

SPOTLIGHT

DECEMBER 2020

PRISONS
REHABILITATION
AND
REINTEGRATION





Nadya RADKOVSKA



Kari-Anne AASTERUD AASEN



Gaby THIJSSSEN



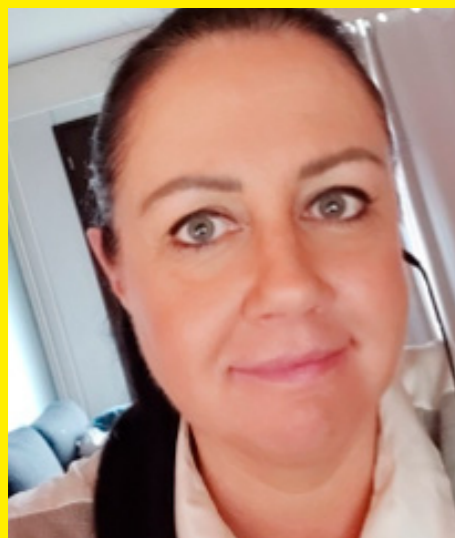
Katherine BROWN



Ioan DURNESCU



Cristina CAPARESI



Lotta CARLSSON



Onni SARVELA



Robert ÖRELL

EDITORIAL

The ongoing Covid pandemic has given new opportunities for violent extremists to radicalise and recruit. The proliferation of conspiracy theories and radicalising narratives has increased, while recent attacks in Austria, France and Germany show that the terrorist threat is still very present.

Prison and probation services across the EU continue to handle the large numbers of individuals convicted of terrorism-related domestic crimes. With foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) from conflict areas still returning it is likely these numbers will continue to increase.

EU Member States are therefore facing a significant challenge to rehabilitate terrorist offenders, during and after their release, and with many expected to be released from prison next year, to prepare their families and local communities for their reintegration into society.

Rehabilitation is a complex process that requires the participation and cooperation of multiple stakeholders, including prison and probation services, intervention providers, local authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs). In this edition of Spotlight we hear some of them.

In this Spotlight practitioners working in the fields of prisons, rehabilitation and reintegration after release share their insights and experiences on different aspects of the rehabilitation journey and some of the challenges faced, including radicalisation in prisons, gender and families.

We want to hear from you! If you would like to contribute to future editions of Spotlight, or if you have ideas for an article, please get in touch with the RAN communications team at ran@radaradvies.nl

The RAN Staff

Contents

03

EDITORIAL
COVID and P/CVE

08

ARTICLE
**Rehabilitation of VEOs
in prisons**

14

ARTICLE
**Staff training - a
precondition for
success, but also a
challenge**

20

INTERVIEW
**A Day in the Life Of...
Gaby Thijssen**

26

ARTICLE
**The Importance
of Gender**

36

MANUAL
**RAN Rehabilitation
Manual**

38

OPINION
**The Emerging
Reintegration Challenge**

44

ARTICLE
**Family in the
Recovery Process**

50

FEATURE
EXIT Finland

56

INTERVIEW
**A Look Ahead at
Rehabilitation in 2021**

62

HIGHLIGHTS
**RAN Activity on Prisons
and Rehabilitation**

64

LIBRARY
Discover More



ARTICLE: REHABILITATION OF VEOs IN PRISONS



**Nadya
RADKOVSKA**

Prisons are challenging environments in an organizational, methodological, conceptual and social context. This is even more valid when new phenomena arise and rearrange the “puzzle” of prison dynamics and management patterns...

The appearance of new categories of prisoners influences the profile of the prison population, and calls for the revision of practices, approaches and existing tools for assessment, treatment and rehabilitation.

The growing number of prisoners sentenced for extremist and terrorist crimes poses new challenges and requires a well-articulated prison policy and practice to ensure cohesion between the relevant interventions, depending on the needs and proportionate measures depending of the level of risk. The complexity of challenges in prisons related to poor conditions, overcrowding, lack of staff, are factors that can lead to the creation of a space in which the discourse on religion, faith and values can be occupied by extremists and recruiters. There are concerns that such individuals may spread violent extremist ideologies among prisoners, and that subsequently, after being released, they may engage in violent extremist activities. The treatment of these persons is a key issue in the context of prisons which must fulfill their human rights obligations, provide rehabilitation and reintegration activities, and ensure the safety and security of all prisoners.

The most powerful response to prevent and combat radicalization in prisons is a humane detention policy that respects the fundamental human rights and focuses on prisoners' rehabilitation and reintegration.

The diverse policy and practice in Europe and the polarization of the debate regarding the management of violent extremist offenders (VEOs) in prisons – are they ordinary prisoners or not?; should they be segregated or dispersed? – increase the need for consensus among policy makers and practitioners. One of the important questions is how prisons can contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of VEOs.

In recognition of the fact that prisons can be incubators for violent extremist ideology or institutions for reform, a number of prison authorities in Europe have established prison-based rehabilitation programs. These programs are designed to rehabilitate violent extremists and reintegrate them into society as individuals posing a lower risk.

The main challenges relate to the effectiveness of prison-based programs designed to intervene with VEOs, and the insufficient evaluation of their impact. In tailoring rehabilitation programs for violent extremist prisoners, formulating achievable and measurable short-term and long-term objectives, as well as indicators, is crucial for monitoring progress and effectiveness. The most important aspect is defining whether the intervention focuses on deradicalization with the aim to change views, values and attitudes or behavior and disengagement from violence.

