

STRATEGIC NOTE:

EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM

Towards a multidisciplinary approach in Belgium.....



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1. INTRODUCTION

In order to tackle extremism and terrorism in our society, cooperation between all services involved in tackling these issues is crucial. The need for closer cooperation between the services involved was already the central theme of the report by the Parliamentary Investigation Committee following the attacks on 22 March 2016. For this multidisciplinary approach to be successful, it first of all requires trust between all the partners involved. In this regard, it is essential that this trust is not held to ransom by the various competences at all levels of government, nor by the individual agendas of the different participating services. The security rationale and the socio-preventive rationale - both equally necessary - need to reinforce each other.

This Strategic Note aims to structure this multidisciplinary approach. To achieve this, a clear picture of the problem is first and foremost necessary. Then, on the basis of this accurate picture, the risks posed by extremism and terrorism must be reduced as much as possible. This can be achieved when the best-placed services take the most appropriate measures.

The aim of this Strategic Note is to enable all competent authorities and services to work within a common framework, with a common strategy, while respecting each other's specific mission and methodology. Of course, the principles of professional secrecy and the legal competences of each level of government remain safeguarded.

This Strategic Note makes the link between:

- the socio-preventive, administrative, police and judicial approach as well as an approach focused on social reintegration;
- the federal level, the level of the communities and regions and the provincial and local level.



The Strategic Note builds on past experience. Since 2002, there have been successive action plans aimed at reducing radicalisation and extremism in society, through measures taken primarily by the security and intelligence services and the police services. Over time, however, there was a gradual realisation that a purely security-oriented approach was not enough. An inclusive society must be the main weapon in the fight against extremism and terrorism. Prevention and social reintegration into society are crucial in this regard. The update of the Plan R in 2015 took this comprehensive approach into account. The synergies between the different policy levels were enhanced, and the cities and municipalities took on a more important role.

→ *For an optimal multidisciplinary approach, collaboration, strengthening and maintaining mutual trust, as well as information exchange and sharing of knowledge and expertise between all services involved, are essential.*

The attacks in Paris and Brussels in 2015 and 2016 have profoundly changed the security landscape. It is crucial that the government is able to demonstrate sufficient resilience in order to best safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens in the fight against terrorism and extremism. A safe and pluralistic society, where everyone can express themselves without fear of violence or persecution, is the *conditio sine qua non* in this respect. To this end, the right structures and platforms must be put in place and supported by all participants. This is what the present Strategic Note aims to achieve.

2. SCOPE

In order to tackle extremism and terrorism in our society, a comprehensive and integrated cooperation is vital. In this sense, it is first and foremost important to define the scope of the Strategic Note. All partners need to work within a common framework. A common language is crucial in this regard. The Strategic Note uses a number of concepts defined in the Act of 30 November 1998 governing the intelligence and security services.

Extremism: *“racist, xenophobic, anarchic, nationalist, authoritarian or totalitarian views or intentions, whether political, ideological, confessional or philosophical, which are theoretically or practically contrary to the principles of democracy or human rights, the proper functioning of democratic institutions or other foundations of the rule of law. This also includes the radicalisation process”.*

Terrorism: *“the use of violence against persons or material interests for ideological or political reasons with the aim of achieving one’s objectives through terror, intimidation or threats. This also includes the radicalisation process”.*



Since the Strategic Note transcends the security domain, the **socio-preventive definition** of the **radicalisation process** also needs to be considered:

“A dynamic process that starts with alienation from society and the political system, a growing intolerance towards an ideology one does not share and an increasing willingness to accept violence as a means of imposing one’s own ideology on others.”

The concepts of ‘radicalisation process’ and ‘radicalisation’ in this Strategic Note are therefore only used within the above conceptual framework. Of course, in a democratic state based on the rule of law, people and groups who express themselves in a radical way are not by definition a problem. On the contrary, they may enrich society. Unambiguous and provocative positions that challenge the status quo are important in a democratic society. Convincing others of one’s own ideas is therefore a legitimate thing to do.

