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## CONCLUSION PAPER

*RAN Practitioners Study Visit*

*22-23 February 2023, online*

# The Dutch Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised Detainees (MAR)

## Key outcomes

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In the coming years, violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) will be released from prisons across the EU. Their imprisonment presents a unique opportunity to prepare them for the transition and reintegration into society. The time spent in prison can be used for rehabilitation and disengagement from extremism, reducing the risk of recidivism. However, preparing and managing this process requires a holistic approach that relies on the engagement and cooperation of different actors in multi-agency settings.

During a two-day digital study visit, practitioners from across the EU and beyond had the opportunity to learn about and discuss the approaches developed by the Dutch National Programme Against Radicalisation and Extremism (PARE) and its MAR programme - the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalised Detainees (MAR). The focus was on the rehabilitation of VETOs and radicalised detainees and assessment for radicalisation among inmates. In terms of rehabilitation of radicalised detainees and in-prison radicalisation assessment, the following key elements emerged:

- The process of **prison-exit represents a continuum**, in which the time spent in prison can and should be used to prepare VETOs for their reintegration into society with the coordinated support of different governmental and non-governmental actors. Implementing multi-agency approaches at an early stage contributes to creating this continuum between prison and society. Prison-exit requires proper preparation, an adequate handover and continuity on the local level.
- **Information sharing lies at the heart of multi-agency cooperation** and is crucial for enhancing the rehabilitation of VETOs and radicalised detainees. Merely having procedures and protocols in place is insufficient. Instead, there needs to be a **cultural framework** embedded in the process. The Dutch approach builds on a long-standing culture of information sharing, which has been further facilitated by legislation in the wake of the Utrecht attack.
- In the development of **tailored rehabilitation measures**, it is important to consider potential risks while prioritising clients' needs. It is essential to involve all relevant stakeholders and to clearly define the content and the target audience.

- **Ownership of the rehabilitation process** is crucial. This means the offender should be actively involved in the rehabilitation plan to avoid reinforcing feelings of rejection that they may be already experiencing. Additionally, other stakeholders, such as the municipality, probation and police, should also be included in the rehabilitation process.
- Conducting **in-prison assessment of radicalisation** and the required structures, including training for prison staff, are critical to implement the rehabilitation process effectively<sup>1</sup>.

## Highlights of the discussion

The presentation and discussion of the MAR, developed by the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency, provided an opportunity to identify the essential elements and the main challenges associated with effective rehabilitation, including:

- While the importance of **multi-agency work** has been stressed extensively in various forums, the actual engagement P/CVE practitioners and institutions in the management of VETOs can have its pitfalls. It raises questions such as **who should participate and at what stage of the process?** In the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation, the responsible authority coordinating the approach is the Programme Against Radicalization and Extremism (PARE), and three main actors are primarily involved in the consultations: the custodial institution, municipalities and probation. The overall purpose of developing an individualised resocialisation plan for detainees who are linked to extremism.
  - The 2019 attack in Utrecht prompted a change in Dutch law that widened the legal basis for information sharing related to VETOs and radicalised offenders. Information is shared between actors on a needs-basis and is not disclosed to anyone who does not need to know. In addition to the standardisation of processes, information-sharing in the Netherlands is facilitated by a supportive culture of mutual trust. When a sign of radicalisation is reported, investigations are launched under the coordination of the **Bureau of interrogation and safety**. The bureau is in charge of collecting internal reports from relevant actors, and if deemed relevant and necessary, monitoring telephone calls, organising cell inspections, supervising the inmates' reading material, reviewing statements and previous behaviour through judicial files. Further information can also be obtained from the police or prosecution. Based on this assessment, a decision is made as to whether the case has to be brought to the attention of the MAR.
- The prison-exit journey presents practical challenges in terms of **case transfer**, as multiple actors from different institutions are involved. In the Netherlands, the smooth transition of information before, during and after release is facilitated by the National Programme Against Radicalisation and Extremism, which involves prison, probation and municipalities. Local authorities are involved in the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of Radicalized Detainees from the start, ensuring an efficient transfer of information to the local Safety House located in Dutch municipalities, responsible for supporting the re-socialisation process after release. Offering **rehabilitation and reintegration measures** to the general prison population upon their prison release is a **long-established practice in the Netherlands**. As such, local multi-agency structures and support mechanisms such as the Safety Houses were already in place before practitioners started addressing the specific target group of VETOs.
  - While VETOs may require specialised rehabilitation measures, including those aimed at disengagement and addressing ideological motives, it is crucial they **do not receive preferential treatment** in terms of functional support, such as housing and integration into the labour market, compared to other offenders.
  - Rehabilitation interventions may be related to:

