EX POST PAPER
Thematic Event
**The refugee and migrant crisis:
new pressing challenges for CVE policy**

08/05/2016

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Introduction

All over Europe, Member States should be asking themselves whether their CVE agenda is up to date. The recent surge of right-wing extremism and growing polarisation, both fuelled by the migrant crisis, are not on the CVE agenda in many countries.

At the same time, radicalisation and recruitment is taking place in and around refugee centres. There are even small numbers of terrorists amongst the large numbers of refugees and migrants.

At the RAN CoE Thematic Event, the RAN community of practitioners voiced their concerns that the refugee crisis is exacerbating the already rising tensions and polarisation in society. This justifies a re-evaluation of CVE policies. Looking at breeding grounds, vulnerability and resilience, what are the roles of social cohesion, integration and inclusion in CVE?

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Prelude

The fears, facts and myths about the so-called migrant and refugee crisis prompted the RAN CoE to take the initiative of organising three consecutive activities in early 2016:

- A Policy Paper on refugees and CVE[1];
- A thematic event for practioners, researchers and policy makers, Vienna (AT), 14 April 2016;
- Three one-day workshops to support Member States, Warsaw (PL), 11, 12 and 13 May 2016

This Ex Post paper builds the case that the CVE agenda needs updating. Member States should be aware of the increased and growing risk of right-wing extremism, the risk of radicalisation and recruitment amongst the refugees and migrants, and the risk of polarisation.

The participants at the Thematic Event drew attention to many interventions that are or could be included in a comprehensive approach.

This paper will address:

- The outcomes of the Policy Paper and the conclusions of the Thematic Event on Refugees and CVE policies;
- Effects on xenophobia, hate crimes and right wing extremism;
- Effects on extremist jihadist radicalisation and terrorism inside the refugee stream, and exploitation of the crisis by Daesh;
- A model for explaining and managing polarisation;
- Potential key elements for a contemporary, holistic CVE agenda;

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[1] Gonzales-Enriquez Carmen; Garcia-Calvo, Carola; Kreko, Peter and Thorleifsson, Cathrine. RAN CoE, April 2016

- Some inspiring interventions;
- Suggestions for possible actions and interventions, as suggested by participants of the Thematic Event.

Main conclusions: Policy Paper and Thematic Event

In short: within the RAN community there is growing concern about developments in Europe. This directly relates in part to the refugee and migrant crisis, but is not limited to this.

In many but not all EU Member States the surge of Daesh and Al-Qaeda (AQ) was a game changer for CVE. Developments in Syria and Iraq, new awareness of the scale of home-grown foreign terrorist fighters and the establishment of the so-called Caliphate put radicalisation – and prevention thereof – on the agenda. Daesh, AQ and global extremist jihadism had already been a threat, and it was becoming apparent that they would remain so for the coming years – or even centuries.

At the same time, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, plus hate speech and hate crimes were already on the rise in several countries. Nationalist, anti-migrant and anti-Islam right-wing extremist movements were also becoming more active, in different shapes and sizes. All of this was catalysed by the economic crisis, government budget cuts, terrorist attacks and large- and small-scale violent incidents such as in Cologne, Germany. Together, this presented a grim and complex situation.

It is important to note that in the scene just described, the so-called refugee and migrant crisis was not mentioned. But the refugee crisis undoubtedly exacerbates the situation. Struggling with the large numbers of refugees coming into Europe caused huge challenges for governments, the EU, local governments and society. The

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refugee crisis brought fear, polarisation, sometimes even decreased trust in governments. All of this creates an excellent environment for radicalisation, recruitment and propaganda by right-wing extremists and extremist jihadists. A polarised society with different groups depicted as adversaries is a dream for extremists propagating 'us and them'; they work on destroying the 'grey middle' and call for drastic actions *"because governments and leaders are not protecting us against them"*.

Both the Policy Paper and the Thematic Event broadened thinking about polarisation, radicalisation and recruitment with a discourse about breeding grounds, resilience, grievances and concerns. Social cohesion, fundamental rights and inclusion were advocated by many speakers and participants as ways to prevent polarisation and to prevent radicalisation.

Polarisation explained: it's all about 'the grey in the middle'

The refugee and migrant crisis fuelled polarisation in many European countries. A conceptual framework for polarisation developed for Dutch police[2] was presented at the Thematic Event,. It is built upon *two rules and five roles*:

1. Polarisation is a thought construct, 'us-and-them' thinking, based on identities and groups;
2. Polarisation needs fuel, it thrives on talking about identities in combination with judgment.

