

21/05/2021

SPECIAL OVERVIEW PAPER

RAN Victims/Survivors of Terrorism

RAN Activities on Victims/Survivors of Terrorism 2011-2021

Introduction

This document centres on the key themes of the RAN Victims of Terrorism (VoT) Working Group. The discussed topics relate to the following thematic areas:

- supporting victims/survivors of terrorism;
- helping victims/survivors of terrorism to make their voices heard;
- supporting practitioners working with victims/survivors of terrorism;
- assessing how victims/survivors of terrorism can play a role in the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE).

Victims/survivors of terrorism are the key constituency of the RAN VoT Working Group. This includes all people whose lives have been affected by terrorist attacks, those emotionally or physically injured and those who have lost their loved ones, as well as first responders. Practitioners working with victims/survivors of terrorism are also part of the constituency. The Working Group was established in 2011 under the name Voices of Victims of Terrorism (VVT); it was then chaired by Guillaume Denoix de Saint Marc (France) and Luca Guglielminetti (Italy). From 2015-2019, María Lozano Alía (Spain) and Cat Wilkinson (Ireland) chaired its successor, the Working Group Remembrance of Victims of Terrorism (RVT). The current Working Group Leaders are Ana Isabel Rodríguez Cordero (Spain) and Philippe Vansteenkiste (Belgium).

This paper elaborates on how the aforementioned key themes have been addressed by RAN since the inception of the Working Group. The paper summarises the main findings and information from meetings and activities, papers, practices, and key lessons learned and recommendations. All findings are clustered around these key themes. In addition, it highlights where there are gaps that may require further exploration. The paper will first elaborate on RAN activities dedicated to the role of victims/survivors of terrorism in P/CVE and focus on the topics of sharing testimonies and their role in social cohesion and justice. The second part will focus on the core task of the VoT Working Group — supporting victims/survivors of terrorism — and look into the areas of remembrance and support to victims/survivors.

Main theme: The role of victims/survivors in P/CVE

This chapter focuses on the role that victims/survivors of terrorism can play in P/CVE and is divided into two subthemes related to sharing testimonies and the interaction between victims and perpetrators.

Subtheme: Sharing testimonies

When victims/survivors of terrorism decide to play an active role in P/CVE, one of the most evident and frequent forms of participation in a number of programmes is the sharing of a testimonial. Not all victims/survivors are equally ready or willing to do so (yet). While some may still need to overcome their trauma or decide whether, when and how they want their story to be heard, others may want to learn more about how to shape their own story into a strong testimonial or how to (better) build a campaign. Further, those programmes wishing to work with victims'/survivors' testimonies in their P/CVE interventions should ensure that sensible training and awareness raising is conducted with both key target groups: the messengers and the receivers of testimonies. Since the beginning, the Working Group meetings have provided an important platform for such dialogue and knowledge transfer, bringing together practitioners already working as or with victims/survivors and those who wish to do so in the future.

Specific topic: How to deliver testimonies

Meetings and papers

- Giving testimonies in schools, 6 June 2013. The Working Group meeting focused on bringing together best practices concerning the effective use of narratives of victims/survivors of terrorism within an educational context. The meeting was attended by 53 participants from 8 Member States.
- [Delivering testimonies, 20-21 September 2018 \(guideline author: Lynn Davies\)](#). This Working Group meeting focused on gathering and sharing experiences in delivering testimonies. Twenty-two participants contributed to the creation of the practical guideline for those delivering testimonies in a variety of situations.
- [Checklist: Shaping your testimonial as a Victim of Terrorism](#). This checklist was created as a result of the Working Group meeting above and offers very concise, practical support to victims/survivors who wish to deliver their testimonial.

Practices ⁽¹⁾

- The [Omagh Support & Self Help Group \(OSSHG\)](#) was founded in Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing in August 1998 to act as a source of support for those affected.
- The [Counter-narration for Counter-terrorism - C4C project](#) was founded in Italy and aims to support and use the testimonies and the stories of victims of terrorism.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Delivering a testimonial is a very challenging undertaking that requires thorough preparation — cognitively, psychologically and emotionally. While emotions should not be masked, the presenter needs to be prepared and reflect on possible ways to deal with them during the testimonial.
- Making use of indirect testimonies and combining testimonies of individuals affected by different attacks can send a strong message on the detrimental consequences of violent extremism in society.
- Structuring the narrative (and language) of one's testimonial while reflecting it against the background of the audience and the editorial context of the project remains important to transmit the story.

