

# MULTI-AGENCY WORKING to prevent violent radicalisation<sup>a</sup>

*Multi-agency working (MAW) has increasingly been considered a promising approach to preventing violent radicalisation, allowing early and effective identification of individuals who may be at risk of violent radicalisation, and breaking down historical silos between agencies.*

*This article provides an overview of the MAW approaches in the context of violent radicalisation in three countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. Although these countries are neighbouring, the MAW approach is very different in each, in terms of legislation (e.g., on information sharing), structure (e.g., level of organisation, key actors), procedures (e.g., case management) and goals (e.g., target groups, role and function). There does not seem to be one general MAW approach in the field. This article identifies the goals, partnership, governance, information sharing, and other issues that can strengthen local MAW approaches.*

*Through the 'Evaluation and Mentoring of the Multi-Agency approach to violent radicalisation' (EMMA) project, the question 'What works under what conditions?' will be assessed in each country by means of a realist process evaluation. As part of the project, a practical self-evaluation tool is being developed for local officials that will be widely applicable across different MAW approaches in Europe.*

**Wim Hardyns, Janne Thys, Lien Dorme, Noel Klima, Lieven Pauwels  
(Faculty of Law and Criminology, Ghent University)**

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## Key words

prevention;  
multi-agency;  
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## Introduction

The problem of preventing and tackling violent radicalisation is very similar to the problem of crime prevention in general: there is no shortage of risk and protective factors, and there is robust discussion on the importance of each risk factor. This risk factor approach has led to a wide variety of theoretical models so far.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that various models of violent radicalisation have been developed over the years,<sup>2</sup> there is no single answer to the question of why a person becomes radicalised – violent extremists and terrorists do not have one specific profile. However, scientists do agree on the process-oriented nature of violent radicalisation, in which committing a terrorist act is the final step.<sup>3</sup>

As a consequence, efforts have focused on trying to prevent violent radicalisation rather than attempting to stop a terrorist attack.<sup>4</sup> Preventing violent radicalisation is not a task that can be successfully undertaken by one actor, as there is no generalisable and identifiable terrorist profile, and the violent radicalisation process, which includes various individual and group processes (in-group and out-group processes) playing a role, is very complex.<sup>5</sup> In recent years, the focus has concentrated on bringing together different actors to prevent violent radicalisation through a multi-agency approach.<sup>6</sup>

According to the RAN policy paper (2018),<sup>7</sup> multi-agency structures and working processes are crucial in the early and effective identification of individuals who are at risk of violent radicalisation. Multi-agency working (MAW) breaks down traditional silos between agencies, and creates cooperation rather than a fragmentation of services, improved information sharing, joint decision-making and coordinated efforts. An important factor here is the involvement of the local level in the preventive approach to violent radicalisation. Local actors (e.g., cities or municipalities) are the closest to citizens, have access to most information, and are therefore in the best position to identify vulnerable individuals and to develop and implement a tailor-made approach.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Per-Olof H. Wikström and Noémie Bouhana, "Analyzing radicalization and terrorism: A situational action theory," In *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism*, eds Gary LaFree & Joshua Freilich (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 175-86; Per-Olof H. Wikström and Kyle Treiber, "Beyond risk factors: An analytical approach to crime prevention," In *Preventing Crime and Violence* (Cham: Springer, 2017), 73-87; Per-Olof H. Wikström, "Does everything matter? Addressing the problem of causation and explanation in the study of crime," In *When Crime Appears: The role of emergence*, eds Jean McGloin, Christopher Sullivan and Leslie Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2011), 53-72.
  2. Stéphanie De Coensel, "Processual models of radicalization into terrorism: A best fit framework synthesis," *Journal for Deradicalization* (2018) 17: 89-127; Gary LaFree and Joshua Freilich, *The Handbook of the Criminology of Terrorism* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2016).
  3. Keiran Hardy, "Comparing theories of radicalization with countering violent extremism policy," *Journal for Deradicalization* 15 (2018): 78-81; Amy Thornton and Noémie Bouhana, "Preventing radicalization in the UK: Expanding the knowledge-base on the Channel programme," *Policing: A journal of policy and practice* (2019): 13(3), 331-44.
  4. Isabelle Pistone et al., "A scoping review of interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism: Current status and implications for future research," *Journal for Deradicalization* (2019) 19: 1-5.
  5. Kees Van den Bos, *Why People Radicalize: How unfairness judgments are used to fuel radical beliefs, extremist behaviors, and terrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
  6. Alejandro Beutel and Peter Weinberger, "Public-private partnerships to counter violent extremism: Field principles for action," *Final Report to the U.S. Department of State* (2016): 5.
  7. Magnus Ranstorp and Umair Ahmed, "Developing a local prevent framework and guiding principles-Part 2," *RAN Policy Paper* (2018): 5-8.
  8. Sue Roberts, "Detecting radicalisation in communities: The role of multi-agency partnership and the power of local information," *RAIS* (2018): 42.

This article presents an overview of different MAW practices in three neighbouring countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. We start with a description of LISC-R (Local Integrated Security Cell – Radicalism), the Belgian multi-agency platform that works to prevent violent radicalisation, and detail its legislation, structure and information sharing. We then compare it with MAW in the Netherlands and Germany. In the final section, we outline the EMMA project.<sup>9</sup> This project, funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund – Police, focuses on MAW in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany and aims to develop a self-evaluation toolkit for these agencies, to enhance the self-reliance of local actors in improving the existing structures. Information on the Belgian, Dutch and German structures was primarily collected by consulting experts in the field (EMMA project partners, data protection officer and relevant MAW actors from the three countries) and supplemented with relevant literature and legal documents. A concise overview of the MAW approaches in these three countries can be found in the appendix.

