

# The role of local authorities in European national strategies against radicalisation

Over the last few years, policy agendas across Europe have included initiatives to tackle radicalisation and countries have designed and implemented national strategies. This initial period of policy crafting and implementation, often in the wake of a terrorist attack, has been characterised by the introduction of "hard" or "repressive" counter-radicalisation measures, whether legal or administrative in nature (arrest, proscription of organisation, freezing of assets, etc.).

In complement to these repressive measures, prevention initiatives have progressively been included in national strategies and legislations. The degree of involvement and capacities of local authorities for decision-making vary from one country to another. Some give local authorities a large margin of autonomy to decide counter-radicalisation initiatives, such as Denmark and Germany, while others define municipalities as mere implementers of national guidelines, such as the United Kingdom. Concerning their area of intervention, local authorities are usually responsible for detection and primary and secondary prevention initiatives.

In this document, we present the national strategies of nine countries, which include the role of local authorities, as well as their approaches and measures. These are Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom

## Belgium



In the last years, the Belgian federal government has focused on drafting an integrated and global strategy to prevent radicalisation, with an important emphasis on the involvement of local bodies. A 2014 government agreement says that the federal level should assist local authorities in detecting and tackling radicalisation.

The current national strategy, originally drawn up in 2004 and reformed in 2015, is called "Radicalism Plan", also known as "R plan". It aims to build an integrated and global approach to tackle radicalisation and creates a structure to coordinate actions between local and federal authorities. Two kinds of task force are created:

- The National Task Force gathers the various national security agencies as well as the Immigration Office. Managed by the Coordination Unit for the Analysis of Threat (Organe de coordination pour analyse de la menace), it works on seven thematic areas of intervention and meets once a month.
- *Local task forces* are linked to the National Task Force to exchange information on radicalised individuals. They are responsible for following each case.

Apart from this strategy, a ministerial circular on "foreign fighters" issued in August 2015 emphasises the need for collaboration between services at different levels. It organises the exchange of information between federal and local authorities and the monitoring of returnees by the authorities. It requires the police to share information on foreign fighters returning from conflict with local authorities (the mayor) so that they can better organise their action locally. It also encourages mayors to create a local multi-agency security unit (LISC) to coordinate actions at the local level and exchange information between services. Local authorities can choose the relevant services they want to involve in such a platform.<sup>2</sup>

Specific plans were also developed by the local level, especially with regards to informationsharing between services and the importance of local authorities' actions to detect possible cases of radicalisation: The Wallonia-Brussels Federation (French speaking part of Belgium) developed its own counter-radicalisation Plan, which includes preventive measures in schools. It launched a free helpline for professionals and recently created a support centre for the public and professionals. Apart from the existing regional and proximity plans, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Contrary to other francophone countries such as France or Canada, which are also confronted by radicalisation leading to violent extremism, Belgian authorities use the term "radicalism" (*radicalisme* in French) to refer to this phenomenon.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Info sheet of the Ministry of Security and Internal Affairs regarding the local platform and actions for the prevention of radicalisation (Besafe newsletter): https://www.besafe.be/sites/besafe.localhost/files/u18/besafe39\_extra\_fr.pdf

Brussels Region developed, also in 2015, a plan to provide municipalities with expertise, resources, contact points and training. It also supports networking between professionals from the Brussels municipalities and the police, as well as with other levels of governance.

Moreover, the ministry of Security and Internal Affairs created an "R Unit" with the mission of supporting local authorities with all the necessary expertise and trainings related to radicalisation. This Unit serves as a meeting platform for municipalities.

#### Denmark

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Denmark's most recent plan for the prevention of radicalisation and extremism was adopted in 2014. Based on a strong multi-agency collaborative approach, it was designed on the basis of the experience of the city of Aarhus<sup>3</sup>, which in 2007 launched a pilot project to provide personalised guidance and advice for individuals concerned or affected by a process of radicalisation, including after-care for returnees.<sup>4</sup> This pilot project was built upon the existing cooperation between the city of Aarhus and the East Jutland Police.

