



Radicalisation Research – Gap Analysis

Introduction

Radicalisation research has grown significantly in the last years. Several large research projects have also been funded by the European Union that explore online aspects of radicalisation, underlying mechanisms of the radicalisation process, or de-radicalisation.¹ In spite of this effort, practitioners and academics alike have signalled research gaps along all the focus areas of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), as represented by its Working Groups (WG).

This paper presents an overview of these research gaps as they have been outlined in the literature, in particular in the individual research papers on the RAN focus areas; as they have been voiced by practitioners and academics during the first RAN research seminar held between 12-13 April, 2016, in Vienna, Austria; and as communicated by WG leaders and the RAN Editorial Board in their feedback to this paper. It proceeds with describing research gaps that have been noted in all focus areas, followed by gaps which are specific to certain areas.

Where appropriate, existing studies which meet at least partially some of these needs are mentioned and briefly outlined. While radicalisation research and its respective gaps are rather broad, this paper only looks at the aspects which are directly related to practical work in the nine RAN Working Groups: Communications and Narratives; Education; EXIT; Youth, Families and Communities; Local Authorities; Prison and Probation; Police and Law Enforcement; Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism; and Health and Social Care. The conclusion provides an overview of the research priorities based on the gaps outlined throughout the paper.

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Common gaps in radicalisation research

This section outlines some major and overarching research gaps, which have been deemed relevant for all focus areas. While a significant amount of research on violent radicalisation as well as measures to counter it already exists, an underlying **lack of sufficient understanding** concerning **the way radicalisation works** remains apparent. This is also due to the fact that different social science paradigms have been applied to this field. As a result, we have deterministic explanations, but also rational choice models, global explanations (i.e. models considering the micro-, the meso- and the macro-levels), social movement theories as well as attempts to reduce radicalisation to one underlying and overarching explanation (see for instance the quest for significance model or the ongoing debate between the role of ideological or social factors). Whether deterministic or rational choice, complex or integrated, there is a general consensus among practitioners and academics alike that *more research is needed to understand the causes, processes and mechanisms of radicalisation in order to be able to develop effective preventive and counter-measures*. Research is also needed to *understand the dynamics between radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism*. Namely, it is important to identify the kinds of radicalisation factors and processes which lead to violent extremism and terrorism, given that radicalisation is a broader and more complex phenomenon. In the area of Prison and Probation, for example, the need for more research in order to understand the psychological dynamics of radicalisation has been voiced; the role of trust is particularly relevant in this area, especially in determining appropriate countermeasures.

Academic studies and practical work have approached radicalisation at the cognitive level and at the behavioural level. While it is clear that both are relevant, what remains largely unclarified is the interaction between the two and their sequence along the radicalisation process. Furthermore, research on intermediary layers, such as those of habit, aesthetic expression or emotions has recently emerged. Particularly in relation to the phenomenon of foreign fighters and the so-called Islamic State (IS), but also in general terms, visual and audio elements play a major role in terms of both propaganda and the ways in which individuals radicalise. Content produced and distributed on social media is received and consumed by young people who, under powerful aesthetic and emotional impressions are motivated to get involved and go on to imitate the kinds of behaviours they see online. While incipient research has been produced on the topic, it is still largely unknown how visuals and audio material influence individuals on their radicalisation path.

Measures aimed at combating and preventing radicalisation need to be more intimately connected to the insights we have on how radicalisation functions in the first place. For example, we know that discourse and narratives play a role in radicalisation. As participants in the WG session on counter-narratives in Vienna outlined, both practitioners and academics are, however, far from knowing precisely how these narratives are created and what their effect at the individual level is. Developing counter-narratives on the basis of such limited and general knowledge has of course little chance of success. The idea of evidence-based research and policy has in the meantime gained prominence at the European level. Both academics and practitioners require evaluations of existing programmes and empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness, as well as evaluations of the assumptions concerning the mechanisms of radicalisation on which these programmes are based.

In order to achieve this objective, the *current structure of research funding needs to be changed*. Solid scientific research results can only be produced by engaging in systematic

research and by using sound methodologies, which require in most cases significant resources and time. Since current research projects run over 5 years, the resource and time conditions themselves appear to be fulfilled. This comes, however, at the expense of clarity, precision and innovation in terms of research objectives. Research questions tend to be general, unfocused and repetitive. At the same time, as the chapter on Police and Law Enforcement notes, research results are needed in a timely fashion: “The ultimate aim should be to deliver research results to academic standards but to strive to achieve this within operationally relevant timescales. Discovering how this can be achieved wherever possible should be explored.”² During the WG session at the Vienna seminar, education professionals criticised the length of research projects and argued that waiting for results for 3 years is unrealistic.

Relatedly, inadequate knowledge regarding how radicalisation actually functions is due to methodological limitations. While there are many publications on the topic, only a few resort to primary data. As repeatedly outlined during the Vienna research seminar, many studies employ single case studies, anecdotal evidence or no data at all. In general, there is an overwhelming and disproportional amount of concepts and frameworks which are not supported by tangible evidence. The need for evidence base in creating viable prevention and counter-radicalisation measures and programmes is explicitly demanded in all of the chapters surveyed. In the area of Education for example, it is argued that research should be based on systematic primary data, rather than assumptions and public opinion, and that it should employ transparent and state of the art methodology.³ This research should then feed into practical toolkits for teachers. In the area of local authorities there is also a “lack of evidence-based studies assessing the effectiveness of interventions.”⁴

While definitions and concepts often seem to be rather something for academic debate, they are also necessary for practical work. Understanding what radicalisation is and how it manifests is crucial in order to be able to recognise when it occurs or in order to devise adequate prevention measures. Radicalisation is currently understood in various ways that range from radicalisation as a causal factor in terrorist behaviour to a loosely defined process that increases vulnerability to involvement in terrorism, to a fixed, stage-like progression from non-violence to terrorism, to merely a shift towards a more non-violent position around the efficacy of the social order.⁵ This is of course problematic not only from a scientific point of view, but also in practical terms with regard to the specific behaviours and factors that need to be considered in prevention work. **Conceptual clarity** has been specifically requested in the area of Education for example, concerning radicalisation as such and its indicators. The Prison and Probation WG has noted that a new conceptualisation of radicalisation and how it works may be needed in order to match the apparently new empirical reality created by IS, an organisation that, among others, holds territory and resources, and is generally different to the kinds of terrorist organisations we have studied so far.⁶

A further, more general research gap in this field is finding ways to clarify and activate **interlinkage between basic research, applied research and practical work**. Radicalisation research is clearly and intimately connected to practice. The need to understand how and why radicalisation emerges is not only useful in terms of gaining knowledge on human action in general, but also in order to prevent, among others, concrete terrorist attacks. Ideally, basic research should inform policy and applied research should evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of these policy measures. As the chapter on Police and Law Enforcement notes, radicalisation research, how it emerges, unfolds and interacts with violent extremism and

terrorism, “will be of benefit to the police in formulating their own policies, strategies, tactics, techniques and procedures. It is on this interface between theoretical research conclusions and practical research requirements that gaps in knowledge and insight exist and three issues in particular need to be addressed.”⁷ In reality, these three areas remain largely separate, with very few points of overlap. In order to achieve such interlinkage, at least two courses of action appear necessary. First, the face-to-face interaction and exchange between academics and practitioners initiated at the RAN research seminar in Vienna should be continued. Progress has already been made in regards to finding a common language and in grasping how existing research might be useful in practice and what is still needed. Future exchanges should continue this process. Second, calls for research proposals should concretely spell out the kinds of practical output that is needed in the field.

