Radicalisation Awareness Network
RAN Practitioners

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POL

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CONCLUSION PAPER

RAN POL Working Group meeting ***Mainstreaming PVE in crime prevention?***
6 and 7 June 2024, Madrid, Spain

Mainstreaming the prevention of violent extremism (PVE) in crime prevention?

Key outcomes

Some say that violent extremism and terrorism are illegal acts and averting them is part of crime prevention. In reality, there are often differences in the way their prevention is organised. What are the advantages and disadvantages of merging crime prevention (CP) and the prevention and countering of radicalisation leading to violent extremism and terrorism? How, and under which conditions, would CP be a wise choice? On 6 and 7 June 2024, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Police and Law Enforcement Working Group (RAN POL) organised a meeting for a group of (police) experts, mostly with experience in the field of P/CVE and CP. Here they discussed if, or to what extent, the domains of "regular" crime prevention and PVE can be brought together. On the first day of this meeting, participants were asked to reflect on the benefits as well as the challenges that arise from combining these two fields. On the second day, the experts got together in smaller groups to draft possible strategies for mainstreaming or integrating PVE in (generic) crime prevention. Some of the key outcomes are listed below.

- Crime prevention was already established when P/CVE was starting. In that sense P/CVE was building on the legacy of CP. In the last fifteen years, after the terror attacks in Europe, resources and energy were invested in developing, innovating and implementing P/CVE, however generic crime prevention could be the best of both worlds.
- There are clear benefits from mainstreaming or merging CP and P/CVE, but only if it is done in a way that mitigates the disadvantages. It requires strategies for building from the bottom up, while honouring the difference between the phenomena.
- Generic crime prevention takes place at the three level of the prevention pyramid (Primary, secondary and tertiary). The activities at each level need a collaboration between multiple actors, of which the police are only one. The police play a role at each level but make the biggest impact in secondary prevention.
- The participants sketched in different team drafts scenarios for generic crime prevention, and the role and contribution of police.

Highlights of the discussion

On the first day, participants in small groups shared the current state of play on the "mainstreaming of PVE in CP", in their national and/or local context, and what can be learnt from this. Here we found there are many differences between how much (some parts of) CP and PVE have already been integrated in different Member States.

An interesting discussion on the history and legacy of CP and PVE took place. CP has been around for many decades, with international conferences on modern crime prevention taking place since the late eighties. RAN often presents the example of the Danish SSP model, [1] (schools, social services and police), with its mandatory information sharing legislation, that started half a century ago in Copenhagen (1975).

- Even though CP has been around much longer, after the European terror attacks the tough fight on terrorism was accompanied by the soft measures of PVE and CVE. The term PVE was first used in the UK in 2008.
- P/CVE resulted in many structures, procedures and interventions for police. Awareness raising, training of officers, and multi-agency P/CVE schedules were introduced in many European Member States. For instance, the introduction of the Belgium multi-agency Local Integrated Security Cells was an innovation that was initiated by PVE goals, and not for crime. It could be interesting to expand some of these police PVE approaches into a broader agenda.

The participants discussed the importance of a shared goal and an inclusive common language, multi-agency strategy.

- It will not work if the multi-agency strategy is perceived as police-owned and security driven.
- Framing something positively might work better for creating buy-in. The example was given that "preventing diseases" is about "achieving a healthy lifestyle".

Such an approach is in line with the "European definition of crime prevention", used by the European Union Crime Prevention Network EUCPN: [2]

> "Ethically acceptable and evidence-based activities aimed at reducing the risk of crime occurring and its harmful consequences with **the ultimate goal of working towards the improvement of the quality of life and safety of individuals, groups and communities**."

For P/CVE the element of "safeguarding democracy and open society" could be added.

Different roles for the police:

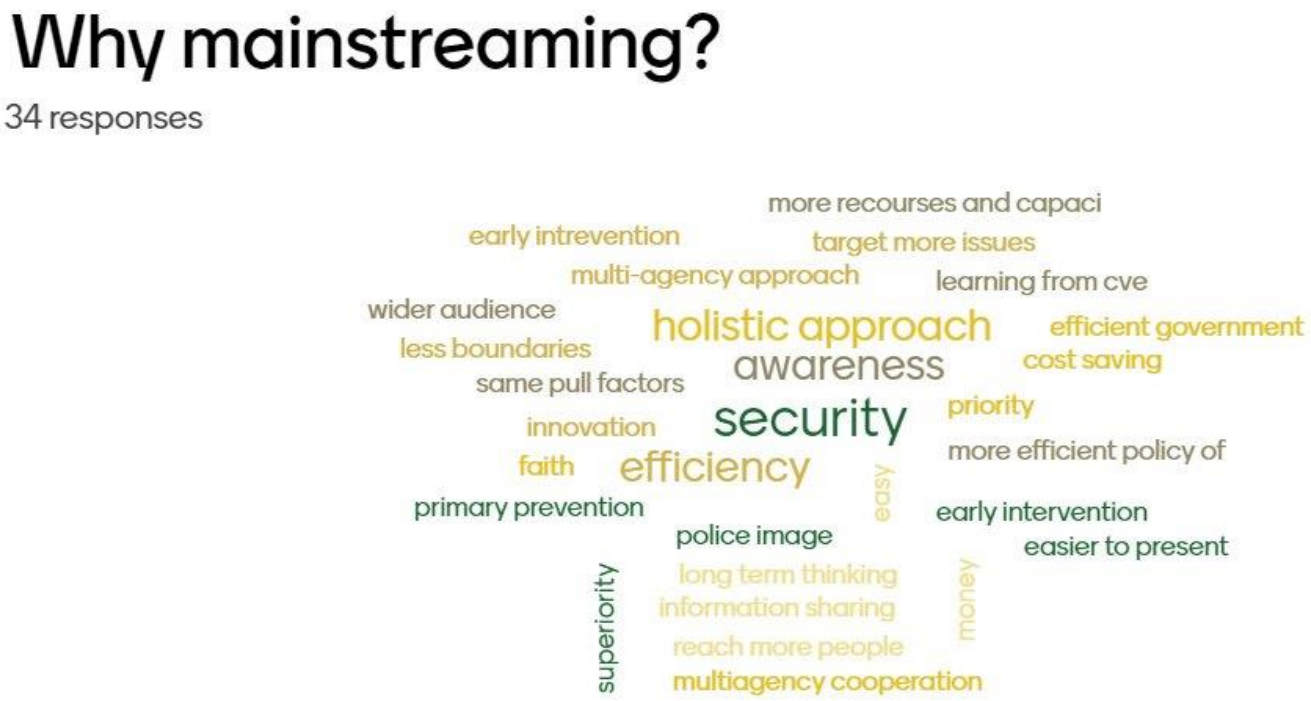
- Raise awareness
- Mobilise other stakeholders
- Act as a role model
- Build coalitions
- Organise dealing with signals

