

SPOTLIGHT

APR 2024

REHABILITATION
AND
REINTEGRATION

RAN 
Practitioners



REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION



The rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals convicted of terrorism-related offences, those returning from conflict zones, including their families, and those leaving extremist groups is one of the biggest security challenges facing EU Member States today.

This publication has been commissioned by the European Commission and has been prepared by REOC Communications on behalf of RadarEurope, a subsidiary of RadarGroup.



Editorial

This edition of the RAN Practitioners Spotlight magazine therefore takes a look at some of the challenges related to rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as some of the approaches that have been taken, including multi-agency approaches, mentorship and engagement with families.

With foreign fighters returning from Ukraine, women and children still returning from camps in Syria and Iraq, and violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) being released from prisons across the EU, the need to effectively and successfully rehabilitate them and reintegrate them back into society has never been more acute and important.

Not only do these efforts affect large sections of our society, but this work involves numerous practitioners from multiple disciplines, including police, prison and probation services, mental health professionals, intervention providers, exit workers, local authorities, community organisations, among many others. Coordination between these varying efforts and among the different services and organisations is therefore critical.

This edition of the RAN Practitioners Spotlight magazine therefore takes a look at some of the challenges related to rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as some of the approaches that have been taken, including multi-agency approaches, mentorship and engagement with families. The publication

features a number of original articles by members of RAN, papers produced by RAN Practitioners, and case studies of programmes being delivered.

As always, we want to hear from you. If you would like to contribute to future editions of Spotlight, or if you have ideas for a topic, article, interview or feature, please get in touch with the RAN Practitioners communications team on our email by clicking this [link](#).

RAN Practitioners Staff

Contributors



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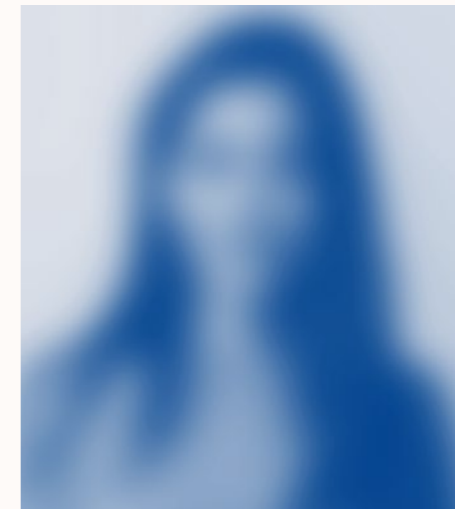
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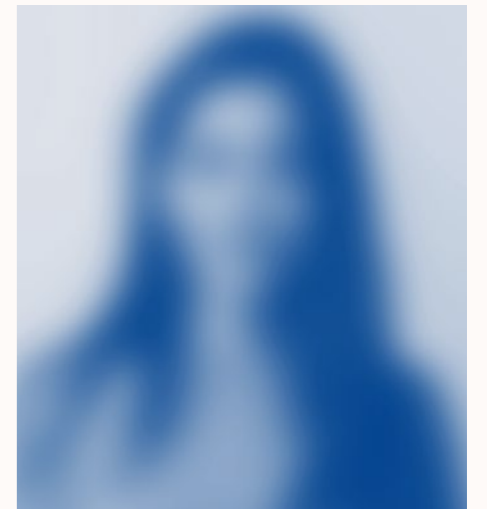
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**Nadya
RADKOVSKA**

Nadya Radkovska is co-lead of the RAN PRISONS Working Group and Head of International Cooperation and Training of Staff Department, General Directorate "Execution of Sentences", Bulgaria.

Prisons; "ground" for rehabilitation and reformation of VETOs...

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Prison systems around the world face fundamental challenges and dilemmas. The punitive justice policies, the growing number of incarcerated people around the world, and the new generation of prisoners and prison staff, indicates that criminal-justice systems play an essential role in the safety, security and development of our societies. These trends in prisons mirrors the dynamic nature of the world outside and calls for a more sophisticated understanding of the important role that prisons can play in preventing the further radicalisation of violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) and enabling their successful rehabilitation.

Managing VETOs brings additional challenges for prisons: ensuring the security and safety of prisoners and staff; the fair treatment and humane conditions of prisoners; providing opportunities for rehabilitation and re-entry into society. In a world where violent extremists continually exploit events to radicalise and recruit, there is an even greater need for authorities to demonstrate that VETOs have been deprived of their liberty in a secure environment, but treated humanely and provided with hope for the future.

Prison authorities are confronted with daily challenges in the preparation of those convicted of terrorism and violent extremism-related offences for their safe re-entry into society, dissuading them from violence and allowing them to become law-abiding members of their communities. This requires an enormous effort, especially for first-line practitioners, who in many cases do not receive appropriate and tailored training and support, including in developing constructive and professional relationships with

VETOs. Deradicalisation and rehabilitation are valuable tools for countering and preventing violent extremism. Therefore, interventions which are both aimed at the cognitive and behavioural transformation of VETOs and which promote their social reintegration, are essential in creating an inclusive, peaceful, and tolerant society. The logic behind this is that if an individual can adopt radical beliefs and attitudes that lead to violent extremism, then the individual can also abandon those beliefs and attitudes. There is no gold standard or silver bullet, not in the least because these tools are highly context specific, require considerable tailoring and very much depend on the availability of resources and political support for penitentiary systems.

The process of rehabilitation requires a structural and holistic approach, as well as the inclusion of different external actors, including civil society organisations (CSOs), at the beginning of the journey of the radicalised person, until the end. The success of rehabilitation and reintegration of VETOs therefore requires strong inter-agency and multi-stakeholder coordination.

- Before starting the deradicalisation process and during rehabilitation interventions it is important to understand the mental state of the radicalised person. There is much research which shows a nexus between mental health, radicalisation and terrorism. In this context, the role of psychiatrists and psychologists is very important.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is a key component of all interventions with VETOs. Concerned actors and stakeholders involved in their deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration must comply with international human rights law and humanitarian laws.

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From a fear of violent extremist contagion and dissemination among other prisoners to concerns around reintegrating formers back into communities, the perceived challenges are many and the tolerance for failure is low.

