

Report number 2024.313

Review investigation into how the intelligence services gather information on political representatives, how they handle and analyse that information, and how they report to the competent authorities

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**Declassified final report** 

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

#### I.1. ORIGIN OF THE INVESTIGATION

Questions have been repeatedly raised during (parliamentary) debates on whether, and to what extent, the Belgian intelligence services (are allowed to) monitor political representatives and the rules that they must comply with in doing so.<sup>1</sup>

The role of political representatives inherently involves a large number of contacts with diverse people, with different backgrounds and intentions, all of whom seek to influence decisions. However, it is not always obvious to these representatives who these individuals are (lobbyists, representatives of interest groups, etc.), nor what their true intentions are. It therefore cannot be ruled out that the representatives may be mentioned at any time in information gathered by intelligence services, unknowingly and without wishing to be (in the course of performing their duties / in the context of a threat / to protect our democratic institutions). They may be named by human sources or mentioned in messages from sister intelligence services, they may appear on lists created by technical means (e.g. lists of telephone numbers), they may be contacted by individuals being monitored by intelligence services, etc.

As early as 1997<sup>2</sup>, 1998<sup>3</sup>, 2008<sup>4</sup>, 2013<sup>5</sup> and 2021<sup>6</sup>, the Standing Committee I has conducted investigations into this issue or into closely related matters. These addressed all aspects of the intelligence cycle, from the governance of intelligence activities, through information gathering and the organisation of information to the analysis and dissemination of intelligence.

This investigation, like those mentioned above, is not being conducted in response to a particular incident but forms part of the decision by the Standing Committee I to review periodically how the intelligence services are handling information in which the identities of political representatives appear.

#### I.2. POWERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE I

Article 33 of the Review Act<sup>7</sup> states that the Standing Committee I initiates investigations of the effectiveness and coordination of the activities and the methods used by the intelligence services.

The purpose of the present review investigation is as defined in Article 1 of the aforementioned Act, namely, to ensure protection of the rights guaranteed to individuals by the Constitution and in legislation, irrespective of their status.

It is emphasised that the Standing Committee I's review assignment is focused on the functioning and operations of the intelligence services and does not take into consideration the activities of political representatives, nor the internal functioning of the Chamber of Representatives or, by extension, of other organs of the legislative branch.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 2019, 67-68.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 1998, 67 ff. (see Dutch version on the website)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 1999, 12 ff. (see Dutch version on the website)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, *Activity Report 2008*, 24 ff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 2013, 117 ff.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 2021, 32 ff. (see Dutch version on the website)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Act of 18 July 1991 governing the review of the police and intelligence services and of the coordination unit for threat assessment, Belgian Official Gazette 26 July 1991.

#### **I.3.** PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purpose of the investigation was to ascertain how often, during the reference period from 1 September 2020<sup>8</sup> to 31 December 2023, information on a political representative gathered by intelligence services was shared with their respective competent authorities.

The term 'political representatives' is defined by the Belgian State Security and the General Intelligence and Security Service (GISS) as including the following office holders:

#### I.3.1. For State Security

#### I.3.1.1. For the period from 1 September 2020 to 21 November 2023

Service note DNS 20-28 dated 11 June 2020 referred to the following as 'political representatives':

- ministers of:
  - the Federal government,
  - the Flemish government,
  - o the government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation,
  - the Walloon regional government,
  - the government of the German-speaking Community,
  - the Brussels government
  - o and Belgian commissioners in the European Commission;
- members of:
  - o the Federal Parliament (Chamber and Senate),
  - the community and regional parliaments:
    - the Flemish Parliament,
    - the French community,
    - the Walloon region,
    - the Brussels Capital region
    - the German-speaking community
  - and Belgian members of the European Parliament;
- with the exception of:
  - political party leaders who are not members of a parliament and do not hold executive office at the aforementioned levels,
  - members of the Royal Family,
  - o ministers of State,
  - local representatives (mayors, aldermen, municipal councillors, members of intermunicipal associations) if they do not hold office at the regional / community / federal / European level,
  - o governors
  - $\circ$  and former representatives who are not currently in office.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> The previous review investigation (ref. 2020.282) covered the period from 1 September 2019 (the beginning of parliamentary term 55 (2019-2024) to 31 August 2020.