⁽¹⁾ Throughout this paper we have listed inspiring practices and organisations that have been presented at RAN activities. If a practice is part of the RAN Collection of inspiring practices, the link will direct to more information on this practice or organisation in the RAN Collection. Other practices and organisations are not (yet) part of the RAN Collection but have made valuable contributions to the RAN VoT Working Group over the years and are therefore also an important part of this overview. The link will in that case direct to the practice's or organisation's own web page and these practices and organisations will be marked with an *.

- It is important to keep the testimonial authentic and truthful, but refrain from mentioning too disturbing and explicit details. When using testimonies in education or school projects, make sure that information is also provided to teachers and parents.
- It is difficult to determine when an individual is ready to deliver a testimonial, or whether they are willing or capable of doing this at all. A clear assessment should be done before involving victims/survivors.
- For victims/survivors, including young people, reaching a large audience may pose a challenge of losing control over one's own narrative and story. Professional guidance is needed.

What needs to be further explored?

- How to better identify and respond to the needs of young victims/survivors and how to work with them in sharing stories and making different voices heard.

Specific topic: How to interact with young people

Meetings and papers

- [Using victims' stories in the classroom, 15 October 2013](#). This Working Group meeting was attended by 55 participants from 7 Member States and focused on the use of indirect testimonies of victims/survivors of terrorism in education of youngsters between 12 and 18 years old (i.e. in films or books).
- [How to interact with young people about terrorism, 10-11 December 2018](#). The focus of this Working Group meeting, attended by nine participants from three Member States, was to explore ways on how to deal with children who are affected by an attack, and what kind of support activities, such as therapies or discussions with children, can help them overcome what they have lived through.
- [Building resilience in the classroom using testimonials from victims and formers, 24-25 May 2018](#). This joint meeting with the RAN EDU Working Group was attended by 32 participants from 10 Member States as well as 3 non-EU participants. Participants discussed how testimonials should be prepared, delivered and followed up on, as well as which practical guidelines will make them more effective.

Practices

- The [French Association for Victims of Terrorism \(AfVT\)](#) was created in 2009 by Guillaume Denoix de Saint Marc, who lost his father in a terrorist attack in 1989. Since 2015, the AfVT has organised prison workshops and a school intervention programme, where victims/survivors tell their stories to inspire the understanding that hatred is not a solution.
- [Women without borders](#) is based in Austria and has been building resilience through whole-of-community approaches and bringing impactful stories to the attention of the world since 2001.
- [Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation](#) is an initiative based in the United Kingdom (UK) that works nationally and internationally for peace and non-violent conflict resolution. It aims to support those affected by terrorism and conflict.
- [Extreme Dialogue](#) is a UK-based initiative that provides training, workshops and in-classroom sessions for young people in schools and community settings.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- The needs, interests and experiences of young people can be very diverse and differ from those of other age groups. Programmes working with young people need to take this diversity into account to ensure that activities are meaningful and do no harm.
- Victims/survivors directly affected by a terrorist attack need support. Beyond this, there may be a variety of people, including young people, affected in other ways by a terrorist attack. Good communication after a terrorist attack is key to understanding who is affected and in which ways.
- When working with young people in the aftermath of an attack, permanent support teams and structures should be in place to respond to changing needs of victims/survivors and when designing therapeutic and psychosocial support options.
- Activities and projects aimed at young students should be meaningful and safe learning experiences for participants and, if they are delivered in school, should differ from regular classroom lessons.

- When interacting with (younger) students as a victim/survivor, keep the objectives of the project in mind, be age appropriate and avoid being too graphic in the descriptions and the details.
- Victims/survivors interacting in classrooms need training and support before, during and after the interactions; possible secondary victimisation must be avoided, and project staff must be able to intervene when (too) critical questions are raised by pupils.

What needs to be further explored?