- The involvement of social workers during imprisonment and after release is crucial for the reintegration process. In many cases, VETOs lack job skills and sometimes turn back to violent extremism out of frustration about their lack of opportunities. To avoid such a scenario, social workers can play a vital role – they can address their needs, give them the skills that they need and help them to overcome the stigmatisation from the community within which they return.
- CSOs are also vital partners for prison authorities. They provide specific interventions but also raise awareness of the political, operational and logistical challenges related to the rehabilitation of violent extremist prisoners.
- In the case of religious inspired radicalisation, religious leaders and institutions are vital in countering such processes and supporting disengagement.
- The involvement of the families of VETOs is a crucial factor for the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist prisoners because they can have a significant impact upon their decision-making process. It is also essential to conduct a precise assessment and evaluation of the impact and the role the family can play in advance.
- Independent evaluators must be involved during various stages of the rehabilitation and reintegration process to conduct impact assessments and generate valuable lessons learned.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law is a key component of all interventions with VETOs. Concerned actors and stakeholders involved in their deradicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration must comply with international human rights law and humanitarian laws. The legal and policy framework for the rehabilitation of VETOs must refer to domestic and international human rights norms. Any violation of their human rights in the name of fighting radicalisation and extremism may have a detrimental effect.

The presence of violent extremist offenders in prisons poses numerous challenges to the criminal justice system and to other stakeholders involved in their management, rehabilitation and reintegration. From a fear of violent extremist contagion and dissemination among other prisoners to concerns around reintegrating formers back into communities, the perceived challenges are many and the tolerance for failure is low.

The public has very high expectations in relation to the prevention of radicalization and violent extremism, which might, in some cases, translate into pressure. It is crucial to communicate openly about the limitation of prison authorities in legal and practical aspect. Sometimes it is difficult for society to acknowledge that the sustainable reformation and reintegration of VETOs is a long process which continues long after release from prison. It is even more challenging to convince the community that prisons should invest in efforts to support the process of change of people who are passing through a very difficult journey in their life, trying to find new perspective and meaning for the future.



WATCH FILM



Rehabilitation in prisons



RAN Practitioners met with two practitioners to discuss the work they do in rehabilitating violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) in prisons. Drawing on their experiences of working both inside and outside of prison, they talk to us about the rehabilitation journey, from detention to preparation for release, giving insight into different approaches taken in France and Croatia respectively. They describe some of the challenges of this work and how to overcome them, the choices that offenders can make and what happens after release.





Feature 01/04

Diletta
BERARDINELLI

Disengagement in an Italian prison

Diletta Berardinelli is lead of this project and co-lead of the RAN PRISONS Working Group.





In June 2023, a pioneering pilot disengagement project with inmates convicted of international jihadist terrorism offences was launched in the high-security section of an Italian penitentiary institute.

A decision was made not to use the term violent radicalisation when discussing the programme with the detainees. Aware of the potentially high level of conflict due to the type of offence and the type of detainee, the workshop was presented as a path of self-reflection, with the aim of avoiding the build-up of prejudices which would likely hinder participation.

The treatment pathway aims to initiate processes of disengagement from the use of violence and consequently to decrease the risk of reoffending. While the programme is extremely ambitious, it starts by achieving small specific objectives such as acquiring the understanding of the personal experience of the detainee and teaching basic concepts regarding the country's history, legal system and democratic values.

Meetings were held twice a month for about two hours, led by an intervention provider in the presence of the prison's cultural mediator. This

aspect provides an opportunity to exchange views and operate in a collaborative multi-agency approach between experts from NGOs/civil society and prison staff. Furthermore, external experts are invited to participate depending on the topics of the meetings.

At the invitation of the prison, a monthly training on P/CVE issues has also been provided, consisting of lectures in the morning and interactive workshops – to address and share the daily challenges regarding the monitoring and management of inmates – in the afternoon.

A further innovative aspect of the training is its multidisciplinary approach involving all functions, from the health service to the prison, police and educators' unit. This approach has proven invaluable in strengthening a climate of sharing and trust among external experts and internal penitentiary staff, that is fundamental for the work in prison.

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After seven months of activity we have achieved a good measure of success. Memories and personal experiences of their private lives were shared, often starting with simple memories, such as the story of their favourite game as children or memories about their mother.

Furthermore, it encourages the flow of knowledge and mutual learning, based upon experiences, and enables the coordination of cultural and religious initiatives for the treatment and reduction of recidivism (such as celebrating Ramadan).

The disengagement programme has several stages in order to adequately address the drivers of political-religious radicalisation. First of all, due to the fact that participation is on a voluntary basis, efforts are made to establish the group itself, developing a climate of respect and trust among inmates and staff. The first meetings are of paramount importance. They must take place in an atmosphere which exudes sincerity (within the possible professional limits of our role) and empathy, which doesn't of course mean justifying the inmate's criminal history but rather understanding their life journey.

After seven months of activity we have achieved a good measure of success. Memories and personal experiences of their private lives were shared, often starting with simple memories, such as the story of their favourite game as children or memories about their mother. All activities take place while carrying out a manual activity.

We were initially afraid that activities such as water colouring, sowing, plasticine modelling could be perceived as 'feminine' or 'childish', but our experience showed instead that they were well accepted and were instrumental in nurturing the sense of relaxation, ultimately contributing to the success of the sessions.

Furthermore, the crafted objects are intriguing for analysing a symbolic transfer upon their artistic craft. This first phase took place within an intimate and fun atmosphere. The activities concluded by playing board games. The games were instrumental in understanding certain dynamics (the hierarchy of roles, respecting and learning the rules, losing etc.), and in reinforcing a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

In the following phase, we debated the roles that historical figures such as St. Francis, the Sultan of Egypt al-Malik al-Kamil, as well as the prophet Yusuf in his experience in prison played, to activate a discussion regarding interreligious dialogue, with all its opportunities and issues. The use of the historical period indeed facilitates an open discussion detached from the present political experience, despite the polarisation of the two worlds.

The work on disengagement will also focus on activities with the aim of humanising the 'enemy'. The topics of these workshops will focus on the perception of forgiveness and the group will together develop a set of principles or rules for shared and peaceful living, regardless of one's creed or ideology.

The activities carried out so far have enabled participants to exchange views on a range of topics. This approach is based upon an educational methodology inspired by the APAC school established in Brazil that manages 54 prisons, considered by the UN a best practice in term of recidivism reduction. The approach and its tools

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facilitate individual introspection, striving to overcome the prison dynamics of omertà (code of silence) and fake respect.

