

DE IMPLEMENTATIE VAN BELEID GERICHT OP RECIDIVEREDUCTIE

Summary and conclusion

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Een actualisatie van het deelonderzoek
'Verklaringen daling recidive'

- Summary and conclusion -

Drs. G. Homburg
A. Mack, MSc
Dr. M. Timmermans
Dr. M. Witvliet

Met medewerking van Y. van der Ploeg

RegioPlan
Jollemanhof 18
1019 GW Amsterdam
Tel.: +31 (0)20 – 531 53 15
www.regioplan.nl

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Background and research design

The current study elaborates on the study carried out in 2014 into explanations for the development of recidivism between 2002 and 2010. This follow-up study intends to:

- 1) identify new scientific insights into factors associated with recidivism;
- 2) identify which new policy measures have been implemented (between 2010 to 2015) aimed at reducing recidivism and to what extent they have been properly implemented and also to investigate the current state of affairs concerning previously implemented recidivism reduction policies (before 2010);
- 3) map out potential effects of government measures on recidivism, especially the changes within the detention regime and policy adjustments and cuts to the Dutch National Agency of Correctional Institutions (DJI) and the after-care and resettlement organisations.

The following questions were central to this study:

A. Update of the literature study

1. Have new insights about the explanation of recidivism been brought forward in publications since the previous study? Which ones?

B. Implementation review of policy programmes and measures, 2002-2010 and 2011-2015

1. What policy programmes and measures with the aim of reducing recidivism were implemented in the period 2002-2010 (existing measures) and in 2011-2015 (new measures)?
2. What is known about the quality of implementation, both with regard to the new programmes (2011-2015) and the existing measures (2002-2010)? To what extent has the implementation of the existing programmes changed in the meantime?
3. To what extent are the programmes and policy measures expected to have an impact on recidivism?

C. The role of changes within the detention regime and policy adjustments and cuts to after-care and resettlement and DJI

1. Which austerity measures at DJI and after-care and resettlement organisations may have had an adverse effect on recidivism?
2. What evidence or clues indicate that these measures have had an adverse effect on the recidivism of different target groups (particularly juvenile offenders and adult ex-detainees)?

In the sections below the research questions are answered per sub-section (A, B, C) and the corresponding results are summarised.

Update of the literature study (A)

The update of the literature study with publications (until mid-2016) has not led to completely new insights into factors that influence recidivism. However, the update shows that there is additional evidence for a number of previously identified factors, and that there is new evidence for factors whose content is related to previously identified factors. The update, for instance, shows that reading comprehension and maths and writing skills are negatively related to recidivism. This fits in with existing knowledge that education levels or school performance are negatively related to recidivism.

More information on the way the literature study was conducted, the results and the consulted literature can be found in Annexes 1, 2 and 3.

Implementation review of policy programmes and measures (B)

Policy overview of the period between 2002 and 2015

The complete list of policy programmes and measures and the policy implementation assessment can be found in Tables 2.4 (adults) and 2.5 (youth) in Chapter 2. A total of 11 policy measures for adults and 14 policy measures for youth are involved in the study.

Quality of the implementation

The overall picture is that throughout the years, both with regard to adults and youth, the implemented policy aimed at reducing recidivism has increasingly been carried out well. Whereas in the period between 2002 and 2010 in a number of cases measures were still carried out insufficiently, it appears that after 2010, all measures aimed at adults were carried out at least moderately (+/-).²³ With the exception of one measure, the same applies to measures aimed at youth.

In addition, the number of measures increased for both groups. After 2010, an increase can be observed in policy programmes and measures with a focus on improved cooperation among authorities to reduce recidivism. Besides, we noticed that some of the measures of the period 2002-2010 aimed at young people no longer exist (they were discontinued), while others were merged with other initiatives. Furthermore, it turns out that the execution of some of the measures deteriorated to such an extent that they can no longer impact recidivism. This does not apply to measures aimed at adults.

²³ Based on a multi-criteria assessment (see framework for analysis in Chapter 2, Table 2.3), in which none of the criteria is assessed as 'insufficient'.