- Meaningful methods for practitioners and victims/survivors to engage with young people on the topic of terrorism must be collected and shared.

Specific topic: How to work with the media

Meetings and papers

- The voice of victims of terrorism in an open source setting, 9-10 April 2014. Forty-seven participants from Member States met in this Working Group meeting in order to discuss usage of the internet and social media by victims/survivors of terrorism for P/CVE purposes.
- How to use media to share a PVE message as a Victim of Terrorism, 25-26 November 2014. This Working Group meeting was attended by 34 participants from 9 Member States and dealt with the relationship between victims (organisations) and the press. The main goal was to collect practical tips for participants.

Practices

- [Colectivo de Víctimas del Terrorismo \(COVITE\)](#), Spain. The Map of Terror was born out of the need to not forget the Spanish victims of terrorism. On the map, the names and short biographies of those who have fallen victim to a terrorist attack are shown.
- [The Association of Aid for the Victims of 11 March*](#) (*Asociación de ayuda a las víctimas del 11-M*), Spain. Ayuda 11M is a Spanish non-profit organisation, founded after the Atocha attacks in 2004. The organisation aims to support and advise victims/survivors of this attack and create societal awareness of the impact of terrorist attacks.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Organisations working with and for victims/survivors of terrorism should have one point of contact for media in order to better communicate and channel information, raise awareness and maintain a good relationship with journalists.
- For targeted public communication and outreach to media outlets, it is crucial to have a communication strategy in place, including a press policy, that is shared and agreed within the organisation.
- Media will look for a new angle when deciding whether to cover a commemoration. Finding ways to leverage attention, for instance by inviting VIPs or using appealing methods to broadcast the event, can help.
- Raise awareness by sharing the story in a way that attracts media coverage. The narrative of a small group fighting for justice against a bigger body can help to attract the media's attention.
- When trying to promote a project or event, one press release is not enough; reaching out on a regular basis with the purpose of engaging other networks and via multiple channels creates a sense of being topical.

What needs to be further explored?

- The negative effects of media exposure need to be further explored to avoid incomplete strategies that expose victims/survivors or have other adverse and detrimental effects.
- The role of social media in the lives of victims/survivors after an attack. What are the challenges, risks and potentials in being exposed to or using social media platforms?

Specific topic: How to evaluate victims'/survivors' testimonials

Meetings and papers

- [Evaluating the impact of testimonies by Victims of Terrorism \(author: Maria Jiménez Ramos\), 10-11 April 2019](#). During this Working Group meeting, 19 participants from 7 Member States met to discuss how to evaluate projects incorporating testimonies. The ex post paper includes recommendations, step-by-step guidelines and a summary of the main challenges.

Practices

Not applicable.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Establish indicators to measure the success of the initiative — such as awareness, engagement and impact. Additionally, define what kind of impact is desired with a testimonial or initiative.
- When evaluating a testimonial in the framework of a project, all relevant elements must be considered and taken into account, including the purpose, scope and goals of the intervention. Do not overstate or oversimplify.
- Ensuring scientific evaluation of a project requires resources. Be aware of the support that is needed and try to connect with organisations that have such expertise and may be able to support the project.
- Establish feedback loops and possibilities to reflect on and evaluate an initiative before, during and after it is carried out. Use lessons learned to adjust the project and mitigate against possible flaws at the earliest point possible.

What needs to be further explored?

- The needs, challenges and interests of victim organisations in self-evaluation: What can be done to better connect victims/survivors, their projects and testimonials with actors such as universities and others to improve collaborative evaluation?

Subtheme: The role of victims/survivors in working for social cohesion and justice

Victims/survivors can contribute to social cohesion initiatives or take part in restorative approaches. One very impactful type of action through which victims/survivors of terrorist attacks can contribute to P/CVE activities is by interacting — directly or indirectly — with former offenders and perpetrators. They can participate in face-to-face meetings, or they can contribute to discussion groups, and could either meet the perpetrators who directly attacked them or perpetrators of other attacks. Each of these possible encounters poses opportunities and challenges, which need to be identified and addressed. In the course of the Working Group's activities, different forms of interaction were discussed and scrutinised, such as promoting social cohesion, engaging in restorative justice or discussion groups, and promoting alternative and counter-narratives.