## The LISC-R in Belgium

### Origins

European countries have followed a trend of taking a multi-agency approach to the prevention of violent radicalisation. This can be seen in the Danish use of info-houses and the United Kingdom's use of Luton Family Safeguarding. From 2012, cities and municipalities across Europe started developing strategies to deal with the problem of combatants leaving for Syria, the so-called foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs). In Belgium, there was an increasing need for an adapted approach to this complex situation. It is for this reason that in 2015 the Belgian Minister for Security and Home Affairs, Jan Jambon, and the Minister of Justice, Koen Geens, sent out a circular (*omzendbrief/circulaire*) in which a multi-agency approach was referred to for the first time, in the context of '*Local Integrated Security Cells*' (in Dutch: *Lokale Integrale Veiligheidscellen* – LISC).<sup>10</sup>

After a series of terrorist attacks in Belgium and other countries in 2016, policy-makers became increasingly aware of so-called homegrown terrorist fighters (HTFs) who were being radicalised on Belgian soil. In addition to focusing on FTFs, policy-makers now had to develop an approach to prevent violent radicalisation locally.<sup>11</sup> More and more municipalities established a LISC, but the lack of a legal framework created problems with respect to professional secrecy, information sharing and other issues relating to the organisation of the LISC.

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9. The Evaluation and Mentoring of the Multi-Agency approach to violent radicalization (EMMA) project is coordinated by the Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten (VVSG, Belgium) in collaboration with Ghent University (Belgium), RadarAdvies (the Netherlands) and the Violence Prevention Network (VPN, Germany).
  10. *Omzendbrief betreffende de informatie-uitwisseling rond en de opvolging van foreign terrorist fighters afkomstig uit België en de inperkingen van de dreiging die ervan uitgaan* (21 augustus 2015), (Brussel: Minister van Binnenlandse zaken en Minister van Justitie); *Circulaire relative à l'échange d'informations et au suivi des foreign terrorist fighters* (21 août 2015), (Bruxelles: Ministre de l'intérieur et du Ministre de la Justice).
  11. Nathan Irwin, "The complexity of responding to home-grown terrorism: radicalization, deradicalization and disengagement," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* (2015) 2: 167-68.

## Legislation

Eventually, on 13 July 2018, legislation for the LISC-R came into effect. From that point on, municipalities were obliged to establish or join a LISC-R. The 'R' was added to the name to emphasise the focus of this MAW structure on radicalism and its objective as the prevention of terrorist crimes.<sup>12</sup> This general objective can be divided into two aims: (1) the early detection of individuals vulnerable to violent radicalisation; and (2) the development of a personalised/tailor-made approach.<sup>13</sup> By setting up a MAW structure consisting of local actors, each with their own information and expertise, policymakers hope to ensure that individuals are thoroughly screened and any issues are efficiently followed up.<sup>14</sup>

## Structure and actors involved

Despite the existence of a legal framework, the Belgian LISC-R landscape is characterised by a wide range in how LISC-Rs are interpreted, set up and organised. In practice, every municipality deals with a highly specific context and needs to be able to adapt their LISC-R to these local needs. Municipalities can choose to develop their own LISC-R or to join one from the overarching police district. There is no universal approach for the MAW structure. CUTA (Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis in Belgium) have therefore proposed a standard model, where a distinction is made between a strategic and an operational structure. The strategic structure (from now on referred to as the 'strategic roundtable') should make it possible to draw up policy lines and make agreements on the management of cases by the operational structure (the 'operational roundtable').<sup>15</sup> The operational roundtable, in turn, is responsible for bringing together local partners for the early detection and discussion of radicalised persons. In addition, it is the task of the partners in the operational roundtable to implement the strategic policy lines within their local reality. Alternatively, the strategic and operational roundtables can be combined in an 'integrated' roundtable. A study by VVSG indicates that this is the most common structure in Flanders. No less than 67% of the surveyed LISC-Rs consist of one roundtable where both the strategic objectives are determined and the operational case management is carried out.<sup>16</sup>

However, the LISC-R law (13 July 2018) imposes a number of obligations on the composition of the MAW structure. Article 3 describes the mandatory actors who must participate in the LISC-R. The first of these is the **mayor**, who is responsible for establishing the LISC-R. In addition, the mayor should compile a list of cases of individuals who show signs of radicalisation and are possibly in need of a follow-up. The LISC-R must screen these cases and determine whether or not a tailor-made

12. *Wet tot oprichting van lokale integrale veiligheidscellen inzake radicalisme, extremisme en terrorisme* (30 juli 2018), (Brussel: Minister van Binnenlandse zaken en Minister van Justitie).

13. *Bijlage omzendbrief van de minister van veiligheid en binnenlandse zaken en de minister van justitie betreffende de informatie-uitwisseling rond en de opvolging van terrorist fighters en haatpropagandisten* (22 mei 2018), (Brussel: Minister van Binnenlandse zaken en Minister van Justitie).

14. On the fifth anniversary commemoration of the Brussels attacks on 22 March 2021, Minister of Justice Van Quickenborne proposed a new interpretation of the LISC-R, namely the LISC-P. The Minister wants to use this agency to establish multi-agency working in various penitentiary institutions. This MAW agency is intended to guarantee early detection and a tailor-made approach. The ultimate purpose of this LISC-P is the reintegration of the individual into society. "Meer controle op radicalisering in gevangenis," *De Morgen*, 19.03.2021, Accessed 19.04.2021, <https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/meer-controle-op-radicalisering-in-gevangenis~b-256d2a4/>.