3. THE STRATEGY TRANSLATED INTO PRACTICE

The Strategy Note takes into account various elements on how to best address threats and what measures should be taken in tackling the root causes of radicalisation and extremism, including the radicalisation process:

- **All forms** of extremism that **incites or promotes the use of violence**, fall within the scope of the Strategic Note;
 - There are **many different factors** that play a role in the **radicalisation process**. That is why it is **impossible to outline one general profile** for all individuals going through a radicalisation process. In addition, the **online aspect** has also grown significantly;
 - The ***modi operandi*** and the **profiles of perpetrators are evolving**. Whereas the perpetrators used to be sent out, trained commandos from a conflict zone, today most perpetrators of attacks are **inspired lone actors** using unsophisticated weapons. Therefore, it is essential to work on the basis of a **clearly defined and individualised threat picture**, which is continuously updated;
 - **Transparency and cooperation between all the different actors are essential**, both in the outlines of the Strategic Note and in the approach on the ground. This cooperation is necessary to ensure that all partners involved in the approach have a common understanding of the phenomenon and that they all speak the same language. The cooperation can only run smoothly if there is trust between the different partners. Robust exchange of knowledge, expertise and information based on this trust will ensure the implementation of the most appropriate measures. Such a multidisciplinary approach offers the best guarantees for **limiting the harmful effects of radicalisation**.
- The resources deployed will therefore vary according to the type of extremism, the wider environment and the individual.



Consequently, the focus of the approach has shifted from a narrow approach to terrorism to a broader approach aimed at **preventing violent extremism (PVE)** and **countering violent extremism (CVE)**. In the area of prevention and guidance, the broad social field - especially the socio-preventive actors - is a crucial partner. This is what the multidisciplinary approach stands for.

A multidisciplinary approach is required, with a view to prevention, early detection, reintegration, exchange of information, accurate prioritisation and identification of the service(s) best placed to take appropriate measures. These measures may be proactive, preventive or repressive, or aimed at social reintegration. Focusing more on a culture of trust and cooperation between the different professional disciplines is paramount.

In practice, this multidisciplinary approach translates into platforms for information exchange that use an individualised approach based on the philosophy of risk management.

Risk management is a cyclical process, based on three main steps: **detection**, **risk assessment** and **risk reduction**. By putting all the pieces of the information puzzle together, it is possible to make an assessment, an analysis of the risk posed by the entity in question. Drawing on a number of well-defined risk domains, a picture can be formed of the profile of the entity in question. As such, it becomes clear which domains are rather problematic and in which domains the individual is progressing positively.

On the basis of this assessment, it must then be determined what measures - and at what level - must be taken in order to reduce the risk posed by the person in question. Once these measures are laid down, information has to be collected again, a new assessment is made and the cyclical process of risk management starts all over again.



Central to this philosophy are the multidisciplinary case consultations. The consultation platforms are set up on a decentralised basis:

- There are **Local Task Forces (LTFs)** at the district level, working from a security perspective;
- At the local level, there are the **Local Integral Security Cells concerning radicalism, extremism and terrorism (LISCs-R)**, working from a socio-preventive perspective.

The **Information Officer** is the link between both platforms. The aim is to reduce as much as possible the risk of extremist and terrorist threat posed by the individual or organisation concerned.

- There are also platforms for monitoring and orienting terrorist cases. In the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal of Brussels, these are the **Joint Intelligence Centre** and **Joint Decision Centre (JIC-JDC)**, in the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal of Liege, Charleroi, Ghent and Antwerp, these are the **Counterterrorism Forums (CT)**. JIC-JDC and the CT Forums are security-oriented platforms. Their remit is to continuously exchange information in the context of existing judicial and intelligence files relating to terrorism. They decide jointly on the best strategy to follow when information on terrorist activities is available.

Of course, the Strategic Note is in line with the democratic rights and freedoms set out by international treaties ratified by Belgium, including the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as the constitution and the laws, decrees and ordinances in force and their implementing orders. This Strategic Note should also be accorded to the action plans and strategic plans of the communities and regions, all in the broader context of the “Framework Memorandum Integral Safety”.

3.1. Decentralised platforms

3.1.1. The Local Task Forces

The Local Task Forces (LTFs), together with the LISCs-R, are the nerve centre of the Strategic Note. The LTFs are a security-oriented permanent network and thus more than just an occasion to meet. The information shared within the LTFs may be either classified or unclassified.

