice, the SMB takes decisions independently on fewer subjects than foreseen, so that items later end up on the agenda of the BMB. The SMB acts to some extent as a filter for the BMB, but could fulfil that role even more.

The two main **auxiliary structures** are both active and meet regularly. In practice, the DO seems to function as a portal for the SMB and thus as an extra layer in the governance. The question is whether that fits with the status of the auxiliary structure. The OHM has less of such a formal role, but has more of the character of an informative consultation.

At the **regional level**, we note that a management team has been set up for all ECRs (in the making), in line with the ministerial regulation, with two ECRs that are yet to be merged in a transitional phase. In line with the regulation, all ECRs also have a meeting for operational coordination. In the majority of ECRs, other consultations are also active in governance. In five ECRs, this involves consultation at an administrative level 'above' the management team. The composition of the two central consultations for the ten ECRs is broadly similar. In addition, virtually all responsibilities for management consultations described in the regulation have in practice been assigned to them.

With regard to the implementation of the **policy and maintenance cycle**, we note that the steps described in the regulation have been completed in practice. We conclude, however, that the plan for

2022 could not be adopted on 1 September in accordance with the regulation, in particular because of the large number of comments and remarks from the parties represented in the DO. It also appeared that there were different views in the BMB about the ownership of the annual plan (by the LMS vs by the collaborating parties).

Practical functioning of the governance

Based on interviews with all parties involved, we conclude that a great deal has been achieved in a short period of time in the construction of the new governance structure in the ECR field. Broadly**, the governance is in place** and there is a functioning collaboration in which the parties jointly guide the management of the ECRs, for example by drawing up a joint policy and spending plan. The fact that there is a functioning management team for all ECRs that fulfils its role in joint management also provides a good basis for effective management.

The various parties in the ECR field can **influence management in the multi governance**. The users of the ECRs are represented at all levels in the governance and the management teams of the ten ECRs also have a place in the policy and management cycle, in which they can state their wishes for management. The attitude of the LMS also contributes to this: the parties predominantly describe the LMS as an organisation that is prepared to listen to the questions and requests of the parties, and makes every effort to convert those wishes into actions where possible. It is striking, however, that the disciplines seem to have a greater influence on the national policy and spending cycle than the (management teams of the regional) ECRs. The degree of influence of 'practice' on management is therefore a point of attention. It must be prevented that governance becomes too far removed from the professional field.

There are various points in the practical operation of governance that require attention. We have identified a number of fundamental points in the governance on which the parties' opinions differ. For example, parties have different views on the **scope of the subject of governance** ('what do we decide on, what is subject to the main lines of policy and management' and what do we mean by the ECR function?) and it is difficult to address those topics that are on the edge of the scope of maintenance ('beheer'). We note that there is little room for jointly developing a learning approach, in which parties reflect on basic principles and agreements, and recalibrate on points where changing circumstances require this.

One and a half years after the new management model came into effect, those involved are still looking for a good interpretation of the roles in the management and for fruitful and **appropriate mutual relationships**. In practice, it appears that there is as yet no shared idea about the relationship between the LMS and the steering parties and the mutual division of responsibilities. There are also divergent views on how far the ministries' ultimate 'system responsibility' should extend. The various bodies in the national management structure do not (yet) fulfil their role optimally: there is a widely shared wish to position the SMB more firmly and to allow the BMB to focus more on the overarching themes and topics. The limited mandate at the national level of the Regional Ambulance Facilities in particular hinders the effectiveness of decision making. Finally, the influence of the ECR management teams on national management is still limited.

The discussions also show that parties regularly experience a lack of a **sense of togetherness and mutual trust**. Controlling the management of the ECRs in the multi governance is a joint responsibility of the parties. This requires reasoning from the perspective of the whole and now and then being able to set one's own interests or preferences aside in order to serve the common

interest. The people we spoke with regularly have the feeling that mutual trust is limited and that in practice it is mainly up to the LMS to look for commonality.

Conclusions

The ECR field is a complex whole in which 54 independent parties have to work together and come to decisions, while their interests are not always aligned. They are rooted in very different systems. In particular, a tension is recognisable between the more centralised management logic of the ministry of Justice and Security and the decentralised, privatised domain of the ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. These differences make it difficult to adopt a comprehensive approach to the ECR field, also because these differences do not always allow parties to fully understand the logic and context of their partners.