A third general gap concerns **overcoming the false exceptionalism of radicalisation**. In terms of both research and practice, overlaps and opportunities for applying existing knowledge have been observed with respect to areas such as crime, gangs or subcultures. It has also been noted that radicalisation is not an exceptional phenomenon, but one that involves variations of social and psychological processes existing in society. Consequently, *concepts and theories developed in the broader fields of criminology, sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, economics, etc., should be exploited through cross disciplinary academic/practical projects*. The fields of radicalisation and terrorism research are already heavily interdisciplinary, yet systematic applications of such broader theories are still outstanding. For example, during the research seminar in Vienna it was argued that research concerning victims of terrorism can be informed by research that looks at the experiences of victims of serious (non-political) crimes and their efforts to prevent violence, such as in the case of sexual violence or domestic abuse. With regard to the role of local authorities, it has been noted that insights from research on crime prevention, community safety and urban security could be applied to the area of local authorities and governance and their role in preventing radicalisation. Additionally, existing research on criminal neighbourhoods has been deemed relevant in order to understand why radicalisation emerges in some neighbourhoods but not in others.

WG discussions during the Vienna research seminar pinpointed some concrete areas where other research fields can contribute. For example, social movement literature might aid conceptual clarification, particularly regarding the differences between various degrees of involvement in militancy leading up to violent extremism and terrorism. In the area of education, the broader field of critical pedagogy seems appropriate as a source of inspiration, as it seeks to address the interrelationship between educational challenges as societal problems. In the area of Police and Law enforcement, reference has been made to the utility of the broader research on police experience and knowledge in relation to gangs and gang culture, in terms of processes of joining, operations and exit. With respect to counter-narratives, it is argued that there is relevant research on mind-sets and on ‘dos and don’ts’ in the field of communication studies; such research should also look into other areas of work such as drugs and crime and draw lessons from there. In the area of youth, families and communities, it is argued that there is a need to enlarge the conceptual and theoretical focus of research on radicalisation by a) not considering radicalisation as exceptional, but as entailing mechanisms which occur in other phenomena, too – such as joining a group or wanting to be cool; b) using existing research in the areas of crime and family dynamics and roles.

In terms of specific and concrete *radicalisation prevention work*, an aspect that comes up recurrently is the applicability of *'business as usual'*, namely the application of tools and knowledge that practitioners have long used in their daily work and which were not specifically tailored to radicalisation. On the one hand, this advances in the direction of 'resilience' – building resistance against extremist narratives and recruitment attempts. On the other hand, it involves acknowledging the fact that methods employed in more mundane contexts of the work with youth can also be applied to radicalisation prevention. Education professionals as well as youth workers have noted that many of the kinds of social intervention methods they use in everyday work are in fact adequate for radicalisation prevention work. It still remains to be seen which of these methods are applicable to radicalisation and to which extent they should be modified, if at all.

A further gap is the issue of programme **evaluation**. Radicalisation prevention and de-radicalisation programmes have been initiated and are currently running in most European countries, addressing most of the issue areas the RAN Working Groups are dealing with. Apart from the fact that these programmes are supported by limited evidence base, there is also next to no evaluation of their effectiveness. What we mostly have are descriptions of the programmes or quantitative accounts thereof. As outlined in the Exit chapter, what is lacking are qualitative studies that are 'person-centred', which can use concrete cases to ascertain whether and how certain measures impact on individuals' evolution towards and away from radicalisation. In the area of Prison and Probation, it is noted that most programmes are not evaluated, and those that are evaluated do not examine impact and are not made public, thus remaining outside external scrutiny. Furthermore, what we need within this particular area is an overarching strategic overview of what has worked and what has not, in order to learn from failures and see what works in one context and not in another. In the area of Education, the need for clear definitions of what works and what does not work has been voiced, as well as an overview of what has been done so far in this area, along with recommendations as to what elements should be kept while others are discarded. Moreover, in the area of Local Authorities, increased evaluation of counter-radicalisation programmes at this level has been requested. The need to evaluate existing programmes is all the more evident given the fact that radicalisation work has in the meantime become professionalised; as noted in the WG on Local Authorities, the latter and NGOs along with other actors compete for funding. Health professionals have also asked for evaluations of intervention models and of risk assessment tools that they can use in their own environments. On a more general note, evaluation could be calibrated from the very start into the implementation of policies, by setting pre-measures, benchmarks etc. This would make outcome evaluation possible and would involve research carried out alongside the implementation of counter-radicalisation policies.

Another more fundamental issue impacting all focus areas is the **comparability between different types of radicalisation depending on ideology**. In particular, it would be necessary to know whether there are parallels between for example jihadi and right-wing radicalisation. Such knowledge is important and would save significant resources if research gains in one field on substantive, prevention or de-radicalisation questions could be applied to the other. Additionally, participants in the WG on Youth, Families and Communities suggested that there is currently a crisis of youth identity worldwide, which facilitates the adoption of extremist ideas of three kinds, jihadi, right-wing and left-wing. Should this be accurate, comparative research on the three kinds of radicalisation appears even more imperative.

More research is also needed with regard to **multi-agency cooperation** and how this should occur for individual cases. This issue has been raised in multiple WGs, in particular Local authorities and Prison and probation.

Other than comparability between different ideologies, research needs to be orientated towards gender and different age-groups. The socialisation process between gender differs so it is logical that radicalisation processes can also be different. The same stands for age as people in different stages of life get influenced and/or react in different ways. Furthermore, research is needed regarding the existence and role of organised religious programmes for the prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation. Religion is often regarded as contributing to the threat of radicalisation and Islamist propaganda. However, there have also been efforts from churches, organised religious groups, and interreligious foundations to thwart the process of radicalisation, or help individuals exit.

Finally, an issue that has been specifically raised in the WG Prison and Probation, but which is relevant for all WGs is the issue of **transfer to policy makers**. Research output needs to be presented to policy makers and thus structured so as to provide adequate and practical answers that can be directly applicable in policy making.

Communication and Narratives

The area of communication and narratives has gained prominence given the surge in availability of online extremist content (in particular as produced by the IS), and their increasingly apparent role in all types of radicalisation. Before formulating effective counter-narratives, some preparatory work is necessary, and here research plays a major role. From a conceptual point of view, it is evident that significant work needs to be invested in clarifying the following questions:

- What are narratives and what is their constituent content? It has been noted, for example, that much of the IS propaganda is not about violence, but rather about identity building and positive messages. Additionally, the different workings of counter-narratives vs. alternative narratives should be clarified.
- Similar to other areas of inquiry, we also encounter the specificity problem: why is it that some individuals buy into this narrative and others do not? Why does the IS propaganda not appeal to the majority of the population?
- Does it make a difference whether these narratives are propagated online or offline? Are they different and is their effect different? What are the differences and the implications of 'official videos' vs. the ones which are being produced and distributed by sympathisers?⁸

A further major gap is the lack of control groups - namely studies looking at those who do not become radicalised, although confronted with the same narratives, including online. In one such study of extreme right and jihadi propaganda by Diana Rieger et al.⁹, the authors found that young audiences tended to reject the extremist propaganda shown to them. Thus, it is important to understand how different people interpret and consume such material. Such research does however pose ethical issues, as participants would be intentionally exposed to extremist content. Gender issues also need to be addressed here; women are clearly not just

targets of propaganda, but also part of the narrative. In fact, both the far right and the jihadi narrative utilise the image of females as victims in general, with a particular focus on the idea of women as victims of rape. This creates a particularly emotional response within both male and female audiences and is thus a very powerful motivating tool. In a broader perspective, the role of emotions should be more closely investigated, as propaganda videos tend to exploit this dimension. The kinds of emotional manifestations alluded to here include not only the outrage at the sight of images depicting Muslim suffering, but also other kinds of positive emotions such as belonging or even sexual attraction. Related to this are the pop cultural and masculinity elements, which are also part and parcel of the message and of the visuals produced.