The police services, the security and intelligence services, CUTA, the Immigration Office and the Public Prosecution Service are primarily represented in the LTF. The LTFs form the platform within which the different actors can discuss the monitoring of entities in the Common Database (CDB). Other cases of radicalisation can also be discussed within the LTF, so that an initial joint risk analysis can be made. Based on the information exchange and coordination within the services, these cases can then be monitored through the standard operations of the police or intelligence and security services. It may also be decided that cases should be passed on to the LISC-R for socio-preventive monitoring. An LTF may also decide that an entity should no longer be monitored.

The LTFs operate at district level and consist of a strategic and an operational component.

- The **operational LTFs** are responsible for collecting information and feeding the CDB. In addition, they are competent for monitoring the entities in the CDB present in their area, in accordance with the threat assessment by the Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis (CUTA). The operational LTFs identify the priority cases and decide what action or monitoring is appropriate for each case.
- The **strategic LTFs** ensure strategic concordance between the local operational LTFs.





The LTFs are steered at national level by the **Local Task Forces Working Group**, which sets out the guidelines and priorities.

It is ensured that the prospective focus on radicalisation does not fade into the background with purely reactive monitoring of known persons or organisations. In this sense, the interaction with the LISCs-R is crucial. Indeed, the Information Officer's involvement in the LISC-R meetings makes cooperation between the operational LTFs and the socio-preventive platforms more efficient.

In order to always implement the most appropriate measures, the LTFs first prioritise the entities in the CDB. This is always done using carefully selected criteria. This prioritisation is necessary because some entities require more focus and monitoring than others, and because the cases do not always have to be handled by the same actors. The prioritisation therefore also determines the platform on which the entity is primarily monitored, as well as the corresponding measures.

The process for prioritising the entities is as follows:

- **A entities** are primarily monitored by the Federal Judicial Police and/or the intelligence services in the context of a conventional criminal investigation led by the (federal) public prosecutor or the examining magistrate and/or in the context of an intelligence investigation. The LTFs are kept informed of the cases and of the eventual need to take action;
- **B entities** are primarily monitored via the platform of LTFs and the associated partners;
- **C entities** are monitored in the first instance via the platform of LISCs-R and the associated partners;
- **D entities** concern, for example, persons who are in prison abroad or who have been expelled from Belgian territory. Being registered as an entity ensures that the person or organisation in question remains in the CDB until he or she can be removed.

Entities can be monitored simultaneously on different platforms. Moreover, the classification for monitoring the entities is not static, but dynamic, as the monitoring of an entity may evolve.

3.1.2. The Local Integral Security Cells concerning radicalism, extremism and terrorism

At the local level, the Local Integral Security Cells concerning radicalism, extremism and terrorism (LISCs-R) stand closest to the citizens. As a result, they are best placed to work on prevention and early detection, but also to elaborate a reintegration path for the most problematic cases.

The LISC-R has a symbiotic relationship with the LTF. Where the LTF implements monitoring from a security perspective, the LISC-R focuses on prevention and guidance. These different approaches are reflected in the set-up of both consultation structures. Whereas the LTF consists of the police services, the intelligence and security services, the Immigration Office and the Public Prosecution Service, a LISC-R consists mainly of local social actors.

An LISC-R ideally consists of two consultation platforms, the so-called “tables”:

- The **operational table** is competent for the actual case consultation. Follow-up is done by the mayor and/or their representative;
- The **strategic table** steers the operational table and ensures that it functions properly. The mayor is in charge of the strategic table.

Multidisciplinary cooperation is a key aspect here too:

- The LISCs-R are an efficient tool in the fight against radicalisation because they **detect at an early stage persons** who are in the process of radicalisation (or who are suspected of radicalisation);
- Besides early detection, an **individualised monitoring process** can be worked out on the basis of the information gathered. Not only people who are identified from early detection, but also people who have been identified outside the operation of the LISC-R can be subject to an individualised monitoring process.

In concrete terms, this means that the partners within the LISC-R determine which service is best placed to monitor or guide a particular person, and what form the guidance will take.



With the exception of the Information Officer - who ensures the link with the LTF - no member of the LTF participates in the LISC-R. Feedback of information from the LISC-R to the LTF is only done after approval by consensus by all actual participants of the LISC-R, through the feedback sheet. This feedback sheet is a tool that allows the participants in the LISC-R and the LTF to know which information is feeding through, and which is not.

The actual participants in the case consultation within the LISC-R also decide by consensus on the monitoring to be given to the case discussed.