When dealing with VEOs in prisons, the individual approach is key in terms of implementing rehabilitation interventions. It is important to understand the personal history, motivation, perceptions, concerns, frustration, strengths and deficits. Besides internal factors, external factors such as the individual social environment and other local circumstances need to be taken into account to provide effective support. An individual risk and needs assessment is required in order to identify the necessary rehabilitation intervention targeting VEOs, and the inclusion of more general prison activities to support and reinforce the process of change (vocational training, educational activities, cultural activities, psychosocial interventions).

An important argument is that some interventions and activities may be counterproductive for certain individuals and the risks associated with their participation need to be carefully assessed and monitored. A multidisciplinary approach should be established to ensure that the complexity of the issues underlying violent extremism can be appropriately addressed. Rehabilitation interventions should be designed, developed, and implemented by taking into consideration local conditions, legislation, prison population and available staff.

One of most important pillars for the rehabilitation of VEOs is the front-line practitioners. Working with this category of prisoners towards their deradicalization could put prison staff in a situation of vulnerability. This underlines the need for a sufficient number of well-selected, trained, motivated staff, and reiterates the importance of prison interventions, which must be programmed in such a way as to assist prisoners in building their identity, and thus reduce the feeling of hopelessness and vulnerability.

The reformation of VEOs does not end behind prison walls, it continues after release and without strong multiagency co-ordination, co-operation and community support the risk of relapse is high. This emphasizes the need to commit to the understanding that prisons are not only a breeding ground for radicalization, but are also part of international and national efforts to prevent and combat radicalization and violent extremism.

Social measures and integration policies are needed to facilitate the development of sustainable communities and shared values, strengthen social ties that can play an important role in reducing the risk of radicalization, especially among young people, and neutralize the propaganda attracting them to extremist ideology.

Nadya Radkovska is co-leader for the RAN Working Group on Prisons and Head of International Cooperation and Training of Staff Department, General Directorate, Bulgaria.

“When dealing with VEOs in prisons, the individual approach is key in terms of implementing rehabilitation interventions. It is important to understand the personal history, motivation, perceptions, concerns, frustration, strengths and deficits.”

ARTICLE: **STAFF TRAINING. A PRECONDITION FOR SUCCESS, BUT ALSO A CHALLENGE**



**Kari-Anne
AASTERUD
AASEN**

When we developed the guidelines for how the Norwegian correctional service should handle radicalisation and violent extremism, we focused on four main areas...



1. We must identify prisoners who are radicalized or are about to become radicalized and persons who are vulnerable for being radicalized during their time in prison. 2. We must find and implement measures that can help prevent criminal acts because of the radicalisation process. 3. We must work together across agencies to ensure that when the execution of the sentence is over, society is prepared to take the convicts back and the convicted person him-/herself has been given the opportunity to establish a life without crime. 4. A precondition for us to do all of this is that the staff must have knowledge and competence, both to recognize signs and indications that a radicalisation process is taking place and to work actively with these inmates and convicts to prevent new criminal acts.

Developing knowledge and competence are primarily done through the education of prison officers and through supplementary courses provided by the University College of Norwegian Correctional Service (KRUS). The education ensures that employees have knowledge of radicalization and extremism as a phenomenon. They learn how a radicalization process can take place, what can be ways into extreme groups or networks and what can be the driving forces to leave them. During their training officers also get an introduction to the most well-known networks and groups in both right-wing and left-wing extremism, as well as Islamist extremism.

In addition to knowledge of radicalization and extremism on a theoretical level, it is important that staff also have more practical competence that enables them to deal with this in everyday life in prison or in the probation service. The staff need to know what to look for when observing, how to talk to the inmates and convicts about extremism, how they can face extreme attitudes and statements and how they can work to prevent extreme attitudes becoming criminal acts.

We believe that the basic education in the Norwegian correctional service is of a high standard, but knowledge and

“We believe that the basic education in the Norwegian correctional service is of a high standard, but knowledge and competence depend on being renewed and updated. This requires a lot of resources and is challenging to maintain.”

competence depend on being renewed and updated. This requires a lot of resources and is challenging to maintain. It is also challenging to keep staff motivated and interested, especially when there are not many active cases to work with and there are many other tasks that need to be done.

In Norway, we have chosen not to gather foreign fighters or convicted terrorists, but to spread them in prisons throughout the country. This means that all employees must have the knowledge and competence to handle all types of cases. This also means that the employees do not gain experience in the same way as if special units had been established. It is also difficult to build professional environments that can work with risk assessments, to have continuity and to establish functional collaboration across agencies.

As of November, there are 23 active cases, of which 15 has been convicted or charged of crimes related to extremism. The other cases are cases where employees are concerned that a radicalization process is taking place or where the person has been identified as particularly vulnerable. Fortunately, the scope of cases is low, but it also affects on how we conduct training. It is difficult to defend that a lot of resources should be used on this, at the expense of other important topics and when the budgets are tight, priorities become even tougher.

At the same time as we wish that strong professional environments could be built where the prisoners and convicts are, it would not have been sufficient. As the figures show, 8 of the cases we are working on started as a concern while they are undergoing sentencing. The seriousness of the concerns varies, and it would have been counterproductive for many to gather them in units together with those convicted of terrorism. That leaves us back where we started: To succeed in preventing and handling radicalisation and violent extremism in prison and probation, all employees must have knowledge and skills to identify and deal with these people.

Kari-Anne Aasterud Aasen is a Deputy Governor in the Norwegian prison and probation service.

Interview: A Day in the Life Of... Gaby Thijssen



WE asked Gaby Thijssen, a practitioner working with offenders convicted of terrorism-related offences, ten questions about life working in Vught prison in The Netherlands.

1. Where do you work?

I work in the terrorist department of a prison in the Netherlands. Our prison has a maximum of 46 inmates who are suspected or convicted of terrorism. This concerns both Islamist extremist terrorism and right-wing terrorism. In recent years, our wards have mainly housed persons associated with jihadist terrorism.