Obviously aware of intra-prison dynamics, the programme is flexible, and can be adjusted to the specific context and relationship with inmates in a multi-agency approach with prison staff. In addition to group meetings, individual interviews with detainees are available on request in order to deepen the understanding of their life story, thus determining the predominant factors of the radicalisation process, leading to more targeted rehabilitation work.

Our challenge, which we could only approach thanks to the forward-looking prison that has welcomed us in this pilot project, is to try to cure, through relationship and dialogue, the disease of hatred, as J. Said hopes in *The Islamic Ways to Non-Violence*, so as not to resemble "the doctor who has no other

medicine for the sick person but to kill him without curing him: what an evil doctor this is! We claim to be good doctors for the ideological illnesses of society, but then our method of treatment consists in killing and murdering the sick person, not in eliminating his illness."





WATCH FILM



RAN Prisons



Practitioners came together at a RAN PRISONS event in Rome to discuss some of the challenges around dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) in prison. The film, which gives an insight into a RAN Practitioners Working Group meeting, captures the thoughts of some of those who participated in the event, including on dealing with false or non-compliance in prison.





Feature

02/04

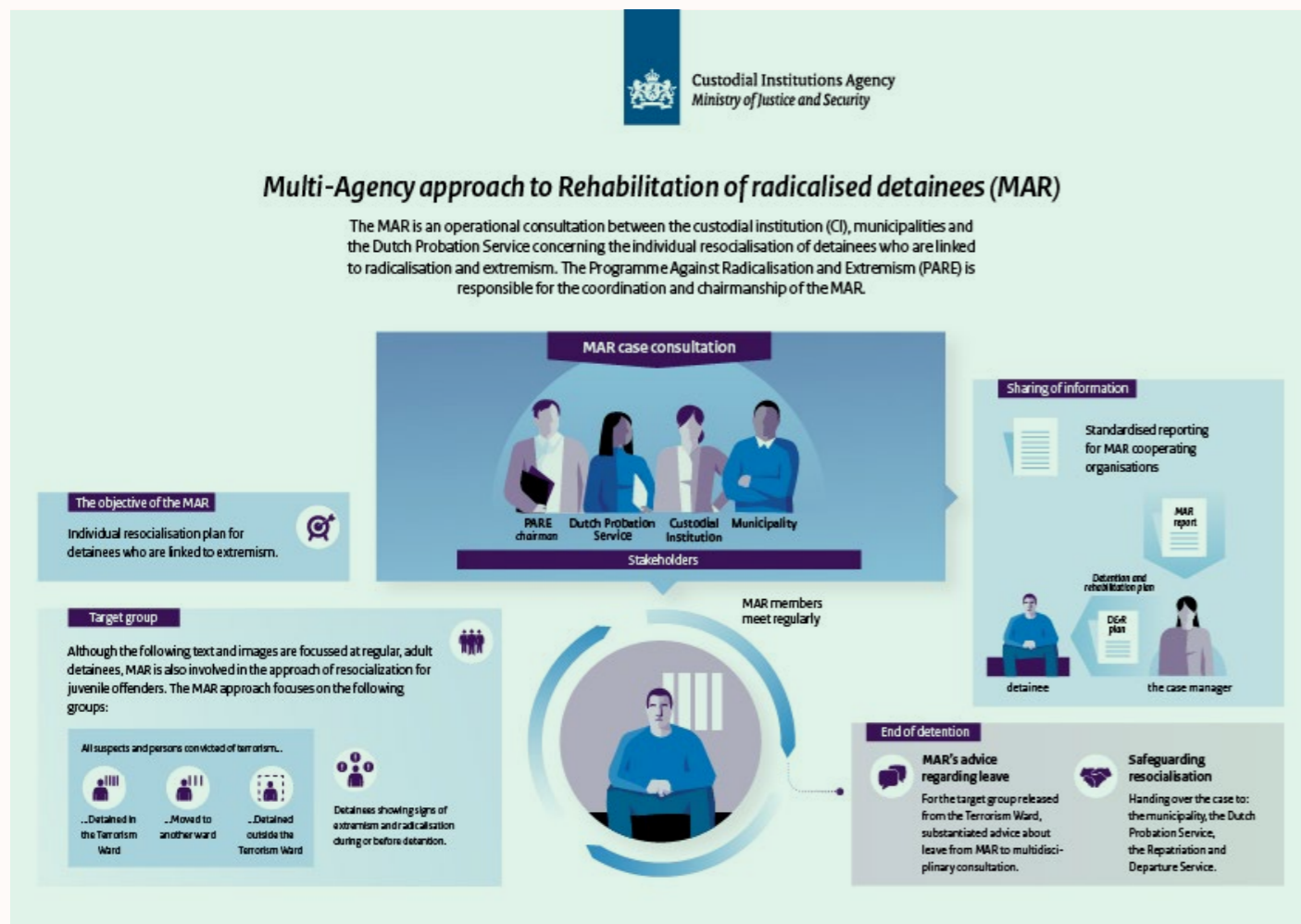
Maartje B.

Programme Against Radicalisation and Extremism (PARE)

Maartje B. is a senior advisor with the national Program Against Radicalization & Extremism (PARE) of the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency. She has a background in behavioural science, specialised in criminal behaviour and family- and group dynamics. In the past, Maartje has been responsible for the development and coordination of the multi-agency approach for radicalization and (potential) jihadism for Safety Houses in the Netherlands. In 2020 she joined PARE.



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The Programme Against Radicalisation and Extremism (PARE) of the Dutch Custodial Institutions Agency started in 2019. It covers all prisons in the Netherlands and includes the National Central Point for signs of radicalisation and extremism observed during detention as well as the Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees (MAR).

Central Point for signals of radicalisation

Since 2019, PARE forms the National Central Point where all Custodial Institutions (prisons), as well as other organisations (such as police, municipalities and probation services), can report potential cases of radicalisation and extremism for individuals detained for any type of offense. Persons suspected or convicted of a terrorist offense will automatically be included in our MAR approach.

PARE gathers all the potential cases of radicalisation and extremism and adds to them with information from personal files, information from the prison and any other organisations that are involved. Then, we assess the risks and based upon the outcome, we decide how to follow up. This might be downscaled if there are no risks. We monitor them throughout their detention period (for example when we need more time to see how someone will develop) or, if we see high ideological risks, we will include the individual in

our Multidisciplinary Approach, the MAR. Because we handle all of the cases for all prisons, no information is lost when someone is transferred to another prison, or if someone leaves and re-enters a prison. The National Central Point receives around 80 – 90 signals of potential radicalisation and extremism of detainees a year. This involves all kinds and forms of extremism.

Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees (MAR)

Target group

The Multi-Agency Approach to Rehabilitation of radicalised detainees (MAR), is a national approach for all detainees held on extremism or terrorism-related charges in the Netherlands. Most of them are staying in one of the three high-level security wings reserved for terrorist offenders (TA). For the last period of detention (12-18 months), detainees are eligible for transfer to a regular prison in

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Therefore, the collaboration is less depending on individual knowledge and willingness of persons. Involved partners declare that they are very satisfied; the MAR plays a key role in information sharing. The importance of a well-functioning MAR is essential.

order to work more specifically on their individual rehabilitation goals. The MAR approach includes all kinds and forms of extremism.

Aim

Together with the prison service, the probation service and the local municipality, we develop a reintegration plan for each detainee. We start the MAR-meetings immediately when someone enters the prison, so that he or she is supported throughout his or her detention. We have eight areas of focus: risk profile, family, social network, personal identity, reinterpretation of violent ideology, daily life (housing, income, and job), resilience, and responsivity. The reintegration plan is based on the risk profile and the opportunities for intervention. To build our risk profile, we use structured instruments such as the VERA-2R, but also professional judgement from experienced and trained practitioners, ideological evaluation by an expert, psychological, psychiatric examination and evaluation, as well as evaluation of a person's network.

The MAR provides the platform where risk profiles and opportunities for intervention are discussed and decided. Such interventions are based on different factors, such as family, social network, ideology, mental health, personal identity, basic needs (housing, income) and responsivity. All organisations involved must be in agreement about any decisions that are made. When decisions are made it is important to strike the right balance between rehabilitation and security.

Each organisation who participates in the MAR has its own mandate and responsibility, and brings its own unique information and perspectives on the case. Providing the opportunity for these organisations to come together to share information, discuss which risks are most relevant and co-develop the best strategy to mitigate these risks, in order to achieve successful rehabilitation, is key.

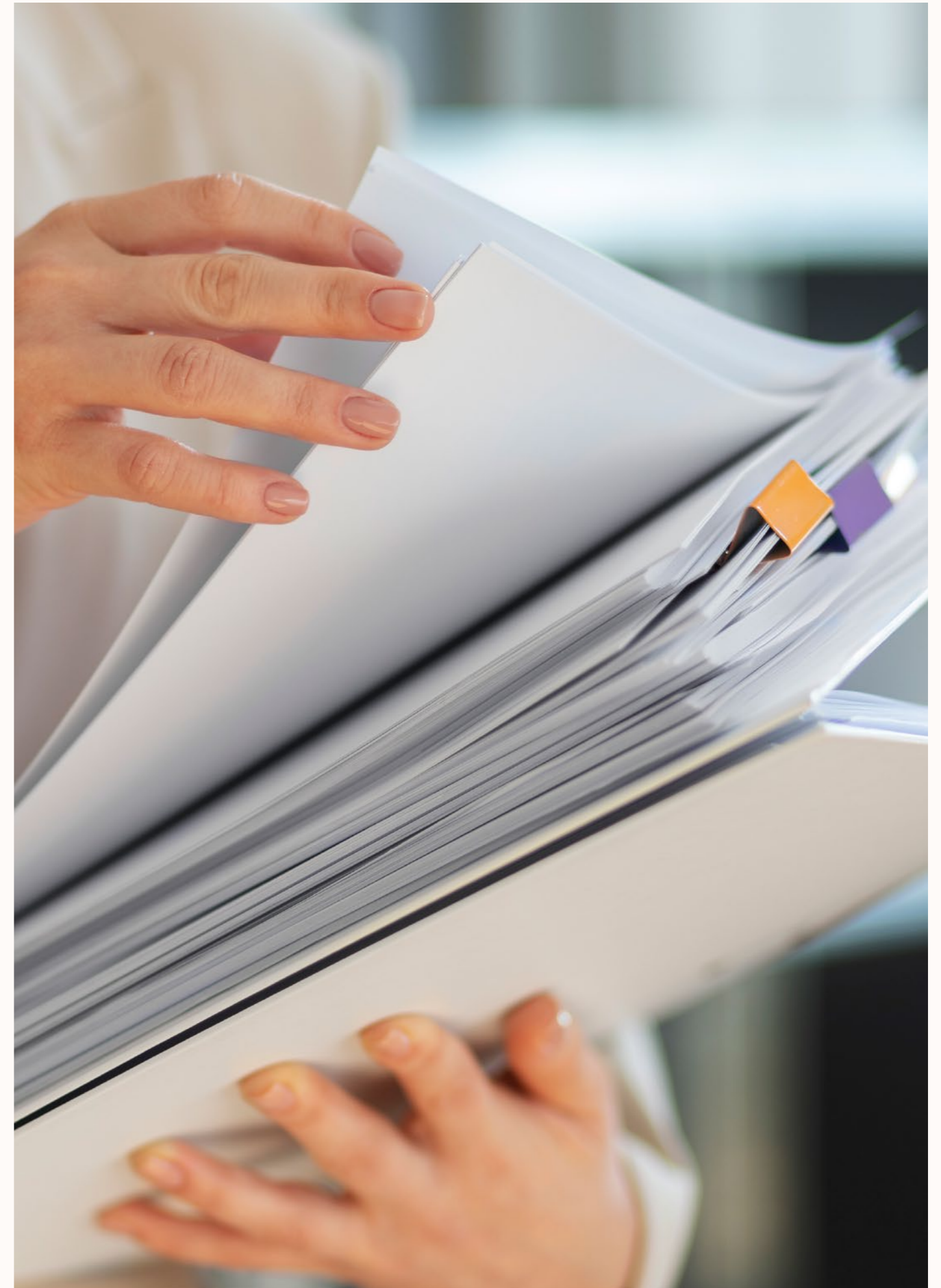
Interventions can start in detention and continue afterwards through the local multi-agency approach. After leaving prison, the MAR rehabilitation plan is transferred to the local municipality that has been involved in the MAR approach from the start.