#### I.3.1.2. From 22 November 2023

In the instruction 'Service Note on Political Representatives' (DNS 23-41), dated 22 November 2023, State Security modified this scope as follows and the following office holders were added to the service note:

- mayors;
- secretaries of state;
- political party leaders represented in the federal parliament;
- governors.

This service note was communicated to the Standing Committee I on 5 October 2023 by State Security prior to its entry into force.

After considering a number of proposed amendments, State Security subsequently stated on 22 November 2023 that:

- regarding the list of office holders that are or are not included under 'political representatives':
  - the addition of mayors and aldermen was limited to mayors only because adding aldermen would make the list particularly large and difficult to manage;
  - the comments of the Standing Committee I regarding a much wider extension (to include government commissioners, presidents of intermunicipal companies, etc.) were not taken up at this stage. State Security took the view that wider monitoring ought to be based on a political decision.
- regarding informing the leader of a political representative's party on identification of a(n) (un)conscious contribution to the creation of a threat:
  - State Security's idea of informing the political party leader about this was dropped following comments from the Standing Committee I on this matter. State Security will confine itself to informing the competent minister and the Prime Minister (as chairman of the National Security Council) and implementing directives issued by them.
  - where a criminal offence is involved, the Public Prosecutor's Office is obviously also informed, as stipulated by the regulations.<sup>9</sup>
- State Security will focus more on its role of making society in general and politicians in particular more conscious to security (including through security and awareness briefings).
  Particularly since the National Security Authority (ANS/NVO) has now also become part of the service since 1 January 2024.

#### I.3.2. For GISS

#### I.3.2.1. For the period from 1 September 2020 to 31 December 2021

Unlike State Security, GISS did not have an instruction (SOP<sup>10</sup>) on how it gathers information on political representatives, how it handles and analyses that information and how it reports to the competent authorities. However, the Standing Committee I had already issued a reminder in 2021<sup>11</sup> of an earlier 2013 recommendation to draft such an instruction.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> As stipulated in Article 29 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Standard Operating Procedure.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 2021, 204 ff. ("Standing Committee I strongly reiterates its earlier recommendation made in 2013 that GISS should establish unambiguous guidelines regarding the gathering, processing, consultation, storage and archiving of information on political representatives.") (free translation).

#### I.3.2.2. For the period from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023

Following dissemination of the report of the earlier review investigation by the Standing Committee I, in late 2021 GISS drafted the SOP recommended by the Standing Committee I,<sup>12</sup> which came into force on 1 January 2022.

This SOP described its purpose as follows: "Political representatives hold an executive political office at regional, community, federal or European level. Specifically, these include ministers, secretaries of state, holders of certain offices within the European institutions and members of parliament." (free translation).

More specifically:

- ministers of:
  - the Federal government,
  - the Flemish government,
  - o the French-speaking community government,
  - o the Walloon regional government,
  - the government of the German-speaking Community,
  - the Brussels government
- Belgian office holders in the European institutions:
  - o Commissioners of the European Commission (including the High Representative)
  - o The President of the European Commission
  - The President of the European Council
- Belgian members of the following parliaments:
  - o the Federal Parliament (Chamber and Senate),
  - the community and regional parliaments:
    - the Flemish Parliament,
      - the French community,
    - the Walloon region,
    - the Brussels Capital region
    - the German-speaking community
  - o and Belgian members of the European Parliament;
- with the exception of:
  - political party leaders who are not members of a parliament and do not hold executive office in the aforementioned institutions,
  - members of the Royal Family,
  - o ministers of State,
  - local representatives (mayors, aldermen, municipal councillors, members of intermunicipal associations) insofar as they are not members of a parliament and do not hold executive office in the above-mentioned institutions,
  - provincial governors
  - and former representatives (to the extent that the information handled does not relate to their activities during their term in office as a political representative)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> It was approved by the head of GISS on 28 September 2021 and by the Minister of Defence on 9 December 2021.