2. What is your job?

I work as a psychologist in the terrorist department. My daily work consists of guiding, treating and diagnosing these detainees. I am also involved in risk assessment and I am involved in intervention plans in a multidisciplinary context. In addition, supporting the team in dealing with this target group is important in my work. Furthermore, I am involved in scientific research regarding this target group.

3. How do you do it?

In my experience, detainees are helped when there is someone who takes them seriously and listens to them sincerely. I see this as the basis of my work. Building a relationship of trust is a crucial starting point for any further intervention. If necessary I perform treatments (such as trauma treatment, psychotherapy, system therapy). Furthermore, a risk profile is drawn up for each prisoner. This provides direction in treatment and interventions: on the one hand to lower the risk factors present, on the other hand to strengthen the protective factors present.

4. What is being done well in The Netherlands?

In the Dutch context, there are a lot of resources which are committed to the prison system and therefore many opportunities for a good living environment. This means that there is no overcrowding in the prison, there are sufficient numbers of staff present and there is an increasing focus on relational security. Furthermore, a tailor-made plan is made for each detainee in the terrorist department, which I believe contributes to the best possible return to society.

5. How does this approach differ to other Member States?

Broadly speaking, the approach in The Netherlands aligns closely to the best practices deployed in other Member States. This includes a tailor-made approach, real-world safety, the involvement of care workers and family. In a number of respects I think that many resources and options are available in The Netherlands, which means that detainees can be carefully and closely monitored during detention and that a lot of time can be spent making contact with the target group. In The Netherlands, building a relationship of trust with various officials, such as prison guards, case managers, social workers and prison chaplains/Imams, is started at the very beginning of detention.

6. What does a typical day involve?

A normal day starts with the morning report, which captures the details from a transfer which has taken place the previous day or night. Then I will speak to prisoners for treatment or simply to build a relationship. I regularly walk into the ward to drink tea, play a game or watch TV with the inmates. In addition, there is an almost daily consultation with all members of the multidisciplinary team to coordinate the interaction with prisoners, the risk factors, needs and protective factors present, as well as appropriate interventions.

7. Why do you do this job?

Working with this target group gives me a lot of satisfaction: on the one hand because it is a complex target group, which means that it is continuously puzzling and philosophising – together with inmates – why they did what they did. I also like that my work is not only about psychology but also about history, anthropology, philosophy and geopolitics: when it is possible to get in touch with a prisoner, sometimes after months or years, to gain more insight into their perception of the world, in order to subsequently arrive at appropriate interventions, to help them and to reduce social risks.

8. What is the most challenging part of your job?

The most complex thing about this target group is to develop a relationship of trust with them. Particularly because there is often a strong us-versus-them thinking and we as practitioners are often seen as part of the government. Sharing information and establishing a single picture of the detainee, together with chain partners, is also often very complicated.

“In my experience, detainees are helped when there is someone who takes them seriously and listens to them sincerely. I see this as the basis of my work. Building a relationship of trust is a crucial starting point for any further intervention.”

9. What is the outlook for 2021?

Relational security will take even more shape in practice in 2021. In addition, the policy regarding prisoners with a (life-) long prison sentence will be considered. The group of prisoners with a long-term sentence is increasing. There will need to be much thought about how to deal with them in a strict regime like the terrorist department.

10. How has the RAN been helpful to you?

RAN has been great at creating connections with other practitioners. Being in touch with colleagues from other Member States gives me inspiration. Furthermore, the exchange of best practices and insights helps to shape much of the policy in our department.

Final thought?

A quote of Martin Luther King that is important in our approach: 'Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.'

“The most complex thing about this target group is to develop a relationship of trust with them. Particularly because there is often a strong us-versus-them thinking.”

ARTICLE: **THE IMPORTANCE OF GENDER**



**Dr. Katherine
BROWN**

The 2020 European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report reveals that 15% of jihadist terrorist perpetrators were women, but it did not disaggregate by gender the 520 terrorism convictions and acquittals last year in the EU or right-wing perpetrators...



UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Handbook on **GENDER DIMENSIONS** of criminal justice responses to terrorism



The most up-to-date 2018 Eurojust report highlights ten cases involving European women extremists. There are 1400 individuals held on terrorism charges in ten European countries, of which approximately 10% are women.

Prison sentences for women involved in terrorism are slightly lower than men, with an average of 5.5 years. However, women may be charged with non-terrorism related offences for cases involving violent extremism — such as kidnap — so are outside of this statistical purview. In addition, women and children represent the majority of those seeking return from conflict zones in Iraq and Syria, many of whom will face a period of detention.

Women's involvement in jihadist violence has tripled in the past ten years, and they are increasingly prominent in right-wing activities as well, so we can expect to see convictions and detentions rise. As this brief overview highlights, there are gaps in our collective knowledge regarding women offenders. A key issue is to encourage gender-disaggregated data gathering and reporting to support prison management, rehabilitation and reintegration of women extremists.

Offender Management

The UN Office for Drugs and Crimes released a detailed handbook on the gender dimensions of criminal justice responses to terrorism, including a chapter on prisons. This, and many international, EU, and national reports on violent extremism highlight the importance of gender-differentiated management plans and risk assessments for offenders. However, without widespread appropriate gender awareness training among staff, the quality of these efforts is questionable.

Dependency on gender stereotypes by prison and probation staff continues, and gender is not addressed 'on the ground'. In the UK, for example, prison managers argue that women extremists do not 'pose the same challenges' as men and are therefore not placed in high security units. Good practice does exist; for

“There is also a general shortage of women practitioners in EXIT work and extremist offender management to support women offenders, including fewer women ‘formers’ involved in these efforts.”

example, in The Netherlands 15 women convicted of terrorism charges are held in a bespoke high-security wing, with a child-friendly visiting centre, and gender appropriate skills training and rehabilitation activities on offer.

