

**Measures to eliminate international terrorism – Belgian contribution**

Belgium fully cooperates in the fight against terrorism in many international fora, at global and regional level. Belgium participates in UN, EU, NATO, OSCE and Council of Europe counterterrorism efforts. Belgium is in particular a member of the advisory board of the UN Counterterrorism Center and fully supports the UN Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism. Furthermore, our country has been an active proponent of Europol and Interpol databases and EU-wide information sharing. Belgium is also a member of the New York 'like-minded' group concerning the Counter-terrorism UN sanctions regime. Furthermore, Belgium is an active member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and participates in all of its working groups.

In 2007 Belgium has published its first Action Plan against Radicalization, which has been updated in 2016. The terrorist attacks in Brussels on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 2016 were a turning point in the Belgian approach to eliminating international terrorism. In the aftermath of these attacks, the Belgian authorities strengthened the legal, institutional and operational framework to combat terrorism, while maintaining a holistic approach in preventing and countering the phenomenon. The Federal Government has introduced a package of 30 counterterrorism measures since 2015. In 2017, a new set of 28 measures in the field of security, several of which are particularly relevant in the fight against terrorism, were announced. Among these measures we can cite in particular : adding to the Criminal Code a new terrorist offence concerning travelling abroad for terrorist purposes, extending the list of offences leading to the use of specific investigation methods (art. 90b of the Code of Criminal Procedure), temporary withdrawal of an identity card, refusal to issue and withdrawal of passports, reform of the National Security Council's intelligence and security structures, ... .

The judicial approach has been significantly strengthened: the terrorist offences have been extended and further specified, intelligence and investigation methods further developed, initiatives were taken to improve information sharing, the financial and human resources available to security services have been bolstered and repressive and administrative measures were reinforced. Some of the measures taken include: the increase of border controls on airports and in international train stations, the enhancement of the intelligence services information position abroad, the increase of the security of identity cards thanks to the use of biometric data, the establishment of travelling abroad for terrorist reasons as a terrorist offence, increasing the options for revoking the Belgian nationality of people with double nationality, a change of the consular code to allow refusal, withdrawal or invalidation of passports regarding people considered as threatening the public order or national security, the adoption of a new PNR law including air travel, travel by boat, train and bus, an improvement of the investigation methods related to Internet and electronic and telecommunications, strict legislation for cryptocurrencies, an extension of the criminalization of incitement to terrorism and recruitment to terrorism. There were up to 426 judicial convictions for terrorist offences since 2015. More than 279 individuals have been included in the national terrorism list, resulting in asset freezing. Through these and other measures Belgium is implementing relevant UNSC Resolutions, in particular Resolutions 2178 and 2396. Belgium is committed to a human rights compliant approach in line with its international obligations under international law, in particular human rights law.

In line with its holistic, integrated approach addressing the challenge of terrorism and violent extremism in a human rights complaint way, first-line prevention units were set up in most affected municipalities, to monitor and respond to cases of radicalization. Regional teams and 'mobile teams' were also created to facilitate the exchange of good practices between municipalities, while multidisciplinary support centers were launched to help citizens confronted with radicalization. Furthermore, countering the foreign terrorist fighter threat through prison de-radicalization is a top priority, and funding has been increased for radicalization-related counseling in prisons. In 2015, the Action Plan against radicalization in prisons was adopted. The central objective of the policy is twofold and consists of, on the one hand preventing the radicalization of detainees during their imprisonment and, on the other hand, developing a specialized follow-up of radicalized people during their detention<sup>1</sup>.

Through cooperation with the representative body of the Muslims of Belgium, Belgium has begun training imams who work with prisoners to recognize signs of radicalization to violence, and to identify possible recruiters. Two Belgian prisons contain specific wings for inmates considered radicalized and posing a security threat, to prevent the spread of violent extremist views. These inmates can be put under a special regime or special security measures, resulting in limited movement within the prison and limited contact with other detainees. These measures are subject to regular review. In general, the consultations that take place in the context of the interfaith dialogue are aimed at stimulating cooperation between the representatives of the representative bodies of the recognized religions and of the recognized non confessional philosophical organizations among others in the fight against radicalization. Both regional and local public and non-governmental initiatives exist to attempt to reintegrate returned foreign terrorist fighters and their families into Belgian society, as well as national programs and a federally supported network, of de-radicalization actors to work with foreign terrorist fighters.

Belgium attaches great importance to CT cooperation at the international level. In the framework of the UN, Belgium welcomed the adoption in 2006 of the UN CT Strategy by the UN General Assembly, developing a comprehensive approach of CT into a single UN document. In the Fourth Pillar, Belgium financed a UNCCT project about child returnees "Enhancing the Capacity of States to adopt human rights based treatment of children accompanying returning foreign terrorist fighters" (2018). The document was publicly launched in 2019.

In October 2019, in the framework of its mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Belgium organized an Arria meeting on the challenges of radicalization in prisons in collaboration with the UNODC. This meeting has provided Members States with a platform to address issues related to the management of terrorists and violent extremist prisoners, the prevention of radicalization to violence in prisons as well as the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners within society. This meeting also contributed to exchanges on lessons learned, best practices and persisting challenges regarding prison radicalization between member states.

Belgium fosters cooperation between the United Nations Security Council, the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly in CT matters and is actively involved in the negotiation of the relevant resolutions on CT and human rights matter in the Human Rights Council as well as in the Third, Fifth and Sixth Committees with special attention for our priority of the promotion and protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism. Belgium is an

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<sup>1</sup><https://justice.belgium.be/sites/default/files/downloads/PIland%27actionradicalisation-prison-EN.pdf>

active supporter of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism. In this regard, Belgium holds a principled position of the open invitation to all Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council and encourages other countries to do so as well.

Equally, Belgium is very active in the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe develops legal standards to prevent and suppress acts of terrorism through criminal law and other measures, while respecting human rights and in full respect of the rule of law, and is continuously working to improve international co-operation in bringing terrorists to justice. Belgium held the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from November 2014 to May 2015. The fight against violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism was one of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency. The Brussels ministerial meeting of 19 May 2015 resulted in the adoption of a Political Declaration on this issue, as well as an action plan and an additional protocol to the Convention for the Prevention of Terrorism of the Council of Europe. This additional protocol notably implements the criminal law aspects contained in Resolution 2178 of the United Nations Security Council. In this context, Belgium has participated in the development of resilience tools such as the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture, which were rolled out in a series of Belgian schools since 2016.