The way the assessment of the execution was established is described in Table 2.3 (Chapter 2). To summarise, the assessment (insufficient, moderate or sufficient) was established by evaluating the policy measures on a number of aspects, namely: theoretical underpinnings of the measure, substantive execution, personnel and cooperation, reach of the target group and indications of effectiveness of the measure.²⁴ The assessment was based on available documentation and interviews with relevant authorities. An overview of the consulted sources by policy measure is included in Appendix 5.

Impact on recidivism

The expected impact of the implemented policy on recidivism reduction was examined for both adults and youth and was based on the reach and the intensity of the measures. After all, it makes a difference whether a measure envisages (and reaches) a substantial or a limited target group and whether the measure focuses on a high-risk target group (high-intensity measure) or a target group with a lower risk of recidivism (low-intensity measure). Figures 2.1 (adults) and 2.2 (youth) in Chapter 2 show that the expected impact of the implemented policy increased steadily, also after 2010.

In addition, the impact was combined with the quality of the implementation of the policy measures. This resulted in a total score for each measure.

Subsequently, for each year, a total score of the measures aimed at adults and youth (in that year) was calculated. These scores were used to indicate trends, as presented in Figures 2.4 (adults) and 2.5 (youth) (Chapter 2). This gives an overall picture of the implemented policy for both adults and youth. From this, we can conclude that the number of properly implemented and impactful policies aimed at recidivism reduction among adults and youth increased considerably between 2002 and 2015. The continuation of the upward trend after 2010 (both for adults and youth) is the result of the implementation of more policy measures aimed at reducing recidivism, but above all it is the result of an increase in the quality of the implementation and of the impact of policies.

The method that was used for the calculation of the total scores is reflected in Figure 2.3 (Chapter 2). These annual total scores per measure can be found in Annex 6.

The role of cutbacks and changes (C)

Potential effects on detention

At DJI two austerity measures were implemented on a larger scale – the austerity of the detention regime and the closure of prisons – which may have a potential effect on the recidivism development. A negative impact on

²⁴ In cases where no effect evaluation was conducted, this criterion was not taken into account in the total assessment.

recidivism reduction may occur if the result of these austerity measures is that large groups of detainees are disadvantaged with regard to the following factors:

- meaningful daytime activities, person-orientedness and focus on resocialisation;
- certain degree of autonomy;
- respectful and motivating treatment by staff;
- frequency and circumstances of the reception/visitor facilities for maintaining social contacts;
- the completion of treatment programmes;
- regional reintegration with the aim of effective resocialisation.

On the other hand, in implementing the cuts special attention was paid to the potential for a person-oriented approach in detention aimed at higher chances of resocialisation and recidivism reduction. By means of this approach adverse effects of the cuts may already have been restricted to a minimum. It is also possible that the reduced imposition of custodial sentences resulting from the cuts leads to less detention damage and thus has a damping effect on recidivism.

Potential effects on the execution of after-care and resettlement

From 2013, budgets have shrunk under the terms of the government-wide cuts. The rising demand for after-care and resettlement products combined with a reduction of financial means is dealt with by charging lower rates and a reduced number of hours available for probation supervision and formulating probation advice. The recidivism reduction can be negatively affected in case the austerity measures and policy adjustments harm the efficacy of the probation supervision resulting in:

- less intensive and / or shorter supervision of clients;
- reduced quality of guidance of clients;
- irresponsibly long lead times at after-care and resettlement organisations;
- an unfavourable working relationship with clients (as a result of dissatisfaction among staff about budget cuts and policy changes).

We conclude that based on the literature there are indeed indications of the potential negative impact of budget cuts and changes in detention and after-care and resettlement on the development of recidivism. However, on the basis of existing studies it cannot be determined whether these effects actually occur (or occurred in the past), and in what order of magnitude.

Regioplan Beleidsonderzoek

Jollemanhof 18 (6^e etage)

1019 GW Amsterdam

T 020 531 531 5

E info@regioplan.nl

I www.regioplan.nl