Specific topic: Social cohesion

Meetings and papers

- [The role of victims in strengthening social cohesion after a period of violence, 20-21 June 2019 \(author: María Lozano Alía\)](#). In this Working Group meeting, 19 participants from 4 Member States and 3 non-EU countries met to discuss victims'/survivors' role in promoting social cohesion and strengthening the community's resilience to violent extremism, exploring possible fields where victims/survivors could play a role, identifying inspiring practices, and determining possible challenges and solutions in this field.

Practices

- **[We have the choice](#)**, based in Belgium, has grown out of a voluntary citizens' initiative by Kristin Verellen — who lost her life partner in the attacks of Maelbeek on 22 March 2016 — and a circle of friends. The initiative is working towards a culture of inclusive togetherness, inclusion and dialogue.
- **[Cross Cultures](#)** is a politically independent Danish non-profit organisation that promotes peaceful coexistence and social cohesion between people of different cultures and backgrounds.
- **[Fundación Fernando Buesa Blanco](#)** is a non-profit organisation founded in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, in memory and honour of Fernando Buesa, assassinated by the ETA together with his bodyguard on 22 February 2000; its goal is keeping his example of supporting the culture of peace, democracy and social progress alive. One of their practices is the **[Concordia Bloggers game](#)**, in which young people engage in real-life situations, where they are invited to think critically about their own convictions.
- The **[Manchester Survivors Choir](#)*** is a choir made up of survivors of the Manchester terrorist attack. It is a cross-generational group that meets together in solidarity and supports those affected by the attack.
- The **[European Forum for Restorative Justice \(EFRJ\)](#)*** focuses on the application of restorative justice to criminal matters, but other areas, such as family, school and community mediation, are not excluded. The general aim of the EFRJ is to contribute to the development and establishment of victim-offender mediation and other restorative justice practices throughout Europe.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Victims/survivors and groups working for them can play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and strengthening the communities' resilience to violent extremism by promoting learning and sharing of memories, stories and voices for peace in modern societies.
- Victims/survivors can be important agents for peace and non-violence in the media. In support of a *peace journalism* culture, they can help in spotlighting initiatives aimed at bridging gaps between communities and speaking out against violence.
- Victims/survivors and their organisations can be crucial eyes and ears in monitoring the situation in communities after a terrorist attack and ensure that the needs, risks and interests of affected individuals and groups are met by policymakers.

What needs to be further explored?

- Engaging as advocates of local communities: What are the ways and means through which victim/survivor organisations can support their communities in identifying needs and reach out to local authorities?
- Upholding the memories of victims/survivors is crucial for a society's cohesion, but it is not always wanted. How can victim organisations uphold the importance of memories and dialogue when larger parts of societies are inclined not to be reminded of past atrocities?

Specific topic: Restorative justice

Meetings and papers

- **[Restorative justice in Croatia: Study visit to Zagreb, 12-13 September 2019](#)**. During this study visit, 13 participants from 11 Member States gained insight into Croatia's restorative justice process. Policymakers, judiciaries and mediators explained their approach and researchers analysed the Croatian context.
- **[The role of restorative justice in preventing and responding to violent extremism, 3-4 December 2019 \(author: Emanuela Biffi\)](#)**. During this joint meeting with the EXIT and RVT Working Groups, 32 participants from 14 Member States and 2 non-EU countries explored the role of restorative justice in cases of violent extremism; the main focus lay in increasing understanding of the role of restorative justice in relation to violent extremism and learning from one another how to better include victims/survivors and perpetrators in this process.
- **[The potential of restorative justice in cases of violent extremism and terrorism, 2021 \(author: Emanuela Biffi\)](#)**. This consolidated overview focuses on the opportunity that restorative processes offer for repairing the harm caused to victims of terrorism, showing how they have been used in the context of violent extremism, how they can benefit victims/survivors of terrorism, and what challenges exist in this context.