[1] Pederson, J., Stothard, B. "The Danish SSP model – prevention through support and co-operation", *Drugs and Alcohol Today,* ResearchGate, 2015
[2] Crime prevention - a European definition | EUCPN

The participants discussed the main advantages of mainstreaming PVE in CP and the main challenges in doing so. Here are a few of the outcomes of this discussion:

Advantages of mainstreaming:

- Different methods and frameworks already exist in both domains and sharing those can lead to a synergy between them.
- You can target more issues, through the same base structure.
- There could be a more integrated manner for police to communicate and present itself to society.
- It could lower the threshold for individuals to approach the police with concerns.
- Sharing knowledge, experiences and making use of existing methods/ frameworks can be more (cost) effective and efficient.



*Screenshot of a Mentimeter poll where participants were asked about the benefits of mainstreaming.

Challenges of mainstreaming:

- The "ideological" dimension in PVE poses a challenge, as not all CP efforts are suitable to use in this field (and vice versa).
- There could be a loss of specialisation and knowledge that has been built up over the years.

- Coordination and resources will be costly combining and bringing together the different domains.
- There can be a greater risk of stigmatisation by blending both fields.
- The risk of "securitisation" – where interventions are not part of the solution, but "create problems".

*Screenshot of a Mentimeter poll where participants were asked about the challenges of mainstreaming.

On the second day, participants were asked to work in groups to create and come up with a strategy for combining both PVE and CP in one common framework, building on the insights from the first day. They came up with the following ideas:

Approaches for mainstreaming PVE in CP

All participants agreed with mapping out the situation through analysis and monitoring crime and the "atmosphere" of a given society (from a multi-agency/multidisciplinary perspective). This could be done by engaging in and strengthening current networks. The focus here is on the network, where people should be selected based on their commitment and willingness to represent this network/organisation openly. In this network, actors from different backgrounds and expertise, would come together to discuss (changes in) the environment.

1. **Bottom-up networking strategy**

The first strategy is a bottom-up approach starting at the local level, where action plans are suited to/ and for different phenomena. It begins with a scan of the area, where different factors including but not limited to population as well as crime types and rates are collected. Also monitoring the effects of other factors, (e.g. geopolitical events leading to tensions), are used to decide which types of measures should be set in place. Relevant stakeholders are identified based on the different phenomena. The next step is to engage with the different stakeholders to work on knowledge sharing and mutual trust building. Focus must

be on the support of "first-line" practitioners . Merging the two domains will start at this level, from where it will spill over to the other levels.

Preconditions:

1. There is a need for funding in order to build capacity.

2. There must be a mandate for it.

3. Communication and accountability are crucial.

4. There should be a focus on the online dimension as well.

5. Be proactive (not reactive), engage with partners/communities in "peacetime".

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2. Think big, by starting small

Another approach focusses on the "strategic" level. From there the question should be asked "what do we want to achieve?". Here the focus should be narrower than "a safer and more secure community". For example, "preventing violence from erupting in this community" is more specific. In this approach, the group used the (prevention) pyramid, but choose to turn it upside-down. In this way "primary prevention" is at the top, making it the main focus of the strategy.

1. Why?

This approach aims to have greater efficiency and better outcomes, enhance capacity building, strengthen knowledge, maintain better accountability, and build trust between organisations (and with society).

2. What?

First, there is a need to identify "what is already out there", in terms of knowledge, interventions, methods, etc. (with scientific proof). Then, select the relevant partners and get them on board. From here identify possible issues (e.g. in legislation).

3. How?

Through a balanced approach, both bottom-up and top-down. It should be a network focused strategy. Also, be aware to build on existing knowledge and expertise.

4. Who?

Stakeholders in the network are the main focus. Efforts must be taken to support and mobilise them, making use of "soft-skills" such as inspiration, motivation and trust.

Further reading

- RAN Issue paper (2020). Lessons from crime prevention in preventing violent extremism by police.
- RAN POL Conclusion paper (2018). Lessons from crime prevention.
- Bjørgo, T. (2015). Counter-terrorism as crime prevention: a holistic approach. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*.