#### I.3.2.3. From 1 January 2024 to 22 January 2024

In early 2024, GISS informed the Standing Committee I that it was preparing an updated SOP, to take effect on 22 January 2024, in line with the service note from State Security dated 22 November 2023.

The two intelligence services have thus been using similar criteria and methodologies in this regard since 22 January 2024.

#### **1.3. PROGRESS OF THE INVESTIGATION AND METHODOLOGY USED**

The Standing Committee I made a commitment to the Monitoring Committee in 2020 that it would conduct an investigation twice in each legislative period on how the intelligence services process information on political representatives. This was to take place after the first and then after the fourth (or final) year of the legislative period.

Following a reminder of this commitment by the Monitoring Committee in late 2023, the Standing Committee I commenced the planned political representatives investigation in early January 2024, with notification to the President of the Chamber, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Defence on 23 February 2024.

Accordingly, for reasons of efficiency and effectiveness, the Standing Committee I undertook to depart from the periodical schedule as initially defined (twice per legislative period) and to opt for permanent monitoring, by analogy with the periodic monitoring of the risk of infiltration at the two intelligence services and the ways in which this is managed (this was initially launched as a review investigation with ref. TO 2019.274).

This investigation is therefore the latest in a series of periodic review investigations on how the intelligence services gather information on political representatives, how they handle that information and how they report on it to the competent authorities.

In terms of information gathering, the Standing Committee I initially made use of the information gathered during the review investigation *'into the actions taken by the intelligence services to detect the threat of interference by foreign powers through funding of political parties, political institutions or political figures in Belgium*" (ref: TO 2023.310) (free translation).

To develop a renewed model of participatory consultation with the intelligence services, the Standing Committee I organised a brainstorming session with State Security and GISS on 6 February 2024. The purpose of this was to test ideas on how to provide information and who should be informed if there are indications of possible involvement of political representatives who might (possibly) have knowingly or unknowingly become involved in the creation of threats. Views were exchanged and some innovative hypotheses were considered. (see II.4 Observations)

Subsequently, the Investigation Service of the Standing Committee I completed the process of gathering information from State Security and GISS and gave information sessions for the respective agencies.

On 6 March 2024, a classified draft report of this follow-up investigation was submitted to both intelligence services for consultation and amendment.

#### I.4. INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

The questions addressed by the investigation were as follows:

- How have the recommendations made by the Standing Committee I in a previous investigation been implemented?<sup>13</sup>
- What has been the situation within the intelligence services since that time (gathering, analysis and dissemination of intelligence)?
- Do the services respect the fundamental rights of the specific category of citizens who are political representatives:
  - Is the information gathering lawful and proportionate?
  - If there is an actual threat in which the representatives are either a perpetrator/suspect or a victim, are the necessary measures taken to eliminate this threat, and how is this done?

#### II. OBSERVATIONS ON THE INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

II.1. INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION 1: HOW HAVE THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE I IN A PREVIOUS INVESTIGATION BEEN IMPLEMENTED?

Recommendation 1: The Standing Committee I strongly reiterated its earlier recommendation made in 2013 that GISS should prepare unambiguous guidelines regarding the gathering, processing, consultation, storage and archiving of information on political representatives.<sup>14</sup>

As cited above, GISS followed this up in late 2021 by preparing a Standard Operation Procedure (SOP), which was updated in late 2023 after alignment with the service note from State Security dated 22 November 2023.

This recommendation was therefore met.

Recommendation 2: The Standing Committee I recommended that the intelligence services should pay the necessary attention in their reporting to the position of a person mentioned in a report in relation to the threat (as victim, actor, passer-by etc.)

#### State Security:

The Service Note dated 15 December 2020 did not make this distinction, which prompted the aforementioned recommendation.

Service Note 23-41 makes a distinction between:

- a. a political representative contributing to the creation of a threat via <u>a new 'lead'</u> and
- b. a political representative appearing in the context of <u>an ongoing investigation</u>.