The action plan of the national strategy is also based on the existing multi-agency and collaborative information-sharing frameworks provided by the law, and commonly referred to as SSPs.<sup>5</sup>

Several institutions are involved in this national plan: the ministry of Childhood, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, the ministry of Justice, the National Social Service Board, the Danish Prison and Probation Service, and local authorities, in particular local councils and police districts.

The strategy considers that local authorities and the police are key actors. 6 Local authorities are required to inform the municipal staff and police and to establish 'Info Houses', which receive and assesses referred cases to decide whether they are primarily related to social challenges or present security risks. This process can also involve the Security and Intelligence Service's Centre for Prevention. Indeed, if concerns are rated as a threat to security, the case is passed to national intelligence services.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This project drew inspiration from the Dutch 'Wif Amsterdammers' project (city of Amsterdam)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> This is usually referred to as the 'Aarhus model'.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Since 1977, multi-agency networks (schools, police and social services), commonly referred to as SSPs, have been established at the municipal level in order to coordinate crime prevention, particularly aimed at young people. <sup>6</sup> The Action Plan states the "greater Involvement by Local Authorities" as one the national priorities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Information sharing between the different services involved in this work is regulated by paragraph 115 of the Danish Justice Administration Act.

Once cases have been assessed, the Info Houses define the action to be taken and the intervention logic, mobilising competent local services within the SSP cooperation framework. To ensure the efficiency of such interventions, selected local authority officers and police officers are specially trained to take part in this preventive work against extremism and radicalisation.

In September 2015, the ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing announced the creation of a national helpline "to offer assistance to parents and relatives", which is connected with the Info Houses. As with the whole national action plan, this initiative was also inspired by local experiences.<sup>8</sup>

#### France

Launched in April 2014, and updated in May 2016 as part of the Action Plan Against Radicalisation and Terrorism (Plan d'Action contre la Radicalisation et le terrorisme) the French national strategy for the prevention of radicalisation is organised under the Secretary General of the Interministerial Committee on Crime and Radicalisation Prevention (Secrétariat général du Comité interministériel de prévention de la délinquance et de la radicalisation).<sup>9</sup>

Under this strategy, referred cases of vulnerable or already radicalised individuals are treated with a tailor made intervention. Referral of cases is made through a national helpline (numéro vert) through which callers receive assistance and guidance. The helpline is managed by the National Centre for Support and Prevention of Radicalisation (Centre national d'assistance et de prévention de la radicalisation), hosted by the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit (Unité de coordination de lutte anti-terroriste).

Depending on the assessment made by the Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit, referred cases can be transferred to the local Préfecture (the body that administers the regional 'départements' under the ministry of the Interior)<sup>10</sup> where the case has been detected. All referred cases, regardless the conclusion of the assessment, are transferred to the intelligence services.<sup>11</sup> The Préfet is responsible for mobilising all relevant stakeholders at the departmental level through a Monitoring Unit (Cellule de Suivi).

<sup>8</sup> The cities of Copenhagen and Aarhus have already established their own helplines.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Until 2016, this interministerial structure (created in 2006) was known as the Interministerial Committee on Crime Prevention. Since May 2016 (Decree n° 2016-553 of 6 May 2016), this Committee was given the additional mission to prevent radicalisation, and its name was changed accordingly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> There are 101 préfectures in France, one for each département (county). The Préfet represents the national State at the local level and as such exercises the powers that are constitutionally attributed to the national State.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> État major de la Direction générale de la sécurité intérieure et du Service du renseignement territorial

These units are generally composed of representatives of the national State (police, education and justice agencies), social services and associations working with families and youths. In theory, municipalities can also be included, but this is rarely the case in practice. This multiagency platform decides the most suitable type of intervention for referred cases. This can include family support or individual counselling (i.e. social and professional reintegration).

