Letter of 7 April 2015 from the Minister of Security and Justice and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the House of Representatives on the progress of the Actionplan ‘The Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism - Overview of measures and actions.

We hereby present a progress report on the implementation of the plan of action ‘The Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism - Overview of measures and actions’ (House of Representatives 29 754, no. 253), in accordance with the amended motion submitted by MP Alexander Pechtold (House of Representatives 29 754, no. 267). The report is presented in the form of a schematic overview, in keeping with the undertaking made by the Minister of Security and Justice during the plenary debate on 11 February 2015 (see annexe 1). Further information concerning a number of relevant motions and undertakings appears in an annexe to this letter (see annexe 2). A progress report of this type is now submitted to the House of Representatives with every Terrorist Threat Assessment for the Netherlands (DTN).

The reality is that what recently happened in France, Belgium and Denmark could also happen here. It is impossible to guarantee 100% security. We are therefore obliged to assess on a daily basis whether the measures that are being implemented and developed are sufficient.

The plan of action ‘The Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism - Overview of measures and actions’ is the robust response required to the current jihadist threat described in DTN38. This latest assessment of the terrorist threat facing the Netherlands gives no grounds for changing Dutch policy at present. Although the government is clearly focusing its efforts on reducing this threat as soon as possible and protecting democracy and the rule of law, history shows that radicalisation and terrorism cannot be defeated overnight. The government therefore believes that, in addition to measures to tackle the consequences of jihadism, it is vital to focus specifically on preventing radicalisation and strengthening society’s resilience in the longer term.

The plan of action comprises a mixture of existing, enhanced and new measures that are being implemented over a two-year period. Since the publication of the first progress report on 12 November 2014,¹ progress has been made in various areas.

¹ Letter of 12 November 2014 on the progress of the plan of action ‘The Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism - Overview of measures and actions’ (House of Representatives, 2014-2015, 29 754, no. 271).
In order to tackle jihadism and **reduce the risk of jihadists travelling to conflict zones abroad**, the Public Prosecution Service has added seven public prosecutors and various other staff. In addition, over 60 ‘jihad-related’ criminal investigations are currently under way, focusing on approximately 90 individuals. They are suspected of offences including conspiracy to participate in armed conflict, preparing terrorist acts, terrorist financing, incitement of criminal offences against the public authority, possession and distribution of jihadist material and facilitating and promoting jihadist travel.

As regards **travel interventions**, alerts have been issued for the revocation of approximately 65 passports since December 2013, including those of jihadists who have actually travelled to fight abroad (measure 7) but chiefly of persons regarding whom there were well-founded suspicions that they intended to travel to jihadist conflict zones (measure 15). The need to maintain such measures is continuously monitored in each individual case. If the aforementioned suspicions no longer apply, the alert is withdrawn. This has so far happened in approximately ten cases.

The most affected municipalities have received detailed information on the passport procedure. A description of the procedure is also available to municipalities on the website of the National Office for Identity Data (RvIG).

For the purpose of **tackling radicalisation**, the Expertise Unit on Social Tensions and Radicalisation has been operational since 1 February 2015. The unit offers practical expertise aimed at preventing radicalisation, reducing social tension between groups and promoting social stability. It focuses on establishing ties with networks in different communities and supporting municipalities and professionals. In recent weeks, for example, the unit has responded to a request from municipalities to provide targeted advice in response to the question, ‘how can we ensure that things do not get out of hand?’ Such requests may emerge directly from local council meetings or the desire of municipal executives to develop a vision, a range of procedures and a communications strategy so that they are better prepared to deal with rising tensions observed in their communities.

In January 2015, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) established an information centre for municipalities that have questions about radicalisation. Little use has been made of this service so far. The VNG also offers its members an online forum where they can share experiences. This initiative has been more successful, and is now used by
over 150 members (civil servants and local administrators) to share knowledge and information with other municipalities and the VNG.

On 16 March 2015, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science sent a letter to the House of Representatives on the role of education in tackling radicalisation. The support offered to educational institutions includes training programmes to help teaching staff recognise and deal with radicalisation, a helpline operated by a foundation that promotes a safe and supportive social environment in schools (‘Stichting School en Veiligheid’) and online portals that offer up-to-date information and knowledge on these issues (‘School en Veiligheid’ and ‘Integraal Veilig Hoger Onderwijs’). These portals also list the steps that educational institutions should take in cases of potential jihadist travel by young people.