Practices

Not applicable.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- First and foremost, restorative approaches must be voluntary for all participants, building on mutual respect and needs — forcing victims/survivors or offenders to engage with each other is likely to have detrimental effects.
- A considerable amount of time must be dedicated to preparing the parties, understanding their needs and clarifying expectations. Creating trust in the process and facilitators is essential and requires long-term engagement and genuine dialogue.
- A multidimensional approach is key; the needs of victims, (former) offenders and the community must be met by professionals from diverse fields in order to ensure a beneficial and sustainable process.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to restorative justice. Every process brings together different individuals with different experiences, different histories and contexts and must be prepared, discussed and implemented in a tailored manner.
- Those who decide to engage in a process require support. To ensure a do-no-harm culture, facilitators and participants need to ensure that any sort of secondary victimisation derived from engaging in restorative justice processes is prevented.

What needs to be further explored?

- There is a growing need for training and preparatory dialogues of supporting practitioners to better identify needs of victims/survivors and (former) offenders in their efforts to engage in restorative justice.
- A lack of implementation increases frustration. There is a need to explore effective ways to support implementation of restorative justice processes, after first dialogues have taken place — also because institutional support is not always provided, and sometimes not accepted by the involved parties.
- While only few victims/survivors may decide to participate in restorative justice approaches, the possibility to do so should be granted to all who are interested.

Specific topic: Counter- and alternative narratives

Meetings and papers

- [How to involve victims of terrorism in a prevention campaign, 11 June 2020](#). This joint meeting with the RAN C&N Working Group was attended by 26 participants from 13 Member States and 1 non-European country. It focused on collecting expertise and supporting victims/survivors of terrorism in professionally sharing their stories and voices in order to use these as counter- and alternative narratives; communications experts were shown how to successfully and respectfully embed victims' voices in their P/CVE campaign.

Practices

- The [French Association for Victims of Terrorism \(AfVT\)](#) conducted the project **The voice of victims against radicalisation**, publishing 10 testimonies of people impacted by terrorist acts on its social networks and visiting schools for discussions with students.
- The [Truth and Reconciliation Platform \(TaRP\)](#)* is a platform that was established to give victims/survivors an opportunity to speak for themselves in their own words, so that the consequences of violence will never be forgotten.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Victims/survivors decide on their own narrative and story. Practitioners need to be sensitive in approaching this as well as purposeful and critical regarding whether the stories of victims align with the desired goal of the programme and the target audience.
- When working with victims/survivors, it is important that they are provided with the space to be the messengers they want to be. While some may want to be understood as survivors and agents of change, others may want to be heard and recognised as victims.

- When undertaking online campaigns via social media, the target audience must be chosen very carefully. The avoidance of secondary victimisation is imperative and there is a need to ensure that victims/survivors participating in an initiative are made aware about the risks of online polarisation.
- Ensure authenticity and ethical campaigning — it is imperative that victims'/survivors' voices and stories are not altered or changed in order to fit the campaign.

What needs to be further explored?

- A do-no-harm approach needs to be promoted further. How can authorities be made aware of victims'/survivors' vulnerabilities and what the criteria, challenges and good practices for (long-term) cooperation with victims/survivors are?
- How can the support of victims/survivors, who want to make their voices heard and contribute to P/CVE policies or campaigns, be increased before they feel excluded or left behind?

Specific topic: Discussion groups

Meetings and papers

- [Formers and Victims of Terrorism, 23 March 2015](#). This Working Group meeting was attended by 25 participants from 9 Member States; it focused on the cooperation between victims/survivors and formers, looking into the prerequisites for cooperation as well as the added value and the challenges of encounters.
- [Organising direct interactions between victims of terrorism and terrorist detainees, 29 September 2020 \(author: Peter Knoope\)](#). This Working Group meeting with 20 participants from 8 Member States and 2 non-EU countries worked on the development of guidelines for setting up discussion groups between detainees who are convicted for terrorism-related offences with victims/survivors of terrorism, focusing on three different phases: preparation, implementation and evaluation.
- [Conducting direct interactions between victims of terrorism and detainees, 24 November 2020 \(author: Max Boon\)](#). In this small-scale meeting, nine participants from seven Member States gathered to create a guideline for conducting direct interactions between detainees and victims/survivors, focusing on the three questions: How to interact? Who interacts? What to discuss?