15. *Plan R: verduidelijkende nota over de LIVC-R*, (Brussel: Orgaan voor de Coördinatie en Analyse van de Dreiging, 2019), 6.

16. Maarten De Waele, *Bevraging radicalisering en polarisering 2020*, (Brussel: VVSG, 2020), 26-27.

approach should be developed. In order for this screening to be reliable, Article 3 of the LISC-R law recommends the inclusion of municipal social actors who, through their function and expertise, can contribute to this analysis and the follow-up of the individual. As a result of the varied social structures of Belgian municipalities, a great diversity of social actors could be represented in the MAW structure, such as probation and education stakeholders, health care professionals, welfare institutions, youth centres, social workers, social housing agencies and many others. It is the mayor's responsibility to invite these key partners to the roundtable. The second required actor within the LISC-R is the **information officer**. This role is taken by a local police officer, who is responsible for the exchange of information between the LISC-R and the Local Task Force (LTF).<sup>17</sup> The latter platform is part of a vertical structure, implemented in 2013 by the Federal Action Plan – Radicalism (Plan R).<sup>18</sup> This action plan aims to reduce radicalism and extremism in society through integrated collaboration between the various governments in Belgium. The LTF discusses cases with increased public security risks, and notifies LISC-Rs of possible cases within the municipality. A third required actor is the **municipal official as the coordinator** of the LISC-R. This function can be assigned from any department. It is, however, recommended that the municipal official has worked in the area of prevention before. It is the coordinator's task to steer the LISC-R in the right direction and to build bridges between all actors (i.e., police and social actors).

### Case management and information sharing

In general, there are two ways in which an individual case can be raised for discussion at the LISC-R. The first is through the vertical top-down information flux with the LTF, in which the information is passed on from the LTF to the mayor through the information officer. Alternatively, a case can be submitted bottom-up, either via signalling structures for citizens and organisations within the municipality, or directly via a participating MAW actor.<sup>19</sup>

In order to obtain a complete, holistic view of each case, participating partners are expected to share all the necessary, available information on the case. However, many participating actors are bound to professional secrecy, as described in Article 458 of the Belgian Criminal Law. This makes it difficult, and even in some cases prosecutable, to share information under secrecy. In order to facilitate information sharing, Article 5 of the LISC-R law states that this body can be understood as a case consultation, as defined in Article 458 ter of the Criminal Code. This Article allows for an exception to be made to professional secrecy in order for actors to temporarily relinquish their own obligation of secrecy.<sup>20</sup>

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17. *Wet tot oprichting van lokale integrale veiligheidscellen inzake radicalisme, extremisme en terrorisme*, art. 4.  
 18. *Plan R: verduidelijkende nota over de LIRC-R*, (Brussel: Orgaan voor de Coördinatie en Analyse van de Dreiging, 2019), 14.  
 19. Maarten De Waele, *Hoe een lokale integrale veiligheidscel uitbouwen?* (Brussel: Politea, 2018), 72-79.  
 20. *Strafwetboek*, art.458 ter.

## The Care and Safety Houses (CSH) in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, the responsibility for developing a preventive approach to violent radicalisation lies with local authorities. Municipalities can rely on the facilitating support of the Care and Safety Houses (in Dutch: *Zorg- en Veiligheidshuizen*, CSH) as a multi-agency working unit for a number of elements of this preventive approach, such as case management. To obtain this support, the local authorities can join the regional CSH.

The philosophy of the multi-agency approach in the Netherlands is the same as in Belgium, namely, to facilitate cooperation between different actors and disciplines to ensure the prevention of violent radicalisation. As with the Belgian LISC-Rs, this prevention practice consists of identifying individuals who are at risk on the one hand, and developing a person-centred approach on the other hand.

### How it started

The structure of CSHs originated in the 1990s as 'Safety Houses'. These were used when local authorities wanted to create a partnership between different justice actors to develop approaches to complex, multi-faceted problems faced by individuals in multiple life domains that required a multi-actor response. Over the years, these structures have been adapted to fit the needs of the local partners, for example with the addition of social partners to the MAW structure. These adaptations not only resulted in a name change to 'Care and Safety Houses', they also led to a proliferation of CSHs, each with their own structure and organisation, partners and working methods.<sup>21</sup> CSHs tackle these complex problems with cooperation between the criminal justice system, the care sector and municipal authorities.

### Differences in legislation

A first difference between the Belgian and the Dutch approach can be found in the legal framework. At the moment, the CSH system lacks a national legal framework in the context of violent radicalisation, such as the legislation for the Belgian LISC-R that defines its general purpose and structure. However, on the 13 February 2020 a legislative proposal was introduced that would include the legal obligation of mayors and aldermen to use a case management approach in matters concerning a radicalising individual. This legislative proposal also lays down the exchange of information between the participating actors. The legislator defines the goal of the case management as promoting coordination of measures with regard to persons who reside or have resided in the city and can be linked to radicalising activities. The intention is to develop an effective approach tailored to the individual. The permanent actors – the mayor/the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, police, public prosecutor's office, the Ministry of Justice and Security, probation institutions, and the Child Protection Board – are also described, each with a specific role in the case management.<sup>22</sup>

21. *Landelijk kader: Veiligheidshuizen, vóór en dóór partners (januari 2013)*, (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie), 11.