In cases involving a <u>new lead</u>, the information (like other leads) is evaluated and it is then considered whether:

- the political representative has been mentioned purely by chance in the course of the service's activities or
- he or she is (knowingly or unknowingly) contributing to the creation of a threat;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, Activity Report 2013, 117-127 (II.4. Monitoring of political representatives by the intelligence services).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> STANDING COMMITTEE I, *Activity Report 2008*, 84-85 (VIII.1.2. Guidelines for handling data regarding certain categories of persons.

If, after this assessment or as part of an <u>ongoing investigation</u>, a political representative is found to be contributing to the creation of a threat, the following distinction will be made:

- whether or not it is clear that he or she is personally and knowingly contributing to the creation of a threat;
- whether he or she is unknowingly involved in a threat;
- or whether this is unclear and requires further investigation.

This recommendation was therefore met by State Security.

<u>GISS</u>:

The SOP from late 2021 comprehensively set out the principles that were applicable when political representatives appeared in investigations conducted or documents handled by GISS. A distinction was made here according to whether or not the representative was involved as an approached person, a victim or a (suspected) perpetrator in an activity generating a threat.

Consequently, GISS also gave a favourable response to the recommendation made by the Standing Committee I.

Recommendation 3: The Standing Committee I recommended that GISS provide it with a quarterly overview of all documents mentioning political representatives; if necessary, with a 'blank hit' if no such mentions were made.

In its SOP of late 2021, GISS undertook to provide the Standing Committee I with a quarterly overview of all representatives who are involved either as approached persons, victims or (suspected) perpetrators in an activity resulting in a threat. This overview lists all documents, reports and extracts from databases or recorded files in which the representative is mentioned by name.

On closer inspection it was found that the Standing Committee I has not received any quarterly overviews from GISS during the reference period mentioned. The latest overview is dated 5 February 2020.

This recommendation was therefore not met. The Standing Committee I wishes to point out that even if no memoranda or reports have been prepared on the involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat, that information should still be communicated.

#### II.2. INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION 2: WHAT HAS BEEN THE SITUATION WITHIN THE SERVICES SINCE 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 CONCERNING THE GATHERING, ANALYSIS AND DISSEMINATION OF INTELLIGENCE?

#### II.2.1. Gathering and analysis

GISS reported to the Standing Committee I on 27 February 2024 that during the reference period (1 September 2020 to 31 December 2023) only one Belgian political representative appeared in the context of an intelligence investigation. This concerned a threat of extremism, in which the representative (federal MP) was only tangentially involved. The Standing Committee I and the competent authorities were notified of this by letter on 11 May 2022.

State Security reported that 10 notifications on the same number of political representatives were sent to the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister during the reference period. These comprised eight reports in 2021, one in 2022 and one in 2023.

Reference	Person concerned	For the attention of	Threat	Reason	Status of person concerned	Remediation
NA/2023/xxx	Federal MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into Chinese influence attempts	Victim/unknowing cooperation	Briefing
NA/2022/xxx	Federal MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Interference and extremism	Investigation into Russian funding	Possible target	None
NA/2021/xxx	Brussels MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of the Moroccan intelligence service	Victim	None
NA/2021/xxx	Brussels MP Walloon MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of a member of the Moroccan intelligence service	Unclear	Briefing
NA/2021/xxx	Brussels MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of the Moroccan intelligence service	Victim	None
RV/2021/xxx	Member of the European Parliament Member of the European Parliament	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Moroccan acts of interference in the EP	Unclear	None
NA/2021/xxx	Senator Brussels MP Brussels MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of the Moroccan intelligence service	Possibility of manipulation	None
NA/2021/xxx	Senator	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of the Chinese embassy	No specific indications	Briefing
NA/2021/xxx	Federal MP	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Possibility of involvement in visa tampering	Interception of rumours within the Iranian community	Possibility of manipulation	Information shared with Immigration office, FPS Foreign Affairs
NA/2021/xxx	Senator	Prime Minister Min Justice cc SCI	Espionage and Interference	Investigation into activities of the Chinese embassy	Possible target of Chinese services	Briefing

#### II.2.2. Notification

#### II.2.2.1. For State Security

As stipulated in service note DNS 20-28 dated 11 June 2020, State Security provided the Standing Committee I with a quarterly overview of all documents in which political representatives are mentioned. The overview included references of all analysis documents, as well as all documents containing raw information (collection documents) and the memoranda sent to the Minister of Justice and the Prime Minister.

