

Presentation title:

Navigating a solid and sound course in countering terrorism and violent extremism: experiences with evidence based policymaking and structural evaluations in the Netherlands

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Countering terrorism and violent extremism takes place in a societal climate in which pre-emption and risk avoidance seems key. Therefore, there is quite some pressure to build strong and efficient policies to prevent and counter emerging threats. But how to measure the success of those policies? The sheer absence of terrorist attacks and political violence is not a sufficient indicator, as those risks are inherent to open societies. In addition, it remains crucial to have proportionate policies in place as protecting the democratic legal order is always bound to that same order. One of the first evaluations of Dutch counterterrorism policies suggested to develop comprehensive counterterrorism strategies and to evaluate those policies afterwards. This suggestion became an agreement between parliament and government. Since then, various strategies have been published, implemented and evaluated. Furthermore, specific policies like the municipal reinforcement funds have been built (and evaluated) on an evidence based approach. My presentation comprises three parts. First, I will analyze the major findings of the various evaluations of counterterrorism strategies. What did the evaluations of counterterrorism strategies conclude? Second, I will examine to what extent the lessons of evaluations have been integrated in follow up strategies. Is it possible to establish whether the circular process of policy design, implementation and evaluation has led to meaningful processes of learning? Finally, I will revisit the overall Dutch experiences with evaluations and evidence based policymaking in counterterrorism and identify major lessons, from best practices to pitfalls. What can be learned for future evidence based policy making in the field of countering terrorism and violent extremism?