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Rapport

**Vijf jaar lokale projecten
Polarisatie en Radicalisering
Resultaatinventarisatie
2007-2011**

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5 jaar Lokale Projecten Polarisatie en Radicalisering
Resultaatinventarisatie over de periode 2007-2011

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Summary

In 2007, the then Balkenende IV cabinet published the 2007-2011 Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan. The goals of the Action Plan are as follows:

- **Prevention:** The prevention of (further) processes of isolation, polarisation and radicalisation by the (re-) inclusion of people who are at risk of slipping away or turning away from Dutch society and the democratic legal order.
- **Proaction:** The early identification of these processes by administrators and professionals and the development of an effective approach.
- **Repression:** The exclusion of people who have crossed clear boundaries and seeing to it that their influence on others is limited as much as possible.

There are three tracks in the Action Plan: the local track, the national track and the international track. For the local track, the national government has made financial support available to projects being run by municipalities at a local level (through decentralisation payments via the Municipalities Fund). Funds have also been made available to non-government organisations operating at a supra-local level, mostly non-profit organisations (which is called the Temporary subsidy scheme for preventing and controlling polarisation and radicalisation). In the 2007-2011 period, the government invested more than €10.7 million in the local track of the Action Plan. This resulted in 78 projects.

Research was conducted into how these projects were run. Research reports were drafted for the projects carried out in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. In 2009 and 2010, summarised research reports of these appeared. This present report is a summary of the 35 reports on projects that received a financial subsidy in 2010 from the Ministry of Security and Justice and therefore also includes the results of the first two summary reports. This report also contains an account of an in-depth study, which attempts to gain a better understanding of the potential effectiveness of a number of projects.

Goal and research questions

Reports on the project set-up, progress and results were drafted for each project carried out from 2007 through 2011. The results of 78 projects run in the 2007-2011 period have been outlined in 72 reports in total. To read the reports, go to www.polarisatie-radicalisering.nl/praktijkvoorbeelden.

Inventorying the results in the past few years had the following purposes:

- to make the set-up of projects and the way in which they were run transparent;
- to make the scope of the projects and the approaches used transparent;
- to inventory the result of the projects and approaches used;
- to gain knowledge for the approach to polarisation and radicalisation in the future.

With these purposes in mind, this report answers the following research questions:

1. How have the local projects that received financial subsidies from the Ministry of Security and Justice (abbreviated in Dutch to VenJ) as part of the Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan been set up and run?
2. What are the outcomes of these projects, partly in relation to the goals of the Polarisation and Radicalisation Action Plan?

3. What trends in terms of set-up, performance and result can be identified in the projects financed in 2007/2008, 2009 and 2010?
4. What lessons can be learned from the projects in terms of the content and the process of the approach towards polarisation and radicalisation at a local level?
5. What are the assumptions behind the interventions in a number of the selected projects, and to what extent do these contribute to the expected effectiveness of the projects?

A broad investigation approach was chosen, incorporating all projects. Documents on the set-up of projects were reviewed, which (sometimes) provided an insight into the results. The project leaders of the projects reviewed completed a questionnaire, interviews were held with the project leaders, and a few additional interviews were held with stakeholders who were involved in the running of large projects (i.e. those that received a financial subsidy of more than € 100,000 from the Ministry of VenJ). These results are given in the reports on the individual projects.

This investigation is an inventory of results, that matches the Action Plan as an incentive programme. The investigation focuses on those activities set up at a local level as part of the Action Plan, i.e. activities focusing on preventing people from slipping away or turning away from Dutch society (prevention) and activities designed to help identify processes of polarisation and radicalisation by administrators and professionals at an early stage (proaction). The direct effects of the projects on the attitude and behaviour of the target groups, and the effects of the projects and the Action Plan as a whole on the scale of polarisation and radicalisation in Dutch society were not measured. This study is, therefore, not an evaluation of the effects.

Results

The results of the individual projects have been classified by the steps, 'set-up', 'organisation', 'performance and results' and 'safeguards'. Below are the findings in relation to these steps, with the more noticeable trends in the 2007-2011 research period shown in the boxes.

Motive and reasons

For municipalities, there are a variety of reasons for the projects: a need for insight into the issue, indications from the police and other professionals, concrete incidents, specific media attention, results from previous research, or policy relating to integration or community-based activities. The non-profit organisations often build on knowledge and experience gained previously with methodology development in the field of education, community work projects and welfare projects.