Also under the Secretary General of the Interministerial Committee on Crime and Radicalisation Prevention, the Interministerial Fund for Crime Prevention decided in February 2016 to allocate 25% of their budget to the prevention of radicalisation, with a strong emphasis on using these funds locally. Additionally local authorities are also directly required by the national government to develop initiatives for the prevention of radicalisation within their local security strategies, notably with regards to primary prevention, and many take upon themselves to develop preventive activities such as the training of local practitioners.

Morevoer, by the end of 2017, one centre for reinsertion and citizenship (centre de réinsertion et de citoyenneté) aiming at giving support to radicalised individuals or those in a process of radicalisation should be established in region.

Germany >>>>>>>>>

Even though Germany does not have a national strategy and a national work model, local authorities are involved in the efforts to counter radicalisation and extremism, which are organised at the federal, state and local level.

As both formal education and police are mainly a prerogative of federated states (the Lander), this level of governance plays a key role in countering radicalisation and extremism. The example of the two largest Lander, North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria, also shows that state programmes and services for the prevention of radicalisation are implemented in cooperation with municipalities and civil society organisations.

For instance, when the North Rhine-Westphalia ministry of the Interior launched a help desk with a hotline and information centres, called 'Wegweiser' (signpost), it did so together with the cities of Bochum, Bonn, Dinslaken/Kreis Wesel, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, and Duisburg and the Land of Wuppertal/Bergisches. This scheme is now being expanded. Local authorities contribute with their relevant departments to the local multi-agency partnership, which builds essentially on local expertise and NGOs. It is coordinated by the ministry of the

Interior (in charge of protecting of the Constitution) and is usually run by locally selected civil society organisations. While this secondary and targeted programme is organised at the local level, the federal States' tertiary prevention exit programmes are directly run by the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>12</sup>

The structure in Bavaria is similar though its prevention programme was launched by the Bavarian ministry of the Interior together with the national ministries of Justice, Education, and Labour and Social Affairs. As in North Rhine-Westphalia, a separate programme for Islamic radicalisation was launched in addition to the existing measures against right wing extremism, and of course primary (general) prevention programmes. This state programme is run in cooperation with the city of Augsburg and its Crime Prevention Council. The prevention network is currently being expanded to other cities to include training and networking at the local level, notably with Muslim communities. Additionally, two nongovernmental partners provide support and training both in cases of de-radicalisation interventions (Violence Prevention Network - see practice sheet on <a href="www.efus.eu">www.efus.eu</a> for more details) and in the field of prevention. For example, they provide trainings for teachers and organise workshops with young people (Ufuq.de - visit <a href="www.ufuq.de">www.ufuq.de</a> for more details).

### The Netherlands

In August 2014, the Dutch government announced "The Netherlands' comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism<sup>14</sup>", a 38-measure Action Plan to decrease jihadist departures and tackle radicalisation. In its plan, the government recommends an integrated approach to counter jihadism and five categories of measures: risk reduction regarding jihadist travellers, travel interventions, radicalisation, social media, and information-sharing and cooperation. The central ministries in charge are the Public Prosecutor and the ministry of Security and Justice. A National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV according to the Dutch acronym) was appointed, under the authority of the ministry of Security and Justice. He coordinates and implements the national Action Plan, in collaboration with the central services and local partners, including local authorities.

http://www.mik.nrw.de/fileadmin/user\_upload/Redakteure/Verfassungsschutz/Dokumente/Wegweiser/FAQ\_Wegweiser\_Maerz\_2015.pdf

https://english.nctv.nl/Images/def-a5-nctvjihadismuk-03-lr\_tcm92-562673.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Wegweiser prevention programme against violent salafism

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> D. Schubert: Wie schützen wir unsere jungen Menschen vor gewaltbereiten Salafisten? – Über die Rolle der Kommunen in der Prävention von Radikalisierung, 2016

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> See the publication of the ministry of Security and Justice, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, ministry of Social Affairs and Employment: the Netherlands' comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism, 2014:

Both local authorities and central government bodies are active in tackling radicalisation and recruitment of jihadists.<sup>15</sup> More precisely, local authorities have a key role in preventing radicalisation, early identifying and preventing the threat.