<sup>1</sup> The idea was made clear after the terror attack in Utrecht March 2019, as the perpetrator had been recently released from prison.

- **Family:** repairing relations, investing in protective family members, involving them in resocialisation
  - **Social network:** (re)building of healthy social networks, distancing from extremist networks
  - **Personal identity:** boosting resilience, skills in handling problems
  - **Reflection on ideology:** knowledge, spiritual guidance, encouragement of critical reflection, offering alternatives
  - **Daily life:** housing, income, stability, education/employment
  - **Mental Health:** therapy, evaluation, trauma counselling
  - **Behaviour and attitude:** responsiveness, false/non-compliance
- In the Netherlands, VETOs are separated from other inmates. They are held in designated wings within prison. This approach has faced criticism in the past. However, the MAR approach is applied to **all prisoners exhibiting signs of radicalisation**, whether detained in the dedicated terrorism wing or in a regular ward. While VETO cases will automatically be addressed by the MAR team, inmates demonstrating signs of radicalisation, before or during detention, will either be flagged in judicial documents or by prison contact officers.
    - It can be **challenging** to decisively **identify genuine signs of radicalisation**, as there is a potential for misinterpretation on the one hand (e.g. based on biases vis-à-vis Muslim inmates), on the other hand inmates being aware of monitoring may hide their ideology, adopt socially desirable behaviours or even manipulate other prisoners.
    - **Signs of radicalisation** can be **internal** or **external**, and can be observed in different contexts within the prison settings, but also by the police, probation, or other actors, such as the municipalities in the Dutch context. An internal indication refers to an employee of the Custodial Institutions Agency recognising a risk, while an external signal is received by PARE from an external actor. In the latter case, PARE will inform the Custodial Institutions Agency.
      - Signs of radicalisation can be drawn from a variety of aspects, such as the individual's network of contacts, ideological beliefs, the extremist nature of the crime committed, changes in contacts or visitors to the prison facilities, the adoption of deviant behaviour or the search for extremist information.
  - When a sign of radicalisation is detected, the **relevant contact point(s)** within the custodian institution is notified. As part of the implementation of MAR, designated prison staff are trained to identify these signs. The custodial institution and PARE then **assess the risk** and determine the appropriate **follow-up steps**, which could include downscaling, monitoring, notifying the municipality and other stakeholders or bringing the case to the attention of MAR. Risk assessment is conducted at the beginning of the sentence to evaluate risks posed in detention using VERA-2R. At the end of detention, risk assessment is also conducted together with probation. After release, municipalities will continue monitoring risks and needs through RADIX, a tool considering a broader set of socio-economic factors affecting re-socialisation. In all cases, efforts are made not to attract attention when addressing signs of radicalisation in order to avoid stigmatising consequences.
  - **Rehabilitation measures** should focus on the **specific needs** of each individual client, thus requiring a strong investment in terms of resources and capacities for individualised support plans.
    - Rehabilitation efforts often encompass more than just addressing ideological or extremist beliefs. It also involves identifying strategies and means to overcome **every-day practical issues**, such

as rebuilding family and social ties, enhancing personal identity, addressing basic needs like housing, income and education. Improving psychological well-being is also essential.