While noting that assessment tools are not ‘tick box’ exercises and require professional judgement, they were designed using ‘gender-blind’ data sets and models of radicalisation (in other words, the male experience of radicalisation is assumed as the norm). These tools are therefore less helpful in their determination of women extremists’ continued risk of reoffending and deradicalisation. This can mean women’s needs are not taken seriously.

There is also a general shortage of women practitioners in EXIT work and extremist offender management to support women offenders, including fewer women ‘formers’ involved in these efforts.

These factors, as well as short sentences, not always being convicted for terrorism, and a general lack of resources within prison systems, can mean that women extremists struggle to gain access to specialist support while in detention.

Rehabilitation

Evidence suggests that women face a double burden on release — both for being a terrorist offender and for being a woman offender — and therefore have additional gender specific barriers to reintegration. Women’s recidivism and reoffending rates from the general prison populations across Europe are higher than men’s, and we can assume this to be the case for women extremist offenders. Working with communities and civil society organisations in advance of women’s release will be key to long-term reintegration.

Gender-specific reintegration issues were raised at a [RAN-EXIT working group meeting in 2019](#); one matter of significance was the lack of family support for women offenders when they leave prison and during their detention. Families may shun them for



dishonouring them or be complicit, supporting of their extremist beliefs and behaviours. In contrast, practitioners often identify the families of male extremist offenders' as protective and supportive factors for rehabilitation.

A related concern is the wellbeing of children associated with women extremist offenders—women and children's desire to be reunited as a family unit must be carefully managed, as this is not always possible. Consequently, reinforcing other elements of a woman's identity in rehabilitation is important (not only as a mother). Where families remain together, monitoring and reporting requirements for women ex-offenders can present challenges for child-care, especially if they don't drive. The international element of some women's participation in violent extremism can call into question their citizenship and that of their children. This factor can pose an additional challenge to reintegration (as families are often fractured), create barriers to resources for recovery and rehabilitation, and generate prolonged uncertainty.

Gender is not just about women?

There is an acute need to address violent masculinities among male extremist offenders and the gender ideologies of violent extremist groups. This is important; changes in belief may be harder to measure, but necessary to ensure long-term stability and security for states. Women are often the first target of VE groups, and as the [2016 UN Strategic Review of Counter-Terrorism](#) notes, there is, "deep concern that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups."

“For successful long-term prevention and to fulfil international obligations, deradicalisation efforts must commit to challenging ideologies that limit women’s equality or reduce women’s security.”

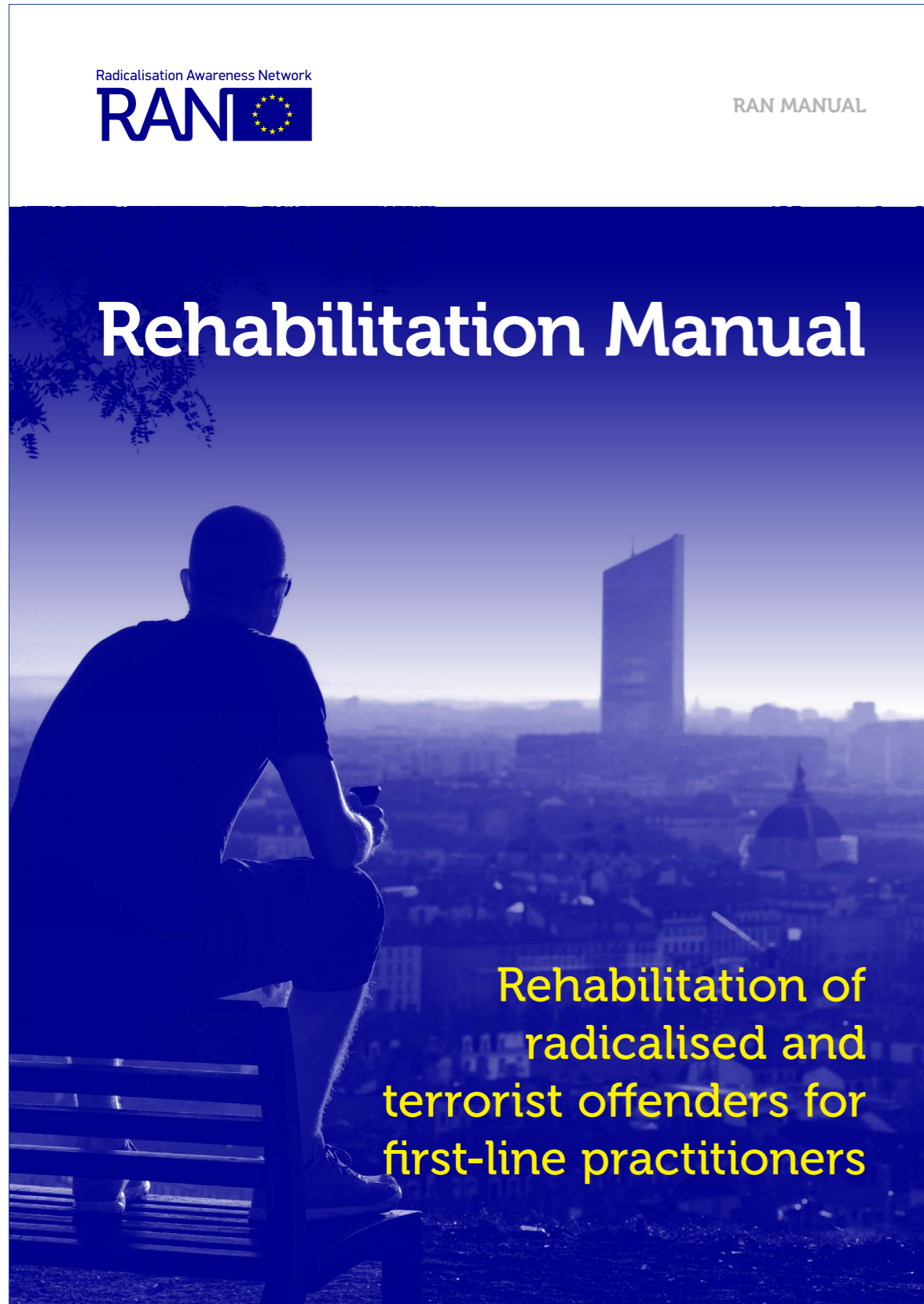
For successful long-term prevention and to fulfil international obligations, deradicalisation efforts must commit to challenging ideologies that limit women’s equality or reduce women’s security. This means, for example, being cautious about replicating harmful masculinities in extremist offenders, such as overemphasis on ‘alpha’-style masculinities, or reinforcing ‘breadwinner’ and anti-feminist ideologies. EXIT-Germany has worked particularly hard to avoid reinforcing and recreating the underlying masculinities in far-right extremism; and [Theater Fryshuset](#) (Sweden) also explore masculinities to help deradicalisation initiatives.