State Security departed from this principle after the fourth quarter of 2020 because this quarterly notification constituted duplication of the individual notification sheets concerning possible involvement of political representatives in the creation of a threat. The Standing Committee I is in fact systematically informed of the reports delivered to the competent minister and the Prime Minister (cf. duty to report).

#### II.2.2.2. For GISS

On closer inspection it was found that the Standing Committee I has not received any quarterly overviews from GISS during the reference period mentioned. The latest overview is dated 5 February 2020.

## **II.3.** <u>INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION 3</u>: DO THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES RESPECT THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE SPECIFIC CATEGORY OF CITIZENS WHO ARE POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES?

The Standing Committee I found no evidence of the intelligence services targeting political representatives for reasons outside the interests and threats listed in the legislation, nor of any treatment of such representatives that differs from the operational treatment of other professional groups.

The investigation did not reveal any information gathering, analysis or dissemination that had failed to respect the fundamental rights of political representatives.

#### II.3.1. Is the information lawful and proportionate?

The lawfulness of information gathering is based on the assignment(s) of the intelligence services as set out in Article 7 of the Intelligence Services Act.

As stated above, only 11 political representatives were mentioned in reports drafted by the intelligence services to their supervisory minister and 10 to the Prime Minister.

It should be noted that such mentions did not necessarily involve being knowingly involved in a potential threat, but could equally be based on a simple reference to the intended political representative (e.g. in the foreign press, presence at a reception for a foreign delegation etc.)

The present investigation does not show that political representatives appear disproportionately in intelligence service documents.

II.3.2. If there is an actual threat in which representatives are either a perpetrator/suspect or a victim, are the necessary measures taken to eliminate this threat, and how is this done?

If the involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat is unclear and requires further investigation, the Standing Committee I should be notified <u>in advance</u>.

If it turns out that a political representative may be <u>unknowingly</u> linked to the creation of a threat or while pending further investigation, both intelligence services give the representative in question an 'awareness briefing' to make him or her aware of the potential risk he or she faces through his or her ongoing contacts. The Standing Committee I is then informed accordingly.

If, on the other hand, it appears that the political representative is <u>knowingly</u> contributing to the creation of a threat, the two intelligence services inform their respective supervisory ministers and the Prime Minister (with a copy to the Standing Committee I). This has to be confirmed or highly probable intelligence.

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#### II.3.3. Limitations

However, the current regulation<sup>15</sup> is subject to a number of limitations, in terms of both information sharing and resources for taking appropriate action when a political representative is involved in the creation of a threat.

Many obstacles exist, including the following:

- the intelligence services give notification of any involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat to their respective supervisory ministers and the Prime Minister (each of whom has 'top secret' security clearance by virtue of their position), with a copy to the Standing Committee I.

Each of the addressees is made aware of this but cannot take any concrete action against the political representatives in question.

The addressees also cannot share this information with the legislative bodies and/or respective disciplinary authorities that cover the said political representatives, because their members do not have the required security clearance to receive this classified information. Moreover, classified information cannot be used when taking disciplinary action since the person concerned also cannot/is not allowed to know either what exactly he or she is being charged with (cf. the right to a defence).

- the provision for notification of the supervisory ministers (Justice and Defence) and the Prime Minister does not take into account the possible involvement of regional political representatives, nor the extension in scope to include mayors, governors, Belgian members of the European Parliament and party leaders (see the comments on disciplinary authorities above).

- The last of these only refers to party leaders with representation in the Federal Parliament. So what happens if a party leader with no representatives in the federal parliament comes to the attention of the intelligence services?