The Association of Netherlands Municipalities (Vereniging Nederlandse Steden, VNG) receives support from the government to give cities information on the phenomenon of jihadism, and to implement best practices and manage local actions to counter radicalisation. For instance, the VNG has created tools such as factsheets to advise local authorities on how to manage social trouble, the detection of radicalised individuals, or returnees when they arrive. It advises mayors to create a multi-disciplinary local platform to organise the case management for detected radicalised individuals. Chaired by the Mayor, the platform should include at least the police services, the prosecution department (Public Ministry), and other local services (youth, probation services, etc.). The municipality is required to appoint a contact officer within the administration to inform the partners and local professionals, but also to organise a dialogue with religious communities and civil society organisations in order to prevent social tensions, and to set up procedures guaranteeing that all services know precisely where to refer detected cases.

The central government has made funding available for counter-radicalisation measures to be developed in municipalities that are considered as priority. This financial support focuses mainly on projects to build local networks, develop early warning and response, train professionals on identifying signs of radicalisation, evaluate the local situation, make communities more resilient to radicalisation and prevent local social tensions.

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In Norway, municipalities have a key role to play in the prevention of radicalisation. Norway bases it policies for the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism on an approach of shared responsibility between various stakeholders.<sup>18</sup>

According to the national Action Plan Against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism (2014), a broad cooperation among different sectors is necessary for the preventive efforts to succeed, which implies that municipalities play an important role.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> See the website of the National Coordinator: <a href="https://english.nctv.nl/themes\_en/Counterterrorism/">https://english.nctv.nl/themes\_en/Counterterrorism/</a>
<sup>16</sup> See the toolkit for municipalities to counter terrorism and radicalisation produced by the VNG:

https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/aanpak-radicalisering

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Factsheets for municipalities to counter jihadism: <a href="https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/aanpak-radicalisering/nieuws/rol-gemeenten-in-integrale-aanpak-radicalisering-factsheet">https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/aanpak-radicalisering/nieuws/rol-gemeenten-in-integrale-aanpak-radicalisering-factsheet</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> See for example the former Action plan to prevent radicalisation (2010), titled "Collective security – a shared responsibility".

Including 30 specific measures, this plan builds on the existing cooperation framework between the police and municipalities within the so-called STL (Samordning av locakle kriminalitetsforebyggende tiltak, Coordination of local crime prevention measures).<sup>20</sup> This model requires that the municipal authorities at top level and the local head of the police collaborate within an administrative local board. Such cooperation exists in half of Norway's municipalities and in all major cities (approximately 180 of 430 Norwegian municipalities). The scheme is mainly aimed at young people under the age of 18, but also covers youngsters aged up to 23.

The Action Plan Against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism stresses the need for further cross-sectoral cooperation and improved coordination between municipalities and security agencies, especially with regards to information sharing.

The exchange of information on returnees between the police and municipalities is already well organised: The Norwegian Police Security Service has established routines for notifying the home municipality when individuals come back after having travelled to conflict zones abroad where they may have taken part in terrorist activities (foreign fighters). Municipalities can assess whether it is relevant to monitor these individuals. The State provides guidance material and support to municipalities for the establishment of mentoring schemes aimed at individuals at risk of radicalisation and violent extremism, but also guidance material for working on exit programmes for individuals who want to disengage from violent extremist groups. These support actions are coordinated by the ministry of Justice and Public Security.