Research should be also dedicated to comparative research of far right/left and Islamist narratives in order to establish whether there is a case for commonalities and thus common elements to counter-narratives. With respect to the specific case of the far-right, research should first of all look into how far right narratives incorporate themes which used to be specific for the far left. Authors have already noted that the contemporary far-right discourse is anti-globalisation¹⁰; the incorporation of far left themes, however, extends further than this and there is so far no systematic research covering this topic¹¹. This is significant in order to understand how these messages are constructed to appeal to audiences beyond the strict range of the far right. More broadly, as the chapter on Communication and Narratives notes, “discursive responses of the far right to the recent economic, financial, and humanitarian crises also remain an open field of investigation, as much as do attempts willing to push our understanding of far right politics beyond the usual conception of a ‘single-issue’ anti-immigration/minority phenomenon”¹².

In terms of implementation, it should be clarified which roles the various stakeholders in communication might play and what their particular contribution might be. The topic of formers has been frequently addressed; however, it still remains to be determined what their contribution might specifically look like, how it can be implemented and how this relates to other kinds of initiatives which also involve the participation of formers. In a similar vein to arguments presented in the section on Youth, additional work should clarify how families can be most effectively involved in delivering counter-narratives¹³. Government and NGOs are clearly not credible enough to be the source of these narratives; therefore, individuals which do possess this credibility, such as family members, need to be more involved. In terms of evaluation, *practical* concepts and methodologies for the evaluation of counter-narrative campaigns which should go beyond quantitative assessments and evaluate impact are still lacking.

A further gap refers to identifying the ways in which findings from commercial campaigns could be used in the design of counter-narratives campaigns. This additionally relates to the role of media and how it can spread positive messages instead of indirectly contributing to the dissemination of extremist propaganda. Ethical and legal aspects need to be clarified in relation to direct contact with individuals who have not yet engaged in criminal behaviour, as well as in relation to the target of counter-narrative campaigns, i.e. should they only address people already exposed to violent extremist propaganda in order to avoid unintentionally spreading the extremist propaganda by raising awareness about it to a more general audience?

Finally, the effectiveness and implications of the public communication campaigns of security services should be evaluated. Additionally, research is needed about the best possible point of legal intervention by the authorities in order to effectively tackle radicalisation. Issues of freedom of expression and civil liberties must be taken into account. However, on a practical level it must also be determined whether there have been failures of the legal system to timely intervene before narratives and communication have led to radicalisation to violence. Thus, the actual legal texts and provisions in several EU countries should be assessed in order to establish whether the current legal situation is adequate or whether there should be changes within the legal framework. This is important especially due to the much discussed forthcoming EU directive on terrorism.

Conclusion: Communication & Narratives

- To formulate effective counter-narratives, more research on narratives themselves is critical. We need to look in particular at the following questions: What are narratives? Why is it that some individuals buy into this narrative and others do not? Does it make a difference whether these narratives are propagated online or offline?
- Similar to other areas of inquiry, we need to address the specificity question: why is it that some individuals buy into this narrative and others do not? Why does the IS propaganda not appeal to the majority of the population?
- Another area of inquiry concerns the question: does it make a difference whether these narratives are propagated online or offline? Are they different and is their effect different? What are the differences and the implications of 'official videos' vs. the ones which are being produced and distributed by sympathisers?
- Research should clarify which roles the various stakeholders in communication might play and what their particular contribution might be.
- A further major gap is the need to understand how different people interpret and consume extremist material. Gender issues also need to be addressed here; women are clearly not just targets of propaganda, but also part of the narrative which thus attempts to provoke emotional responses. In a broader perspective, the role of emotions should be more closely investigated, as propaganda videos tend to exploit this dimension.
- Research should be also dedicated to comparative research of far right/left and Islamist narratives in order to establish whether there is a case for commonalities and thus common elements to counter-narratives.
- Another priority is identifying ways in which findings from commercial campaigns could be used in the design of counter-narrative campaigns.

Education

Research on the role of education in radicalisation prevention has produced a series of findings on the general contextual features of the education environment, which should provide conditions for free expression, as well as the possibility to challenge and discuss ideas.¹⁴ Similar to the section on Youth, Families and Communities, there is also emerging acknowledgement that individuals are not just victims of their environment, but agents with

their own ideas and objectives, whose worldview can be corrupted by extremist ideas. Therefore, primarily the allure of the so-called ‘pedagogy of radicalisation’ should be explored. It has been argued that, considering the specific nature and workings of education, as opposed to, for example law enforcement – namely an activity that involves, among others, the exploration of individual and group identity, it would be necessary for practitioners to learn more about the radical mind-set. That is, in order for education practitioners to effectively address the needs of students in class and while doing so, redirect their search for political activism away from extremism, they need to know more about how the radical view emerges in the first place. This is something that arguably goes beyond mere sets of indicators for radicalisation and towards phenomenological accounts of ‘being radical’. Furthermore, research is needed that addresses the question how school activities (within and outside of the curriculum) can respond to the crisis of youth identity and how education can build resistance/resilience to various types of extremism.

A related area of research and intervention concerns the ways in which ideas and frameworks are transmitted and adopted. Some of these issues are dealt with in the focus area on counter-narratives, yet specific solutions are also needed here concerning the mechanisms by which ideals and values are transmitted by parents and schools. A conceptual paper on approaches to formal education and parenting¹⁵, reviewed in the chapter on Education explicitly mentions this gap. As shown in the section on Youth, Families and Communities (see below), research has been carried out on general societal attitudes and on extremist biographies; yet more research is necessary to validate relationships of causality based on primary data.

Another specific gap here (and one that is in fact also useful to investigate in relation to youth) is the issue of conspiracy theories: “We still have too little knowledge on why they are so difficult to resist or undermine, and how we could offer better alternatives that may have the same function in the minds of youths”¹⁶. While research so far has largely focused on education in general, it is clear that different pedagogical approaches need to be developed depending on the type of school and the level of education. While acknowledging the fact that evaluation and capitalising on existing knowledge are important, an approach of ‘trial and error’ and ‘pilot studies’ might also be adopted at the same time, in order to allow for the emergence of innovative solutions. Being aware that some young people do not ‘trust the system’ anymore and find refuge in conspiracy theories, should help lead to effective discussion and application of specific tools to address this issue.

Universities are an area of particular concern requiring notable attention. It has been acknowledged that some radicals have a university degree, that universities can act as both creators and barriers to radicalisation, and that they can be platforms for radical preachers’ dissemination efforts. At the same time there are a series of gaps here concerning: the concrete role the university environment plays in radicalisation; the effectiveness and desirability of allowing or curtailing access to radical messages; the specific pedagogical and social challenges posed by the fact that university students are adults in educational settings. In addition to universities, further research is needed regarding ‘informal education’ centres where radicalisation can take place, such as mosques, Islamist camps, far right establishments etc.

