Radicalisation Awareness Network

RAN

POL

Working group for law enforcement officials

**PROPOSED POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE
HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE**

FROM THE RAN POL WORKING GROUP *(DECEMBER 2012)*

"The views expressed in this document are purely those of the RAN working group and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the European Commission"

1. Introduction

Mission of the working group

RAN POL is the working group for police and other law enforcement officials in the field of preventing violent extremism. A particular focus is that of community policing.

The *Radicalisation Awareness Network for police and law enforcement officials* (RAN POL) has the aim to pool experiences, knowledge and good practices to enhance awareness of and capability to counter radicalisation. With a focus on first line police officers as the main target group of RAN POL it will seek to:

- To increase awareness of the issue of violent radicalisation amongst first line police officers.

- To facilitate networking of practitioners involved in countering violent radicalisation

- To promote learning and cooperation related to the prevention of violent radicalisation   through conferences, seminars, round tables, workshops & study visits

- To formulate recommendations to policy makers.

Vision on the issue

Prevention is the only long-term solution and should focus on being aware of and supporting vulnerable individuals who might be exploited by recruiters to violent extremism or are susceptible to their narrative. This preventive work must be conducted at all levels but particularly so on a local level in towns, neighborhoods and schools. The police or law enforcement agencies cannot undertake this task alone and must connect with other professionals, communities and key individuals. With this vision in mind, and to further the mission aims, the goal of RAN POL is to establish an umbrella network of practitioners involved in countering radicalisation to violent extremism & Terrorism.

2. Analysis of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, from the perspective of the WG

There are many pathways to radicalisation. The academic world has already come up with numerous theories, which try to explain the process of radicalisation. Victoroff, in 2005, came to the conclusion that not one theory can formulate an all-embracing answer to the question – "what causes are at the origin of radicalisation". But almost all academics on this subject have arrived at the same conclusion that the process of radicalisation consists of different stages.

A different set of factors can play a role, it's a "push-pull" phenomenon, in which internal and external drivers come together. Throughout the process however there are opportunities, if the process is identified, for an intervention to prevent radicalisation being achieved. Such an intervention may take many forms but it is a matter of fact that many individuals are undergoing the radicalisation process and without action at an early stage further terrorist atrocities will occur.

3. Best and worst practices, related to the focus of the WG

Community policing has become _the_ recognised approach for preventing crime in general. Now it is increasingly becoming recognised as a critical method of preventing radicalisation.

In the EU Strategy for combating radicalisation and recruitment (2005) community policing is seen as a vital tool for the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of potential violent extremists. Recent research showed that local police, working with local communities have a key role to play in detecting and addressing local factors that may contribute to violent extremism.

The problem is that for the moment there is no specific training/projects that universally addresses one of the most important but, in counter-terrorism context at least, perhaps least visible group: first line police officers. On a daily basis and in the normal course of their duty, they might well be the first to be confronted with signs and signals of radicalisation towards violence. It is essential that these first line police officers can interpret what they see and hear and put this in some kind of context.

Several projects all over the EU have been developed in this field:

- Channel project (UK)
- Operation Nicole (UK)
- Conviction (UK)
- Coppra (BE)
- Dialogue with minority representatives and Imams (DK)
- Awareness training on radicalisation and terrorism for police officers (NL)

Much reference is made to 'Best Practices' however without a process of evaluation can these formally be identified as such. Additionally the RAN has been successful in the identification of practitioners in the field of counter-radicalisation. Each of these practitioners has access to experience or resources that can be shared. A more formal process of developing bespoke packages of international peer support at the request of member states is possible where a field team can be identified to address specific issues and utilised to advise on the ground the member state requesting assistance.

Policy Recommendations:

- To develop an evaluation tool for "best practices"

- Develop mechanisms for the provision of international peer support to address specific needs of a member state.

4. Policy recommendations, from the perspective of the WG

- To promote the introduction of Awareness training (Coppra style) for non-police front line practitioners (eg prisons, social services, teachers …)

- To promote local inter-agency partnership collaboration to prevent radicalisation from occurring and to identify cases where the process is underway, taking action to stop it.

- Further research the phenomenon of Lone Actors and identify the best mechanisms to address this issue.

- To develop an evaluation tool for "best practices" (reference to "Schengen evaluations" based upon some clear and measurable indicators)

- Develop mechanisms for the provision of international peer support to address specific needs of a member state.

- Encourage Internet Service Providers to remove and prohibit illegal extremist material and to collaborate with police and security agencies in doing so.

- Utilise consistent counter-messaging across the EU to discredit the radicaliser's rhetoric.

- Encourage educationalists to introduce better programs of learning to promote 'critical thinking' by young people.

- To create a new "EU team" that can be in charge for the follow up of the EU police recommendations. For the moment these recommendations are unenforceable what means that some countries implement them and others not.

- A more "integrated approach", to create tools that can be used by people from education, police and health. The only way to defeat violent radicalisation is using an "integrated, multiple agency" approach

5. The role of local actors in preventing violent extremism, from the perspective of the WG

The role of local actors in preventing violent extremism is one of the three themes at the HLC. The analysis of and policy recommendations for preventing violent extremism from the perspective of the WG are much appreciated.