Evaluation

In 2022, an investigation on tackling radicalisation was carried out by the Inspections and Audit service of the Ministry of Justice and security. In this report the MAR is mentioned: "Because of the MAR the contact between the responsible case partners is structurally secured. Therefore, the collaboration is less depending on individual knowledge and willingness of persons. Involved partners declare that they are very satisfied; the MAR plays a key role in information sharing. The importance of a well-functioning MAR is essential."

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Article 02/03



Luisa
RAVAGNANI

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**Prison, probation
and exit work:
a dynamic
path towards
rehabilitation that
must involve the
civil society...**

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When dealing with criminal behaviour and the effects of crimes on societies, one of the most relevant questions is of course related to what works in terms of reducing the risk of reoffending through rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. And the first problem that is faced by practitioners and academics alike is the lack of a shared definition of what is meant by rehabilitation and reintegration.

To understand this difficulty, it may be helpful to refer to McNeill (2012, page 07) who, underlying the controversial nature of the rehabilitation concept, described it as “remarkably elastic and hotly contested”. So, rehabilitation and reintegration can be seen as dynamic concepts which presuppose the co-participation of different stakeholders to reach positive outcomes and good models of standardised risk/need assessment practices.

At different levels and with different responsibilities, the most important stakeholders are of course the involuntary ones: those that, for different reasons, are mandatory parts of the criminal system, such as the violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) and the practitioners working in the field of prison and probation. In addition to them, the community in a broad sense – which can be represented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) – needs to work closely with the relevant stakeholders in order to grant support for the post-release phase, in what is considered probably to be the most delicate one (that sees the involved person coming back into society, normally without any kind of supervision).

Another useful definition – not necessarily less controversial – is the one of desistance: in literature different perspectives are presented and authors are still debating about the most important and relevant factors that can affect the desistance pathway. Whether violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) are involved in positive rehabilitation pathways or in long lasting desistance ones, the relevant factors that must be considered are almost the same as for the wider prison population.

It is possible to identify factors/influences within each individual which are of fundamental importance to enabling a positive pathway away from criminal behaviour, such as violent extremism. These factors might include their age, their family, their peers, their community, among many others.

It cannot be ignored that these same factors can also take on a negative value, due to personal experiences (for example if the crime – or the extremist ideology – developed within the family, the involvement of the latter must be carefully considered).

It is therefore clear that the one size fit all approach cannot reach positive outcomes, while an approach which is tailored to the needs of the individual is able to achieve long lasting results.

So, prison and probation cannot be considered as two independent steps of a criminal sentence because the involved offender is a unique person, with specific personal characteristics and needs that are not clearly attributable only to the phase of prison or probation.



SEE R2COM HERE



It is therefore clear that the one size fit all approach cannot reach positive outcomes, while an approach which is tailored to the needs of the individual is able to achieve long lasting results.

So, prison and probation cannot be considered as two independent steps of a criminal sentence because the involved offender is a unique person, with specific personal characteristics and needs that are not clearly attributable only to the phase of prison or probation. Reintegration and desistance paths do not end with the conclusion of the sentence.

Even in the absence of clear definitions of the above mentioned concepts, there is still the possibility to agree on a couple of arguments:

- The offender and the ex-offender play a pivotal role in these processes (their sincere commitment to the cause is among the most important predictors of success);
- The specific skills and positive approaches of practitioners (prison, probation and exit workers) can make the difference in terms of promoting desistance and rehabilitation.

In addition to these involuntary actors it is worth to mention the invaluable work done by NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the rehabilitation journey. Their contribution – even if it creates some grounds for concern, for example, their capability to be independent from political movements – is particularly relevant in relation to:

- Their ability to facilitate social inclusion and integration of marginalised individuals into society;
- Their direct and permanent contact with the society they work with;
- Their credibility and experience to work with specific groups to help detecting and addressing their specific grievances that make individuals more vulnerable to radicalization (OSCE, 2020);
- The important role they play in guiding public opinion on fundamental issues.

To learn more about the involvement of NGOs and CSOs in rehabilitation and reintegration work see R2COM [here](#) or click arrow icon on page.

Lastly, considering what works in the field of rehabilitation in the continuum from prison to probation, it must be mentioned that the respect of Human Rights in all the different steps of the proposed paths is an essential element for the achievement of such complex targets.



WATCH FILM



RAN Reporters



An episode of RAN Reporters – a series of films which uncover some of the most interesting, innovative and new projects being delivered by members of the RAN Practitioners network – visits the Deaconess Foundation in Finland, to learn about its holistic approach to exit work.





Feature 03/04

Fabian
WICHMANN

EXIT Germany

As part of RAN Reporters series of films, RAN Practitioners will be visiting Fabian Wichmann and the team at EXIT-Germany to learn more about some of their latest projects and their approach to exit work. Stay tuned to the RAN Practitioners YouTube channel and future RAN Practitioners Updates for this upcoming episode.



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EXIT-Germany is an initiative that provides assistance to individuals who want to leave the extreme right-wing movement and start a new life. Founded by criminologist and former police detective Bernd Wagner and former neo-Nazi leader Ingo Hasselbach, EXIT-Germany has been active since the summer of 2000 in supporting those who wish to disengage from extreme and violent right-wing environments.

As the first organization in Germany to start such an endeavour, EXIT-Germany is one of the most experienced and successful programmes for de-radicalisation and exit assistance in the country. Since its inception, EXIT-Germany has been continuously working to help individuals from all backgrounds – but mainly those from highly radicalised milieus such as group leaders, terrorists, and party leaders – to leave the violent right-wing movement, and in the process has developed effective methods and programmes in this field. As of 2022, EXIT-Germany has successfully assisted over 800 individuals, with a recidivism rate of approximately 3%.

In the process of exiting, EXIT-Germany helps individuals develop new perspectives outside of the right-wing extremist scene and come to terms with the past. EXIT-Germany often mediates contacts between former right-wing extremists and right-wing extremist-oriented young people in order

to motivate them to leave the scene. To facilitate successful integration back into society, EXIT-Germany provides contacts, gives practical help, develops personal skills and addresses questions of security, social issues and personal recovery.

In addition to individual case work, EXIT-Germany provides advice to organisations and institutions dealing with violent right-wing extremism as well as support to families. Regarding families, EXIT-Germany helps mothers, fathers and siblings if they are worried that their sons, daughters, brothers or sisters will slide into the violent right-wing scene, become involved in it or even become a criminal also helping families when it comes to removing family members from the scene.



