

EX-POST PAPER

Lessons from crime prevention

RAN POL engages at the annual international German Congress on Crime Prevention, Dresden (DE)

Those tasked with innovating and evaluating interventions to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism (PCVE) can learn by taking stock of what is working in adjacent fields. The most relevant adjacent field for police in PCVE comes from decades of well-researched and evaluated crime prevention. Therefore, RAN POL visited the German Congress on Crime Prevention (GCOCP, or DPT in German) with a group of police experts from 20 countries.

With these and other international experts, RAN POL discussed some of the *'Golden rules of crime prevention'*. These rules were mostly in line with RAN DNA. The use of the Prevention Pyramid, however, was a novum for RAN POL.

From the congress programme, RAN POL learned that the evaluation of PCVE practices is underdeveloped compared to those related to crime prevention. While measuring the effects and impact is a challenge, evaluating the integrity of the project design could provide valuable insight. RAN POL also took the opportunity to present the working group to this crime prevention audience. Potential themes for 2019 include right-wing extremism, polarisation and convicted terrorists to be released from prison.

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RAN POL engages at the annual international German Congress on Crime Prevention, Dresden

On 12 and 13 June, some 2,000 experts, practitioners and researchers on crime prevention gathered in Dresden for the annual German Congress on Crime Prevention. This year's theme was '*Violence and radicalisation, current challenges for prevention*'. More than 120 lectures packed the programme of this two-day international conference. Experts from Europe, Jordan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Canada and the United States shared experiences and best practices, offering a unique opportunity for RAN POL to take stock of crime prevention lessons learned in other countries.

RAN POL organised three meetings in Dresden: a panel with international experts; a discussion at the end of the first day and a lecture presenting RAN POL and its most important lessons, which culminated with a discussion on future challenges.

The aim of this ex-post paper is to capture and share the lessons learned and insights from the congress for future strategy development, discussions and publications of RAN POL. More specifically, this paper will serve as a starting point for RAN POL's issue paper on crime prevention lessons for police working in PCVE.

Holistic model of crime prevention for counter-terrorism

In preparation for RAN POL's meeting in Germany, the RAN Centre of Excellence drafted a preparation paper that referred to Tore Bjørgo's paper '*Counter terrorism as crime prevention*'¹. Bjørgo argues that preventing and countering violent extremism in fact requires the use of tools that police developed for crime prevention. There are several preventive mechanisms that can be applied to all forms of crime, including crime related to terrorism and radicalisation. Bjørgo sees three main models of crime prevention, partly overlapping and partly competing. He suggests combining these in a *holistic model*, covering nine different prevention mechanisms of which many are known to police dealing with PCVE. The most relevant prevention mechanisms complying with the mission and the limitations of RAN POL will be discussed here.

Establishing and maintaining normative barriers is the mechanism that refers to the creation or reinforcement of objections and the normative barrier people have that prevents them from becoming involved in violent extremism or terrorism. Parents, teachers and religious leaders are among the many different actors who can play an important role in establishing these barriers². For example, police can

¹ Bjørgo, T. (2015). Counter-terrorism as crime prevention: a holistic approach. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*

² RAN Issue Paper (2018). *Protective and promotive factors building resilience against violent radicalisation* by Stijn Sieckelink and Amy-Jane Gielen: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_paper_protective_factors_042018_en.pdf

play a role by educating children on the dangers of crime and boosting their resilience. This mechanism may be aimed at the entire population, or specifically targeting people who are on the path of radicalisation³.

Reducing recruitment aims to minimise the driving force and motivation for terrorist violence by eliminating the root causes and sources of frustration, as well as stopping recruitment processes as early as possible⁴. Understanding the causes and social mechanisms behind radicalisation can help police prevent radicalisation and recruitment. For example, this could be carried out through conversations with people (at risk of) radicalising⁵.

Another way police can prevent the radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist groups is through **deterrence**. Unified groups or movements can be threatened with punishment, reprisals or other negative consequences, in order to reduce their motivation for carrying out a PCVE related crime⁶.