The Vision of RAN POL is quite specific with regards to this issue:

"This preventive work must be conducted at all levels but particularly so on a local level in towns, neighborhoods and schools. The police or law enforcement agencies cannot undertake this task alone and must connect with other professionals, communities and key individuals."

Essentially the role of local actors is crucial to efforts in preventing radicalization. Individuals or groups may well, during the process of radicalization, be operating in a pre-criminal space and therefore not come to the attention of or interact with the police or security services. They must however interact with other members of society and other agencies. Analysis of historical cases of convicted individuals who have gone through the process of radicalization clearly depicts where missed opportunities existed to intervene in and stop the radicalization from continuing. Health and mental health services, schools, colleges, youth clubs, social services, employment agencies, community groups and religious leaders are a few of many examples of agencies or actors that interact with people daily. These are all in a position to recognize changes in behavior or identify other signs of the radicalization process. Such local actors may also be able to, at a very early stage, identify levels of vulnerability in an individual that will make them susceptible to radicalization.

To empower local actors to contribute in countering radicalization however requires sufficient awareness raising with professionals to better understand the radicalization process, indicators and the vulnerability factors that are invariably always present within an individual prior to the start of the process. Local professionals and communities, in addition to better understanding, and acceptance that the phenomenon exists, must also gain sufficient confidence in the police or security services, and how they will address the issue, that they will willingly communicate their concerns.

A particularly relevant issue, and one of much debate across Europe, is that of Lone Actors. By their very nature these individuals are more isolated than others, rarely on the intelligence radar and the best possible opportunity to identify those Lone Actors undergoing the process of radicalization is through those closest to them whether families, communities or local professionals.

Policy Recommendations:

- To promote the introduction of Awareness training (Coppra style) for non-police front line practitioners (eg prisons, social services, teachers …)

- To promote local inter-agency partnership collaboration to prevent radicalisation from occurring and to identify cases where the process is underway, taking action to stop it.

- Further research the phenomenon of "Lone Actors" and identify the best mechanisms to address this issue.

6. <u>The role of diasporas in the process of violent radicalisation, from the perspective of the WG</u>

The role of diasporas and overseas communities in the process of violent radicalisation and extremism, and their engagement in its prevention, is one of the three themes at the HLC. The analysis of and policy recommendations for diasporas from the perspective of the WG are much appreciated.

The process of radicalisation is often fuelled by deep rooted grievances or conflict often associated with foreign policy and international affairs. The rhetoric utilised by those seeking to radicalise uses these grievances as a foundation stone for their arguments. Diasporas, regardless of their location, retain these issues through their very own community identity and history, existing links back to their originating homeland and in many cases the situation is exasperated through isolation from their current mainstream society. It is vital therefore to engage Diaspora communities to address some of these grievances, promote integration into society and therefore disarm the attempts of the radicalisers. This engagement is required not just at local level but from government at a national and strategic level.

Where radicalisation is possible the support of communities is required to identify and prevent its occurrence. Engagement is necessary to identify appropriate credible voices from within Diaspora communities to facilitate communication but more importantly to help mainstream counter-radicalisation efforts from within the community itself. Diaspora communities must have sufficient confidence in the establishment to collaborate and that confidence will only come through the building of trust by active engagement.

7. The role of communication on the Internet and elsewhere, from the perspective of the WG

Communication on violent radicalisation and extremism, and counter-messaging via Internet, is one of the three themes at the HLC. The analysis of and policy recommendations for communication on the Internet and elsewhere from the perspective of the WG are much appreciated.

It has long been established that the internet can play a critical role in the radicalisation process of individuals. It should be considered however that this is not just through deliberate efforts to disseminate the radicaliser's message through rhetoric or propaganda but also through general easy access to widely available material and media reporting on world-wide events. Such reporting brings graphic images from a long way away and detailed information, previously unavailable, into the home in a very tangible fashion. There are many proven examples of terrorists who have utilised the internet both to access radicaliser's videos and speeches as well as to obtain technical information on attack planning and bomb making. Such cases would include Roshanara Choudhary, David Copeland, Andrew Ibrahim and Anders Breivik. In addition to the internet we need to also encompass all other forms of social media and messaging widely utilised in today's modern society.

In theory the radicaliser's messages could be stopped but free and easy access to global media reporting and the wealth of information on-line will never, and should not stop for many reasons.

There are many opportunities however to address the risks posed by the internet. There are a number of examples across EU member states of the removal of extremist's sites by police or security services. The most effective way for this to be done however is through the cooperation and self-policing by Internet service providers. Rather than viewing the internet as a negative radicalisation tool it should be utilised for positive messaging as a counter-measure. There is an IT generation gap where children today have a natural affiliation and understanding of the internet, and social media, whilst their guardians do not. Better awareness and intervention is needed from parents. Finally the most effective and longer-term solution is to promote, through schools, critical thinking from young people who need to appreciate both positive and negative aspects of the internet and challenge what they see before accepting it.

Policy recommendations:

- Encourage Internet Service Providers to remove and prohibit illegal extremist material and to collaborate with police and security agencies in doing so.

- Utilise consistent counter-messaging across the EU to discredit the radicaliser's rhetoric.

- Encourage educationalists to introduce better programs of learning to promote 'critical thinking' by young people.