VISIT EXIT GERMANY



EXIT-Germany delivers awareness raising campaigns and projects, including social media campaigns and exhibitions of extremist content and material. One such campaign, designed to make those who are thinking about exiting violent right-wing movements realise that it is possible.



EXIT-Germany delivers awareness raising campaigns and projects, including social media campaigns and exhibitions of extremist content and material. One such campaign, designed to make those who are thinking about exiting violent right-wing movements realise that it is possible, is 'EXIT – (NO) WAY BACK'. In the first season, Christian Ernst Weißgerber, who speaks remorsefully about his past and points out the dangers of the right-wing extremist worldview and violence, reflects on his time as an active neo-Nazi.

If you would like to find out more about the work of EXIT-Germany, including its case work, projects and exhibitions you can visit the website [here](#) or click on the arrow icon top left in this feature.

A Article 03/03



Tina
**WILCHEN-
CHRISTENSEN**

Tina Wilchen-Christensen is an experienced consultant, train-the-trainer and researcher within the field of P/CVE.

Mentorship in exit, rehabilitation and reintegration...

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Mentoring in the context of P/CVE aims at rehabilitating politically motivated offenders after they have left a violent extremist environment. It has proven to be an effectful tool of support in the difficult transition from being a violent politically motivated offender into becoming a citizen abiding the democratic rules conditioned by liberal democracy, as the barriers to reintegration are many. Many approaches prevalent in programmes aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) are defined as ‘mentoring’. So what constitutes mentoring? Why is it effective and what needs to be in place for a mentoring approach to be successful?

‘Role models’, ‘counselling’ and ‘mentorship’ are often juxtaposed, but despite the term, has become a common label used across interventions and it often refers to different approaches, aims and target audiences. Mentors work strategically towards fulfilling a clear aim based on structured training and support by a programme. This is not the case with a role model approach, which mainly utilises the personal story and life experience of the role model to inspire others. While counselling in deradicalisation and rehabilitation often refers to a comprehensive combination of functional and social reintegration measures, mentorship aims to instigate cognitive distancing away from extremist beliefs and worldviews.

Individuals who join extremist political movements are immersed in an ideological infused everyday practice. This involves being part of a culture, where violence and harassment is accepted, promoted, and legitimated, in addition to other values and norms at odds with liberal democracy. Over time this has

an impact on the individuals’ identity, perspectives, actions, and ethics. When leaving a violent extremist environment many individuals experience maladaptive emotional and bodily reactions and find it difficult to adjust. In addition, the stigmatisation of former violent extremist adds to the challenges that need to be overcome in a reintegration process, which may involve the development of an alternative identity, occupation, and the establishment of new social networks. Interventions aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration of former violent extremists need to take account of the individual’s social, political, cultural and community context, as well as addressing ideas and beliefs. Reintegration after involvement in violent extremist groups therefore requires a holistic intervention.

Mentoring aims to challenge a mentee’s old perspectives on life and introduces them to new ways of acting and meaningful ways of engaging with democratic society. Mentoring builds on the belief that people’s identity is conditioned by the environment they are engaged in. This means that you learn to become a violent extremist by being involved in a violent extremist group. This also means that the individual can develop an alternative identity providing they break with the violent extremist environment they have been part of and come to identify with an alternative one. Mentoring therefore aims at immersing the mentee in a process of learning linked to activities in an alternative environment, situated in everyday life in democratic society. This implies that mentors model behaviour and cognition with the aim of influencing the mentees on their path to a more nuanced perspective on the world and to support

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DISCOVER MORE



For a mentoring approach to be successful it is important that the mentors have a solid understanding of the specific characteristics of the target group and the social and cultural practices at work within the violent extremist environment they represent.



their transformation. Based on a non-judgmental and trustful relationship a mentor thereby supports a former violent extremist in becoming a non-violent citizen by setting examples of how to act in everyday life and having reflective dialogues about it, which a motivated mentee can be inspired by and learn from. When a mentoring scheme is linked to a specific community this also provides the possibility for a mentee to enter a supportive environment, where the mentee's non-reflective perspectives and social practices, can be challenged through other people's questions, and at times social sanctions. This can help mentees become reflective about ideologically-infused 'truths' and prejudices, as well as maladaptive social strategies, and readjust to society.

For a mentoring approach to be successful it is important that the mentors have a solid understanding of the specific characteristics of the target group and the social and cultural practices

at work within the violent extremist environment they represent. Besides, mentors need to receive training and supervision and the programme should cooperate with other public and civil society actors who have the capability to assess and handle issues regarding mental health and functional reintegration. Accompanying problem areas, such as substance abuse and mental health issues, may need to be addressed alongside a mentoring process. It is of equal importance to cooperate with employment consultants, career advisers and/or partners who offer vocational training to support the mentee to move forward in due time, to uphold their motivation and for the approach to be holistic, ensuring that the overall mentor-based intervention becomes a success.

For more information and access to articles, book chapters and reports, see [here](#).



Feature 04/04

Annika
VON BERG

Violence Prevention Network; Family Counselling

Annika von Berg is a researcher and project leader at Violence Prevention Network. She is a political scientist and her research focusses on risk assessment and social diagnostics in P/CVE, deradicalization processes and Lone Actor Terrorists.



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Violence Prevention Network (VPN) has been active in P/CVE work for over 20 years. Counselling families and other individuals who are part of the social environment of vulnerable or radicalised individuals has formed a large part of this work. Working with these groups of people is key in guaranteeing a holistic approach to P/CVE work.

Within the scope of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees' (BAMF) Advice Center on Radicalisation – and in collaboration with other members of the referral network – VPN was also responsible for drafting the 'Standards in counselling for the social environment of (potentially) radicalised Islamist individuals'. The result explicitly includes standards for counselling families, including universal standards (framing and principles) as well as action (goals, processes, and methods) standards.

