

EX POST PAPER

How to create local networks?

RAN LOCAL kick-off meeting 22-23 February

Summary

During this first meeting of RAN local we focused on creating an EU network of local preventive coordinators within RAN and on how to create local networks. The preventive approach needs to be tailored to the needs of the persons who are susceptible for violent extremism. To do so several organisations with different expertise and the local communities need to work together. Often the coordination and the multi-agency work is carried out by the local governments. In this paper we describe the considerations, steps and tips on how to create a local network.

Intro

During this first meeting of RAN local we focused on creating an EU network of local preventive coordinators within RAN and on how to create local networks. The preventive approach needs to be tailored to the needs of the persons who are susceptible for violent extremism. To do so several organisations with different expertise and the local communities need to work together. Often the coordination and the multi-agency work is carried out by the local governments. In this paper we describe the considerations, steps and tips on how to create a local network.

How to create a local network?

A local network has multiple parts. Part of the network consists of employees of the different organisations like schools, police, mental health institutions and civil society organisations, this is the formal network. Furthermore the network consists of inhabitants of and the communities within the municipality.

Formal network

Prevention and countering radicalisation and violent extremism is best done on a local level. That we all agree of. The prevention approach needs to be tailored to the needs of the person who is susceptible/vulnerable to violent extremism and you'll need different organisations with different expertise. They all form a part of the solution. Local authorities, civil society organisations, schools, mental health organisation and social work need to cooperate in order to have a chance at preventing the youngster from violent extremism. Often the coordination of these practitioners and the multi-agency work is carried out by the local governments. They form the linking pin between the practitioner's organisations. How to become such a linking pin; how do you create a network with this different organisations, who do you need at your table, how do you stimulate them to cooperate and what is your mandate to do so? In short: How to create a local network?

Tips

- Cooperation needs mutual understanding. Make sure you know what the mandate and aim of the organisations you'd want to cooperate with are. And be clear about your mandate and goals.
- Try to involve the cooperating organisations on different levels. Top level needs to support the operative level to be able to work towards full cooperation.

Informal networks

Building long term (trust) relationships – not only during crises – with communities is necessary. Engaging communities by cooperating with civil society organisations is needed for handling specific cases of radicalisation and for preventing radicalisation on a societal scale. Within the local communities there is knowledge of the people who live in your municipality. Information needed to make the right assessments. Individuals that play key roles in their communities are credible and able to use fast, practical, and local interventions, while using their religious or cultural background and connections where needed. How do you create an informal network with informal organisations and credible voices within communities? How do you establish an inclusive network where formal organisations and informal stakeholders cooperate, trust each other and build an inclusive local network?

Tips

- Take multiple entries into the communities. For example the local Muslim community does not equal the local mosque(s). Loose the static idea the Muslims are only in Mosques, they are at schools, are local employers and youth work etc)
- Recognise other important issues for the community and offer solutions (enough space for the parking for people who go to the mosque), what do they need?
- Political support has been a success factor > support of the mayor is a big help.

How to create a local network in 3 steps

1. First step: Individual outreach

In order to start creating a local network, you need to start with creating your own personal network of relevant stakeholders throughout your local municipality. Reach out to relevant stakeholders within the different organisations and parts of the municipality (the formal network) and to stakeholders within the local community. This may be someone from the local soccer club, the church, mosque or the local farmer women club.

Locate the relevant stakeholders within your municipality/city

Use the networks already in place, for example the network of organisations working on truancy or youth workers or the communities work together on keeping the city clean project. Introduce yourself to the stakeholders and get acquainted. Be very clear about your focus. For example: "I am trying to set up a network within Valencia to prevent radicalisation amongst our youth."

Keep in mind: Located relevant stakeholders will be able to point out other relevant stakeholders.

You could do this in order to create the formal and the informal parts of the network.

Create awareness

Talk about the situation in your municipality with the stakeholders. Is there polarisation between different communities? Is there general polarisation? Are there cases of young people becoming radicalised / violent extremist/foreign fighters? Make sure you have your facts and numbers straight when creating awareness on the possible risk of radicalisation of young inhabitants of your municipality.

Sharing information

You ask the stakeholders for information about their 'youngster' or their community members. If you want them to share information with you, you should be willing to share information with them as well. If there is any information from the local authorities you'd think they might be interested in, do not hesitate to share this with them. Don't sit on your information, share it. And if stakeholders ask you for information you cannot provide them with, be upfront about this. Tell them you do not have or cannot share the asked information and why you cannot. You'd want them to be as upfront with you as well.

2. Second step: Put similar people together

When you have your local individual network in place. Start to let them get acquainted with each other. Start easy with organising meetings between groups that are similar. For example stakeholders from all the youth organisations of the municipality or all sports and youth clubs within the local community. In short, create groups of similar stakeholders.