The Action Plan also calls for increasing research on local prevention and evaluating the prevention efforts of municipalities in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). 21 22



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Norwegian ministry of Justice and Public Security (2014): Action Plan Against Radicalisation and Violent Extremism https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/6d84d5d6c6df47b38f5e2b989347fc49/action-planagainst-radicalisation-and-violent-extremism\_2014.pdf, p.20

This model came to use in Norway in the early the 1990s after it had been proven to be very successful in

Denmark.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> see also www.radikalisering.no

In January 2015, the Strategic Plan to Fight Against Violent Radicalisation (Plan Estratégico Nacional de Lucha contra la Radicalización Violenta, PEN-LCRV) was approved by the Spanish government.

This national strategy aims at preventing all forms of radicalisation processes, based on a global and integrated approach that concerns both the understanding of the phenomenon and its prevention. For this purpose, the strategy establishes the creation of two levels of action: national and local (municipal and regional level).

- *National level*: The strategy includes the creation of an inter-ministerial National Group composed by 12 ministerial entities, the intelligence services, members of the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, and associations. This group is under the supervision of the ministry of the Interior and aims at coordinating all activities that result at the local level from the national strategy
- *Local level:* The strategy includes the creation of two types of local groups depending on the administrative specificities of the concerned local area.
  - > *Municipal level:* Each municipality has its own local group. A multi-agency structure gathering municipal, social and educational workers, as well as city hall representatives, the local group is in charge of dealing with cases of possible radicalised individuals or groups. > *Regional level:* Regional groups can be created in the regions that have their own regional police.<sup>23</sup>

The assessment of cases is undertaken by national and local groups. Depending on the result of the analysis, the case might be addressed at the local level, always selecting the most adequate area of intervention through which to tackle it, or for cases that go beyond the local scope and might constitute a threat for national security, transferred to the National Group. Aiming at empowering and involving civil society within this strategy, a digital platform was launched through which citizens can report relevant information regarding a possible case of radicalisation leading to any form of violent extremism. This platform is called "stop.radicalismos" and is available in Spanish, Arabic, French and English. Three different types of channels of contact are connected to this platform: a website, a hotline number and the app "Alertcops". The information received is handled by the Centre for the Coordination of Information on Radicalisation, which is based at the Intelligence Centre Against Terrorism and Organised Crime.

To date (summer 2016), this Centre has been contacted more than 1,800 times.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Four autonomous communities (regions) have their own regional police: the *Policía Canaria* in the Canary Island, the *Mossos d'Esquadra* in Catalonia, the *Policía Foral* in Navarra and the *Ertzaintza* in the Basque Country.

## Sweden

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Issued in 2011, Sweden's National Counter-terrorism Strategy updated the 2007 strategy, titled "National Responsibility and International Commitment - A national strategy to meet terrorism threats". It is based on three pillars<sup>24</sup>:

- *Preventing:* Efforts to identify and curb breeding grounds for radicalisation leading to extremism, particularly through the strengthening of democratic values.
- *Pursuing/Stopping:* Actions aimed at discovering and stopping terrorist attacks, especially thorough judicial investigations.
- *Preparing:* Reducing the impact of terrorist attacks when they cannot be stopped.

This strategy emphasises that terrorism can only be countered by using the means of a democratic society. Thus, it highlights the importance of respecting national and international law and of protecting human rights.

The 'Preventing' component relies on local authorities to deliver measures locally. It establishes a "national action plan to safeguard democracy against violence-promoting extremism," with the aim of increasing society's resilience to radicalisation and extremist narratives while enhancing awareness of democratic values. The plan highlights the importance of working at the local level, more particularly through strong collaboration between local authorities and civil society, including sport clubs and other voluntary organisations.

It also includes measures strengthening structures for cooperation in order to counter breeding grounds for extremist violence. To this end, the government works with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to identify and disseminate promising local practices against violent political extremism.