In this process there are five roles:

1. The Pushers, trying to create polarisation, acting from the poles;
2. The Joiners, who have chosen sides, and are with one of the pushers;
3. The silent, the grey, the nuanced. They could be neutral and/or indifferent. They are targeted by the pusher;
4. The Bridge builder, reaching out to both opposing poles and pushing, adding fuel by doing so;
5. The Scapegoats, the silent ones in the middle, or perhaps the bridge-builders.
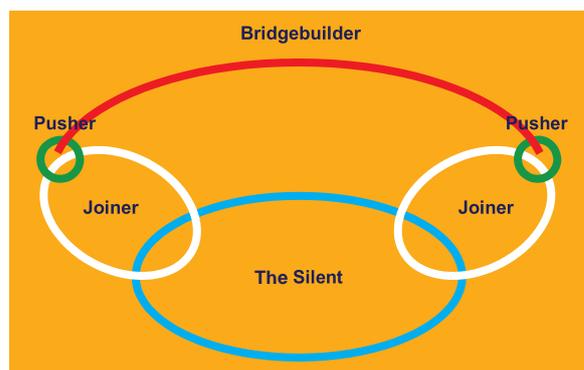
The extremists and terrorists deliberately try to polarise. Daesh even explains in the editorial of its online magazine Dabiq that they "want to destroy the grey zone". Daesh has produced dozens of videos capitalising on the refugee crises in recent months. They enforcefour themes: 1. The West does not care about refugees. 2. Any refugee fleeing to a non-Muslim area is seen to have committed a major sin 3. Because of their sin, any Muslim who dies on the road to the West will be punished by God 4. Anyone fleening the capiphat will become a target of Daesh.

The central themes used by the right-wing extremist pole in its narratives are: cultural-religious anxiety, threat to physical safety, economic security.

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[2] Police and Polarisation, An initial guide. Bart Brandsma, Pharresia 2016

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The Pharresia polarisation management approach, developed for the Dutch National Police, promotes:

1. targeting the middle not talking about identities;
2. not speaking about 'right or wrong', but about elements in common

The presented model/approach was, sometimes with slightly different words, reflected and supported in presentations and statements at both the RAN POL meeting in Oslo (NO)[3] and the Thematic Event.

**Promising practice:
polarisation management for police (NL)**

The approach sketched out above is being implemented in police departments in the Netherlands to manage external and internal polarisation.

The police could easily play a role that either fuels the process or turns the police into a scapegoat. Local police team leaders are being trained in how to start conversations, before polarisation sets in. This is done in three steps

1. Police officers are invited to share their views. This is about exploring, not about discussion. There is no moral judgement.
2. A fundamental and generic line on the professional role of the police is discussed with the team: this is not about personal opinions, not about left or right. "*We are neutral and have to treat all citizens equally and offer security and protection to everyone*". And the teams answer the question specifying which behaviour will be used to achieve the professional norm?

3. After accepting the outcomes of step 2, the last step is to invite the colleagues to translate these shared and agreed norms and behaviours into their own specific situation: what does it mean in our town or city? What is going on? How do we approach different actors?

Inclusion, social cohesion and integration

Compared to other RAN events, many practitioners at the Thematic Event were promoting inclusion, social cohesion and integration. More than in other meetings. The explanation for this lies in the nature of the challenge facing societies and governments, which must deal with a large group of newcomers, benefit as a society, and prevent negative effects.

RAN is not the right network for promoting integration or citizenship – unless it becomes clear that investing in inclusiveness, integration and social cohesion is a first and very sustainable line of defence against polarisation. *Polarisation doesn't necessary lead to radicalisation, but a polarised society helps extremists.*

The successful integration of newcomers is also directly related to the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment because it decreases the vulnerability of groups within society. On the one hand, successful integration is an antidote against xenophobic extremism, because it responds to the fears and grievances of hosting communities. On the other hand, it makes newcomers them resilient to "us and them" anti-western extremist propaganda activities. When marginalised, insulted, humiliated and even violently attacked, migrants and refugees are more vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment.