Conclusion: Education

- It is important to explore the allure of the so-called ‘pedagogy of radicalisation’. Concretely, it is necessary for practitioners to learn more about the radical mind-set and how the radical view emerges in the first place.
- Research is needed that addresses the question of how school activities (within and outside of the curriculum) can respond to the crisis of youth identity and how education can build resistance/resilience to various types of extremism.
- Research should identify and evaluate the applicability of specific tools to address the issue of conspiracy theories.
- Related to the specific case of universities, research should address the following: the concrete role the university environment plays in radicalisation; the effectiveness and desirability of allowing or curtailing access to radical messages; the specific pedagogical and social challenges posed by the fact that university students are adults in educational settings.
- Research is also needed in regards to ‘informal education’ centres where radicalisation can take place.

EXIT

In relation to exit, a series of research gaps have been identified at the conceptual, theoretical and empirical level. Conceptually, the precise content of the terms de-radicalisation and disengagement¹⁷ still needs to be clarified in order to avoid targeting the wrong people. Theoretically, the role of ideology, in particular as it reflects on de-radicalisation and disengagement still needs to be better understood. This has direct relevance for practical programmes, given the existence of two fundamentally different approaches to exit; namely, the ones focusing on ideology and ideology de-construction, vs. the ones focussing on behaviour - in particular violent behaviour. Fundamentally, a more fine-grained analysis is needed to distinguish between indoctrination per se and the acquisition of certain routines and the formation of new identities as a consequence of participation in extremist groups. This has implications for the kinds of measures involved in de-radicalisation/disengagement; i.e. whether text or religious dialogue should be employed, or one should rather attempt to change habits. It also has consequences in terms of recidivism and the sustainability of exit initiatives. Christensen argues that “former extremists need to learn new bodily routines in order to participate in alternative settings and develop different feelings and understanding of ‘who one is’. In order for the individual to be able to make a halt to an extremist and criminal life. Otherwise the person potentially exits one group, ‘just’ to enter a different criminal and violent group, because of the habitus learned.”¹⁸ At the empirical level, the consideration of the context appears relevant, as it not only influences the reasons and ways in which people join extremist organisations. Indeed, cultural, historical, and social frames will also impact on the kinds of approaches to de-radicalisation and disengagement, as well as their effectiveness. That said, identifying assumptions and mechanisms which are generally applicable is also relevant in developing appropriate overarching initiatives at the European level and as a basis for exchange of experience among countries.

Another empirical gap concerns the evaluation of programmes in this area and specifically addressing the following aspects: a systematic overview of incentives and instruments deployed in de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes; the effects of leadership in such programmes; percentage of recidivism with regard to type of previous extremist

violence, age and gender; the drivers of recidivism and means to prevent it; variations induced by context. Existing research on de-radicalisation programmes has been carried out so far from a macro sociological perspective and in the majority of cases outside of Europe.¹⁹ Finally, again in relation to exit programmes, it would be important to investigate the features of the demand and not just the supply side, in particular, the profiles and motivations of those individuals who are willing to cooperate vs. the ones who would not. It might be that different exit programmes are necessary for different people depending on whether their motivation is for example rather personal or rather ideological; or on whether they are leaders, ideologues, drifters or foot soldiers. And it might of course be the case that some individuals will never be open to and available for such programmes. Finally, it would be important to investigate the role of mentors (spiritual leadership) and to assess the effectiveness of the various methods used to encourage de-radicalisation/disengagement.

Conclusion: EXIT

- Conceptually, the precise content of the terms de-radicalisation and disengagement still needs to be clarified in order to avoid targeting the wrong people.
- We need to gain more theoretical insight into the role of ideology, in particular as it reflects on de-radicalisation and disengagement. This has direct relevance for practical programmes, given the existence of two fundamentally different approaches to exit; namely, the ones focusing on ideology and ideology de-construction, vs. the ones focussing on behaviour - in particular violent behaviour.
- A more fine-grained analysis is required to distinguish between indoctrination per se and the acquisition of certain routines and the formation of new identities as a consequence of participation in extremist groups. This has implications for the kinds of measures involved in de-radicalisation/disengagement; i.e. whether text or religious dialogue should be employed, or one should rather attempt to change habits. It also has consequences in terms of recidivism and the sustainability of exit initiatives.
- At the empirical level, research should look into the role of context – cultural, historical and social factors and how they influence the reasons and ways in which people join extremist organisations on the one side, and the kinds of approaches to de-radicalisation and disengagement, as well as their effectiveness, on the other.
- We need a more systematic overview of the incentives and instruments deployed in de-radicalisation and disengagement programmes; the effects of leadership in such programs; percentage of recidivism with regard to type of previous extremist violence, age and gender; the drivers of recidivism and means to prevent it; variations induced by context.
- We need to investigate the features of the demand and not just the supply side, in particular, the profiles and motivations of those individuals who are willing to cooperate vs. the ones who would not.

Youth, Families and Communities

Research gaps in the area of youth, families and communities can be classified as: conceptual and theoretical, methodological or empirical; and as some which are applicable to specific issue areas, vs. some which are applicable to all. *Methodological* observations applicable to *all* concern the lack of comparative, pan-European and longitudinal studies. The lack of control

groups is another aspect which has been mentioned specifically in the context of youth radicalisation²⁰ and in the area of families, in particular with regard to the question of why some members of the same family such as brothers do not radicalise. Some other methodological gaps outlined in the studies on subcultures²¹ and British youth²² concern the need to develop alternative research designs to the ones looking for 'causes' and 'factors', and which consider the perspective of the individuals investigated. In the area of families, a new methodological approach proposed is the use of population registers in order to better understand the complexity of the causal web leading to radicalisation, the relevance of shared psychological and cultural dimensions, the susceptibility to violence, and the role of specific cultural concepts such as 'honour'.

Existing studies on communities and attitudes²³ reveal great potential for improvement at the methodological level. These large scale appraisals of in-group out-group hostility should be combined with socio-psychological research to ascertain their role in radicalisation. The same is valid for stereotypes. Clearly, both elements are a symptom of radicalisation and they also exist in the public opinion more than one would like to admit, yet their concrete role in fostering radicalisation is not entirely understood. The community studies on attitudes have an inherent limitation as they only deal with attitudes and not behaviour; consequently, their findings only reach a certain point, whereas violent radicalisation obviously also has a behavioural component. This link from attitudes to behaviour remains unclarified, yet it is important for the understanding of radicalisation processes. Given the fact that only some individuals who have radical views also go on to commit violent acts, and that these acts are in fact the ones relevant for the authorities, these explanations are not specific enough. In relation to attitudes, more granular, individual level and qualitative studies are needed to complement the large scale, quantitative ones. From a methodological perspective, it is obvious that these studies find correlation, rather than causation, and thus assume relationships that still need to be validated at the micro-level.

With regard to *conceptual* and *theoretical* development, one avenue worth pursuing is the development of typologies for motivations and radicalisation processes, given the empirical diversity on the ground and incipient attempts to develop such typologies. As a matter of theoretical refinement with the help of empirical work and with regard to belonging and social inclusion, some further clarification is needed concerning the types and exact roles of these factors in preventing or furthering radicalisation. According to the large scale studies on attitudes, belonging and social inclusion can help to prevent stereotypes, while according to other studies it is on the other hand precisely social connections that facilitate radicalisation and recruitment.²⁴ Finally, while there is awareness of a link between fundamentalism and radicalisation, the ways in which this plays out, in particular in individual biographies, remains little understood. This clearly has implications for prevention work, in particular the reach of repressive measures, and the breadth of inclusion of religious authorities.