22. *Wetsvoorstel persoonsgerichte aanpak en meldingen over radicalisering en terroristische activiteiten (13 februari 2020)*, (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie).

### Differences in the scope of the MAW structure

A second notable characteristic and contrast with the LISC-R is the scope of the Dutch MAW structure. In the LISC-R, discussion of cases is only permitted if it concerns the prevention of terrorist acts or crimes committed within the framework of criminal organisations.<sup>23</sup> This is not the case for the CSH, where all complex problems that meet predetermined criteria can be discussed.<sup>24</sup> Four specific themes have been defined and are believed to cover a substantial proportion of these complex problems, including radicalisation and violent extremism. The other themes covered are domestic violence and child abuse, re-integration of ex-prisoners posing a security threat, and persons with confused behaviours posing a security threat. However, these four themes are not exhaustive and do not cover all 'complex problems'. Other complex problems that are not covered by these themes could thus also fall under the care of the CSH. In principle, a separate roundtable could be organised for each theme, consisting of professionals with expertise that is valuable to the intervention needed in a particular case.<sup>25</sup>

### Differences in the structure and level of organisation

The third difference concerns the level of organisation. The CSH structure is organised on a regional level, per safety region (there are 25 safety regions in the Netherlands),<sup>26</sup> while in Belgium the LISC-R structure is organised on a municipal level (there are 581 municipalities in Belgium). On 1 September 2020 the Netherlands had 30 CSHs,<sup>27</sup> and Belgium had 272 LISC-Rs.<sup>28</sup>

Dutch municipalities and cities have the opportunity to join and be supported by the CSH structure when a complex problem arises in their local area. To join these structures, local administrations must sign a covenant. This covenant regulates the legal embedding of the cooperation structure and the agreements at the organisational level, namely the purpose of the structure and the participating partners, clarification of a number of terms, the structure of the CSHs and their role, and the manner of decision-making and partner consultation. It also contains agreements on data collection and processing. A separate covenant was drawn up for the issue of radicalisation, with a clear definition of radicalisation, extremism and case management, among other things.<sup>29</sup>

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23. *Wet tot oprichting van lokale integrale veiligheidscellen inzake radicalisme, extremisme en terrorisme*; Maarten DeWaele, *Hoe een lokale integrale veiligheidscel uitbouwen?*, 41-44; *Wetsontwerp tot oprichting van Lokale Integrale veiligheidscellen inzake radicalisme, extremisme en terrorisme* (2 juli 2018), (Brussel: Belgische Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers), Art. 3, 17.
  24. These criteria are: problems impacting multiple life domains that have impact on, or are impacted by, the direct social environment; and require a multi-actor collaboration OR problems causing a severe security threat.
  25. Landelijk kader: *Veiligheidshuizen, vóór en dóór partners* (januari 2013), (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie).
  26. The country is divided into 25 safety regions (in Dutch: *veiligheidsregios*). Each safety region has at least one CSH, which any municipality in the safety region can join. Centrum voor Criminaliteitspreventie en Veiligheid, "Veiligheidshuizen," Accessed 22.03.2021, <https://hetccv.nl/onderwerpen/veiligheidsbeleving/praktijkvoorbeelden/alle-praktijkvoorbeelden/veiligheidshuizen/#:~:text=Veiligheidshuizen%20zijn%20netwerksamenwerkingsverbanden%2C%20die%20partners,op%20dit%20moment%2038%20veiligheidshuizen.>
  27. Zorg- en Veiligheidshuizen, "Zoek een zorg- en veiligheidshuis," Accessed 22.03.2021, <https://www.veiligheidshuizen.nl/veiligheidshuizen>.
  28. FOD Binnenlandse Zaken, "Cartografie van de LIVC-R," Accessed 04.03.2021, <https://www.besafe.be/nl/veiligheidsthemas/radicalisme/lokale-integrale-veiligheidscel>.
  29. *Convenant: Persoonsgerichte aanpak voorkoming radicalisering en extremisme*, (Den Haag: Nationaal coördinator terrorismebestrijding en veiligheid).

Looking in more detail at the structure of the organisation, there are a number of key covenant actors (in Dutch: *convenantpartijen*) – the so-called 'triangle': the municipality, the police and the public prosecutor's office. In addition, the 'case actors' (in Dutch: *casuspartijen*) consist of 'the Board of Child Protection' and 'probation service Netherlands'. In addition, 'external case actors' can join the consultation. These are actors that are necessary for the development of a person-oriented approach, or have specific expertise. Since this differs for each case, these are ad hoc contributors who only join the consultations when their expertise is required.

A noteworthy difference between the LISC-R in Belgium and the CSHs in the Netherlands is the role of the public prosecutor's office. In the Dutch structure, the public prosecutor's office is one of the major actors, while the LISC-R law in Belgium stipulates that this office is not authorised to participate in the operational roundtable. This is to safeguard the preventive purpose of the LISC-R; the link with the security services in Belgium has already been guaranteed by including both the police and the information officer in the roundtable. However, the Belgian public prosecutor's office can, subject to approval, participate in the strategic roundtable.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Differences and similarities in case management***

The Dutch and the Belgian MAW approaches share the same goal for case management, namely, to identify and analyse cases, and to elaborate a person-centred integral approach.