Exchange of experiences

The different relevant stakeholders should also get acquainted, if they not already know each other. Organise meetings with all of them to discuss matters of violent extremism and polarisation that are currently at stake in your local region. Or talk to them about the role of prevention of radicalisation or in which ways they came into contact with radicalisation and radicalised people within your local region.

Localise solutions and cooperate to achieve them

If in the meetings with these groups you'll probably come across specific problems within your local municipality, do address them and try to establish in what way this problem can be solved. Try to work together with the stakeholders towards a solution. Focus on this solution, not on the problem while cooperation. Keep in mind the different task and responsibilities from the different stakeholders. If needed, write down what your take aways from these meetings are and disseminate this within the groups. Remember, you are coordinating, this does not mean that you have to do everything (or that everyone will do stuff according to your idea's).

3. Third step: Put people with the same goals together

Now start combining the different mini-networks. Also the formal and informal groups. They need to get to know each other and know how could do what within the local community. This way you'll have a network throughout the whole of the local municipality. "You're all part of the solution."

First combination

Two suggestions on how to kick off the combining of the different networks.

1. There is a specific problem regarding to violent extremism. Get all the relevant stakeholders to solve this problem in a room and start working together towards the solution. Do not forget to take time, at the beginning of the meeting to let everybody introduce her or himself and his organisation and tasks to the rest of the group.

2. There is not (yet) a specific problem. Then you organise a '*Together we prevent violent extremism – meeting*'. Goal of this meeting is that the relevant stakeholders get to know each other and get to know what their different roles in prevention of violent extremism is. For the meeting you invite all the relevant stakeholders and have them doing for example first speed-dates and then exchange information and experiences on countering violent extremism within the municipality. For the speed date session you ask the stakeholders to share their name, function, organisation, tasks and what their assessment is of the situation in the municipality regarding to radicalisation. After that you organise, depending on the number of stakeholders you invited, small break-out groups on specific themes such as types of violent extremism, adolescent mental health problems, radicalisation process, how to talk about politicised topics with

youngsters or other themes you think are relevant to talk about. Note: Ask your stakeholders to help you organise this and involve them as experts (they could do short presentations on the topics you choose).

Make use of each other's expertise

By now you know all the relevant stakeholders and what their tasks and expertise is. Do not hesitate to link stakeholders. You are in the best place to estimate who could benefit of who's knowledge. Do not be stingy with your network of stakeholders, act more like a broker and encourage them to interact.

Make network independent

The network you created should work on it's own. You facilitated the creation and if needed can facilitate meetings, but at large stakeholders should be able to find each other without your interference. Keep encouraging them to interact with each other, share challenges, possible solutions and information.

Simple task?

This is not a simple task. Creating/building a network of stakeholders to prevent violent extremism will not be a linear process of just following these described three steps. It's only a small guideline written with information and the experiences of different local coordinators (Thank you very much for sharing all your information, dear experienced local coordinators). The aim is to help those who want to create a local network to get started and to encourage those who already are halfway or even have a network in place to keep investing in it. And please, do not forget, you are not the only local coordinator. Within your country there are probably more. Localise them and contact them. And within RAN there are many of you. Use the RAN meetings to get acquainted and share information, challenges, experiences and practices.

Don'ts

Many local coordinators started creating a local network. As said, it is quite a challenge. You'll make mistakes. Some of this local coordinators shared their mistakes with us. We put them together in a list of things to not do or at least keep in mind.

- Do not use polarised and conflicting labels – not use communication that stimulates the polarisation. Also to avoid political manipulation.
- Do not leave your network alone. They need attendance, support and attention. Feed it!
- Lack of transparency > be concrete and send a clear message
- Do not adopt a one size approach
- Do not loose sight of the main objectives
- Easy to get into details, try to keep the main focus
- Do not expect to much to quickly.
- Do not get into action without thinking. Try to not let your network actions be affected by stress about pressure of politics or attacks etc. Be clear with politicians, they want you to solve the problems immediately. This is not always possible. Think first and manage expectations.
- Do not rest on your laurels, the job is never done! It will never be fixed and you'll need the network to stay a network.
- Do not abuse the network. Pick you battles.

- If you want to use them continuously and frequently, they get tired of you. Try to use them for the most important issues. Manage the network and avoid over exposure to signals. Manage who is the right person for what message or action.
- Do not forget to give your network, or at least parts of it, a voice in the approach.

