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CONCLUSION PAPER
RAN PRISONS Meeting
04-05 November 2021, Digital Meeting

How to effectively train prison staff and partners for P/CVE

Key outcomes

Training prison staff and their partners (such as probation officers, health and social workers, law enforcement, CSOs, local administration, and religious counsellors) on preventing and countering violent extremism is essential. Not just to be equipped to work with those inmates already radicalised (specifically VETOs and FTFs), but also to be able to detect early signs of radicalisation in vulnerable inmates and be able to respond in a preventive way. For this reason, the RAN PRISONS Working Group meeting addressed the key skills and knowledge required for prison staff and their partners to be well equipped for successfully engaging in P/CVE work in prisons. The digital meeting gathered 22 practitioners working in or with prisons who have either designed, delivered or participated in P/CVE training over the past three years. The target audience of this paper includes this same group, as well as administrators, researchers, and policymakers who want to create more effective P/CVE trainings for the prison environment. Several of the most important outcomes of the meeting to be considered are listed below.

- Every prison is different. Thus, **P/CVE training for prison staff and partners needs to be customised** to the specific context the recipients are working in. Not just with regards to the given national P/CVE context, but also considering regional differences and even specificities of individual prisons and characteristics of inmates.

- P/CVE training for the prison environment **cannot easily be differentiated** along the lines of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention but should always cover both the relevant personal skills and knowledge of both the phenomenon and the institutional structures set up to deal with P/CVE.

- **General P/CVE awareness training** should be provided to all staff in prisons so that everyone involved *speaks the same language.* More specialised P/CVE trainings for different professions within the prison environment should build on this.

- **P/CVE training should not be considered a one-time event.** A pre-assessment, as well as the chance for the recipients to reflect on the training later, should be considered from the outset (including supervision). This also includes the consideration that oftentimes when funding from institutions ends, training ends. This means that investing in long-term processes should therefore be considered.

- The **potential radicalisation of staff members who are dealing with VETOs** is a topic that should not be neglected and considered in the context of designing P/CVE training.

This paper outlines the highlights of the meeting and presents inspiring practices in the EU and beyond, followed by recommendations for what to consider when designing P/CVE trainings for prisons, both in terms of content and delivery.

Highlights of the discussion

Before the P/CVE training

Important observations were made during the meeting with regards to the conditions existing in each prison *before* any P/CVE training is conducted (unless it is already included in initial training). Two factors specifically influence the starting conditions on which P/CVE training builds. Firstly, any prison is its own microcosm of existing conditions, structures and processes. Secondly, the prison environment is determined to a large extent also by the staff working there. For this reason, the initial selection procedure during recruitment of prison staff plays an important role in setting the prison up for successfully dealing with all kinds of challenges, including P/CVE. Failing to account for the present situation in the specific prison in which P/CVE training is to be conducted may render the training useless if this means that specific factors and needs are not addressed.

Prioritising P/CVE training

In the prison context, P/CVE is not the only challenge staff and their partners are faced with. Other challenges include the recognition of mental health problems and suicide prevention as well as escape risk management. However, these challenges may overlap so that P/CVE training can be tied in with or build on existing knowledge and structures.

An interconnected set of questions: train what, whom and how?

When designing effective P/CVE training for the prison context, it is helpful to think about covering three distinct areas in terms of content, namely skills, knowledge and structures. But to also consider *how* the training is conducted in terms of techniques, *whom* it will address (only one or multiple professional profiles?) and *who* will be delivering the training. During the meeting, practitioners highlighted a multitude of specific content and techniques to be included.

Train what?

*(Inter)personal **skills**:*

- Basic communication

- Self-reflection

- Anti-bias training & diversity awareness

- Intervention strategies, systemic case understanding

- Personal security

*Specific **knowledge** on:*

- Relevant terms and phenomena

European Commission

- The radicalisation process (including being able to differentiate between radicalisation, protest, religion, push-pull factors, etc.)

- Psychological aspects of radicalisation

- Conspiracy theories

- Religion, geopolitics, gender stereotypes

Structures and *processes*:

- Contact points and referral procedures

- Risk assessment

- Reporting (write relevant reports to inform specialised units), protocols and procedures

- Multi-agency cooperation (for prison management)

Train whom?

- When deciding who to train, one major distinction to be made relates to the extent that participants are engaging with P/CVE in their daily work. Should training include general prison staff members who might not actually be dealing with VETOs or only staff directly working with VETOs? Should training include prison management staff supervising all inmates (including VETOs)? While an introductory training might be suitable for all prison staff, the senior-ranking staff members who are in more direct contact with VETOs may require additional and more specialised training.

- Will the training address only one profession or multiple profiles (including prison and probation officers, health and social workers, law enforcement, CSOs, local administration, and religious counsellors)? A 2-step training programme could be formulated as follows. First, train each profession separately. Second, train mixed groups of practitioners who are working together.

Train how? (and who trains?)

- There are often opportunities to benefit from working with actors from outside the prison, such as NGOs. They might bring valuable and highly specialised expertise to training settings, deliver specialised trainings, or provide guest speakers.