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[3] RAN POL meeting on engaging with communities, Oslo (NO) 6-7 April 2016

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Strategic communication

Communication is an important way to boost social cohesion, to work on public opinion in terms of support for the challenge of dealing with migrants.

Strategic communication implies a coordinated approach, starting with research to establish what is going on. What is the nature and the scale of the problem? What are the attitudes and behaviours of the different target audiences?

Some potential actions:

- Run campaigns to influence public opinion;
- Invest in awareness-raising, expertise and dialogue with media organisations;
- Show personal stories of real people to humanise the debate about refugees.

There are several examples of communication campaigns in Europe with the theme 'together', for instance "Together for Sweden" and "Together Austria".

Communication and arranging for people to meet one another help create the circumstances for successful inclusion and social cohesion. Besides talking is action, people actually working together and contributing, a very effective strategy. Have refugees volunteer and contribute to society.

Refugees who have settled in the country could play an important role in building bridges between hosting communities and refugees. Refugees can also be very valuable in introducing new refugees to the rules and cultures practised by the hosting community, as well as how everything is organised.

Promising local approaches

The Thematic Event showed that polarisation can be tackled by both an active municipality and

civic society. Small-scale and large-scale local approaches can contribute significally.

**Promising practice:
local inclusive CVE policy process**

A presentation on rethinking radicalisation through an inclusive policy process provided an interesting example of how to implement inclusiveness. The city of Manchester (UK) was confronted with a backlash from CVE Prevent and Channel policies. One result was that Muslim communities felt targeted. One of the murderers of soldier Lee Rigby came from Manchester. There was a lot of conflict and lack of trust within the communities. It was this situation that led to the innovative idea of rethinking radicalisation.[4] The approach has already seen:

- The Big Questions Open Community Dialogue event;
- Rethinking Radicalisation Engagement workshops for three different parts of the city, and an extra one for young people;
- A question and answer session with government policy makers;
- Draft report (initial findings, recommendations);
- Two action planning sessions 1) voluntary sector, NGO and civil society 2) public sector and services;
- Rethinking Radicalisation report
- Training for network of local actors.

What is interesting about this approach is that the plans and actions are not determined by a central government CVE agenda. So it is inclusive

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[4]

http://www.makingmanchestersafer.com/mms/info/16/prevent/27/rethinking_radicalisation_-_manchesters_community_dialogue_programme

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in its broad range of participants, all of whom could contribute to the agenda.

**Promising practice
Local social calamity and contingency networks**

After a terrorist attack or any other impactful serious incident, tensions at local level can soar very quickly. When responses get out of hand, this can inflame new conflicts. In the Netherlands, the mayors of the biggest cities rely on a network to stay informed, and to keep the peace through actions or communication.

The formula is simple. Build a tiered network including coordinators from different areas of the city. These coordinators have their own network of contact persons, for instance key youth workers, community leaders and school leaders.

For instance immediately after the attack on Charlie Hebdo, a decision was taken to activate such a network. Contact points are aware that they must provide a short report on feelings, incidents and observations once or sometimes even twice a day.

This information is used to decide what to do. And in case of unrest and tensions in the street, the contact persons know they can be called upon to go in the streets and calm things down, perhaps by correcting rumours and conspiracy theories. For this approach to work, you need to work on the roof when it is not raining.

Refugees and radicalisation: right-wing scene

Nationalist, anti-migration, anti-Islam groups, parties and organisations are capitalising on the fears of hosting communities in different EU Member States. On the right-hand side of the political spectrum, changes have happened quickly in some countries. New political movements and parties are very successful in mobilising support. Old groups sometimes change colours and language. It is necessary to be precise in labelling and deciding on responses.

Some groups are portrayed as right-wing extremists but are mainly concerned members of the hosting community with fears and grievances, sometimes real, sometimes more perceived. And the fears and grievances could be voiced in a very upset, angry or offensive way. But their fears and concerns should be dealt with. It doesn't help to ignore them or silence them. Small-scale encounters are better than large-scale meetings.

Then there are nationalist or xenophobic groups, movements and political parties. Some have a long history in politics or activist and extremist activities. It was stressed several times that governments should uphold the rule of law and offer protection and security to all in society. All extremist propaganda and hate speech should be dealt with.

And then there are the real, violent hate groups and violent extremist groups who talk about 'civil war', who are looking for weapons, exercising in uniform and with fake weapons.

In addition to these specific groups, should lone actors be considered a risk for right-wing terrorist violence?