The importance of mobilising all levels of governance and in particular local authorities is reflected in the creation of a National Coordinator for Protecting Democracy Against Violent Extremism, in 2014. This high ranking official is tasked with contributing to improve cooperation between government agencies, municipalities and organisations at national, regional and local level, as well as to spread knowledge and good practices at the municipal level, and therefore supporting local actors.<sup>26</sup>

 $<sup>^{24}</sup>$  Swedish ministry of Justice (2012), Sweden's national counter-terrorism strategy http://www.government.se/sb/d/16072/a/195928

http://media.samordnarenmotextremism.se/2016/06/NSMVE-Strategi.pdf
 National coordinator for protecting democracy against violent extremism

# United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's counter-terrorism strategy was first developed in 2003 under the name of CONTEST. Its aim is "to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism, so that people can go about their lives freely and with confidence." This national structure is split into four work streams, known as the 'four Ps':

- *Pursue*: to stop terrorist attacks by detecting, prosecuting and disrupting those who plan to carry out attacks.
- *Prevent*: to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. This includes countering terrorist ideology and challenging those who promote it, as well as supporting individuals who are considered as vulnerable to radicalisation.
- *Protect*: to strengthen protection against terrorist attacks and so reduce vulnerability. This strategy mainly focuses on border security, transport systems, national infrastructures and public places.
- *Prepare*: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack that cannot be stopped. This includes work to bring a terrorist attack to an end and to increase resilience to recover from its aftermath.

Under the Prevent strategy, authorities seek to reduce the threat terrorism can pose to the UK by preventing people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. An important component of Prevent is Channel, a highly flexible intervention programme implemented at the local level, which aims at pulling individuals away from extremism through tailored interventions.

The Channel programme is based on a multi-agency approach and works according to the following stages:

- 1. Identification of individuals at risk
- 2. Assessment of the nature and extent of that risk
- 3. Development of the most appropriate support intervention for the individuals concerned.

Within this programme, local authorities are responsible for ensuring that a multi-agency panel exists in their area, as well as to chair it. This panel is composed by relevant mainstream service providers (in the realms of education, social services, mental health, and religion), which allows to address referred cases through a holistic approach.

Risk assessment is made by the police, which then inform the panel about the nature and extent of the referred individual's vulnerability. If required, the panel develops tailored support for each case. Channel panel members monitor and evaluate each case, all the while continuing to learn about vulnerability factors.

Referral of vulnerable individuals can be made by frontline staff, individuals within local communities, as well as the wider public. According to the Prevent strategy, general staff that interacts with the public is considered to be among the frontline staff. Since August 2015, they are required to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism."

Official reviews on this strategy conclude that while many efforts have been made to evaluate Prevent, their success has been quite uneven. The initial requirement of delivering the Prevent programme quickly, combined with high funding allocations, led to limited quality control. These problems regarding evaluation concern all levels of the programme.<sup>29</sup>

## References

<sup>29</sup> Home Office, Government, Prevent Strategy, United Kingdom, 2011. p 36

 $<sup>^{28}</sup>$  Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

#### Offline resources

D. Schubert: Wie schützen wir unsere jungen Menschen vor gewaltbereiten Salafisten? – Über die Rolle der Kommunen in der Prävention von Radikalisierung, 2016

Homme Office, CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism, July 2011

Home Office, Government, Prevent Strategy, 2011

United Kingdom Government, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015

#### Online resources

- > Association of Netherlands Municipalities https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/aanpak-radicalisering
- > Association of Netherlands Municipalities https://vng.nl/onderwerpenindex/veiligheid/aanpakradicalisering/nieuws/rol-gemeenten-in-integrale-aanpak-radicaliseringfactsheet
- >Belgian Ministry of Security and Internal Affairs <a href="https://www.besafe.be/sites/besafe.localhost/files/u18/besafe39\_extra\_fr.p">https://www.besafe.be/sites/besafe.localhost/files/u18/besafe39\_extra\_fr.p</a>
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- >French Ministry of the Interior file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/decret-2016-553-6mai2016-sgcipdr%20(1).pdf
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