There are three main ways in which VPN works with families of vulnerable and radicalised individuals:

- Counselling with families and the social environment – without working with the radicalised/vulnerable individuals

In many cases, families, or members of the social environment (such as teachers, social workers, friends) approach one of VPN's local counselling centres, because a family member, a student or a friend is perceived to be radicalised or radicalising,

convicted and/or imprisoned due to a crime related to extremism/terrorism. The main goal of this type of counselling is to increase the confidence and ability of those seeking support to take action and deal with the problem. VPN does this by offering them guidance on how to improve their relationship with the radicalised/vulnerable individual, how to understand their child, student or friend better, or simply explaining which changes in the individual might indicate real concerns in terms of radicalisation – and which might not. Ideally, this positively impacts the deradicalisation process, e.g. by enabling the social network surrounding the radicalised/vulnerable individual to uphold contact and thus preventing the individual from withdrawing in the extremist in-group, which most certainly would result in further radicalisation as input and ideas challenging extremist beliefs will no longer be available. Furthermore, these individuals in the social environment might also operate as confidant and the radicalised/vulnerable individual might open up to them, if they have proven to be reliable and non-judgemental in the past.

In many cases, families, or members of the social environment (such as teachers, social workers, friends) approach one of Violence Prevention Network's local counselling centres, because a family member, a student or a friend is perceived to be radicalised or radicalising.

If someone approaches the counselling centre with one of the abovementioned issues, counsellors will start the counselling/‘clearing’ process. This first step aims at evaluating the needs and worries of the family/social environment and at developing a preliminary understanding of the potentially radicalising/radicalised individual. This includes a preliminary analysis of questions such as why the person may be attracted to extremist ideologies, if the observed behaviour is of concern or may for example just be relatively common teenage behaviour, and whether the case shows any immediate warning signs of potential harm to themselves or others. This initial counselling also includes guidance on how to deal with the issue in general as explained in the abovementioned goals.

Based on this initial process, counsellors will in a second step offer different approaches on handling the case. This might be a referral to or collaboration with other relevant services, such as child guidance offices, youth welfare offices, police, victim protection and counselling (depending on the specifics of the case). However, if the clearing process does indeed lead to the preliminary conclusion that the case might be relevant for a P/CVE counselling centre, further in-person or remote counselling appointments will be offered.

If the person(s) seeking support makes use of further counselling appointments, counsellors will follow a bespoke help plan that is tailored to the case, its specific problems and the relevant resource needs. One focus point in counselling families often is listening to their particular needs and worries. Simply demonstrating that

someone is willing to listen to their problems often helps significantly. Nevertheless, there are certain topics that are methodically addressed in these counselling sessions if the need arises. For example, counsellors may support families in (re-) establishing a relationship with the radicalised/vulnerable individual if previous conflicts have led to its deterioration; they may sensitise them about political and religious ways of life and how to deal with them on a daily basis; they may brief them in conflict management and communication skills and help them understand why an individual may be attracted to extremist ideologies/groups. The intensity of these counselling-relationships depends on the specifics of the case. Some families or members of the social environment are willing to work on themselves profoundly by, e.g., looking back and reappraising their family history, patterns of behaviour or stereotypes, whereas other families will mainly use the counselling session to give brief updates on the development of the case, asking for advice on how to deal with newly arising problems.

- Counselling families and the social environment in addition to working with the radicalised/vulnerable individuals

In some cases, either the family or the radicalised/vulnerable individual are in contact with the counselling centre. In this case, the goal is to accompany the radicalised/vulnerable individuals in their deradicalisation process by offering guidance to the individuals and their families or social environment as well by providing safe spaces in which conflict management and resolution can be achieved. During the counselling process of one

F

In some specific instances, all counsellors and involved parties might join a shared counselling session to speak about certain topics together or to have counsellors mediate between them.

party, the other party may be introduced to the counselling centre as well – if the circumstances either allow or necessitate it. If it is the family/social environment who is in touch first, counsellors will typically ask the family/social environment, if they would like to offer the vulnerable/radicalised person in question to participate in a counselling process as well. If they agree, both parties will be counselled, but by different professionals in different sessions.

To gain a holistic picture of the situation and to support all involved parties in the best approach, these different counsellors may, however, share some relevant information with each other. This step is necessary to make a qualified analysis and develop a suitable support and intervention plan. All client groups are informed about this possibility in advance and need to actively consent to it. These perspectives will later also be included in the Violence Prevention Network's comprehensive social diagnostics process (GRIDD). Nevertheless, it is essential to uphold high principles of non-disclosure and active consent. In addition, if any of the involved parties do not want the other party to know about (certain) contents of the counselling sessions, counsellors will never disclose this information to the other party. In some specific instances, all counsellors and involved parties might join a shared counselling session to speak about certain topics together or to have counsellors mediate between them. A rather common example worth mentioning is radicalised/vulnerable individuals requiring help in communicating their needs and/or limits or establishing shared rules for managing everyday life to reduce reoccurring conflicts. These issues either affect radicalisation processes to a certain degree

and/or cause the radicalised/vulnerable individuals' alienation from their social environment/family. By addressing these issues in a mediated setting, offering a safe space for both parties, potential pull- and push factors for radicalisation are addressed.

- Involving families in the actual P/CVE work for example via so-called family days in prison

In the context of VPN's work inside the prison system, family days are part of the deradicalisation programme, if prison facilities enable it and if families are willing/able to visit their imprisoned family members. These activities are highly important in terms of transition management and reintegration following release. They offer a possibility to stay in touch with the family while in prison and (re-)instate a social network that supports the individual during and after their prison term. Apart from that, family days offer valuable insights in an individual's social network and behaviour around and with family members, which may provide practitioners with helpful insights into their development.

As part of the programme, counsellors can act as mediators and address problems between the participant and their families, as well as coach them in conflict management skills and improving communication, if necessary and wanted by the involved parties. This might also offer the possibility for families to start their own counselling process as mentioned in (2).

Manuals

M



READ MANUAL

This manual outlines responses to foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their families, returning or planning to return to their home countries within the EU, from conflict or post-conflict zones such as Syria and Iraq. This edition of the manual highlights responses from the perspectives of practitioners, academics and policymakers.

Concrete method 1

Clearly define the local issue through research and understanding of community, media and wider stakeholder sentiment. In particular, focus on key target groups, such as those prone to radicalisation by right-wing organisations. In addition, ensure the communication strategy is integrated with other communication strategies

Concrete method 2

Understand who you want to speak to and how to speak to them clearly and in a way that makes sense to them. Who are the voices that resonate with the target audiences? What messages need to be conveyed, and how are these heard by the target audience?

Concrete method 3

Work creatively on campaigns and work in partnership with others, particularly between government (in the local multi-agency cooperation team), community and charity partners, and with the support of agencies (communications, design, media, etc.), and where possible social media companies.

065

Manual for Responses to returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families
2nd Edition.