There are therefore three core areas: gender identities, roles and experiences of offenders; gender representation and gender training of practitioners and the criminal justice system as a whole; and the gender ideologies of violent extremist groups. Without proper attention to, and action on, these areas, progress will not be possible.

***Dr Katherine E. Brown** is a senior lecturer at the University of Birmingham in the UK. Read more about gender-specific approaches in EXIT work in a [RAN paper here](#).*

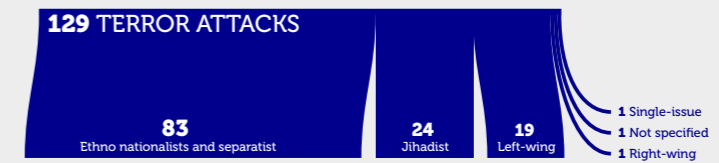
THE RAN Rehabilitation Manual provides guidance for firstline practitioners working to rehabilitate radicalised and terrorist offenders, both within and outside prison. It provides a comprehensive overview of the chronological phases of rehabilitation. The various organisations and individuals contributing to rehabilitation processes are offered a structured assessment of important points of attention.

You can access the Manual [here](#).



Box 2 TE-SAT 2019 statistics

- 129 foiled, failed or completed attacks in 2018 alone.



- 687 foiled, failed or completed attacks between 2015 and 2018.



- The number of foiled, failed or completed jihadist-inspired attacks fell from 33 in 2017 to 24 in 2018.



- 1 056 people arrested on suspicion of terrorism-related offences in 2018.
- Most of these arrests in 2018 'were made on suspicion of preparing or attempting to commit a terrorist act; membership of a terrorist group, including while being abroad; and financing terrorism'.
- Most of the people arrested were EU citizens.



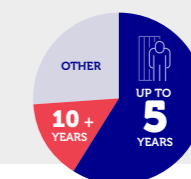
- 653 people in concluded court proceedings in 2018 (number reported from a total of 17 Member States).



- Prison sentences vary, ranging from 3 months to 535 years.



- 59 % of penalties attached to guilty verdicts were for imprisonment of up to 5 years; in 2018, 15 % of such penalties were for 10 years or more of imprisonment ⁽¹⁾.



(1) Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019*, Europol, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2813/788404>.

OPINION

**THE EMERGING
REINTEGRATION
CHALLENGE**

**Ioan
DURNESCU**

THERE are about 2,000 foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in prisons across Europe today. They started to return in large number after ISIS was defeated in Syria and Iraq, two – three years ago. And they will continue to come back, from refugee camps or prisons in Turkey or Iraq, although not in the same numbers. Most of these offenders are kept in countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and other places from where they left in the first place.

To this number must add those offenders convicted of terrorism-related offences in EU Member States. Only in 2019, 1004 individuals were arrested on suspicion of terrorism-related offences in 18 EU Member States, with Belgium, France, Italy, Spain and UK reporting the highest numbers. As we can see, we are not speaking anymore about the ‘spectacular few’. They are many and they pose serious risks to our society if not managed properly.

Their return continues to present a lot of challenges. First we must deal with them when they arrive in Europe. Most Member States take a dual approach: law enforcement and rehabilitation. Law enforcement is more concerned with bringing evidence regarding their involvement in Daesh and other violent Islamist extremist groups, and applying the right punishment or sanction.

Some of those who return are disillusioned from what they have seen, they are ready to de-radicalise and disengage. However, others are not so ready to do so. We therefore need to be able to identify those who are ready to de-radicalise from those who are not, because the approach we take to rehabilitate them will be different, whether we need to address their grievances, personal events in their life, or their social environment, or a combination of all of them.

At present, many of these returned FTFs are in prison and it falls to practitioners, at the frontline, to begin their rehabilitation. However, there are a lot of other agencies working with them, like different probation services, faith workers, NGOs and so on. The challenge is how they work together with offenders both during detention and after their release.

“Although a lot of evaluation studies have been conducted, only very few of them, some 16%, are based on face-to-face interviews with former terrorists. All the other evaluations are conducted using open-source literature and media reports.”