In terms of *empirical* gaps in the area of *youth*, an obvious one relates to the motivations of foreign fighters. Thus far, we know a relatively great deal about their socio-demographic background, but almost nothing about the issues that motivate them; more broadly, we do not know if their travel to a conflict zone is the next step in the radicalisation process, or the result of a different type of radicalisation process. This is significant in order to know whether special prevention programmes are needed. In this case, qualitative studies are necessary - in particular interviews with returnees. Arguably, studies focusing on the socio-political and

cultural context should also be pursued, given the differences in background and characteristics among European foreign fighters. In light of the prevalence of criminal backgrounds among the foreign fighters from Germany²⁵, a research question worth pursuing concerns the factors leading to the transition from violence to political violence. Another gap concerns the issue of identification with an allegedly oppressed and disenfranchised community, although the individuals themselves are not. The role of the media in the context of youth is additionally worth investigating, namely in relation to the ways in which it stirs existing polarisation. Finally, a specific gender perspective is still largely lacking in the literature and should seek to address the roles female foreign fighters play per se and in motivating male fighters. A hypothesis might be the fact that for women facing injustice and restrictions at home, the perspective of a regime that imposes restrictions on all, with the same rules, might appear attractive. Beyond this, first hand contemporary research closer to youth subcultures is missing; namely, addressing forms of violence, the praise of violence, violence in the family and in childhood, the roles of music, of leaders and networks and how they contribute to involvement in terrorism.

In the area of *families*, there is currently a relatively extensive research gap with respect to the role of families (including family histories) in furthering radicalisation and recruitment. In particular the involvement of siblings in radicalisation and concrete terror attacks has become apparent. Another aspect that needs clarification is the apparently high number of family ties in jihadi radicalisation as opposed to other forms – where such ties also exist but not to such an extent. We furthermore have little understanding of the impact of specific cultural contexts and specific cultures of (lack of) communication on both radicalisation and de-radicalisation. In terms of de-radicalisation and prevention, a research gap appears to be the role of families in general in the specific context of the Balkans in particular, and in the context of cultural specificities such as cultures of honour.

In terms of empirical gaps in the area of *communities*, one gap is more focused, detailed and up to date research on the role of peer groups and (online) communities. There is a sense that these play an important role in radicalisation, yet the latest studies were on the ‘bunch of guys’ phenomenon (how cells come together) or social networks more broadly. We still need to better understand the dynamics of groups which are broader than the cell and narrower than the community proper, and in particular how this plays out online. Drawing on the findings in Ranstorp et al.²⁶ and the recent attacks in France, the investigation of particular milieus and their role in radicalisation also appears imperative. Incipient work has already noted the ambivalence of radical milieus: they can serve as ‘hotbeds’ for violent extremism but they may also provide spaces of alternative political engagement, thus limiting the influence of groups that support violence. Here, more research is arguably needed to investigate the various relationships between the radical milieu, terrorist and extremist groups and the broader social environment.²⁷ Relatedly, research on radicalisation could draw more on social-psychology and the study of small group dynamics, including group polarization, risky shifts, and group think. Comparative research is also needed on the issue of community reaction to events and its impact. The ways in which communities can be made more resilient and how they can acquire social and political agency also needs attention. Particularly important would be to uncover what a healthy and inclusive community would look like - one that can offer an alternative to young people. On a broader level, there is still a need for research on ideology and its workings at the level of attitudes, whether in an

elaborated or a simplistic form, to which extent non-democratic ideas are risk-enhancers, and in order to obtain more clarity on our own ideology.

Conclusion: Youth, Families and Communities

- In this area a major research gap identified by practitioners is the need for comparative, pan-European and longitudinal studies examining the motivations and radicalisation processes of European youth, the relevance of shared psychological and cultural dimensions, the susceptibility to violence, and the role of specific cultural concepts such as 'honour'.
- A further research gap is the question of transition from attitudes to behaviour, given the fact that only some individuals who have radical views also go on to commit violent acts.
- Empirical work should be carried out to identify the role of belonging, social inclusion and of religious fundamentalism in preventing or furthering radicalisation.
- In the specific case of foreign fighters, research should focus on individual motivations, the role of criminal backgrounds in radicalisation, the role of socio-political and cultural contexts, and of the identification with an allegedly oppressed and disenfranchised community, all the while ensuring the presence of a specific gender perspective.
- Specific research gaps in the area of families are: the role of families (including family histories) and in particular or siblings in furthering radicalisation and recruitment; the impact of specific cultural contexts and specific cultures of (lack of) communication on both radicalisation and de-radicalisation; the role of cultures of honour.
- Research is also needed to better understand the role of peer groups and (online) communities in radicalisation processes; the role of particular milieus in preventing or facilitating radicalisation; the role of small group dynamics, including group polarisation, risky shifts, and group think; ways in which communities can be made more resilient and how they can acquire social and political agency; and the prerequisites for a healthy and inclusive community.

Local Authorities

The area of local authorities has so far not constituted the specific object of focus in research dealing with radicalisation, radicalisation prevention and de-radicalisation. The kinds of material available in this area are rather an overview of existing initiatives. The fact that local authorities have a role in combating radicalisation and extremism, and that this role is very important, has certainly been acknowledged²⁸, yet there is little indication as to what this role might specifically be. The relevance of local authorities for prevention emerges from several sources: radicalisation occurs as a matter of concomitant factors acting at the local, international and online levels; radicalisation is a process, which thus offers opportunities for prevention at the local level; and a number of the risk and protective factors for radicalisation emerge at the local level. In practice, and in spite of the absence of research specifically dedicated to local authorities, the latter have in fact actively engaged in practical prevention work, either within national multi-agency strategies, or by initiating own primary, secondary and tertiary prevention programmes.²⁹ Several major gaps have been identified in relation to the role of local authorities in preventing radicalisation. First, it needs to be clarified what a local prevent programme should look like, what kinds of elements are necessary, such as for example: multiagency structure and cooperation; hotline; mentoring; support to families; etc.

Second, there is the issue of a more general lack of research on the governance of radicalisation prevention, including an evaluation of the various modes of prevention. This evaluation should give insight into the question of what the effective elements of preventive projects are. Another research gap concerns governance structures at the local level: how can a local authority (often with limited real 'power') motivate potential partners to cooperate, on goal or means basis, and what are the implications of this? Third, a series of mechanisms involved in prevention work at the local level should also be investigated, in particular: the effectiveness of the private-public partnership; case-specific cooperation between authorities and the efficiency of information exchange among them; the transition from policy making to policy implementation; and the effectiveness of communication with different communities in the population, among others.

In light of the recent attacks in France and Belgium, the relevance of neighbourhoods and the reasons why some nurture radicalisation while others do not, has been raised. In particular, research should be carried out on the factors that fuel vs. stop radicalisation at the neighbourhood level and such research should also build on existing research on criminal neighbourhoods. Additionally, research is needed to untangle the differences between urban and rural areas. Beyond the strict focus on radicalisation, and more recently foreign fighters, local authorities are confronted with broader phenomena taking place at the societal level, such as polarisation and radicalisation of other kinds than Islamist. In this context, there are gaps concerning how the work with the youth could contribute to social cohesion, how cities and local spaces could be used to prevent polarisation and community violence, research on prejudice and polarisation including within local authorities themselves and, relatedly, on how to persuade authorities to work towards prevention rather than repression, and how to reconcile the work of local communities with the work of Muslim communities. One important question is: how other (local) policy fields, e.g. youth, education and local integration should and can contribute to the prevention of radicalisation. Similarly, the relation between general and specific prevention is relevant: how do they relate to each other and what should be considered (and labelled) prevention of radicalisation, and what not?