DISCOVER PAPERS



RAN Papers

067

The RAN papers consolidate RAN's expertise and knowledge on radicalisation and violent extremism into an accessible format, providing up-to-date information. They introduce the latest research findings – collected by RAN– and include input from first-line practitioners. All are reviewed by relevant stakeholders within the RAN Editorial Board prior to publication. The Papers are published by RAN Practitioners.

Papers

P



READ PAPER



069

Effective management of the prison-exit continuum.

A paper produced by RAN Practitioners summarises the main insights gained about the French policy on effectively managing the prison-exit continuum. The paper presents the approach in detail, addresses any gaps and challenges, and highlights some inspiring practices.

Key Outcome 1

Evaluation and risk assessment in prison are conducted in a holistic manner by different professionals, to gain understanding of the individual's needs, resources and vulnerabilities. Based on this assessment, not only the risk is determined, but also the nature of the follow-up support needed.

Key Outcome 2

This holistic approach to both evaluation and care management is provided by a multi-disciplinary team, consisting of prison officers, psychologists, educators and cultural and religious mediators, including external consultants.

Key Outcome 3

Building trust and creating authenticity in the relationship with the inmates is a key aspect in deradicalisation work but presents a major challenge. Risk assessment tools are helping professionals in the evaluation process, but a significant part of the work is related to creating trust between the inmate and the intervention team.

Papers

P



READ PAPER

A paper published RAN Practitioners in December 2023, explores how mentoring is implemented in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) rehabilitation work within the EU and beyond. Insight into the challenges that practitioners are currently facing.

Key Outcome 1

Identifying a good match between a mentee and a mentor is crucial to a successful mentorship, as it requires consent and mutual trust. Many factors play into this, including interpersonal ones or the risk level associated with the mentee.

Key Outcome 2

Different actors can be mentors, including practitioners working in exit programmes and probation, formers who are sufficiently disengaged themselves and capable of guiding someone else in the rehabilitation process, and even volunteers who have received adequate training.

Key Outcome 3

Mentorship is distinct from other approaches present in the sphere of rehabilitation from (violent) extremism, such as coaching or counselling, as well as from psychological or therapeutic interventions. It calls for a personal connection between the parties involved rather than a strictly professional one and is not intended to reduce the likelihood of (re)offending.

071

Mentorship in a common rehabilitation setting.



Papers

P



READ PAPER



073

Managing the Needs of Child Returnees.

A paper published by RAN Practitioners in 2023, provides an overview of the French approach to the management and reintegration of child returnees, outlining the different actors involved and the challenges encountered so far. The paper also discusses the approaches and measures in place in the Western Balkans region, including an analysis of the differences and similarities to the French setup and the gaps and good practices identified by practitioners.

Key Outcome 1

Participants agreed on the crucial importance of a multi-agency approach in supporting child returnees' rehabilitation and resocialisation. Multidisciplinary teams and multisectoral perspectives are essential at both national and local level, in the communities where the children will be living.

Key Outcome 2

In the majority of cases, children are repatriated with their mothers. Female returnees in France are subject to criminal investigations and prosecution; in the Western Balkans women typically do not enter the criminal justice system. Instead they remain with their children and are integrated into rehabilitation and reintegration programmes outside the custodial system.

Key Outcome 3

The role of juvenile judges differs vastly in the French vis-à-vis the Western Balkans context: in France, they are responsible for coordinating the measures applicable to child returnees. In the Western Balkans, on the other hand, they play no part in the process whatsoever, which prevents interventions from being established in a clear legal framework.



REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION



The topic of rehabilitation and reintegration will be addressed in a number of RAN Practitioners activities in 2024. Stay tuned for updates on future events in the RAN Practitioners Update and on RAN Practitioners social media channels. For more information about RAN Practitioners activities please visit the Calendar on the RAN website [here](#).

Discover More



Highlights

RAN Practitioners Activity



Discover more

RAN Prisons

The active role of the inmate in DDR(disengagement, deradicalisation, and rehabilitation): opportunities and limits for involvement in developing individualised plans, improving cooperation between inmates and P/ CVE practitioners, fostering voluntary participation and compliance.

What Working Group meeting

When 13 March—14 March 2024

Organisers RAN Practitioners Staff



RAN Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation for female VETOs and the role of masculinity in DDR. Based on the insights from these meetings and publications, this Working Group meeting will take inventory of how gender specificity in DDR practices has evolved and where progress has been made in recent years.

What Working Group meeting

When 14–15 March 2024

Organisers RAN Practitioners Staff



RAN Thematic Event

How to create a smooth rehabilitation process from pre-release to post release? RAN Practitioners is currently looking for participants with relevant expertise to take part in a thematic meeting on the prison-exit continuum. The meeting will focus on how to prepare for the release of violent extremist or terrorist offenders.

What Thematic event

When 22 March 2024

Organisers RAN Practitioners Staff



Stay tuned to the RAN Practitioners website for papers which summarise the outcomes of these meetings and events. You can also click on selected arrows above to delve deeper into content and topics.

Library

RAN Practitioners Publications



Discover more

If you would like to discover more about the topic of rehabilitation and reintegration, you can get in touch with the [RAN Practitioners Staff](#), take a look at the [RAN Practitioners Collection](#) or read through some of the latest [RAN Practitioners publications](#). We have included some of these papers in a carefully selected collection of interesting and relevant articles below. Click on selected arrows to read more.

Practitioner Lessons for Ensuring an Positive Transitional Phase between Work in Prison and after

How we understand and respond to terrorism is an issue that has caused very significant debate amongst academics.

What
RAN Practitioner Lessons

Publication date
7 April 2023

RAN Publications Topic
Rehabilitation, Prison and probation, Foreign Terrorist Fighters and their families



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

In the coming years, violent extremist and terrorist offenders (VETOs) will be released from prisons across the EU.

What
RAN Practitioners Study Visit

Publication date
19 January 2024

RAN Publications Topic
Rehabilitation



Mentorship programmes and approaches in P/CVE

Elements to consider when developing mentorship programmes aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration.

What
RAN Mentorship programmes

Publication date
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RAN Publications Topic
Rehabilitation, Training, Exit work



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European
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REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION



ENG

This publication has been commissioned by the European Commission and has been prepared by REOC Communications on behalf of RadarEurope, a subsidiary of RadarGroup.

FR

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DE

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