Examples of the local network in Rotterdam studyvisit

Safety House Rotterdam Region

The Safety House is aimed at people who deal with many problems at once and therefore cause many problems. These are the people for whom a regular approach within separate punitive, civilian, administrative and care tracks is not enough. Such cases necessitate an intensive approach, and this is where the Safety House comes in. The Safety House provides these clients with a custom strategy. This strategy is an integrated approach aimed at the individual, and consists on the one hand of interventions of a repressive nature and on the other hand of personal aid and health care. A combination of care and punishment is the most effective way to prevent recidivism. As such, the Safety House hosts a large number of institutions specialising in criminal investigation, prosecution, sentencing and aid, which work closely together under a single roof.

On the 1st of May 2015, the Safety House put a new type of case consultation on the agenda: that of radicalisation. This type of case pertains to individuals who are a source of great concern when it comes to radicalisation. The difference between this type of case consultation and others is that the radicalisation case does not necessarily involve criminal procedure. In fact, it is precisely when the municipal government, police, public prosecutors and other parties are concerned that an individual is radicalising, and possibly planning to carry out illegal acts in the future, that the Safety House partners will try hardest to intervene at an early stage and develop a custom strategy for that particular individual.

Spior

SPIOR is the acronym for the Platform for Islamic Organisations in Rijnmond (*Dutch: Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond*) and is the Islamic umbrella organisation in Rotterdam and neighbouring towns, in the Netherlands. Most of the mosques in Rotterdam are members, as well as many socio-cultural organisations, youth and women's organisations. Since 1988, SPIOR has been working to improve the participation of Muslims in the Netherlands. SPIOR develops products and organises activities pertaining to participation & skill development, education & awareness and signalise & anti-discrimination, all of which benefit the whole of society. Within the context of countering radicalisation, SPIOR acts as a valuable partner for the municipal government. Through its connections with the municipality, SPIOR has access to the many Islamic organisations the city is home to. SPIOR actively works to make radicalisation a topic of open discussion within the Islamic community. It does this by organising gatherings in and around mosques at which the topic is discussed. Furthermore, the administrators and volunteers of SPIOR's member organisations act as the city's eyes and ears, providing the municipality with regular insight into current issues and attitudes.

PRACTICE OF VILVOORDE

- 42 000 inhabitants - Demographic expansion 1,5%
- 25% non-Belgian origins > Minors 40%
- High unemployment rate, high rate of school drop out and backlog; shortage of public infrastructure
- Proximity of Brussels and Antwerp
- Sociologically one
- Metropolitan problems
- All citizens of Vilvoorde know someone that has left to Syria or are at risk of radicalisation >very high impact on the city

“A plan for warmth and safety” How to create a local network?

Formal Networks

Step 1. Individual outreach to relevant organisations - Be curious, listen to their needs, share information, gain trust.

Step 2. Creating homogeneous groups - Form groups of professionals from the same sector. Share experiences - getting to know each other - learning other partners face the same problems - being honest results in all parties to open up – results in action. The city of Vilvoorde provided these homogeneous groups a training about awareness, signals and context.

Step 3. Heterogeneous groups – The local network of several multi-agency partners. The aim of these groups is for the partners to get to know each other and each others expertise. Diversity in the local network is key .

The local coordinator working for the city of Vilvoorde

Informal networks

- Based on the formal networks
- It is all about being present. If there is an open door in the mosque, the local coordinator steps by. The *after- chat* after these gatherings provide connections to the informal networks.
- Manage expectations. Be clear om what they can expect from the city and what not.
- Do not abuse the informal network. Choose your battles.

The link between prevention and intervention

- You cannot have one without the other
- Absolute transparency: About goals, about sharing information
- Giving trust is receiving trust
- Be aware for distrust amongst staff members
- It is a continuous effort

PRACTICE OF VILVOORDE

- Sarcelles it is 60 000 people among which 47 % unless 30 years
- The unemployment rate is 23 % / 40 % in certain districts of the city
- The population consists of 90 nationalities
- 1st Jewish community of France with 16 000 Jews (nicknamed of a quarter in the city “Small Jerusalem”)
- Important community of Assyro khaldein (5 000 Christians of East)
- Population of the Maghreb and Sub-Sahara African Countries importing also
- 350 refugees arrived for these last months

Preventive approach of Sarcelles

1. Constitution of a place national-wide resources on the prevention of the violent radicalization
2. Elaboration of counter-speech and methodological support for the partners of the program
Conduct of an annual training program, with the professionals of the partners on the radicalisation, the signs and the indicators, as well as on the values of the Republic and the citizenship
3. Multidisciplinary follow-up of the young people detected in the phase of indoctrination and social isolation with the aim of a restoring of the family, social and economic links
 - Support of existing structures
 - Device plan and follow up of youngsters at risk
 - Pilot of mentoring project
4. Fight against racism and the anti-Semitism (multidisciplinary answer)
Support communications actions : creation and animation of a web site dedicated in counter-speech and development of active accounts on the social networks to defend the republican vision of the partners of the territory.



#CoexistSarcelles