- If a political representative is both a mayor and a member of parliament and is involved in the creation of a threat in one of those two capacities, who should be notified of this?

- If the intelligence services were to inform a mayor's disciplinary authority, this would be a breach of the boundaries imposed by the Belgian State reform. In Flanders the Governor can act as a disciplinary authority for a mayor, but this is not the case in the other regions.

#### II.4. OBSERVATIONS

1. As previously stated, there is no indication of intelligence services targeting political representatives for reasons other than the interests and threats set out in the legislation.

There is also no evidence of intelligence gathering, analysis and dissemination failing to respect the fundamental rights of political representatives, nor of such representatives being treated differently (i.e. less favourably) than other professional groups in the operational activities of the intelligence services. Rather, the opposite is true.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Service note from State Security and SOP from GISS.

This is because if a political representative is found to be unknowingly involved in the creation of a threat, he or she is notified of this in person by the intelligence services (awareness briefings). The purpose of this personal notification is for education and risk avoidance and it is justified by the public office that has been democratically conferred on them. This is a privileged contact, anticipating a risk, something that is not provided for the average citizen. Thus, the initial concern underlying the six review investigations conducted by the Standing Committee I, namely that intelligence services were actively pursuing political representatives, is unjustified.

2. As regards notifications of a possible involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat, both the intelligence services and the Standing Committee I have encountered a number of limitations.

In the current modus operandi, the two intelligence services inform their respective supervisory ministers (Justice and Defence) and the Prime Minister, with a copy to the Standing Committee I. The question arises as to what steps they can take against a member of the legislative branch without the knowledge of the president(s) of the parliamentary assembly (assemblies). At present they find themselves in an impasse.

After consultation with the intelligence services, a number of options may be put forward in this regard, provided a corresponding political consensus can be found:

#### a. Granting of security clearance to the presidents of the federal and regional parliaments

Just as ministers have security clearance by virtue of their office, the President of the Chamber of Representatives, as the first citizen of the country, would have a security clearance similar to that of the presidents of the Senate and the regional parliaments.

This would allow them to be aware of the information identified and disclosed by the intelligence services, to be in full knowledge of the situation and to take appropriate action where necessary.

This is not a perfect solution, however, because the question then arises as to what action the respective presidents can take with this information, who they can share this classified information with and the extent of their authority in this regard.

Another question that arises concerns what should happen if the president(s) of this assembly (these assemblies) are themselves the person involved in the creation of a threat.

# b. Another option is for the supervisory minister and/or the Prime Minister who receives the communication under the current regulations, to notify the relevant legislative authority (the President of the Chamber etc.)

The latter would then have to contact the intelligence services to provide additional information. In this case, it would be up to the intelligence services to assess what declassified information is able to be provided.

Like the previous option, this one also has limitations for the same reasons.

c. A third option is for the Standing Committee I, in its capacity as data protection authority, to notify the respective president(s) of the assembly (assemblies) in a declassified manner of the involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat.

Once again, this raises the question of how these presidents should then handle that information and what measures can be taken.

**d.** A further option would be to install a security officer or a security office within each assembly which, based on its security clearance (secret) through the intelligence services, would become aware of classified information on the involvement of a political representative in the creation of a possible threat and would then be able to conduct further investigations and report back to the president(s) of the respective legislative chamber(s).

It would be interesting to examine through benchmarking how Belgium's neighbouring countries deal with such issues and what intervention is required or possible when democratic institutions are found to be at risk due to the involvement of a political representative in the creation of a threat.

#### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the Standing Committee I's decision to maintain continuous monitoring of the subject of political representatives, it is necessary for the services to inform the Standing Committee I in a systematic way (at least twice a year) of the involvement of representatives in the creation of a threat, even when no information is available.

The Standing Committee I believes it is advisable to have a parliamentary debate on which public representatives should be included in reporting by the intelligence services.

Similarly, a broader discussion will be required that goes beyond the federal level alone, to address the clearance that is needed to be informed of such events and take appropriate measures.