In addition to deterrence, **disruption** is another preventive mechanism that is well-known within the police force. It consists of two phases: detection of activities or preparations and intervening to stop or prevent these activities. Early disruption – before any crimes have been committed – is preferable, as there is less risk of harm⁷. Disruption is often followed by **incapacitation**. This can range from arrests to confiscating weapons or obstructing access to funding. There should, however, be a legal basis for these kinds of measures. For instance, incarcerating someone for a terrorist crime they might never commit is problematic. A balance between preventive and repressive measures, or 'soft' and 'hard' measures must be sought⁸.

Desistance and rehabilitation is the last prevention mechanism that is most relevant for RAN POL. It involves influencing people in such a way that they give up participation in violent extremist milieus. This is achieved mostly through reinforcing the push and pull factors to work in the same direction, away from the attraction of radicalising⁹.

Bjørgero's lessons from crime prevention – combining different crime prevention mechanisms into one holistic model for the prevention of PCVE – offers a first indication that the lessons from crime prevention in general might also apply to police in PCVE.

³ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p. 27-29.

⁴ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p. 29-31.

⁵ See RAN Issue (2016). Paper *The Root Causes of Violent Extremism* by Magnus Ranstorp:

https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf

⁶ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p.31-33.

⁷ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p. 33-34.

⁸ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p.34-36.

⁹ Bjørgero, T. (2015). p. 39-41.

RAN POL international panel ‘PCVE: just a new branch on the big, well rooted tree of crime prevention?’

RAN POL invited an interesting group of renowned international experts¹⁰ to join RAN POL’s morning meeting held on 12 June. To answer the question whether PCVE is a relatively new branch of the big tree of crime prevention, the international panel discussed the ‘Golden rules for crime prevention’. The panel agreed on the following rules:

- **The earlier, the better.** Start early and aim for long-term prevention (in line with Bjørgero’s holistic approach);
- **Local level is key.** Local actors are familiar with local context and are best-suited to intervene;
- **Work in local multi-agency settings and involve civil society.** Each actor holds only one piece of the puzzle, so it is necessary to work together. It is important to build trust among actors in the network and discuss working methods to ensure everyone speaks the same ‘language’;
- **The police is not always the best actor to lead.** Decide on a case-by-case basis who should take the lead. This might be the police, but it could also be a social worker;
- **Work with victims and offenders.** Police sometimes tend to focus on the offenders, but the victims also need to be heard. It is important to give victims a voice.
- **Use the prevention pyramid: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.** Primary prevention concerns universal prevention of several problems, amongst which is radicalisation. Secondary prevention targets groups at risk of radicalisation, while tertiary prevention is about disengagement from radicalisation. Tertiary prevention is mostly concerned with interventions, acting after a crime has been committed¹¹. Police should not forget that there are levels of prevention that prevent people ending up in tertiary prevention in the first place. The panel also raised the question of adding a fourth level of prevention, which would centre around the question of how systems in a country can benefit some groups but be a disadvantage to others. The assumption of this fourth level of prevention is that it is the underlying mechanism rooted in the systems of a country. Declerck’s prevention pyramid views this systems level of society as the societal context, on which the other levels of prevention are based.

¹⁰ The panel consisted of: Egon Wachter (DE), Christiane Sadeler (CA), Dr. Felix Munger (CA), Prof. Dr. Marc Coester (DE), Pilar de la Torre (EU), Dr. Uwe E. Kemmesies (DE) and Franziska Heinze (DE)

¹¹ See: Gielen, Amy-Jane (2017a), “Countering Violent Extremism. A Realist Approach for Assessing What Works, for Whom, in What Circumstances and How?” *Terrorism & Political Violence*, pp. 1-19; Declerck, J., Cautaert, S., Dupont, V. & Ideler, I. (2001), *Weerbaarheid van jongeren, een denk- en doeboek*, Garant, 413 p.

