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How external factors drive organizational change

**The Belgium experience: How to lead
and organise a Probation organisation in
handling violent extremism and
radicalisation**

Brussels – November 16th, 2017

Belgian context: Houses of justice

What?

Core business

Conditional Sentence Mediation (Prosecutor)

Community services

Conditional cases Release Civil

Judicial Victim Support Electronic monitoring

Innovation

Information to citizens

Front-line legal services

Collaboration with service providers

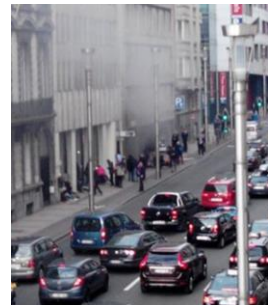
Offender Programmes

Community work Programmes

Victim-offender mediation

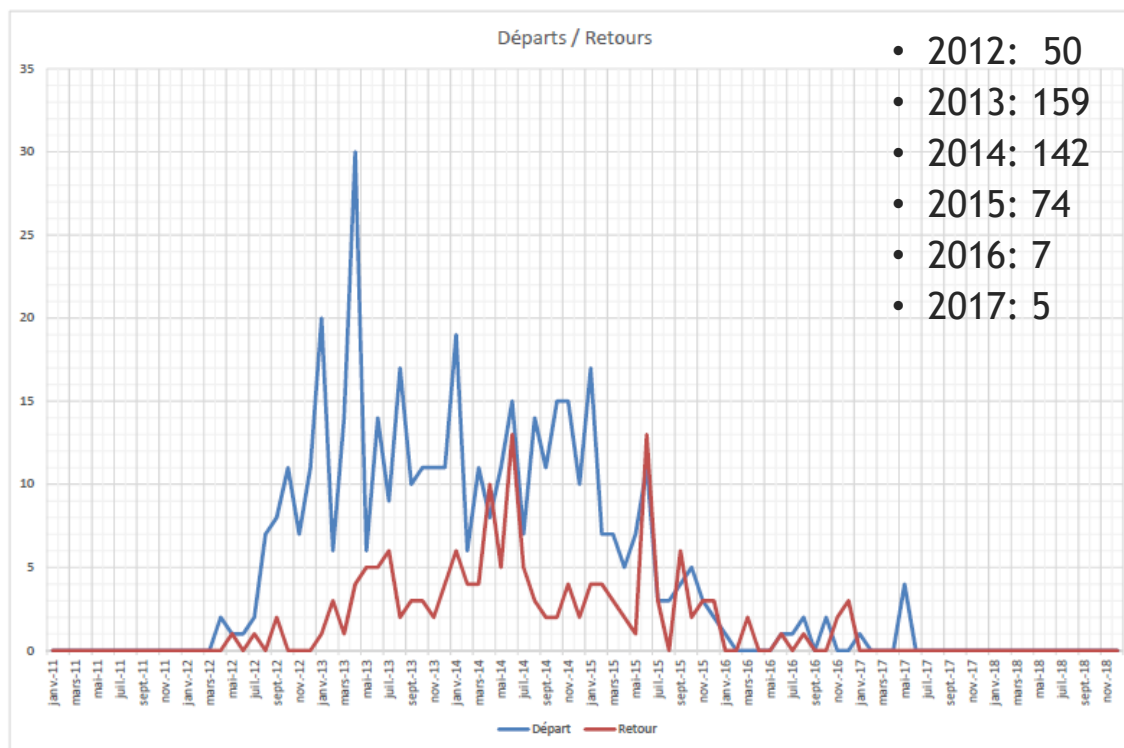
Belgian Context

- ▶ **2012:** First people leaving to Syria
 - Not considered as violent extremism, at first
 - Recruitment by jihadi militant groups & atrocities reaching Europe through media changed our view → departures became a problem and even a threat to our society
- ▶ **2014:** Shooting in Brussels Jewish Museum
 - Carried out by a former Foreign Terrorist Fighter (a French national)
 - 4 people killed
- ▶ **2015:** Round-up of a terrorist cell in Verviers
 - 2 FTF killed
- ▶ **2016/3:** Terror attacks at Brussels international airport and Maelbeek underground station
 - 32 people killed



Timeline: departures and returns of Belgian fighters to/from Syria.