Somewhat counter-intuitively, but at the same time extremely necessary for an adequate distribution of work at the local and the national level respectively, there is a need for research that looks into whether and which measures should be carried out at the local level as opposed to the national one. Although often indicated or even taken for granted, there is still a lack of sufficient evidence that the local level is indeed the adequate level to prevent violent extremism. Such evidence is important in order to persuade advocates of the national approach and to devise proper communication tools.

Another focus of research here should be the issue of cooperation among authorities at the local level and between those at the local and at the national level, respectively. In particular, these concrete questions should be addressed: first, cooperation between national police and local authorities. This is arguably particularly important in relation to cases relevant to security, such as returning foreign fighters, where overlaps and reciprocal hindrance should be avoided. Another issue is research showing that local multi-agency approaches are better suited to tackle this issue rather than national ones³⁰; here, there is also need for assessments and solutions as to how communication can be best employed in order to avoid the diminishing of local credibility, such as it was the case for the Prevent programme. With respect to the much discussed relationship between radicalisation and integration, research

should be directed towards the question whether integration succeeds better in rural than in urban areas, and how this relates to radicalisation.

Conclusion: Local Authorities

- Research should more clearly identify the specific role of local authorities in combating radicalisation and how they should cooperate with other institutions involved in this work.
- Research is also needed with regard to programmes. Namely, what a local prevent program should look like, what kinds of elements are necessary, such as for example: multiagency structure and cooperation; hotline; mentoring; support to families; etc.
- Additionally, a series of mechanisms involved in prevention work at the local level should also be investigated, in particular: the effectiveness of the private-public partnership; case-specific cooperation between authorities and the efficiency of information exchange among them; the transition from policy making to policy implementation; and the effectiveness of communication with different communities in the population, among others.
- One important question is: how other (local) policy fields, e.g. youth, education and local integration should and can contribute to the prevention of radicalisation. Similarly, the relation between general and specific prevention is relevant: how do they relate to each other and what should be considered (and labelled) prevention of radicalisation, and what not?
- There is a need for research that looks into whether and which measures should be carried out at the local level as opposed to the national one. There is still a lack of sufficient evidence that the local level is indeed the adequate level to prevent violent extremism. Such evidence would persuade advocates of the national approach and help to devise proper communication tools.
- There is a need to gain more insight into the issue of cooperation among authorities at the local level and between those at the local and at the national level.

Prison and Probation

The relevance of the prison and probation environment for radicalisation has come particularly prominently to the fore due to the fact that many of the perpetrators of the recent terror attacks in France and Belgium were actually known to the authorities for criminal activities, and some had already been imprisoned. Clearly, there has always been an overlap between terrorism and crime, with respect to for example, logistics, smuggling and the procurement of weapons, or considering the fact that many of the skills needed for terrorism are in fact also applicable to crime and the other way around. Recently, however, there seems to be an increased relevance of this area of investigation given the fact that: many of the foreign fighters and other radicals have criminal backgrounds; that prison as such is not sufficient to deter further involvement in terrorism; and that conversion and radicalisation or further radicalisation in prison is not just a matter of academic debate anymore, but a reality with real consequences in terms of actual attacks. Academics and practitioners alike have argued that it does not make sense to understand radicalisation looking only at deprivation or other socio-psychological factors. We need to take into account what happens in prison. There is in fact a specific narrative heavily used by recruiters; namely that prison is like a watershed

between the previous bad past (petty crimes) to a life as jihadist until martyrdom. The Charlie Hebdo attackers for example, transitioned from criminals to being suddenly treated as heroes.

While the lack of empirical research and 'evidence base' characterises most of the radicalisation field, the dearth of empirical studies appears to be particularly serious in the area of prison and probation. Fieldwork in general and access to the units of analysis are difficult across the area of radicalisation research; prison and probation display specific challenges connected both to the population itself and to the bureaucratic system around it. Motivating inmates to give interviews might be more difficult than for others for example, and they might be less inclined to narrate accurate stories. On the other hand, the time, efforts and uncertainty connected with attempts to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles involved in accessing the prison population might discourage researchers from the start or seem unsuitable for project applications which depend on tangible and quick results.

The research gaps here relate to specific phenomena in the context of prison and probation and to both prevention and de-radicalisation work. A series of research questions need addressing in relation to the topic of gangs: how they recruit members and intervene in prisons dynamics among gangs; how gangs construct their hierarchy and intervene in the prison structure operating between chaos and control; how they use rhetoric to gain power among the inmates. Research shows that they either contribute to radicalisation, by spreading extremist ideologies, or have positive effects on the prison population by maintaining law and order and prevent radicalisation.³¹ Secondly, there is still the unsolved specificity problem; namely, why individuals are confronted with the same prison conditions, yet only some radicalise. Concretely, "In order to accurately identify those individuals at risk, empirical research is needed that aims to disentangle the social and psychological *mechanisms* by which contextual conditions may lead to radicalisation in some, but not in others."³²

With regard to the drivers of radicalisation and the role of prisons therein, anecdotal evidence shows that many inmates – including gang members, convert in prison; it is, however, not yet clear what this involves in terms of criminal and terrorist behaviour after release and whether there is indeed a connection. Conversion as such can in fact also act as a barrier toward violent behaviour. While there is research on conversion as a step in the radicalisation process in general, there is a need for work looking at the specific context of prisons as a special case of conversion with particular features and consequences. Of particular importance is the question of transition from conversion to radicalisation. Another important subsection here is the case of born-again Muslims, from the perspective of how spiritual purification can be transferred to the context of political struggle and self-sacrifice.³³ Additionally, given the temporary and isolated nature of the prison experience, it is important to assess the vulnerability of individuals who leave prison as fresh converts, with little knowledge about Islam and without a supporting religious network as a reference. Somewhat at the intersection with the issue area of youth and given the prevalence of young people in particular among the ranks of those joining the IS, research into violent juvenile offenders appears necessary. Furthermore, a specific area of significant relevance from a security perspective is the period post-detention, in particular the specific re-integration challenges faced by political prisoners (such as stigmatisation and difficulties in finding employment) and the effects of conditions of detention on reintegration and recidivism.

In terms of de-radicalisation and disengagement, the impact of gender has not yet been assessed, in particular concerning the challenges involved in reintegrating female offenders,

such as the ones who have returned from Syria. While the importance of families in de-radicalisation has been noted, it still remains unclear how they can be best employed as a support network during the probation period. As a broader and at the same time more fundamental undertaking, initiatives and programmes need to consider similarities and differences between countries and between different types of prisons with the respective different kinds of dynamics. We still know too little about how to create a good environment in prisons and a healthy prison population. Credibility and trust seem to be of paramount importance and more evidence base is needed on how to ensure the credibility of prison staff guards and how to create and maintain trust. For example, a lot of interventions tend to be stopped because of risks; the problem is that in order to gain trust one needs to give trust and in some countries this is more difficult than in others. A thorny and still unresolved issue is the distribution of political inmates: how do we distribute the radicalised among the prison population? Can we segregate them completely from the rest of the population? Strategies differ³⁴ and “it is unclear which strategy may work best and under which circumstances”³⁵. Beyond the creation and evaluation of programmes as such, we also need to investigate the situation of individuals who are going to be sentenced, their issues and their pathways after release. The most appropriate ways to use formers in de-radicalisation work still need to be determined.

