

# EX POST PAPER

## How to get sustainable political support for your local P/CVE strategy

### Summary

**RAN LOCAL** had a one-day meeting in Berlin about gaining political support. Local coordinators from different European cities, politicians and experts on politics came together to look into this topic in order to develop tangible tips and tricks on how to ensure political support – whatever the situation and starting point may be.

But why is political support so important for local work on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)? The beliefs and ideas behind a local strategy are a political matter. Both funding and political leadership are crucial to ensure a sustainable strategy on the one hand and to deliver hard messages to the general public on the other. During the meeting, participants worked on gaining political support in different scenarios, which we elaborate upon in this paper.

This paper is written by Y. Gssime and M. Meines of the RAN Centre of Excellence. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission or any other institution.

## Introduction

Political support is one of the most crucial elements of establishing and carrying out a local strategy to prevent and counter violent extremism and radicalisation. Without political support from (local) politicians, it is nearly impossible to carry out a local or regional prevention strategy, since funding is needed for interventions. Also, strong support and political leadership is needed when taking risk in promoting interventions or delivering a hard message regarding the prevention of radicalisation to the general public. The “beliefs” behind the P/CVE strategy are mostly a political matter and should be decided on and developed with political representatives. The prefect, the mayor, the politicians and the council need to be aware and supportive of local or regional P/CVE.

However, in contrast to repressive measures, the effects of preventive strategies are not easy to measure. This can make it even harder to gain support. Thereby, local P/CVE coordinators need to be aware of the different political levels politicians are moving between: does the local strategy fit the national politics and the regional approach?

The central question we discussed during this meeting was: How to “sell” the needed strategy to politicians and how to get the right and sustainable political support?

The outcomes can be found in this paper.

## Gaining political support, public affairs, or lobbying?

Different terms are being used for framing one and the same issue, while they are all about the same cause: how to get something done. Something can be anything. Lobbyists work for sports brands and food industries, but also for charity organisations and governments. Whatever it is you want to gain support for, **there are some basic principles to keep in mind** <sup>(1)</sup>:

1. Make sure you know what is going on in the area you are working in, get your facts straight.
2. Think about what you are going to present: what is your story?
3. What do you need to achieve your goal?
4. Who do you need to get what you need?
5. What are the needs and goals of this person? How does the system he or she is in work?
6. Know your audience. Adjust your story to the audience, focus on the perspective of the other and try to find common ground. Work towards a win-win situation.

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<sup>(1)</sup> University of Illinois System, 10 Tips for effective lobbying, Office of Governmental Relations.  
<http://uialumniassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2017/03/Lobby-Tips.pdf>

7. It is all about emotion: the person you are talking to is a human being just like you. The way you approach this person affects his or her reaction, so act respectfully. On the other hand, you can use emotion to reach your goal: *Tune into someone on an emotional level. We will remember something when it touches our emotions. Don't act emotional, don't mention it, but provide someone with a feeling he or she can work with.*

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*'C'est le ton qui fait la musique'*

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**When preparing your story, make sure you have also thought about:**

1. **Timing:** when and where will you tell your story? How long can it take? Often, there is very limited time available. *Try to cut extra details out so that you can deliver your whole point in 60 seconds, including your own introduction, organisation, the bill in question and a clear request for support.*
2. **Framing:** use the right arguments and words to get your story across.
3. **Tone:** will it be a formal or informal conversation? Is it smart to talk in a direct or indirect manner?
4. **Spokesperson:** who is the best person to tell the story?