One of the biggest challenges that we will face next year is the release of large numbers of offenders back into society after serving their sentences. We are going to have to see how ready we are, how prepared we are, how we are going to be able to provide the services that they will need, how we are going to be able to prepare the societies, the communities, the families to work towards reintegrating them. There are studies that show encouraging results in terms of reoffending after deradicalisation programs. Some speak about 5% relapse (see Andrew Silke’s work). But is this enough, it is more than in other areas of criminality, where 0.1% reoffending is already too much. The consequences after such a relapse can be huge in terms of human victims, media exposure, public confidence in the reintegration concept and so on.

The European Commission has already paid a lot of attention to this topic in the last ten years. A lot of progress has been made. Today we have a lot of resources. We have a collection of good practices, we have a lot of guidelines, we have many conventions and legal instruments to work with this population, but we need to keep developing this field of knowledge because there is still a lot to learn and a lot to be done, at both individual, community and society level.

On the individual level, for example, we need to understand the risks they pose, we need to understand their needs, we need to learn more about how to motivate them, how to engage with them, how to challenge violent ideologies or simply how to work towards disengagement. And to know if we are on the right track, we need to learn more about how to measure the impact of our interventions.

Although a lot of evaluation studies have been conducted, only very few of them, some 16%, are based on face-to-face interviews with former terrorists. All the other evaluations are conducted using open-source literature and media reports. We must go beyond that and encourage more robust methodologies such as natural experiments so that we can develop really sound, hard data on what works and what doesn’t with this group.

On the community level, we need to make sure we can work with the local communities themselves, with the street-level organisations, faith groups and so on. We therefore need to work hard to learn more about how we can develop these kinds of community strategies, on a regular basis, not on a crisis-by-crisis basis as we have done too many times up until now. We need to engage with all these groups on a systematic and regular basis.



On the level of society, we need to find ways to overcome the obstacles to reintegration, from societal stigmatisation and marginalisation, the difficulty in securing jobs and safe places to live. We must find ways to provide them with the right opportunities to be able to re-join society. Recent terrorist attacks, such as those in Paris and Vienna, with the media scrutiny and emotion that surrounds them, makes this work even more difficult.

The current Covid-19 pandemic has also placed an even greater strain on our work. We can safely say that the pandemic has put a lot of economic pressure on people who are at the margins of society. We can expect that some of these people, feeling marginalised, and feeling misunderstood by the majority, might feel more pressure to become radicalised and to perform more of these acts of violence and terrorism.

We therefore need more rigorous research in this area, on rehabilitation, because while there are a lot of articles, books and papers there is little material which is practical for frontline practitioners. So we need to produce more practitioner relevant information, such as the RAN Rehabilitation Manual, to support them becoming more efficient in their daily work.

This work is really demanding, very complex and very emotional, with a lot of risks. Practitioners need to be supported in every way we can, with knowledge, with support services and so on. We must therefore focus on the practitioner and how to support him or her to do their work better. And I am confident that RAN, which has already made important steps in supporting practitioners who work on rehabilitation, will continue to do this.

Ioan Durnescu is professor at the University of Bucharest and the co-leader for the RAN Working Group on Rehabilitation.

ARTICLE: FAMILY IN THE RECOVERY PROCESS



**Cristina
CAPARESI**

‘Ervin’ (fictional name) is a young man who is detained for crimes related to terrorism. His father is very critical and never misses the opportunity to attack him, considers him a loser and doesn’t see any future for him...



Analysing Ervin's life when teenager the same aggressive attitude could be found and, even though Ervin's father is not a radical, this continuous belittlement of his son is something to be taken into account when considering Ervin's vulnerabilities.

This case is an example that even when the family is not directly responsible for the radicalisation, it may have had an indirect influence. For this reason, it is highly recommended to deepen the knowledge of the relationship between the detainee and his family. If the family is not radicalised, it could have a positive influence in the recovery process and previous criticalities that may hinder the process of reintegration should be identified and addressed. Let's consider these issues.

1. Family can help the detainee to mediate with the outside world.

During the detainment period life comes to a stop. Family members can have an important role in filling that emptiness, keeping contacts with life outside of prison, giving hope for life after detention. This role can be even more important during the moment of transition from prison back into society.

Family should be accompanied to overcome the feeling of shame and defeat to be able to help their loved one to have a brighter outlook and hope for the future.

2. Family can give support and sustain self-esteem.

The detention is a moment of breaking that should be considered. Some people react by denying the facts and assuming an attitude of superiority, others may feel lost and guilty. Family could work with the detainee bringing a principle of reality but, at the same time, hope and support.

Assessment should also focus on the presence of bitterness and failures of past relationships and any unresolved problems that could make communication difficult if not impossible.

3. Family can serve as a bridge that can speed up reintegration.

It is important to know that there is someone you can go to when everything else has failed. Family can offer that bridge that helps the ex-detainee to get through the swamp.

Family should be strengthened and offered practical tools through specific training programs to help them face criticalities and know how to communicate with loved ones and with probation officers, at least in the transition phase.