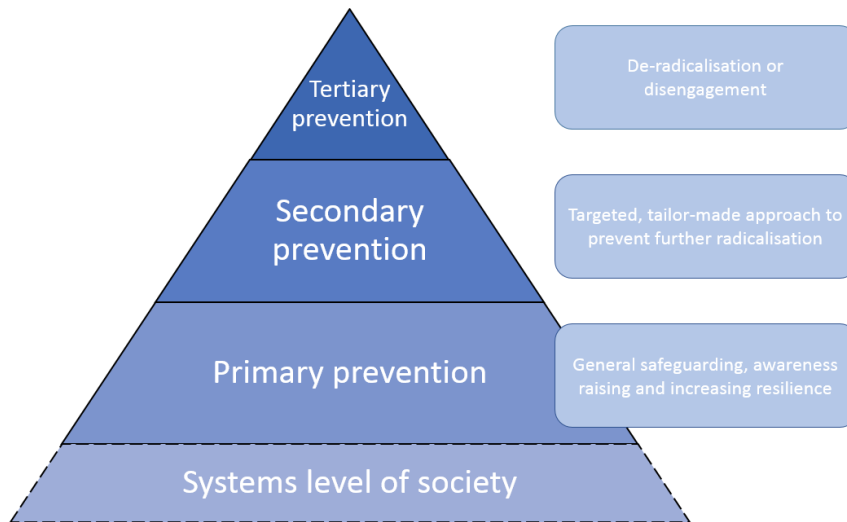


Figure 1: A simplified Prevention Pyramid. Based on: Declerck, J. Cautaert, S., Dupont, V., & Ideler, I. (2001); Gielen, A.J. (2017)

The golden rules listed above are mostly aligned with RAN POL’s vision on PCVE as we understand it. The interesting new aspect is the Prevention Pyramid, which includes a fourth level. This is a novum for RAN POL discussions, even though the pyramid has been discussed within other RAN working groups. Both the panel and Bjørge’s paper define PCVE as another branch of the crime prevention tree.

Findings from the congress

RAN POL police prevention and PCVE experts individually participated in different sessions of the programme. Some of the lectures were explicitly on the topic or related to PVE and CVE, while others addressed the topic of crime prevention. Below is a brief summary of the lessons learned by police in PCVE from several of these lectures.

Lectures on crime prevention

Lessons from crime prevention in Canada - by Dr. Felix Munger and Christiane Sadeler

The Canadians presented a crime prevention approach with a strong local, bottom-up starting point. It promotes equity, belonging, and community safety more than it promotes crime prevention. Incarceration is avoided as much as possible. This wider frame offers opportunities for connecting formal and informal actors on the local level. The police is seen to deal with the problems and priorities of the citizens. On top of this, there is a monthly crime prevention council where everyone represents their area of expertise and not the organisation. They try to work on engaged communities, with local wisdom. Information sharing was mentioned to be a challenge in the Canadian context.

Teenage brains - by Prof. Naomi E. Goldstein and Prof. Em. Dr. Bernd-Rüdeger Sonnen

The US lecture about teenage crimes, probation and brains aimed to identify ways to reduce the rate of recidivism and incarceration. According to Goldstein and Sonnen, the secret lies in understanding the teenage brain. All professionals should therefore be educated on how teenage brains work. They stressed the importance of investing in efforts to connect the worlds of judges and officers with those who understand teenage brains. Disseminating the way teenagers decide and react are different. Moods and peers are greatly influential on the actions of young people. The more we understand teenager brains, the better measures can be taken, matching the individual. Re-education is identified as a strategy for reintegration and reducing recidivism. This is in line with the thinking of practitioners within the RAN community. The importance of how the teenager brain works seems particularly relevant for PVE.

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) – by Petra Guder and Marshall E. Swenson

Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) is the soft alternative to a hard approach that can lead to high numbers of prisoners. MST is scientifically proven to transform lives by letting a therapist work in the home, school and community. It's about finding out how young people operate in their community. The therapist is in contact with the clients 24/7. It claims to reduce the cost for the community (up to \$8,000 per family member). MST focuses on the cause of problems. The goal is to put a young person on a positive path, based on their strengths and increasing their responsibility. The strategy is to involve families as partners (and to avoid bad influence from them), focus on the present and finding the right fit. MST is action-oriented and well-defined, putting a lot of emphasis on programme adherence and evaluation tools. Professional secrecy is reportedly a problem with this approach because all the information stays within the family.

RAN POL lesson: police should work more with these types of 'soft' approaches. Police could be a good partner for MST because they often have contact with the family. Also, community police know the neighbourhood and its characteristics.