This monitoring can consist of:

- The evaluation of whether the case discussed needs to be monitored further within the LISC-R or not;
- The elaboration or coordination of a personalised guidance programme within the LISC-R;
- The evaluation of this monitoring process;
- A referral of the case to the LTF.

The cases handled within a LISC-R are those of persons who reside within the territory of a certain city or municipality or who have indicated that they will reside there. Due to practical opportunities, different municipalities may also choose to set up a joint LISC-R. In addition, an entity can also be discussed in multiple LISCs-R at the same time. It is up to the mayors themselves to communicate and make arrangements among themselves.

3.1.3. The Information Officer

The Information Officer (IO) is a member of the Local Police, who forms the bridge between the LTF and the LISC-R. Each police zone has at least one LISC-R.

The role of the Information Officer is as follows:

- ① The Information Officer **represents the police zone in the LTF**, steers the tracing and monitoring efforts across their organisation in a cross-cutting manner for persons registered in the CDB and ensures the quality of the information flows in their zone. The IO brings the relevant information to the LTF in order to update the CDB;
- ② The Information Officer is the **point of contact** for the intelligence services, the Immigration Office, CUTA and the Federal Police for the exchange of classified information;
- ③ The Information Officer manages **the access to the CDB at local level**. The IO designates the persons in the police zone who will participate in the effective monitoring of each person in the BDC (neighbourhood police officers, investigation teams, intervention teams, etc.) and issues guidelines according to their role;
- ④ The Information Officer needs to be in regular **contact** with the intelligence agents and with the members of the Federal Judicial Police working on the same issues. This contact also needs to take place outside the monthly meetings of the LTF;
- ⑤ The Information Officer acts as the **bridge** between the **police** at local and district level on the one hand, and the **Information Officers** from other police zones on the other;
- ⑥ The Information Officer is the **representative of the LTF in the LISC-R**, thereby acting as the link between the LTF and the LISC-R. The IO must ensure good cooperation between the LISC-R and the LTF. The IO is responsible for the feedback between both platforms, ideally by using the feedback sheet.

3.2. Centralised platforms

3.2.1. The National Task Force

The National Task Force (NTF) is the central platform on which the steering of the Strategic Note is done. The NTF plays an important role in ensuring optimal coordination between the different partners in the context of the multidisciplinary cooperation. The NTF is responsible for the general management and continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Note.

The NTF, the LTFs, the LISCs-R and the National Working Groups maintain a coordination link, while respecting the specificity of the participating services and their internal functioning. The NTF must transmit any proposals or adjustments that require political endorsement to the competent authorities.

The NTF meets on a monthly basis under the chairmanship of CUTA and includes representatives from all partners that have a role within the Strategic Note:

- The Public Prosecution Service;
- The State Security;
- The Military Intelligence Service;
- The Federal and Local Police;
- The FPS Foreign Affairs;
- The FPS Interior;
 - The Directorate General of Safety and Prevention;
 - The Directorate General of the Immigration Office;
 - The National Crisis Centre;
- The Belgian Financial Intelligence Processing Unit;
- The FPS Justice;
 - The Directorate General of the Prison Administration;
 - The Directorate of Legislation, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms through the “Prevention of Terrorism and Radicalisation” Cell of the Department of Religions and Humanism and the “Terrorism and Violent Radicalisation” Cell of the Service for Criminal Policy;
- The Flemish Government;
- The Wallonia-Brussels Federation;
- The Walloon Region;
- The German-speaking Community;
- The Brussels-Capital Region.

3.2.2. The National Working Groups

The National Working Groups are set up around a specific field of action, phenomenon, trend or issue. This allows them to respond flexibly to the ever-changing threat picture, to evolving trends and to the specific needs. The main role of the Working Groups is to bring experts in a given field around the table to analyse and provide support based on their expertise. This approach allows the various partners within the LTFs or LISCs-R to take the most effective measures.

The National Working Groups strive to achieve permanent cooperation and exchange of expertise. A lot of the focus is on the needs of the various partners, including at the local level. Moreover, within the Working Groups, there is a strong focus on information exchange with all stakeholders within the Strategic Note.

Each National Working Group has a pilot service, which brings together all the relevant partners to implement the stated remit. The pilot service monitors the accumulated expertise and also ensures the flow of information to the other platforms and actors involved in the Strategic Note.