Terrorists and radicalisation in the migrant stream

Migrants and refugees are not terrorists. They are victims. Looking for a better life or sometimes just 'life' - instead of suffering or dying. Pictures of Aleppo and Homs in Syria, for instance, make it easier to keep in mind the violence and oppression by Daesh and other terrorist groups, and to understand that a violent war forces families to migrate. Refugees are on the run from violence and violations of fundamental rights.

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At the same time there is evidence of cases of refugees radicalising, recruiting or being recruited. The numbers remain small, but several Member States indicated that this is a reality that must be dealt with. People have been arrested. There are even cases of real terrorists who have abused the refugee flow to get into Europe. But, despite Daesh's claims, is the phenomenon is not structural, or present at a large scale. It is however something to be aware of. In several Member States, including Belgium and the Netherlands, this insight resulted in awareness-raising among the personnel working with refugees. They were trained on the potential signals of radicalisation and what to do if these are detected. Europol is deploying experts to so-called hot spots where large groups of refugees and migrant come into Europe. These experts target smuggling networks, and have expertise on terrorism and false and stolen documents.

Some refugees could be vulnerable to radicalisation and recruitment. If we want the targeted people in refugee centres and communities to oppose extremist recruitment, we need to make them resilient and work on good relations with the hosting authorities. Besides training staff on signals and referral points, we should be investing in good relations with the refugee communities; this is a good way to see any signals of potential radicalisation and recruitment. A professional attitude and professional behaviour are crucial to gaining trust and engaging with refugees.

As a part of measures to safeguard refugees and migrants against recruitment, governments should be on alert for infiltrations and recruitment by extremist organisations.

Reciprocal radicalisation

Right-wing extremism and extremist jihadist radicalisation feed off each other.

Both Daesh and anti-Islam groups play the *refugee–terrorist conspiracy* card. Messages from Daesh intended to scaremonger via social media go viral in no time, and in two directions: within extremist jihadist networks and within right wing extremist networks.

And a surge in right-wing extremism is also triggering left-wing anti-fascist radicalisation. This is leading to dangerous cycles of tension and violence.
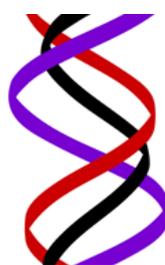
In several countries the implementation of refugee measures by governments fuelled protests and sometimes even violent protests.

Potential key elements for a contemporary, holistic CVE agenda

A country or community challenged by a sudden influx of relatively large numbers of refugees and migrants can expect to be confronted with polarisation, tensions, violence, radicalisation and recruitment by extremist groups from different ideologies, feeding off each other in reciprocity in multiple dimensions. All of these factors affect each other. To prevent and counter these negative effects, a policy agenda – national or local – should cover multiple dimensions and factors. It should also adhere to the 'do no harm' principle, because the extremists will not hesitate to exploit the side effects of interventions. The CVE agenda could include the following elements:

1. **Inclusiveness, while addressing different forms of reciprocal radicalisation**
   Defend fundamental values and rights against all forms of extremism. In the policy agenda and framing of threats, pay

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attention to potential blind spots and make sure the concerns and grievances of all vulnerable communities and groups are covered. This also applies to the hosting communities.

2. **Counter, disturb, pursue and prevent**
   Uphold the rule of law and protect fundamental rights, democracy and freedom from any form of extremism. Disturb and pursue, and at the same time work with prevention strategies on the only sustainable solution.

3. **Address polarisation and inclusiveness, invest in the middle**
   Understand the dynamics of local polarisation and try not to feed the "us and them" game favoured by extremists and pushers of polarisation. Invest in the middle and what people have in common. Invest in what connects people.

4. **Protect, care and safeguard**
   Make sure everyone feels safe, both members of the hosting communities and refugees. This is not only a task for governments. If they do not feel protected, frightened communities can be radicalised more easily.

5. **Awareness, attitude, resilience and training**
   Make staff, members of the press, teachers and NGO volunteers aware of the potential risks of radicalisation, recruitment and polarisation.
   Train them on signs of radicalisation and where to report them. But just as important are signs of concern and the factors that make people vulnerable to recruitment and radicalisation.

Professional attitudes and actions can make a difference, making people at risk resilient or helping them to see practitioners as trustworthy and sharing their concerns about safeguarding vulnerable individuals and groups.