The House of Representatives has already been informed, at its own request, about progress in relation to measure 20f of the plan of action, which concerns the refusal of visas to preachers from countries whose nationals require a visa to enter the Netherlands, if they incite hatred or violence. In a letter sent to the House of Representatives on 3 March 2015, the Minister of Security and Justice, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations noted that in order to implement this measure greater emphasis is being placed on matters relating to public order and national security in the visa application process. For this purpose, the relevant partners in the visa system have started by inserting additional criteria in the standard assessment and risk-assessment profiles. In addition, an alert list of speakers and hosts (for visa purposes) who require special attention during assessments is being drawn up.

With a view to enhancing information-sharing and cooperation, mayors, municipal secretaries and directors of public order and security are being informed about radicalisation and the integrated approach to jihadism at regional meetings. At a conference in Lochem, for example, over 200 mayors participated in a discussion on the phenomenon of jihadism and how it is being tackled.

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In 2014, the General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD) provided stakeholders such as the police and the Public Prosecution Service with 420 reports, including more than 60 country reports, on national and international developments and incidents that have implications for the jihadist threat facing the Netherlands.

In the context of strengthening international cooperation in the fight against jihadism, the Netherlands and Morocco have co-chaired the ‘Foreign Terrorist Fighters’ working group of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) since December 2014. In addition, as a member of a leading group of EU member states focusing on matters relating to jihadism, the Netherlands plays an active role in the drafting and implementation of measures recently adopted by the EU. These measures focus on border controls, information-sharing and enhancing ways of identifying jihadists, for example by making better use of existing instruments.

Legislation designed to tackle jihadism is currently in preparation. The House of Representatives has approved a bill to amend the Netherlands Nationality Act with a view to expanding the possibilities for revoking Dutch nationality in the case of terrorist offences (34 016). The bill to amend the Netherlands Nationality Act in connection with the revocation of Dutch nationality for reasons of national security has passed the consultation stage. This input is currently being processed with a view to sending the bill to the Council of State for its advisory opinion in April. The Counterterrorism (Administrative Measures) Bill, which includes a requirement to report to the authorities at regular intervals and a travel ban, entered the consultation stage on 17 March 2015. After the deadline for submissions expires on 29 April, all comments will be processed so that the bill can be sent to the Council of State for its opinion before the summer. A bill establishing grounds for the termination of social security benefits, allowances and student grants will enter the consultation stage in April.

**Additional initiatives to combat jihadism**

The government keeps a close eye on national and international developments, which sometimes give rise to measures and initiatives that help prevent radicalisation and combat jihadism outside the framework of the plan of action.

On 1 February 2015, for example, the Financial Expertise Centre (FEC) and several other relevant organisations launched a project aimed at improving information-sharing in the field
of terrorist financing. The goal is to map the financial networks of jihadist travellers and other relevant persons in order to obtain insight into terrorist networks, groups, entities and individuals, terrorist financing and facilitators. Appropriate preventive and repressive measures can be taken on the basis of these insights.

In addition, at the initiative of the Public Prosecutor’s Office in The Hague, the municipality of The Hague and the Office of the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV), a pilot programme on potentially violent jihadist loners was launched in The Hague at the beginning of 2015. The programme is exploring the possibilities for establishing a risk-assessment procedure that identifies potentially violent ‘lone wolves’ and provides a range of possible responses. Other participants in the programme include the Dutch mental health services (GGZ), the police and the Netherlands Institute of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (NIFP).

The government welcomes social initiatives that demonstrate the engagement of affected communities, and it aims to support them actively. In recent months, for example, the Partnership of Moroccan Communities in the Netherlands (SMN), mosques and parents have argued in favour of providing easily accessible support to parents who are concerned that their children are being radicalised and seeking ways to respond. The first initiatives to come out of these discussions will start in the near future.

Final remarks

As announced in its letter to parliament of 27 February 2015, the government plans to invest €128.8 million in the security framework over the coming years in order to maintain its ability to tackle the jihadist threat in both the medium and the longer term. Given the expected persistence of this threat, the plan of action ‘An Integrated Approach to Jihadism’ will also remain indispensable for the foreseeable future.

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4 A joint initiative of the Public Prosecution Service, the Fiscal Information and Investigation Service (FIOD), the Tax and Customs Administration, the central bank of the Netherlands (DNB), the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (AFM), the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU-Netherlands), the police, the Ministry of Security and Justice and the Ministry of Finance. The aim of this initiative is to jointly strengthen the integrity of the financial sector.

The plan of action offers a broad range of interventions, including intelligence-based measures, measures under criminal law, administrative measures and financial measures. At the same time, it focuses on prevention. The Netherlands has extensive and longstanding experience with this kind of broad-based, integrated approach to terrorism: from prevention to suppression at international, national and local level. We are therefore fully resolved to continue on this path.

Annexes

1. Second Progress Report on the Plan of Action ‘The Netherlands comprehensive action programme to combat jihadism - Overview of measures and actions’.
2. Motions and undertakings