- In addition, VETOs may require **ad-hoc interventions addressing terrorism-specific aspects/issues**, such as the reflection of ideological beliefs or actions supporting disengagement from violence.
- Despite the lack of systematic data collection and evaluation that could lead to a solid evidence-based approach concerning resocialisation, practical experiences, such as the one put forward by the MAR programme, are contributing to the development of **good practices**.
- With the goal of **fostering long-term engagement**, the question arises how the involvement of clients can be sustained over the long term in order to maximise impact, facilitate reintegration and reduce the risk of recidivism.
  - Engagement with VETOs does not necessarily require specific incentives, but can be linked to the support usually offered to former offenders based on their individual needs. This support can be facilitated through continued assistance from case managers. By providing the same type of measures and incentives as for other offenders, stigmatisation can be avoided. Additionally, disengagement efforts should continue even after the end of probation.
- The involvement of relevant stakeholders in a multi-agency approach requires a **legal framework** defining the role of each actor as well as ensuring that safeguards are in place with due regard to data protection laws. Legislation can also facilitate the implementation of rehabilitation measures by foreseeing, for example, the possibility to prolong the probationary period under certain circumstances related to risk assessment. In the Netherlands, the probation time can be extended for up to 10 years subject to a decision by the judiciary.

## Recommendations

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- The time a VETO spends in prison should be used to prepare his/her reintegration into society. This process should be initiated ahead of release and sustained after re-entry into society through the involvement of relevant actors within and outside the prison settings. It should include police, prison and probation services, prosecution, local municipalities and social work services.
- Multi-agency approaches can present challenges, but a useful starting point to address them is to focus on areas of common ground where cooperation can be established and nurtured, rather than on the limitations of what cannot be done or shared.
- Endorsements from high-level policymakers can be helpful in promoting collaboration among different actors and providing incentives to work together towards successful rehabilitation processes. This can help to establish a culture of joint ownership and cooperation at the operational level.
- As cooperation among different actors is increasing in several Member States, it is important to have a tailored normative framework that can help guide the process and lead to the formalisation of such cooperation.
- The identification of people showing signs of radicalisation and who could benefit from involvement in rehabilitation measures requires an understanding of the context in which they operate. This involves assessing relevant data in light of the specific contextual settings, as well as input from the judicial system, probation officers, and other relevant stakeholders.

## Relevant practices

1. The Dutch practices for supporting re-socialisation and reducing recidivism include a **mentorship programme** that is coordinated by an NGO in collaboration with Dutch municipalities. The programme involves trained volunteers and professionals who support released VETOs in creating a personalised reintegration plan that includes an exit strategy and the necessary mechanisms to implement it.
2. In Catalonia (Spain), dedicated **teams** comprising heterogeneous professional expertise have been developed **to detect signals of radicalisation**. All information is compiled by a **central unit** conducting relevant risk assessments.
3. In France, the NGO GROUPE SOS Solidarités established the **PAIRS (Individualised Support and Social Reaffiliation Programmes)** to work towards disengagement from violent radicalisation and prevent the risk of progressing to violence while encouraging social reintegration and instilling civic values. The programme implies a multidisciplinary approach and several professions such as psychologists, career counsellors, social workers and Islamic studies experts.
4. The **French radicalisation care units (QPR)** offer the PPRV programme to VETOs and radicalised inmates. The programme provides individual and collective activities aimed at supporting the disengagement and reintegration process, with the involvement of a multi-disciplinary team of case workers from prison and probation services, as well as specially hired consultants including mediators, psychologists, social workers and educators. The team works to prepare the inmates for release and social reintegration. Progress is discussed and assessed through multidisciplinary commissions that meet twice a month.

## Follow up

Following the discussions held during the study visit, future RAN Practitioners events could focus on promoting a culture of mutual trust among the actors involved in rehabilitation and reintegration of VETOs and detainees showing signs of radicalisation. Additionally, practitioners could benefit from further understanding of how mentorship programmes can work in the P/CVE context, especially concerning rehabilitation, and how that can translate to operational suggestions. Finally, a reverse-thinking approach could be the focus of future RAN Practitioners events to assess which measures and good practices developed specifically for VETOs could be transferred to other offenders.

## Further reading

RAN (2022) [Police role and contribution in the holistic, multi-agency case diagnosis of at-risk individuals, groups and neighbourhoods](#)

RAN (2021) [RAN Study Visit to Paris on 'Effective management of the prison-exit continuum'](#)

RAN H&SC ISSUE Paper (2019) [Multi-Agency Working and preventing violent extremism: Paper 2](#)

RAN H&SC ISSUE Paper (2018) [Multi-agency working and preventing violent extremism I](#)