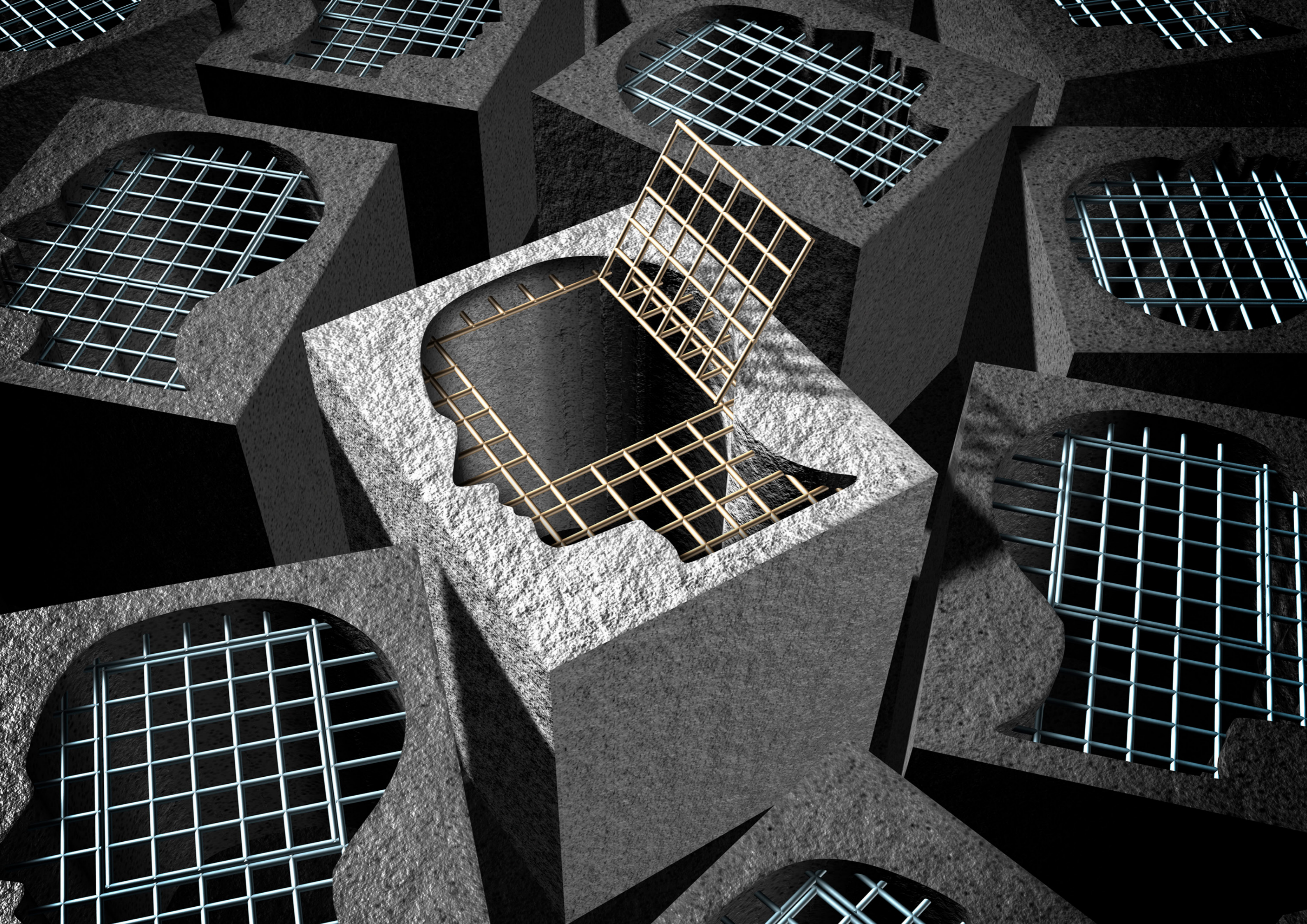
“During the detainment period life comes to a stop. Family members can have an important role in filling that emptiness, keeping contacts with life outside of prison, giving hope for life after detention.”

A man in a white t-shirt is seen from behind, looking out a window with a metal grid. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting daylight. A blue circle with the word 'FEATURE' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

FEATURE

EXIT **Finland**

The EXIT Finland program of the Deaconess Foundation is responsible for developing a national disengagement from violent extremism model to assist individuals who want to disengage from violent radicalisation and violent extremist groups.



The program adopts a multi-agency approach in the prevention of violent extremism bringing together local authorities, social and mental health services, and civil society organisations. In relation specifically to prison rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners, EXIT Finland works in collaboration with the Criminal Sanction Agency.

Currently, the program is rolled out in partnership with local authorities and service providers in the cities of Helsinki, Oulu and Turku to identify and assess violent extremism risks, specific prevention needs and public safety concerns.

Existing European and international models, tools and best practices are being reviewed and assessed to assist EXIT Finland in developing a comprehensive holistic assessment and disengagement from violent extremism model and its approach in the prevention of violent radicalisation.

The activities of EXIT Finland builds on the Deaconess Foundation's extensive national and international experiences in the fields of social and health care services provision, social exclusion and social cohesion. In addition, it focuses on bridge-building and community dialogue, prison rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners and prevention with individuals at risk of radicalisation or extremism.



EXIT Finland's activities focus on three main areas:

1. The program provides, on a voluntary needs basis, multi-professional confidential support to individuals who wish to exit radical and violent extremist groups as well as to those at risk of being radicalised. Remedial therapeutic approaches, mental health support and preventive social work are important elements of the program as well as the use of knowledge and know-how from other fields, such as criminal psychology or restorative justice, in informing their process. In addition, to support the distancing and reintegration process, clients are connected to public education, employment, social and health services.

2. The program aims to develop a national network, which brings together key stakeholders, services providers, civil society organisations and academics from the relevant fields to support EXIT Finland work and the referral of at-risk individuals to the relevant support services.

3. The program provides trainings and practical support on a specific need basis to first-line practitioners in collaboration with stakeholders, experts and professionals in the field.

Read more about the Deaconess Foundation and EXIT Finland [here](#).

Find more examples of exit work in the RAN Collection of Inspiring Practices [here](#).

Lotta Carlsson is an exit worker at the Helsinki Deaconess Institute Foundation, a clinical counsellor and a lecturer in crisis psychology.

Onni Sarvela is an exit worker at the Helsinki Deaconess Institute Foundation, a PVE training consultant and an independent professional youth worker.