The following National Working Groups are currently active:

- Internet and social media and its sub-working group ‘Permanent Working Group Internet and Social Media’;
- Radio and television;
- Prisons: penalty enforcement and operational;
- Prevention;
- Strategic Communication;
- Right-wing extremism;
- Left-wing extremism;
- Asia Minor;
- North Caucasus;
- Local Task Forces;
- Asylum & Migration;
- Salafism.

The NTF determines which National Working Groups will be started, which will be maintained and which will be phased out.

3.3. The tool: The Common Database (CDB)

An important part of the multidisciplinary cooperation is based on the continuous sharing of information according to the need-to-share principle. The Common Database plays an important role in this regard.

Thanks to the CDB, all partners can dynamically exchange information. As such, the CDB is regarded as the backbone of the LTF network. The CDB only contains unclassified information and is a tool for having the most accurate picture possible of the persons to be monitored. On the basis of this information, relevant individual threat assessments can be drawn up and efficient measures taken, resulting in adequate monitoring.

The entities in the CDB are divided into 5 categories: **Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs)**, **Homegrown Terrorist Fighters (HTFs)**, **Hate Propagandists (HPs)**, **Potentially Violent Extremists (PVEs)** and **Persons Convicted of Terrorism (PCTs)**. The criteria for inclusion in the CBD are laid down by Royal Decree and are very strict. As soon as an entity no longer meets the criteria, it must be removed from the CDB.

For each entity in the CDB, there are three sheets, all based on unclassified information: the intelligence sheet, the information card and the threat assessment:

- The **intelligence sheet** with personal data is continuously updated by all services that legally supply information to the CDB;
- The **information card** is an extract of the intelligence sheet, which can be consulted by the mayor;
- CUTA's **individual threat assessment** determines the level of terrorist and extremist threat posed by the person to be monitored. The threat assessment can serve as a guide in discussions about the measures to be taken regarding this person. In addition, the partner services can use the threat assessment to help justify administrative decisions.

3.4. Actions

In order to prevent extremism and terrorism and reduce the radicalising influence of individuals and organisations, concrete actions have been developed.

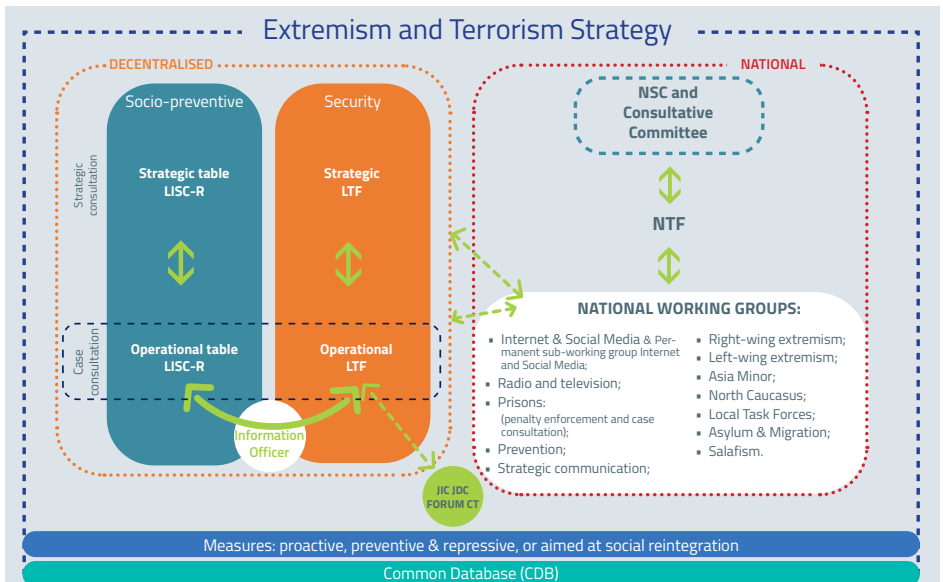
These measures may be the following:

- **The proactive** approach aims to develop optimal structures and representation, in order to address trends that may emerge in a timely manner;
- **The preventive** approach encompasses a broad range of measures which may be targeted:
 - towards society as a whole (primary);
 - towards specific target groups (secondary);
 - towards individuals (tertiary). In this respect, social reintegration through disengagement, for example, plays an important role.
- **The repressive** approach can only be applied towards entities who have been registered in the CDB. The aim of these measures is to reduce the threat posed by these entities. The principle applied in this regard is the risk assessment.