## Gaining political support for local P/CVE strategies

Besides using the basic principles on gaining political support when trying to “sell” the needed P/CVE strategy to local politicians, it might be useful to think about your narrative in a more focused manner. During this meeting, the participants and the experts looked into four different scenarios and came up with tips and tricks per situation:

1. **There is a local strategy, but support is decreasing because of stability. A stabilised situation is of course very much valued, but it doesn't mean prevention work should stop. How can you maintain political support?**

Point out how important it is to attack risk factors and focus on the prevention of topics like polarisation and marginalisation. Take this situation as an opportunity to renew your local action plan and bring new challenges and tendencies into the city council. Use regional examples: look at neighbour cities and clarify that their problems can influence your city as well. There might be grievances in your city that could lead to problems. If resources are being cut and an attack takes place: what would that look like? PVE and CVE are inseparable: as long as there are signs and cases within the intelligence services, prevention is needed and as long as the situation is stable, prevention is needed to keep it that way. Finally, PVE is much cheaper than CVE.

2. **On the local level, there is no strategy yet and no support yet.**

Map your own municipality: what kinds of problems do you have? What kinds of actions are already out there? Connect these interventions with a P/CVE strategy and complement it with other actions needed. Try to use existing, working methods: you don't have to reinvent the wheel, copying well-proven or evaluated strategies works better. Once the strategy is there, support is needed. Make the need for implementing your strategy obvious for politicians: neighbouring countries might be dealing with attacks.

**3. The local strategy has a social focus, while the (new) local politicians are focused on the security side.**

You need to clarify that by dealing with social issues, you are actually – indirectly – dealing with security aspects and terrorism, since you work on the root causes of terrorism. Your narrative should fit into the narrative of the politician. This is a better approach than trying to change his or her narrative. Use examples to show the link between prevention and repression: less social work might lead to more radicalised individuals. Try to build partnerships with the people they like: the police, the prison and probation sector. These are credible messengers. Use the emotional aspect: did you do everything you could to prevent terrorism?

**4. There is an imminent crisis. You need to come up with immediate plans and strategies, but you want to ensure long-term engagement and a strategy that also works in the long term.**

Preparation is key. If preparation is lacking, it is still important not to make decisions in the heat of the moment. Time is needed to understand what actually happened, to investigate and evaluate the situation. However, this doesn't mean you should do nothing. A rapid response from politicians is needed, but do not jump to conclusions immediately to avoid increasing polarisation. Clear communication is needed, while using a systematic approach focused on clarification and de-escalation. All parties need to be informed and included.

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*'Make sure your story fits into the story of your local politician'*

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## Final tips & tricks

- Make sure you are the **point of contact** for local politicians on P/CVE when they need tips, comments or suggestions. Gain **trust**, by showing you are the expert. Get your facts straight and always be prepared.
- Be **short and clear** and focus on a couple of **crucial points** in your action plan in every meeting you have, regardless of the political wing or level.
- Be aware of **the field your local politician is moving in**, the local political landscape. She or he has to deal with different administrative levels, like the local or the regional level and on top of that with the media. Provide your local politician with a narrative that works in all these fields and is useful while being in contact with the media.
- **Clarify the problem and the solution and keep it simple.** What happens when you do not act now? What does the solution bring? Sell the benefits.

LOCAL

- Be very **specific** and **transparent** about what you are asking for: money, resources.
- Take advantage of the **city brand/narrative**. Use it to avoid polarisation and unite your citizens.
- Always strive for a **win-win situation**. Both the local politician and you should be happy with your local approach.
- **Focus on the goal** instead of your narrative. Keep your narrative **flexible**, to ensure it fits within the narrative of your local politician. Convince your local politician to share your goal, not your narrative.

## Get your story across!

How to gain political support for your local P/CVE strategy

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*'Make sure your story fits into the story of your local politician!'*

**CONTEXT**

- Focus on win-win situations
- You have one and the same goal!
- Be aware of the political context

**EXPERTISE**

- You are the expert
- Get your facts straight
- Clarify the **problem** and provide the **solution**



**CONTENT**

- A social or a security **narrative**
- Focus on **successes**
- **Concrete** actions and outcomes
- Use **examples**
- What if you don't do anything...?

**FORM**

- **Timing**
- Keep it **short!**
- Who is the **credible** messenger?
- **Tone:** formal or informal?