Interview: A Look Ahead at Rehabilitation in 2021

WE spoke with Robert Örell, an experienced EXIT worker from Sweden and co- leader for the RAN Rehabilitation Working Group and asked him a series of questions about the nature of rehabilitation efforts across the EU both now and in 2021. He shared his thoughts...



Can you characterise the rehabilitation challenge in Europe today?

Over the last decades there has been an increase of experiences and practices developed in Europe that focuses on rehabilitation work. Although in the field of rehabilitation there are a large variety of good practices and experiences, there are still a few significant questions that we need to address: Which practices are most useful and efficient? How do we measure this? Which practices work best in different countries or regions? To answer some of these questions requires a range of actors to come together, and co-operate and work together.

What is the biggest challenge that we will face in 2021?

The biggest challenge we will face next year is capacity. With the number of offenders sentenced to terrorism and violent extremist crimes being released from prison over the coming year we need to prepare and build the readiness of society to deal with them, the readiness to rehabilitate and to reintegrate them back into society and our ability to evaluate the practices. We also need to look at whether we have the structures and settings ready to do this work.

Change takes time. It happens over a long period. It requires investments in time, resources, dedicated personnel, cooperation, and a clear developed program focused on rehabilitation and reintegration. We need to invest our time and focus on relationship building and trust building – both with the clients and with the receiving communities – to be able to create change.

How do you build trust?

Most exit organisations invest in relationship building and spend time with clients, to get to know them, understand their needs, the risks involved and therefore which partners we need to work with. For example, clients often need help with managing and solving practical problems. In this we need to reconnect them with a range of different partners, and this takes time.

How can we prepare for the challenges in 2021?

Given the release of large numbers of offenders next year it becomes even more important to stress that this is not something for one agency, or one organisation alone, but this is really a whole-of-society approach. And with this we must ask ourselves: How do we prepare the receiving communities? How do we involve the families? How do we work on both rehabilitation and reintegration? We need to identify all the partners needed, everything from employment agencies to social services and local authorities in a range of different settings.

What has been the impact of the Covid pandemic?

When it comes to the spread of extremist ideas and propaganda, it's clear that a lot of violent extremist groups draw benefit from the uncertainty, the fear, and the isolation that the pandemic has caused for people. Meanwhile, the pandemic has made it harder for exit workers and probation officers to work with clients in a one-to-one setting. However, we have seen promising examples of new online activities, which are bringing together and involving more people than ever before, and we are quickly learning lessons about carrying out work at a distance.

How do we prepare offenders for release?

One way is to begin the work early, inside a prison, with individuals to start to assess motivation, to strengthen and to empower change. The other way is to actively prepare them for release from prison. We need to motivate them; we need to equip them psychologically: What does it mean to be released? Where will you live? How will you manage life? So, it's quite complex work, on many levels, including both emotional and practical aspects.

We also need to work with the individual to look at the past and the future, to address what happened and why they ended up in the environment they did and where they want to go and how we can help them to get there. It is usually more complex than this, it is more dynamic, as in all types of change work. We see client progress can sometimes be two steps forward and one step back. This characterises the whole challenge with rehabilitation and reintegration.

Are we equipped to deal with this challenge?

In general, we underestimate what is needed in rehabilitation and reintegration work. We underestimate the number of partners, the amount of work, the amount of time and the number of resources required. Prevention and preventing relapse is always more efficient than having people who are active in violent extremist groups.

“Given the release of large numbers of offenders next year it becomes even more important to stress that this is not something for one agency, or one organisation alone, but this is really a whole-of-society approach. And with this we must ask ourselves: How do we prepare the receiving communities? How do we involve the families?”

In many areas in Europe there are some good structures already in place and there is a lot of experience. However, I think there is still a need for more awareness, more training of practitioners and more focused policy recommendations on how this work should be set up. We need to equip the people who are going to do this work with knowledge about violent extremist groups, how they function and how they work, but also with an understanding of the practices, what works, what has been successful and how to do it.

How can RAN help?

A few key themes that we are keen to address next year and in the long term in the Rehabilitation Working Group is the role of motivation, and the role of evaluating our practices: How do we assess motivation? How do we increase or work with motivation? How do we build trust? How do we equip practitioners to be better at this? How do we determine what success is and how do we evaluate this?

Find out more about the RAN Rehabilitation Working Group [here](#).

“One way is to begin the work early, inside a prison, with individuals to start to assess motivation, to strengthen and to empower change. The other way is to actively prepare them for release from prison. We need to motivate them; we need to equip them psychologically.”

Highlights: **RAN activity on prisons and rehabilitation**

THE topic of prisons, rehabilitation and reintegration will be addressed in a number of RAN activities in 2021, including Working Group meetings, webinars and study visits. Due to the pandemic the foreseen activities will take place online. The insights and outcomes gathered from these meetings will be published in the RAN Update and on the RAN website. Stay tuned for updates in the RAN Update and on RAN social media channels.

For more information about RAN activities please visit the Calendar on the RAN website [here](#).

LIBRARY: DISCOVER MORE

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

RAN. (2020) '[Peer and Self Review Manual for Exit Work](#)'

RAN. (2020) '[Motivation in EXIT work: How to stimulate it](#)'

RAN. (2019) '[Current Challenges of Sentenced Extremists for Prison Regimes](#)'

RAN. (2019) '[Radicalised and terrorist offenders released from prison: Community and family acceptance](#)'

RAN. (2019) '[The role of restorative justice in preventing and responding to violent extremism](#)'

RAN. (2018) '[Dealing with violent extremist and terrorist offenders: Formalising cooperation among police, prison, probation and prosecution](#)'

RAN. (2018) '[The challenge of resocialisation: Dealing with radicalised individuals during and after imprisonment](#)'



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