3.5. Reporting and evaluation

The implementation of the Strategic Note is continuously evaluated on the basis of a content review and adapted by the NTF.

The NTF reports its activities to the National Security Council and to the Consultative Committee, consisting of the ministers of the federal government and the governments of the communities and regions. For day-to-day external communication, the department chairing the NTF (CUTA) is the reference body.



4. PARTNERSHIP

In the context of drawing up and elaborating the Strategic Note, we would like to express our thanks to all the services that have committed themselves to the Strategic Note on a daily basis. This Strategic Note has the full support of the authorities concerned.

For the Federal Government:

- Mr Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister;
- Mrs Sophie Wilmès, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Foreign Trade, and the Federal Cultural Institutions;
- Mr Vincent Van Quickenborne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice and the North Sea;
- Mr Vincent Van Peteghem, Minister of Finance, in charge of the Coordination of the Fight against Fraud;
- Mrs Ludivine Dedonder, Minister of Defence;
- Mrs Annelies Verlinden, Minister of the Interior, Institutional Reform and Democratic Renewal.

For the Flemish Government:

- Mr Jan Jambon, Minister-President of the Flemish Government;
- Mr Bart Somers, Vice-Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Minister for Home Affairs, Administrative Affairs, Civic integration and Equal opportunities;
- Mrs Zuhail Demir, Minister for Justice and Enforcement, Environment, Energy and Tourism.



For the Walloon Government:

- Mr Elio Di Rupo, Minister-President of the Walloon Government;
- Mr Christophe Collignon, Minister of Housing, Local Government and Urban Affairs.

For the Brussels-Capital Region:

- Mr Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region.

For the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation:

- Mr Pierre-Yves Jeholet, Minister-President of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation;
- Mrs Valérie Glatigny, Minister for Higher Education, Welfare, Scientific Research, University Hospitals, Youth Welfare, Community Justice Centres, Youth, Sports and Promotion of Brussels.

For the Government of the German-speaking Community:

- Mr Oliver Paasch, Minister-President of the German-speaking Community;
- Mr Antonios Antoniadis, Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Spatial Planning and Housing.

5. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CUTA	Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
Forum CT	Counter Terrorism Forum
FTF	Foreign Terrorist Fighter
CDB	Common Database
HP	Hate Propagandist
HTF	Homegrown Terrorist Fighter
IO	Information Officer
JDC	Joint Decision Center
JIC	Joint Intelligence Center
LISC-R	Local Integral Security Cell concerning radicalism, extremism and terrorism
LTF	Local Task Force
NTF	National Task Force
PCT	Person Convicted of Terrorism
PVE	Potential Violent Extremist
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
Plan R	Action Plan against Radicalism

ANNEX:

REGULATORY AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

- The Framework Memorandum Integral Security;
- The Act of 5 August 1992 on the Police Service, more specifically Articles 44/11/3bis, 44/11/3ter, 44/11/3quater, 44/11/3quinquies;
- The Act of 10 July 2006 on the Threat Analysis and the Royal Decree of 28 November 2006 implementing the Act of 10 July 2006 on the Threat Analysis;
- The Act of 27 April 2016 regarding the additional measures in the fight against terrorism – chapter 4 on the common database;
- The Act of 6 July 2017 holding simplification, harmonisation, computerisation and modernisation of provisions of civil law and of civil procedural law, as well as of the notary and holding diverse provisions concerning justice, Article 313 - introduction of an Article 458ter in the Criminal Code;
- The Act of 30 July 2018 regarding the creation of local integral security cells concerning radicalism, extremism and terrorism;
- The Royal Decree of 21 July 2016 on the Common Database of Terrorist Fighters;
- The Royal Decree of 23 April 2018 on the common database of Hate Propagandists and implementing certain provisions of Section 1bis 'Information Management' of Chapter IV of the Law on the Police Service;
- The Royal Decree of 20 December 2019 amending the Royal Decree of 21 July 2016 on the common database of Terrorist Fighters and the Royal Decree of 23 April 2018 on the common database of Hate propagandists and implementing certain provisions of Section 1bis 'Information Management' of Chapter IV of the Law on the Police Service.
- The Circular Letter of 22 May 2018 by the Minister of Security and Interior and the Minister of Justice regarding information exchange and monitoring of Terrorist Fighters and Hate propagandists;
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More information at

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