Trend 2007-2011: Focus shift from radicalisation to polarisation

Since 2007, a total of 53 decentralisation payments were made to municipalities via the Municipalities Fund and 25 subsidies were awarded to non-profit organisations as part of the temporary subsidy scheme. The projects initially focused primarily on radicalisation, especially Islamic radicalisation and right-wing radicalisation, as well as on polarisation. Over the years, the projects' focus has shifted to preventing and identifying (breeding grounds for) polarisation. The Ministry has also aimed for this in awarding financial subsidies.

Trend 2007-2011: Common breeding ground for polarisation and radicalisation

It appears that the projects assumed that polarisation and radicalisation partly share similar breeding grounds: insufficient reflection on own identity, not enough understanding of other cultures and religious backgrounds, insufficient socio-economic perspective. This results in young people not being assertive enough, making them susceptible to radicalisation and polarisation. The projects focus on enhancing that assertiveness.

Working together

Projects run by municipalities and non-profit organisations differ from one another in terms of set-up and approach. At the same time, however, it has been noted that municipalities running projects draw significantly on projects developed by non-profit organisations.

The non-profit organisations form project organisations for running projects. As far as municipalities are concerned, only larger municipalities are doing that. In other municipalities, the projects are usually managed from the line organisation.

Working together on the projects is of utmost importance. Practically all of the projects, except for a few research projects, are projects in which local authorities, welfare organisations, educational organisations and target-group organisations (i.e. self-organisations and religious organisations) collaborate. New collaborative relationships have started within these projects. Sometimes, a great deal of time and energy has to be invested into getting bodies such as educational institutes and target-group organisations to participate. In particular, those organisations that regard the terms "polarisation" and "radicalisation" as stigmatising were reluctant to collaborate and participate in projects.

People who were interviewed for this study, however, stated that it was only by working together with different parties that the projects could be completed successfully. The municipalities stated that working together with the following parties was of utmost importance:

- education, youth, welfare policy within the municipal organisation;
- welfare institutes, youth welfare institutes, social work, education;
- self-organisations and target-group organisations.

On balance, the projects encourage collaboration between organisations; networks of local authorities and professionals are extended and enhanced. Furthermore, new networks arise that include local authorities and professionals, on the one hand, and target group organisations, on the other.

Tools

Various tools are used in these projects. The tools and/or activities are subdivided into the following categories:

- education/workshops for the target group;
- knowledge exchange between professionals;
- improving contacts;
- research;
- contact desk/information management;
- training courses for professionals;
- campaigns aimed at the target Group.

More than one tool was used in most projects. However, there are projects that focused exclusively on research or education.

Trend 2007-2011: Shift from encouraging tools to campaigns with the target group

Over the years, there has been a shift from projects focusing on creating favourable conditions and gaining a better understanding of the phenomena of polarisation and radicalisation to projects that actually set to work with the target groups and that focus directly on the breeding grounds for polarisation and radicalisation.

Scope, knowledge effect and insight on the part of administrators, professionals and the target group

The projects have resulted in the following:

- local authorities, administrators and professionals have more knowledge and a better understanding of polarisation and radicalisation and the underlying reasons;
 - greater awareness of the issue among administrators and professionals;
 - integrated approach: over the years, the municipal approaches have typically become more and more aligned. The approaches are integrated on:
 - subject: both polarisation and radicalisation;
 - policy field: in terms of public order and safety as well as welfare, education, social welfare and healthcare;
 - intervention decision: a combination of interventions (research, contact desk, identification network, training courses, campaigns focusing on the target group);
 - target group: administrators and professionals as well as the target group of young people, parents and community organisations;
 - network formation: extending networks and enhancing networks;
 - results in the target groups: insight into identity, enhanced assertiveness, acceptance of other cultures, races and faiths, and learning to work together.
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Trend 2007-2011: The scale of the projects is on the up

In the first few years, the projects were limited in scope and scale of target groups. Over the last few years, however, methods with a wider reach have been employed to involve the target group, e.g. educational projects, exhibitions and the use of social media. As a result, there has been a significant increase in scale expressed in participant numbers. Participation in the projects in 2010 and 2011 has nearly quadrupled compared to the 2007-2009 period. The intensity of the participants' involvement differs from project to project, and in part depends on the methods employed (e.g. from close supervision of families to 'casual' communication via social media).

Monitoring and evaluation

The report cannot properly indicate the numerical range of all the projects. This is due to the lack of any systematic monitoring and evaluation of the numbers of participants in the projects and the projects' performance. Although most of the applications in 2010 did announce evaluations, these have not been carried out yet because of the stage the projects are at. In addition, the setup of projects is often lacking in the formulation of topics to be included in the evaluation. As such, the inventory of results in this report does not include a quantitative and systematic account of the substantive results, nor does it contain complete information on participation in the projects.