These challenges are exacerbated by the fact that the ECR field is undergoing a major and complex change that demands a lot from parties. Until recently, a governance structure with a strongly decentralised character was in place; now parties have to work together nationally and jointly guide the main points of policy and maintenance for the ECRs. The parties have to get used to this, and everyone has to search for a good interpretation of their new role.

Realising a system of ten networked ECRs, connected to a common national infrastructure and able to take over each other's tasks at all times, is a major undertaking that requires a lot from the LMS and the entire network of parties involved. At the same time, the LMS must also manage all ECRs that are not yet connected to the national infrastructure, thereby keeping a tangle of different systems and outdated applications up and running, while also preparing the connection of the ten ECRs. Meanwhile, the LMS has to build its own organisation by recruiting and training new employees, and strengthening its financial management, among other things.

We conclude on the basis of the criteria formulated in the evaluation framework (chapter 1.2) that the chosen control model is **recognisable** for the parties and in line with the characteristics of the ECR field. The collaborating parties have a **say in the management** of and policy for the ECRs: they can steer at various levels and in different ways on the main aspects of management and policy of the ECRs. A point of attention here is that disciplines seem to have a greater say in management than the ten management teams of the various ECRs. This means that there is a danger that national governance will be too far removed from the ECRs.

The distribution of control over the involved parties also poses risks to the **effectiveness** of the governance. Due to the large number of co-directing parties, decision-making can take a long time and certain discussions sometimes remain unresolved for a long time. On various topics, we observe that discussion points regularly appear on the agendas of consultations and that it is difficult for parties to reach joint decisions. This lack of decisiveness to a large extent stems from the complexity of the ECR field, in which 54 parties have to work together in a form of 'network management'. In our opinion, top-down hierarchical management cannot be achieved in this, because the ECR field consists of a multitude of legally and administratively autonomous parties.

One of the goals for the management and control of the ECRs is that **local customisation** must be possible within the framework of national management. The central challenge for the ECR field is currently one of standardisation and uniformisation. We conclude that it is not (yet) clear how much room for customisation remains against that background. The discussion about where standardisation ends and the scope for customisation begins is still hardly being had between the parties. We also conclude that it remains to be seen to what extent it is possible in the current governance to

properly settle discussions about customisation and to make integral assessments. Parties will have to find a way to also assess the need for 'each other's' applications, links and special requests.

We further conclude that in the short time in which the current governance structure is in place, it is still too early to draw clear conclusions about its **effectiveness** (the extent to which the governance contributes to the overarching policy goals for the ECR field). We do note, however, that the divergent views between core players on a number of fundamental aspects do not contribute to working properly towards the common goals. The lack of adequate and complete management information for the ECR field as a whole is also a risk in this regard.

Finally, with regard to the **efficiency** of governance, we note that there is still room for improvement, for example by tightening the boundaries between various decision making bodies, by preventing discussions at different levels from being had again and by clarifying the division of roles and responsibilities. The LMS could also strengthen its financial accountability.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions described above, this report makes a number of recommendations for the collaborating parties. These are summarised very briefly below and further explained and elaborated on in chapter 6.2.

General
- Increase the sense of joint responsibility for realising the changes required in the ECR field. To do this, jointly discuss cooperation, mutual understanding and role stability.

Subject of the governance
- Make explicit that the scope of the multi governance is broader than only steering the LMS. Draft a jointly supported vision on the scope of the governance and the definition of the ECR function.
- Work towards a revised vision for the future of the ECRs in which the significance of current developments for the future is described.

Roles and relations
- Draw up a joint framework for choices about customisation versus standardisation, that guides the conversation about standardisation in the spectrum of systems and applications.
- Strengthen the position of the SMB as a strategic steering body and make the division of roles between the SMB and BMB more explicit.
- Clarify the relationship between the collaborating parties with the LMS, the role of the LMS and secure the police's responsibility for the maintenance of ECRs.
- Strive to strengthen the mandate of parties in national bodies and discuss what is necessary to achieve this.
- Strengthen the position of management teams in the governance.
- Reassess the role of the Discipline Consultation (DO) as an advisory body.

Functioning of the governance
- Reinforce management information and financial accountability by the LMS.
- Strive to reduce the various double roles of the participants in the various bodies.