In the Netherlands, the case management procedure varies from region to region, but it can generally be grouped into several steps, starting with (1) registration and case intake, followed by (2) the selection, (3) the individual case approach, and finally (4) the conclusion. In terms of case intake, only covenant actors are entitled to register cases. These agencies are alerted about possible concerns on the basis of their own available information, or by a contact point where family and friends, social organisations and agencies such as youth work can voice their concerns about a potentially radicalising individual. After receiving information about a concern, (a team of) case management workers consisting of the structure's core actors determines, by means of a framework, whether the case is admissible for case management or not.<sup>31</sup> This is the selection phase. If the case is admissible, the necessary partners will be identified. In the individual case approach phase, an integrated approach is set up and the case is followed up until the concerns about an individual subside. If no further actions are required after an additional follow-up time, the case is closed.<sup>32</sup>

Note that in the case of Belgium, the first two phases are merged into the MAW structure of the LISC-R. Furthermore, there are no fixed rules for the termination of a case follow-up. Decision rules and timings for the closing of a case can thus differ from MAW to MAW in Belgium.

To steer their operation, CSHs have an actor similar to the coordinator in the Belgian LISC-R, namely the process coordinator. This individual is responsible for the preparation of both the selection table and the case management, for recording

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30. De Waele, *Hoe een lokale integrale veiligheidsceel uitbouwen?*, 83.

31. Note that although a triage phase itself occurs in every region, it is not necessarily carried out by a separate team of triage workers, but can also take place as an internal procedure with the CSH. This depends from region to region.

32. *Landelijk kader: Veiligheidshuizen, vóór en dóór partners* (januari 2013), (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie).



the decisions of this structure, requesting further information and informing the persons involved. A case coordinator can be appointed to coordinate and follow up the actions resulting from the action plan.<sup>33</sup>

## A varied approach of MAW in Germany

Germany also tackles the complex problem of violent radicalisation through a variety of MAW cooperative approaches. Unlike in Belgium and the Netherlands, there is no legislation on the issue at the federal or state level, and no overarching national framework to describe the structure and organisation of the MAW approach in the field of prevention work to tackle violent radicalisation. It would be difficult to introduce such legislation and framework, as there are 16 different Federal State Data Protection Acts that apply to all government agencies in the *Bundesländer* (federal states) and specify the EU General Data Protection Regulation.

To deal with this fragmentation, in 2004 the GTAZ (*Gemeinsame Terrorismusabwehrzentrum, Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre*) was established as a community platform of police and intelligence services from federal and state level and others, who specialise in the area of Islamist terrorism and extremism.<sup>34</sup> The aim of this platform is to pool and consolidate information, minimising the loss of information and errors through cross-border and cross-agency exchange, bundling the expertise of 40 German security authorities in compliance with the principle of separation between the police and the intelligence service. In 2012 the GETZ (*Gemeinsame Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum*) was established in line with these principles. GETZ is responsible for dealing with right-wing, left-wing and foreigner extremism and terrorism, as well as espionage. Recently, right-wing extremism has been the highest political priority.<sup>35</sup> Several policy documents have outlined strategic aspects of the German approach for combating extremist radicalisation, such as the 'National prevention programme against Islamist extremism'<sup>36</sup> and 'Guidelines for a holistic approach for dealing with returning FTFs',<sup>37</sup> which refers to a strong, coordinated approach that includes relevant actors on the level of the states, municipalities and civil society.

In contrast to Belgium and Netherlands, in Germany the organisation of local MAW structures is not fixed at the local/municipal level (Belgium) or the supra-local/regional level (the Netherlands). Instead, the level of organisation differs across the country. Some MAW networks are organised at municipality level, while others are part of regional networks.<sup>38</sup> As a result, there are major regional and local differences in German MAW structures in the context of violent radicalisation, and even within

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33. *Persoonsgerichte aanpak voorkoming radicalisering en extremisme: Handleiding voor gemeenten, politie, Openbaar Ministerie en ketenpartners* (mei 2017), (Den Haag: Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid), 8-10.
  34. *Gemeinsames Terrorismusabwehrzentrum (GTAZ) Rechtsgrundlagen und Vergleichbarkeit mit anderen Kooperationsplattformen* (December 2018), (Deutscher Bundestag).
  35. In March 2020 the federal government sent a strong signal by founding a Cabinet Committee (*Kabinettausschuss*) to act against several forms of extremism, giving highest priority to combatting right-wing extremism and other forms of racial discrimination. As a follow-up, a 'catalogue of measures' (*Maßnahmenkatalog*) was recently published by the federal government; *Maßnahmenkatalog des Kabinettausschusses zur Bekämpfung von Rechtsextremismus und Rassismus* (november 2020), (Berlin: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung), 1-11.
  36. *Nationales Präventionsprogramm gegen islamistischen Extremismus* (April 217), (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau and Heimat).
  37. *Leitlinien zum ganzheitlichen Umgang mit Rückkehrerinnen und Rückkehrern* (September 2019), (Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau and Heimat).
  38. Milena Uhlmann, *Evaluation of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation*, (Nuremberg: BAMF, 2017), 21.

the same region (*Bundesland*) the MAW approach can differ greatly. The huge variety of approaches and structures makes it challenging to provide a comprehensive description of the German situation within the scope of this article. Instead, we will outline the complex German MAW landscape by briefly describing some of the ways MAW structures are organised in several cities.