Organisational and governance safeguarding

The Action Plan and the associated implementation programme were temporary (2007-2011). The study shows that there are limited safeguards for the progress of the projects, for any follow-up to the projects or for the project results. People working on the projects are not optimistic about any follow-up, considering such things as the financial cutbacks at the local authorities and the change in political priorities (i.e. a decline in politico-social attention to polarisation and radicalisation). Moreover, the study shows that when setting up and running the projects, the municipalities paid very little advance attention to safeguard the projects in the future, e.g. in policy or in the current organisation.

In the case of non-profit organisations, 'safeguards' are always about passing on the results to specific parties or making the results available to the 'market'. Of course, it is not clear whether those parties then do anything with that or whether the market purchases the products. As such, any actual safeguarding of the results for the future is 'weak'.

Lessons

In addition to reviewing the most noticeable issues in terms of setting up and running projects, the study also focused on lessons learned in the projects. The lessons learned can be summarised as follows:

- The breeding grounds for polarisation and radicalisation among young people and their environment are largely the same, as a result of which there is overlap in the approach to preventing and controlling polarisation and radicalisation.
- Personal approach, personal stories and specific case studies appeal to the target group more than reflective and prescriptive stories. The target group can be reached better if the projects tie in directly with the experiences of young people and their way of communicating, and if interactive methods are used.
- Working with people from outside regular education, as well as experts by experience and representatives from peer groups ensures that educational projects catch on with young people.
- How a project is run is enhanced if municipalities take internal control of aligning approaches from different policy fields: public order, welfare, education, social work, youth policy and community-based activities.
- Projects that tie in with existing networks, existing policy, existing knowledge and/or ongoing developments generally run smoothly.

In-depth study: analysis of assumptions in projects

Section 5 of this report reviews which assumptions are behind the interventions in a number of selected projects and to what extent these contribute to the expected effectiveness of the projects. As such, this section discusses change strategies. Ten projects were selected in which assumptions concerning the effects of tools in the projects were included in the project plans. The reasons behind the assumptions were reviewed: practical knowledge and experience and/or scientific knowledge. A review was then carried out into whether the interventions chosen could also be deemed effective based on current scientific knowledge and insight.

According to scientific insight, there are four forms of intervention that focus on the primary target group of polarisation and radicalisation (especially young people):

- enhancing empowerment;
- peer method;
- bridging contact;

- system approach.

In this present study we added the integrated municipal approach, which also focuses on people and bodies other than just the primary target group.

The projects reviewed were assessed according to an effectiveness ladder. Of the projects that were reviewed, three can be deemed to be effective. The remaining seven projects were deemed promising in terms of the effectiveness in respect of the intervention goals.

The in-depth study shows that there is still a great deal of scientific uncertainty on the effect of interventions. The effectiveness of projects can only be reported with any degree of certainty in cases where that effectiveness was explicitly reviewed.

Conclusions

The report draws the following conclusions:

- the Action Plan provided the essential impetus to initiate a diverse range of polarisation and radicalisation projects at a local level;
- during the 2007-2011 period of the Action Plan, the projects have grown in terms of the spread of the municipalities participating across the country, themes and the use of working methods and tools;
- the projects are the upshot of the first two policy lines of the Action Plan: increasing assertiveness of young people and increasing awareness among administrators and professionals;
- the projects have contributed to enhancing the networks between local authorities and professionals, and between these parties, on the one hand, and target-group organisations, on the other;
- practically all of the projects have actually been run, but their monitoring and evaluation has not been carried out systematically;
- the results and any follow-up to the projects have not been explicitly safeguarded for the future;
- projects that are explicitly based on assumptions concerning the effects of interventions are promising in terms of their effectiveness and even effective in some cases; there is a lack of scientific insight into pointers for effective intervention and the effectiveness of interventions.

Overall, it would seem that awareness regarding the issue and insight into polarisation and radicalisation has increased, that a lot of knowledge has been built up and experience gained with carrying out interventions. However, the systematic monitoring of the lessons learned and safeguarding of the projects is largely neglected. The projects run as part of the Action Plan have contributed to the issues of polarisation and radicalisation - and especially the breeding grounds for these and how they should be dealt with - ending up on the agendas of local authorities (administrators and staff), community organisations and professionals from various fields.