Belgian civilians leaving for Syria (evolution):



- 2012: 50
- 2013: 159
- 2014: 142
- 2015: 74
- 2016: 7
- 2017: 5

Départs vs Retours

printed on 17-07-17

Evolution Jihadi related arrests and convictions in Belgium

- ▶ Evolution Jihadi related arrests in Belgium:
 - ▶ 2014: 72
 - ▶ 2015: 61
 - ▶ 2016: 65
- ▶ Evolution convictions for terrorist offences in 2016 in Belgium:
 - ▶ 2014: 46
 - ▶ 2015: 120
 - ▶ 2016: 136



increase of terrorist related offences in workload probation services

Increase of terrorist related offences in workload probation services

- ▶ In 2016 about 90 % of the cases situated in pre-trial stage
- ▶ Several large terrorism trials in the past two years
- ▶ Expected workload for probation services after release from prison

Challenges for the organisation

Belgium: a country directly affected by terror attacks

Terrorism: a **worldwide** and **multiform** issue

Harming as many **victims** as possible

Terror attacks aim at hurting the society and its **values**

A **new reality**: use of new words (radicalisation, violent extremism, ...); how to deal with this **undefined reality** in a context of **political, media and public pressure**?

- lead to fear and feeling of insecurity for the probation officer
- building process without the possibility to get some distance (emergency management)

Challenges for the organisation

- ▶ Dealing with political decisions and public pressure
 - the way media and politics intend to react to certain events does not always correspond with our goals of social (re)inclusion and re-integration of offenders
 - Precautionary principle: forcing organisation to not take any risk shifts the risk somewhere else
 - the risk prevention becomes the main focus
- ▶ Importance of transparency of the organisation supported by external communication
 - Careful communication with media and politics (use of words, resist to the pression)
 - In case of problem, searching for an individual responsibility (>< responsibility of the organisation)

Challenges for the organisation



In Belgium the same organisation is entrusted with both the judicial victim support services and probation services, which implies an interesting balance

Probation services and victim support services have a crucial role in ensuring that **victims'** rights are enforced and in engaging **offenders** in a disengagement process

Crimes committed by **offenders** with different profiles
But also different types of crime
New penal offences qualified as terror acts
(*even the intention of perpetrating such acts*)

Challenges for the organisation

- ▶ Judicial victims support services
 - ▶ huge emotional impact on the whole society
 - ▶ importance for the authorities to give an adequate response to victims
 - ▶ Large number of people involved
 - ▶ Large number of foreign victims
 - ▶ How to reach all the victims?



Challenges for the organisation

How to manage the emergency with care?

A reference framework in preventing excesses and reaffirming basic values: Guidelines for prisons and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism:

- image of the society through the intervention of prison and probation services
- extremely stigmatized and “dehumanized” population (with consequence of increasing the feeling of fear)

Promoting a **safer** society and ensuring compliance with **core values** (Human Rights)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Co-operation



**Responding to violent extremism = a joint
Responsibility**

→ Council of Europe guidelines + Handbook for
prison and probation services regarding
radicalization and violent extremism

Co-operation

- ▶ **Houses of Justice experienced working with partners**

Judicial Victim support

- ▶ Close collaboration with the Federal Prosecutor's office
- ▶ Collaboration with the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassies
- ▶ Contacts with and referral to organisations/people competent for compensation

Co-operation

Supervision of offenders

- ▶ Interest intelligence services - Protocol
- ▶ Joint database foreign terrorist fighters - access for probation services
- ▶ Prison system : experts working with radicalized inmates
- ▶ Importance of local communities
- ▶ Multi-agency approach → legal framework
- ▶ Tailor made approach - disengagement course

Impact on the day-to-day work of probation officers

- ▶ How to manage violent extremism in a probation environment during a period of crisis? Importance of reassuring and mentoring the probation officers → need for training of probation workers, evaluating the use of supportive tools (risk assessment)
- ▶ Belgian probation officers have the feeling to loose autonomy in their work :
 - they have to refer more to hierarchy on individual cases
 - they are asked to be aware of significant changes linked to a radicalisation process (probation services are not Intelligence services)
 - number of conditions and conditions' wording (linked to “deradicalization”, counterproductive or impossible to control)

Impact on the day-to-day work of the Victim Support services

Requirement to adapt to the specific needs of victims

Some types of intervention :

- ▶ Outreach and contacts at different stages of the procedure
- ▶ Organisation and assistance - meeting with Victim Identification services and forensic scientists
- ▶ Organisation and assistance - filing a claim for civil damages
- ▶ Restitution of belongings
- ▶ Collective information sessions
- ▶ Viewings of on-site CCTV footage



Conclusions/Perspectives

- ▶ **Still much to learn:** all actions must be cautious (little empirical evidence, lack of studies)
- ▶ Collective awareness of the importance to work together
- ▶ Importance to have a framework to refer to
- ▶ Individual approach (both for victims and offenders)
- ▶ Do not create inequalities between our publics
- ▶ Long-term approach (dissonance between biographical and judicial time scale)
- ▶ Values of restorative justice to support a disengagement process

Thank you for your attention !

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