### Scope

Unlike Belgium (radicalism) and the Netherlands (complex problems in four themes), the MAW structures across Germany have no fixed role and function. Instead, they determine their own scope and objectives, whether focusing on operational aspects, strategic aspects or a combination of the two.<sup>39</sup> The general objectives of the MAW structures can vary, from building trusting relationships between actors and promoting democratic values by connecting meaningful actors, to raising awareness, supporting information exchange, or discussing recent trends and developments in the radicalisation field. Also, the target groups vary substantially. Some structures cover the prevention of specific forms of radicalisation, such as right-wing extremism or Islamist extremism, while others have an extremely specialised focus on a subgroup that is specific to the local context (e.g. young, radicalised females). There is a focus on exit work, de-radicalisation, and even on victim support. One advantage of this is that the MAW structure can be established according to the needs of the level of the structure.

### Actors

The key actors involved vary across regions and localities.<sup>40</sup> In many cases, we find similar key actors are involved, such as the municipality, police, local and regional non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and social actors. Actors from the prison administration or youth sector can also be included, depending on the case or situation under discussion. In rare instances, experts from academic institutions take on a facilitating role. Furthermore, the 'lead' of the German MAW structure is not a 'fixed' actor from the municipality (Belgium) or organisation (the Netherlands), but can vary. They may be someone who has been found/chosen by the municipality, with particular expertise, from an advice or coordination centre, or some other person.

### Information sharing

In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, the sharing of information is controlled by data protection laws. Which law applies depends on the specific actor within the MAW structure. Two main pieces of legislation may apply: the EU General Data Protection Regulation, which applies to NGOs across Germany,<sup>41</sup> and special data protection laws that apply to security services, which are Bundesländer specific.<sup>42</sup> In general, the government agencies are allowed to handle data if this is necessary to fulfil their legal duties. They are permitted to share this information with other government agencies if the receiving agencies need those to fulfil their own legal duties.

39. Milena Uhlmann, *Evaluation of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation*, 23.

40. Milena Uhlmann, *Evaluation of the Advice Centre on Radicalisation*, 21.

41. NGOs: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) specified by the Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz*, BDSG). Important regulations for data handling are for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. f GDPR and Art. 9 Sect. 2 lit g GDPR read in conjunction with § 22 Sect. 1 Number 1 lit. d and § 24 Sect. 1 Number 1 BDSG.

42. The following regulations apply for Federal and Federal State security authorities: Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by responsible authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement

But there are several area-specific exceptions. For example, particularly restrictive regulations apply to information obtained by intelligence or youth welfare services.

Apart from the valid general rules of data protection, there are no specific legal frameworks, platforms or covenants in place that regulate, guide or facilitate the sharing of sensitive information in the context of a MAW structure for preventing violent radicalisation. Every MAW structure therefore has its own method of dealing with data protection, which in some cases can cause discrepancies among actors. MAW actors report difficulties with data protection due to competing regulations concerning information sharing.

Not all MAW structures necessarily deal with individual case management, as happens in Belgium and the Netherlands. Some German MAW structures only discuss action plans or strategies for dealing with certain situations or groups (situation analyses). In some structures, the focus is on information exchange, trends and developments in the radicalisation field being discussed, rather than concrete cases, groups or situations. However, in the large federal coordination centres, case information is exchanged among police and intelligence services.

### ***The EMMA project: evaluation of multi-agency working in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany***

It is clear that the MAW structures in Belgium and the Netherlands vary in a number of aspects. One thing that they have in common is that evaluation of the MAW approach is not structurally embedded in their operations. However, local MAW actors are keen to know how they are performing and how they can improve, as local actors face many challenges in their MAW networks, such as difficulties with information sharing, building trust and dealing with legislation. Despite this, local actors are willing to learn and implement good practices that can help overcome these challenges.

This need to evaluate the performance of the multi-agency operation has repeatedly been emphasised by MAW officials, but it is not an easy exercise given the variety of MAW contexts. Evaluations of MAW approaches in the context of preventing violent radicalisation are currently scarce.<sup>43</sup> Local actors must rely on independent evaluators, and opportunities for such independent evaluations are limited. Local MAW actors could perform an evaluation of their own multi-agency working, but they struggle to do this, as there are currently no blueprints on how to perform such evaluation.

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of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA). This directive gets specified by Federal and Federal State laws; other Federal State government agencies: General Data Protection Regulation specified by the Federal State Data Protection Acts and several area-specific legislations (for example social security data protection legislations). Important regulations for data handling are for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. e GDPR; other federal government agencies: General Data Protection Regulation specified by the Federal Data Protection Act and several area-specific legislations; important regulations for data handling are for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. e GDPR read in conjunction with § 3 BDSG.

43. Amy-Jane Gielen, *Cutting Through Complexity: Evaluating Countering Violent Extremism* (CVE). PhD thesis (Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2020), 23.

### **EMMA-project: Towards a self-assessment tool**

To overcome these challenges, the EU-funded so-called EMMA project was established in January 2020. EMMA is the acronym for '**Evaluating and mentoring of the Multi-Agency approach to violent radicalisation**'. One of the principle aims of this project is to develop a practical self-evaluation tool for local officials. This self-evaluation tool needs to support all local actors involved in MAW to assess their role, service delivery, and indicates the shortcomings. To develop this tool, a process evaluation will be performed according to the realist evaluation principle, a method originally developed for the evaluation of complex social programs where there is an "interplay between individual and institution, agency and structure, and micro and macro social processes."<sup>44</sup>