Conclusion: Prison and Probation

- There is a need for work looking at the specific context of prisons as a special case of conversion with particular features and consequences.
- Initiatives and programmes need to consider similarities and differences between countries and between different types of prisons with the respective different kinds of dynamics.
- Research should identify and assess the prerequisites for the creation of a good environment in prisons and of a healthy prison population. Credibility and trust seem to be of paramount importance and more evidence base is needed on how to ensure the credibility of prison staff guards and how to create and maintain trust.
- Beyond the creation and evaluation of programmes as such, we also need to investigate the situation of individuals who are going to be sentenced, their issues and their pathways after release. The most appropriate ways to use formers in de-radicalisation work still need to be determined.

Police and Law Enforcement

In the area of police and law enforcement, significant research has already been carried out - see for example the holistic model for preventing terrorism proposed by Tore Bjorgo.³⁶ Nevertheless, more research on the interface between radicalisation and police work in countering radicalisation is first of all needed. In particular, an EU-wide survey should compare national models and outline the roles played by police across the entire spectrum starting with prevention and ending with various types of repressive actions, and how these should play out in a multi-agency framework.

Another issue where knowledge is inadequate is the area of community policing and how that impacts on (counter-)radicalisation, building public-private partnerships and gathering information, where best practices and evaluated practices (including the reactions of

communities) are still lacking.³⁷ Arguably, police experience in this area pertaining to other areas of interest can be effectively used as comparison. Similar to the area on Prison and probation, gaining trust and its limits³⁸ are also relevant here.

Another research gap lies in the research effort needed to broaden and deepen the scope of knowledge and understanding drawn from other research areas that could be relevant and useful to police efforts in countering radicalization and violent extremism. For example, there is a long-standing body of academic research (primarily from the USA) based on police experience and knowledge relating to gangs and gang culture; how and why individuals join, operate within them and leave them.³⁹ Similarly, much work has been done in the USA to understand 'spree-shooters', particularly in the context of their targeting of schools, places of work or crowded places. Working together, academics and police now have in place a number of practical programmes to identify and pre-empt their activities before they erupt into violence.⁴⁰ At first glance, there appear to be many elements common between radicalized, violent individuals and both these other categories of individuals. Lessons suitable for transference may also be identified from within existing police programmes already targeted against them.

Finally, a series of specific issues and questions deserve consideration. The effectiveness of specific measures such as the ban of certain organisations is also something that should be clarified; in particular, does it effectively disrupt the radicalisation process and reduce the numbers of violent extremists? Research on the effectiveness of Prevent/CVE programmes beyond the mere aspect of recidivism is also needed, in particular: whether and which elements thereof make a difference in concrete cases; the concrete and specific role of the police vis-à-vis other agencies or community groups; how to work on the public image of such programmes; and whether or not police should have a role to play in creating counter-narratives, and if so in which way. More general research on the role of police in combating radicalisation is also needed, including differences based on context, the concepts of high and low policing, facilitators and obstacles of liaising, ways to enforce the law in difficult communities. New developments that could potentially undermine the role of the police also need to be examined. These range from the 'neighbourhood protection' carried out by 'vigilante' groups in the face of perceived threats by 'outsiders', to the concept of 'no-go areas', where police are actively discouraged from entering or carrying out their responsibilities when they do also need investigation.

In terms of methodology and contributing to the goal of producing studies based on primary data, the police are in a privileged position as a depository of important data. Ways of accessing police and intelligence data for academic purposes should be investigated. However, the trade-off here must be for academics involved in this type of work to present their results to the police in operationally relevant timescales.

Conclusion: Police and Law Enforcement

- Research is needed on the effectiveness of Prevent/CVE programmes beyond the mere aspect of recidivism, in particular: whether and which elements thereof make a difference in concrete cases; the concrete and specific role of the police vis-à-vis other agencies or community groups; how to work on the public image of such programmes;

and whether or not police should have a role to play in creating counter-narratives, and if so in which way.

- More general research on the role of police in combating radicalisation is also needed, including differences based on context, the concepts of high and low policing, facilitators and obstacles of liaising, ways to enforce the law in difficult communities.
- More research on the interface between radicalisation and police work in countering radicalisation is needed. In particular, an EU-wide survey should compare national models and outline the roles played by police across the entire spectrum starting with prevention and ending with various types of repressive actions, and how these should play out in a multi-agency framework.

Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism

In the area of victims of terrorism, their role in prevention and de-radicalisation work, as well as some of the issues involved concerning the use of victimisation on both sides (competing victimisation) has been acknowledged.⁴¹ An obvious gap concerns the need to understand and identify the proper role of victims and their testimonies to prevent and counter radicalisation. Given the victims' sensitive situation, care must be taken in order to avoid secondary victimisation as a result of this involvement. Another important aspect here is the identification of relevant testimonies and the need to provide them with training in communication skills. Research should also consider first of all how efforts to prevent violence can impact on both the victims themselves and the target of their interventions: the perpetrators and the potential recruits. This research should consider the level of impact desirable (personal, political, group) as well as the type of interpersonal intervention appropriate in all circumstances. In addition, it should consider how these interventions come about in terms of the identity of the individuals involved and their organisational affiliation. Finally, research should consider if in fact symbolic contact between victims and perpetrators does have a significant impact on the audience for any counter narrative in comparison to face to face interventions.

One other significant area for research is the issue of the re-victimisation of victims of terrorism and political violence. Given that for many victims of serious crime, the criminal justice process is in itself a re-victimising experience, it must be assumed that the likely failure to achieve a criminal justice solution in the case of terrorism and political violence has implications for the victims. Understanding the victims' needs as a result of this process (or of the lack of such a process), as well as the complications of the process in the case of terrorism (i.e. the role of the security services, intelligence services etc.) would inform how and why specific needs are expressed and are prioritised by victims of terrorism and political violence. In addition, understanding the impact of the criminal justice process as well as the failure of criminal justice solutions in the case of terrorism will serve to highlight how the trajectory of needs for victims of terrorism and political violence relate to such processes. In addition to highlighting the personal impact for victims, research in this area could inform how violence prevention work may serve to meet victims' needs as an alternative or in addition to a criminal justice solution.

Some other gaps have been outlined along the lines of practical work in this area, such as: how to give a more nuanced narrative than black and white when it comes to perpetrators and victims; how to enact public mourning through statues for example; how governments

and victim groups and support bodies should tackle this issue; how to manage victims who want to speak up but are not ready yet.⁴² The need for more comparative studies on reconciliation processes has equally been outlined, as well as the need to engage in actions that help break the discursive monopoly on Islamophobia, as well as include forgotten groups such as Muslims killed by jihadis or Catholics killed by the IRA, since very often perpetrators consider that they act on behalf of their community, whilst in reality they are violating it.

Conclusion: Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism

- A first research gap concerns the need to understand and identify the proper role of victims and their testimonies to prevent and counter radicalisation. An important aspect here is the identification of relevant testimonies and the need to provide them with training in communication skills.
- Research is needed to consider how efforts to prevent violence can impact on both the victims themselves and the target of their interventions: the perpetrators and the potential recruits.
- Research in this area could inform how violence prevention work may serve to meet victims' needs as an alternative or in addition to a criminal justice solution.
- Some other gaps have been outlined along the lines of practical work in this area, such as: how to give a more nuanced narrative than black and white when it comes to perpetrators and victims; how to enact public mourning through statues for example; how governments and victim groups and support bodies should tackle this issue; how to manage victims who want to speak up but are not ready yet.

