

# Abstract

## **The national safety plan**

*After the reform of the police force a national safety plan was enacted as a way to address the safety policy issue in a planned fashion but in spite of many initiatives by the federal police force, not all conditions are yet in place to implement it. Legislation must be adapted and the federal police force must further professionalize the design and the follow-up of the plan. This was the conclusion drawn by the Court in its audit report about the national safety plan.*

In the wake of the "Octopus agreement" (signed by eight political parties) police forces underwent a drastic reform these last few years. A key component of the reform was the more planned and integrated approach of the safety policy. To this end, the federal police force set up a national safety plan (NSP) at regular intervals under the responsibility of the Justice and Interior Ministers. This plan aimed at coordinating the general police policy and the management of the integrated police force (federal and local police forces), it defined the way in which the federal police force had to carry out its tasks and priorities and it allocated resources among the General Directorates and Services of the federal police force.

Since the national safety plan was a key component of the reform of the police forces, the Court decided to examine whether the conditions were met to ensure that the national safety plan 2003-2004 (NSP2) was designed and followed-up efficiently. The audit's conclusions were also verified in the light of the Framework note on a comprehensive safety policy, which, from a judicial point of view, provided a wider context for the safety policy for the national safety plan 2004-2007 (NSP3). Both documents were introduced after the completion of the audit.

The audit showed that the federal police force integrated a planning scheme of its operation into its organization and developed and implemented management tools to follow up the execution of the plan. The results of this learning process were, however, not optimal because the following requirements for an efficient planning were inadequately fulfilled.

The concept of the safety plan such as it appeared in the legislation was neither transparent nor efficient. The NSP's place and scope and its connection to other plans (such as the zone safety plans) were vague. As in March 2004, in addition to the NSP, Government adopted a more general policy plan called 'Framework note on a comprehensive safety policy' and as the national safety plan's implementation time was prolonged to four years, the safety plan was effectively reduced to a strategic police plan of the federal police force.

As far as the content is concerned, the plan lacked consistency because the policy components, i.e. the operationalization and the use of financial, were not sufficiently geared to each other.

It was difficult to establish whether the safety plan's objectives were achieved. To gain a clear insight into the outcome of the police force's operation, more precisely the execution and the effects, performance indicators and related target values should be set so as to operationalize policy topics. Failing pre-agreed standards, the competent ministers were not provided a sufficient view to judge and monitor the federal police force's performance.

The planning and reporting processes related to the safety plan were not yet geared to each other and still failed to provide a sufficient picture of the outcome of the police force's work and of the resources applied to this end. Moreover, reporting to Parliament about the national safety plan remained incidental.

The Minister of the Interior concluded from the audit that the direction taken by the Government with its Framework note on a comprehensive safety policy to pave the way for a broader and more consistent political basis still needed to be developed and better framed in the regulations. He was of the opinion that the legislative adjustments needed had to be worked out as part of a general evaluation of the national safety plans and in consideration of the structural modifications planned within the police force structure. He added that he advocated an evaluation of the national safety plan conducted in association with Parliament and that he was in favour of further developing a transparent safety policy and determining the responsibilities and priorities of all active parties.