### **A realistic process evaluation**

Outcome evaluation is probably the most well-known form of evaluation. It measures results – in this case, whether the evaluated approach or programme is effective, i.e. whether it is successful in fulfilling its predefined objectives. Specifically in the context of preventing violent radicalisation, toolkits for such evaluations are becoming increasingly available. Think about the RAND Corporation's Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism<sup>45</sup> or the IMPACT Toolkit.<sup>46</sup> However, outcome evaluation does not provide information on why and how an intervention was effective, and hence it is not very useful in developing a self-evaluation tool. This is where process evaluation can prove helpful. Process evaluation can be used to identify the effective key components of an intervention and thus can help explain why a programme is successful (or not), in which context and under what circumstances. By understanding how MAW actors and structures try to achieve their objectives, and which processes are set in motion in each of these contexts, we can explore what works, whether it is promising, and under what context or conditions it works. A variety of qualitative methods are used to perform a process evaluation, such as interviews with key actors, participatory observations from MAW roundtables and focus groups to identify missing elements and to develop the self-evaluation tool in collaboration with local MAW actors.

### **Practical tools and a digital platform for peer-to-peer exchange**

The EMMA project aims to create a simple and user-friendly evaluation toolkit that will allow local officials to perform a self-assessment of their approach. It will be specifically tailored to actors in multi-agency networks in the context of violent radicalisation.

In addition to the scientific evaluation component, the project includes a mentoring package whose focus is to offer practical support to the 15 MAW cities in the EMMA sample and to improve MAW practices through advice, guidance and peer-to-peer assessment. In addition to the toolkit, EMMA aims to deliver a platform where local MAW officials learn from each other by sharing best practices. The impact of the project will not be limited to the three project countries, as the tools that are created will be available for use by local professionals throughout Europe.

44. Gielen, *Cutting Through Complexity: Evaluating countering violent extremism (CVE)*.

45. Todd C.T Helmus et al., *RAND Program Evaluation Toolkit for Countering Violent Extremism* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2017).

46. IMPACT Europe consortium. "Online evaluation toolkit." Impact Europe, accessed 09.03.2021, <http://impact-europe.eu/online-evaluation-toolkit/>.

## Conclusion

Multi-agency working has proven to be a powerful approach in combating and preventing violent radicalisation, due to its multidisciplinary collaboration and focus on the local level. However, for a MAW approach to remain effective in the ever-evolving dynamics of violent radicalisation, it is important for the actors to take the time to collectively reflect on its functioning from time to time. It is only possible to remain vigilant against the changing context of violent radicalisation and other challenges that will eventually arise in the local MAW through taking an approach that is open-minded, with a willingness to be open to change, and by reflecting on one's own functioning as an actor. By opening themselves up a discussion on goals, partnership, governance, information sharing, and so on, local MAW actors will be able to develop and enhance their professional approach.

Finally, it is important to stress that there is no single, right, *'one size fits all'* approach to MAW. By comparing the Belgian LISC-R, the Dutch CSHs and some German MAW approaches, we have shown that there are different ways in which MAW can be structured, organised and interpreted. Despite all this variety, the EMMA project aims to identify the practices that 'work' and the initial conditions associated with them, to adequately translate these into a practical toolkit that is useful in a variety of contexts and that will enable local MAW officials to be self-reliant in taking an evidence-based approach to assessing their work. ■



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# Appendix: Overview table of the MAW approach in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany

	BELGIUM	THE NETHERLANDS	GERMANY
<b>National framework (legislation)</b>	<p>Legislation: Law LISC-R 30 July 2018.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>Obligation to organise an LISC-R on local level. Mandatory actors (LIVC-R law): mayor, information officer and municipal official.</p>	<p>Legislation proposal specific for the person-oriented approach and notification of radicalisation and terroristic activity.<sup>48</sup></p> <p>National framework for function and objectives of the Care and Safety Houses (CSH).<sup>49</sup></p>	<p>No overarching national framework describing the structure and organisation of the MAW in the field of prevention work regarding violent radicalisation.</p> <p>Complex legislation on federal and state level (Bundesländer).</p>
<b>Information sharing (How? What are the regulations?)</b>	<p>Artikel 458 ter Sw.: Shared professional secrecy within the LISC-R.</p> <p>Vertical information flow: LTF; database FTF/HTF/HP – LISC-R.</p>	<p>Covenant template for local actors for information sharing - Under which conditions can information be shared and with whom?</p>	<p>Regulations depend on state and federal law, as well as special legislation and data protection laws concerning actors' backgrounds (social security data protection e.g. for youth welfare services).</p> <p>No specific legal frameworks, platforms, or covenants in place that regulate, guide, or facilitate the sharing of sensitive information.</p> <p>Which data protection laws apply depends on the specific actor in a MAW structure. EU Data protection law is to be applied to NGOs across Germany. Special data protection laws apply for security services, which are Bundesländer-specific.<sup>50</sup></p> <p>Exceptions to existing data protection law can only be made in exceptional circumstances, which are specified within these laws, e.g. when national security is at stake. Otherwise, actors generally need the individual's consent to share information.</p>