Health and Social Care

In the area of health and social care, a series of research gaps have been outlined. The first and most obvious thereof is the relationship between mental health difficulties and radicalisation. Research on terrorism has long established that mental disorder is not a cause of terrorism.⁴³ At the same time, some individual cases of radicalisation have displayed signs of either mental illness or otherwise a 'lower level' of mental disorder, such as personality disorders. While still not pointing to mental illness as a cause of radicalisation, such cases raise questions with regard to how such aspects can influence the radicalisation process and they should be explored in depth. As a subtopic but also an issue in itself, the role of trauma within and outside radicalisation processes as well as other similar negative psychological experiences occurring during radicalisation and their relationship to it should be explored. The specific case of lone-actors should also be considered, given the fact that such individuals appear to be more likely to be affected by mental illness.⁴⁴ Such studies should additionally consider homogeneous samples in order to obtain more precise findings. The development of decision support systems has also been proposed as an alternative to risk assessment systems of the type 'tick-box'.⁴⁵

The special case of returning foreign fighters and their likely psychological problems should also be addressed for the use of practitioners, in particular the questions: "What is the extent and nature of mental health difficulties that arise in this population? How do we assess if they remain committed to violence? What are the limits of confidentiality in this context, and to whom do we seek counsel if we have concerns that an individual remains at risk of violence?"⁴⁶

The gender question is also relevant here and one of the questions that should be addressed is whether women acting as jihadist brides who are caught at the border are mentally ill or just vulnerable to human nature.

Another empirical question is the role of trauma within the family, what the family experienced in previous conflicts, such as Bosnia and Chechnya. The point of using control groups to validate results has also been brought up here, namely, that the suggestion was made to look at the population affected by mental illness but which has not turned to terrorism. A more underlying issue in this area is of a conceptual nature, namely what mental problems we are actually dealing with and have been found relevant for explaining radicalisation, i.e. is mental illness meant, or also 'lighter' version such as emotional problems, personality features, depression, trauma, etc. Moreover, from a methodological point of view, the incidence of mental issues should be also investigated as they occur during radicalisation, rather than as a prior cause, given the impact of the group and prisons on the individual psyche. Finally, the possibility that mental illness might be a specificity of recruits that join IS should be investigated.⁴⁷

Conclusion: Health and Social Care

- Further research is needed to determine how mental illness or a 'lower level' of mental disorder can influence the radicalisation process.
- In addition, there is a need to explore the role of trauma within and outside radicalisation processes as well as other similar negative psychological experiences occurring during radicalisation.
- In the case of returning foreign fighters, a series of concrete questions need to be addressed: What is the extent and nature of mental health difficulties that arise in this population? How do we assess if they remain committed to violence? What are the limits of confidentiality in this context, and to whom do we seek counsel if we have concerns that an individual remains at risk of violence?
- Control groups are needed to validate such research, i.e. examining the population affected by mental illness but which has not turned to terrorism.

Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of the gaps that exist in radicalisation research. While a significant amount of research on violent radicalisation as well as measures to counter it already exists, an underlying lack of sufficient understanding concerning the way radicalisation works remains apparent. There are also some general overarching common research gaps worth mentioning:

- More research is needed to understand the causes, processes and mechanisms of radicalisation in order to be able to develop effective preventive and counter-measures. Research is also needed to understand the dynamics between radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism. Namely, it is important to identify the kinds of radicalisation factors and processes which lead to violent extremism and terrorism, given that radicalisation is a broader and more complex phenomenon.

- Measures aimed at combating and preventing radicalisation need to be more intimately connected to the insights we have on how radicalisation functions in the first place. Both academics and practitioners require evaluations of existing programmes and empirical evidence regarding their effectiveness, as well as evaluations of the assumptions concerning the mechanisms of radicalisation on which these programs are based.
- There needs to be changes in the current structure of research funding, so that research results to academic standards can be delivered within shorter timescales.
- Research in the area needs to be more methodological robust by being systematic, evidence based, and based on primary data.
- A further, more general research gap in this field is finding ways to clarify and activate interlinkages between basic research, applied research and practical work. Ideally, basic research should inform policy and applied research should evaluate the adequacy and effectiveness of these policy measures.
- Another gap concerns the need to overcome the false exceptionalism of radicalisation. Consequently, concepts and theories developed in the broader fields of criminology, sociology, psychology, political science, anthropology, economics, etc., should be exploited through cross disciplinary academic/practical projects.
- Research should also investigate the applicability of ‘business as usual’, namely the application of tools and knowledge that practitioners have long used in their daily work and which were not specifically tailored to radicalisation.
- The evaluation of the effectiveness of current programmes has been outlined by all RAN Working Groups.
- Another more fundamental issue impacting all focus areas is the comparability between different types of radicalisation depending on ideology. In particular, it would be necessary to know whether there are parallels between for example jihadi and right-wing radicalisation.
- More research is also needed with regard to multi-agency cooperation and how this should occur for individual cases. This issue has been raised in multiple WGs, in particular Local Authorities and Prison and Probation.

¹ So far there have been four research projects on anti-radicalisation funded so far within FP7: Scientific Approach to Finding Indicators of and REsponses to Radicalisation (SAFIRE), Innovative Method and Procedure to Assess Counter-violent- radicalisation Techniques in Europe (IMPACT), Virtual Centre of Excellence for Research in Violent Online Political Extremism (VOX-Pol) and PRIME (PREventing, Interdicting and Mitigating Extremist events: Defending against lone actor extremism).

² N/A, Community Policing and Radicalization Research, p. 8.

³ S. Sieckelinck and L. Stephens, Education, p. 6.

⁴ European Forum for Urban Security, Local authorities, p. 3.

⁵ O. Lynch, ‘British Muslim Youth: Radicalisation, Terrorism and the Construction of the ‘Other’’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Vol. 6, no. 2, 2013, pp. 241–61, p. 241.

⁶ D.L. Byman, ‘Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different goals, different targets’, *Brookings*, 29 April 2015

⁷ N/A, Community Policing and Radicalization Research, p. 7.

⁸ For example, the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence is looking at the online discourses of several types of extremists online, including jihadis and the far right. The results are not yet available.

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- ⁹ D. Rieger, L. Frischlich & G. Bente. 2013. *Propaganda 2.0 Psychological Effects of Right-Wing and Islamic Extremist Internet Videos*. Köln: Wolters Kluwer Deutschland GmbH.
- ¹⁰ A. Zaslove, 'Exclusion, community, and a populist political economy: The radical right as an anti-globalization movement', *Comparative European Politics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2008, pp. 169-189.
- ¹¹ For some incipient research see: D. Pisoiu and F. Lang, 'The porous borders of extremism: Autonomous Nationalists at the crossroad with the extreme left', *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, Vol 7, no. 1, 2015, pp. 69-83.
- ¹² P. Castelli Gattinara, Research overview of far right narratives, p. 5.
- ¹³ A.-J. Gielen, 'Supporting Families of Foreign Fighters. A Realistic Approach for Measuring the Effectiveness', *Journal for Deradicalisation* Vol. 2, 2015, pp. 21-48.
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