- Prisons can be characterised as places of mistrust: between prisoners and staff members, but also between prison staff and management and external training providers. A better coordination between a security approach and other approaches (such as civil society led efforts) is required.

- When developing and delivering training, role-awareness is key. Understanding roles, responsibilities and competences of the trainees helps creating learner-centred training that supports and meets practitioners where they are.

- When there are information gaps in the assessment of VETOs, there might be biases to assess inmates as more dangerous than they are, to avoid the risk of being held accountable at a later stage. In this context, gender can also lead to misjudgements because women might be perceived as less dangerous because of gender stereotypes.

- Radicalisation is generally difficult to assess. There is a lot of pressure on the practitioners involved. Besides the use of risk-assessment tools, professional judgement and collegial exchange is required.

- When designing training, the Covid-19 pandemic has led practitioners involved in the design of P/CVE trainings to recognise that e-learning and classroom training can be mixed and complement each other in smart ways.

- Helpful elements in P/CVE trainings that practitioners highlighted were role play (for example to raise awareness in the context of trust-building between professions) and case studies.

No lack of trainings, but a lack of evidence on long-term effectiveness

There is not a lack of existing P/CVE trainings for the prison context. However, there is a lack when it comes to understanding which trainings are effective mid- and long-term. Political support for training (and thus funding) is volatile, and oftentimes not sustainable and structural but related to post-incident measures.

- P/CVE is not considered a priority over training to improve the recognition of mental health problems and suicide prevention or escape risks. However, similarities to P/CVE training can be found in curricula addressing these other issues.

- In addition to training design and delivery, structural issues influence the effectiveness of training, including lack of funding for monitoring and evaluation and the chronic understaffing of prisons.

Recommendations

Based on their experiences, practitioners formulated the following recommendations.

- Dealing with challenges in prisons is not new. There might be opportunities to work with what already exists, build on previous trainings on related issues and make the training more holistic and sustainable.

- Staff dealing with the assessment and rehabilitation of VETOs daily should have regular access to in- depth expert training, collegial support and supervision.

- Keep investing in developing and delivering P/CVE training programmes that help identify radicalised individuals, but also teach prevention and the communicative and administrative competences required to work on P/CVE in multi-agency settings.

- To improve the quality of trainings, training design should be informed by research and adapted to suit respective national, regional and even local needs.

- Evaluations and long-term impact assessments are needed, including for trainings.

- Gather an updated collection of practical training exercises from across the EU, to be used by different national entities.

- It is important that all prison staff and their partners receive training on cultural diversity, which can improve the awareness of professionals regarding the different perceptions and experiences of the multi-faceted prison population.

- Bringing together practitioners with different professional profiles will highlight the benefits of engaging in P/CVE with practitioners who bring to the table different expertise and skills. Training in a mixed group helps to build networks and trust.

- Long-term and sustainable political support and commitment is required to provide holistic training on radicalisation for those dealing with VETOs.

Relevant practices

1. **Legato Prevention – Competence Centre for religiously justified radicalisation in the judicial sector** **(Germany)** is a project offering various types of P/CVE trainings for the judicial sector. Target groups include general law enforcement services, prison staff and probation officers. Each group may receive specialised and/or intensive training.

2. **R2Pris** **(Belgium)** is a project co-financed by the ERASMUS+ programme. It offers a multi-level radicalisation prevention certification and RRAP, a Radicalisation Risk-Assessment in Prisons toolset as well as online training solutions.

3. **R4JUST** **(Portugal)** is a radicalisation prevention competences development programme for justice professionals.

4. The **INTEGRA project** **(France)** focuses on the prevention of radicalisation within probation settings.

Follow up

An overview paper with an inventory of existing training programmes, including case studies and evaluations would be a helpful product. This could be drafted in collaboration with EPTA / Europris.

One suggestion by practitioners was to investigate the possibility of developing a curriculum for a basic but customisable Pan-European P/CVE training, as well as to gather effective training materials that could be used by colleagues in other countries.

Further reading

Brie, G. & Rambourg, C. (2020). Dire et prédire la radicalisation. Le cas de la prison. Dossiers thématiques. Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche Appliquée au champ Pénitentiaire (CIRAP) See: https://www.enap.justice.fr/sites/default/files/cirap_dossier_thematique_radicalisation_2020.pdf (available in French)

RAN Specialised Paper (2021). Risk Assessment in Prison.

RAN Prisons Conclusion Paper (2020). Religious counselling, training and interfaith dialogue in prison.

RAN/Europris Collection of Staff Trainings on Radicalisation 2017 – 2019 https://www.europris.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Staff-training-collection-overview.pdf

RAN Ex Post Paper (2019). Building Bridges. RAN P&P and RAN EXIT Multi-Agency Meeting on Meeting adjacent fields: rehabilitation, resocialisation and exit activities.

RAN Ex Post Paper (2018). Dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders: Formalising cooperation among police, prison, probation and prosecution.

RAN Ex Post Paper (2016). Multi-agency cooperation around radicalised offenders.