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47. *Wet tot oprichting van lokale integrale veiligheidscellen inzake radicalisme, extremisme en terrorisme* (30 juli 2018) (Brussel: Minister van Binnenlandse zaken en Minister van Justitie).
48. *Wetsvoorstel persoonsgerichte aanpak en meldingen over radicalisering en terroristische activiteiten* (13 februari 2020) (Den Haag: Minister van Justitie en Veiligheid).
49. *Landelijk kader: Veiligheidshuizen, vóór en dóór partners* (januari 2013) (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie), 11.
50. NGOs: General Data Protection Regulation specified by the Federal Data Protection Act (Bundesdatenschutzgesetz, BDSG), important regulations for data handling are for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. f GDPR and Art. 9 Sect. 2 lit g GDPR read in conjunction with § 22 Sect. 1 Number 1 lit. d and § 24 Sect. 1 Number 1 BDSG.
50. For Federal and Federal State security authorities the following regulations apply; DIRECTIVE (EU) 2016/680 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 27 April 2016 (on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by responsible authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA) this directive gets specified by Federal and Federal State laws; other Federal State government agencies: General Data Protection Regulation specified by the Federal State Data Protection Acts and several area-specific legislations (for example social security data protection legislations), important regulation for data handling is for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. e GDPR; Other Federal government agencies: General Data Protection Regulation specified by the Federal Data Protection Act and several area-specific legislations; important regulations for data handling are for example: Art. 6 Sect. 1 lit. e GDPR read in conjunction with § 3 BDSG.

## STRUCTURE

<b>Organised at what level?</b>	The MAW approach can be organised at different local levels: municipal level or police district level.	Care and Safety Houses are organised at regional (safety region) level. Municipalities can join this structure.	Level of organisation differs across the country. Different structures depending on region and city.  Some take place at city-level (e.g. Augsburg, Düsseldorf, Chemnitz). Others are part of regional networks that have local NGO-cooperation partners (e.g. Wegweiser in North Rhine-Westphalia). Different structures exist for right-wing extremism and for Islamist extremism.
<b>Key actors involved in the MAW</b>	<p>Required actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mayor,</li> <li>- Information officer (as link between LISC-R and LTF),</li> <li>- Municipal officer (as coordinator).</li> </ul> <p>Recommended actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social actors (youth services, schools, public centres for social welfare, etc.).</li> </ul>	<p>Three key actors (in Dutch: convenantpartijen):<sup>51</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Municipality (mayor),</li> <li>- Police,</li> <li>- Public prosecution service (OM).</li> </ul> <p>Other actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child services (Raad voor de Kinderbescherming),</li> <li>- National coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV),</li> <li>- Probation services,</li> <li>- Care and Safety Houses (Zorg- en Veiligheidshuizen).</li> </ul>	<p>Actors vary according to region. MAW bodies can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Municipality,</li> <li>- Local police,</li> <li>- Security actors,</li> <li>- NGOs,</li> <li>- Civil society (sport clubs, mosques, etc.).</li> </ul> <p>If applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prison / probation,</li> <li>- Youth services (Jugendamt).</li> </ul> <p>In rare instances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Universities,</li> <li>(e.g. Chemnitz)</li> <li>- Psychologists.</li> </ul> <p>Depending on the security threat coming from a case, the roundtables are organised by security services or law enforcement or by NGOs and civil society if there are more general/less dangerous cases or trends to discuss.</p>
<b>Frequency</b>	MAW structures choose their own frequency (structural or ad hoc).	MAW structures choose their own frequency (structural or ad hoc).	MAW structures chose their own frequency, often depending on number of active cases and local situation / mandate.

51. *Persoonsgerichte aanpak voorkoming radicalisering en extremisme: Handleiding voor gemeenten, politie, Openbaar Ministerie en ketenpartners* (mei 2017) (Den Haag: Nationaal Coördinator Terrorismebestrijding en Veiligheid), 8-10.; Wetsvoorstel persoonsgerichte aanpak en meldingen over radicalisering en terroristische activiteiten (13 februari

## OBJECTIVES

<b>Scope and focus, target group(s)</b>	Focus on violent radicalisation.  Target group: Individuals at risk of violent radicalisation.	Focus of the CSH is on <b>complex problems</b> : multi-problems that can only be solved through collaboration between partners and problems that have an impact on family or direct environment of the individual.  Radicalisation is part of this focus.	MAW structures determine their own scope and objectives. Target groups vary substantially according to the MAW structure.
<b>Role and function</b>	Strategic function - Coordination and agreement making for operational roundtable, - Trust building between municipality, police and other local actors.  Operational function: - Case management: early detection, follow-up and implementation of a tailor-made approach.	Two main functions of CSH <sup>52</sup> : advising local authorities on complex problems and case management (follow-up and implementation of a tailor-made approach).	No fixed role and function.  Varies depending on specific focus and mandate: case management, decision on follow-up measures, discussing local developments that already pose or will pose a problem in the future, gathering knowledge on phenomena, creating awareness, etc.

## EVALUATION

<b>Evaluation</b>	Evaluation is not legally established.  Responsibility of the local MAW structure.	Responsibility of the local MAW structure.  MAW structures are encouraged to carry out evaluations by the Dutch government and are supported / facilitated to do so, for example by the Toolkit Evidence Based Werken. <sup>53</sup>	No obligation for evaluation, but interest to do so to secure long-term establishment of the MAW structure.  A nationwide structure in the area of evaluation is currently being designed (PreVal project). <sup>54</sup>
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52. Landelijk kader: *Veiligheidshuizen, vóór en dóór partners* (januari 2013) (Den Haag: Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie), 14.
53. Expertise-unit Sociale Stabiliteit, "Toolkit Evidence-Based Werken bij de preventie van radicalisering," Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, accessed on 16.03.2021, <https://www.socialestabiliteit.nl/si-toolkit>.
54. Bundesministerium des Innern, für Bau und Heimat, "*PreVal – Evaluationsdesigns für Präventionsmaßnahmen*", accessed on 16.03.2021, <https://preval.hsfk.de/>.