6. **Invest in communication**
   It is not only Daesh that is skilled in using social media to influence their members, sympathisers and empathisers; the counter-jihad movement and actually all extremist groups can be equally effective. Framing, hoaxes, myths, conspiracies and propaganda are spread and shared at an astonishing speed.
   Communication should not only be about facts and figures, because feelings of fear, threat and injustice are perhaps even more important.
   Strategic communication, with understanding of audiences and attitudes, is crucial.
   The ICT industry could help NGOs and communities to use social media to empower themselves

7. **National coordination and local empowerment**
   There is no silver bullet or one unique solution. As the Thematic Event and the Policy Paper showed, many interventions are needed – by national governments, local governments, NGOs, schools, volunteers and others. This needs coordination, as well as sensible empowerment and guidance for local actors.

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Potential actions, as suggested by participants

The participants at the Thematic Event had suggestions for actions that could counter the effects of the refugee crisis. The range was wide, as can be expected from the diverse community of practitioners that the RAN hosts. Some interventions would be delivered on a national level, others at local level. Below, we have tried to organise them. The Thematic Event didn't offer the opportunity to present, challenge or evaluate the suggestions, but they are presented here as inspiration.

National

- Strategic communication, carried out by national and local governments:
    - launch a migration-positive awareness raising campaign;
    - promote values of liberal democracy among all communities and encourage civic cohesion, integration and tolerance;
    - actively communicate to counter rumours and misinformation;
    - issue clear statements of adherence to international treaties on refugees, combined with clear statements of democratic values enforced by law;
    - address sense of security for all sectors of society.

- Press/media:
    - launch an awareness-raising campaign for print and broadcast journalists;
    - organise dialogue with media to enforce best practices in journalism when reporting on stories relating to migrants and negative incidents, there are many cases where negative incidents reported have been based on misinformation.

- Political changes:
    - ensure strong(er) leadership to reduce the fear and chaos around the migrant crisis and the paranoia around the potential import of extremism;
    - enforce zero-tolerance for racist discourse among political party members;
    - reclaim the topic of migration from far-right political parties
    - introduce a stricter asylum policy, more thorough checking of applicants for asylum, and the exchange of information between polices from different countries;
    - screen refugees and detect signals and indicators of radicalisation;
    - improve legislation to maintain integration .

Local level

- Multiagency structure:
    - share indicators with the authorities and intelligence services to prevent some individuals influencing others and potentially pulling them into the radicalisation process;
    - work together (more) to be aware of early warning signs of polarisation (and radicalisation) among the local population;
    - have a system in place for professionals so they know where they can refer signals of concern;

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- integrate polarisation or radicalisation into a broader early warning alert system that includes domestic violence, harassment, petty crime, estrangement/isolation, etc.

- Inform and involve civil society:
  - launch activities for neighbourhoods hosting new reception centres (to prevent polarisation);
  - carry out awareness-raising campaigns in schools and community organisations;
  - organise dialogue platforms where people can voice their fears and discuss worries related to the situation in constructive way; asylum seekers should also be present to ensure there is an opportunity to engage in positive dialogue;
  - hold debates at colleges, institutes, schools, etc.;
  - organise information sessions for local citizens where they can discuss their concerns and stay informed;
  - provide correct and accurate information to both residents and refugees.

- Invest in asylum centres:
  - extend community-level work on radicalisation prevention to immigration centres and other places of residence for incoming migrants; ;
  - process applications quickly and avoid refugees staying too long in reception centres – allow them to start the integration process as soon as possible, including by learning a new language and learning about society in their new country.

- Establish contact between locals and new immigrants:
  - set up volunteer work;
  - organise contact-based education and the presentation of refugee witness testimonies in schools (in receiving countries);
  - create meeting points for refugees and locals – these are very effective;
  - undertake pro-active and/or preventive actions to depolarise (and de-radicalise);

- Invest in training:
  - offer more sensitisation and consciousness-raising, including training, on tolerance, democracy and citizenship;
  - train educators on how to react in situations related to radicalisation (to prevent radicalisation);
  - develop training programmes for first-line workers (police, social workers, schools).

- Invest in integration programmes:
  - ensure adequate integration of accepted refugees into society, including through support for language, understanding new cultures, building new networks, and guidance on the medical system.
  - ensure socialisation of migrants and their effective/proper integration into the environment.