Lectures on PCVE

Home grown narratives, the role of informal actors in PVE – by Alexander Ritzmann

The most important lesson learned from this lecture is that radicalisation is a social process. The majority (75%) radicalises through existing social ties. Informal actors can help radicalised persons by providing alternatives to the radical narratives. Local informal actors are important actors in PVE. This can be supported by investing in a PVE specific theory of change to understand local drivers for radicalisation. The key to success could be in identifying and supporting local informal actors who are already disseminating alternative narratives in their own context.

Evaluation and quality standards – by Daniel Köhler

Throughout the programme, from the RAN POL international panel up until the closing panel, there was widespread agreement that there is not enough evaluation of PCVE practices. We need to know how to allocate resources and time, in an effective manner, to be able to achieve successes. Daniel Köhler's presentation about evaluation and quality standards made clear that with social interventions, like de-radicalisation, measuring impact or effect brings about many difficulties. Evaluation of integrity of design might be a good way of assessing the quality of a project. Are the methods used based on proven theories? Is the project design reflecting basic elements of proper professional standards? Is there enough expertise? Köhler calls for transparency in projects.

Polarisation – by Dr. Triantafyllos Karatrantos

In this lecture, polarisation in Europe was highlighted as a focal point for police. Terrorists can be viewed as polarised and radicalised persons. In the process of polarisation there are often trigger events that are being exploited. Refugees and migrants often play a role in the rhetoric that feeds polarisation. They are victims of this rhetoric of hate. They should feel protected by police. Police should therefore understand the processes of polarisation to be able to identify signs, so they can intervene at an early phase of polarisation. Community police should play a key role. At the same time, police should be aware that their own actions can trigger polarisation. Communication strategies for inclusiveness and depolarisation should be promoted. Local police should be part of strategic networks that are active when there is risk of polarisation.

RAN POL message: polarisation should be a crucial factor in prevention of radicalisation strategies and approaches.

Prison

In the German programme there were several lectures on prison, radicalisation and deradicalisation, all of which drew upon examples from Germany. This reflects the growing understanding that imprisonment and probation are very relevant for PCVE. These challenges require investments in training. The level of expertise and skills needs to be raised. There are also interesting benefits in opening up the prison and probation environment to cooperation with imams, local and federal police and NGOs.

RAN POL and RAN P&P (Prison and Probation) will organise a joint meeting in September 2018. The topic of this meeting is optimising cooperation and information sharing between the three sectors. The expected rise in numbers of prisoners released with a terrorism offence might also be an interesting topic for RAN to explore in 2019.

Future challenges and new topics

Moderated by the Congress President Mr. Kerner, RAN POL had the opportunity to contribute to the programme and present RAN and the RAN POL network to this international gathering. The discussion on future challenges for 2019 focussed on understanding local diversity and how to engage as local police; right-wing extremism; cross-border risk assessment, the expected release of imprisoned terrorists; and the evaluation of police PCVE projects.

Conclusion

The main question tabled at this RAN POL meeting was *“What can be learned from crime prevention for police preventing and countering violent extremism?”*. The golden rules discussed by the international panel during the morning session highlighted early prevention. They also emphasised that the local level is key and promoted working in multi-agency settings. These golden rules are all well-known within RAN and RAN POL. The panel also mentioned working with the prevention pyramid; thus, distinguishing between different levels of prevention. This is a golden rule that is new to the RAN POL working group, even though the prevention pyramid is often used within other RAN working groups.

The panel also noted that the police is not always the best actor to lead. This is also an important aspect to consider for police working on PCVE in multi-agency settings. Sometimes, the police almost automatically leads a case. However, it is best to decide on a case-by-case basis who should take the lead – whether it should be the police or a social worker for example.

The insights of the congress lectures coincide with these golden rules and emphasise the essential importance of the local level (knowing who you’re dealing with). The ‘soft’ approach to crime prevention from a Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) approach may serve as an inspiring approach for PVE with a natural role for community policing. This could be combined with using informal, credible actors to spread alternative narratives. Polarisation and evaluation are topics that police in PCVE will need to deal with more and more in the coming years.