Practices

- The [Victims' Voices initiative](#)* is an Indonesian initiative that has been working to promote peace and delegitimise justifications for terrorist violence through direct engagements with local victims/survivors and former perpetrators of terrorism.
- The [National federation of the victims of catastrophes](#)* (Fenvac — *Fédération Nationale des Victimes d'Attentats et d'Accidents Collectifs*) is a French NGO comprised exclusively of victims of terrorist acts and mass-casualty accidents and their loved ones.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Decide which type of interaction fits the purpose and needs of the project and participants. In some cases, having discussion groups with multiple victims/survivors and/or multiple detainees present at the same time may work, in other cases one-on-one dialogues facilitated by a suitable moderator are more sensible.
- Supporting and preparing both victims/survivors and perpetrators is key. Make sure they are ready and willing to engage and cooperate with each other.
- Finding an agreement among victims/survivors and formers on the message or narrative that should be sent to a specific audience or society is essential. While this can be sensitive to achieve, such a shared narrative can be powerful in raising awareness of societies on the need to understand different perspectives of a story and in creating a culture of non-violence, reconciliation and peace.
- Discussion groups should be part of a larger rehabilitation programme for the detainees in order to follow up on the outcomes of the encounter. Therefore, close cooperation between the (victim) organisation and prison staff from an early stage is paramount — all stakeholders should be involved from the beginning.

What needs to be further explored?

- Some Member States' legal systems do not provide for the possibility of discussion groups between detainees and victims/survivors of terrorism. There is a need to explore how such formats can be conducted if they are desired by all stakeholders.
- Improving ways of avoiding stigmatisation: very often, the involvement of official actors can compromise the setting, process and outcome of discussions. Models should be designed and implemented where NGOs or independent practitioners facilitate the process.

Main theme: Victims/survivors of terrorism

In the following section, the activities of the VoT Working Group regarding victims/survivors of terrorism in general are discussed; this topic is divided into two subthemes: remembrance and support to victims/survivors.

Subtheme: Remembrance

Victims/survivors of terrorism have become involuntary experts on the impact of violent extremism on individuals and society. This deserves recognition as well as support to live a life without fear and allow them to act, including in P/CVE, if they wish to do so. At the same time, the terrorist acts and their consequences on peoples' lives need to be kept in the collective memories. Remembrance is an urgent and undeniable need for many victims/survivors to ensure that societies recognise suffering and take action against violent extremism. Beyond the remembrance ceremonies organised on the occasion of specific terrorist acts, the 11th of March (Atocha attack, 2004) has been designated as the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism.

Specific topic: Remembrance Day

The Remembrance Day consists of two back-to-back meetings that return each year, each of which is explained below.

In 2021, the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism was organised by the European Commission for the 17th time. Since 2016, RAN has been supporting the organisation of the Remembrance Day. The Remembrance Day is attended by victims/survivors and representatives of victim organisations throughout Europe. EU officials are also present — amongst them the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator — Member States' representatives, international organisations, and practitioners from across Europe working with victims/survivors, such as psychologists and social workers. The focus of the programme is set on providing a platform for remembrance and commemoration for all those affected by terrorist attacks. The annual event follows a similar set-up, including high-level interventions by EU officials, Member States and international organisations. With commemoration being at the core of the programme, an important part of the event is dedicated to testimonials of victims/survivors, a minute of silence, and a tree ceremony that allows the attendees to share a message of hope or remembrance.

The day before the Remembrance Day, an informal meeting takes place that allows the victims/survivors and representatives of victim organisations to meet each other in an informal setting and to receive more information on the next day's event. At this meeting, attendees can meet fellow victims/survivors from across the EU. As the Remembrance Day is often an emotional day, this meeting allows for exchanging experiences with peers and for relieving the tension surrounding the Remembrance Day. Psychological support is provided throughout the event.

Meetings and papers

- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 11 March 2016](#)
- Informal meeting in preparation of the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 9 March 2017
- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 10 March 2017](#)
- Informal meeting in preparation of the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 8 March 2018
- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 9 March 2018](#)
- Informal meeting in preparation of the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 10 March 2019
- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 11 March 2019](#)
- Informal meeting in preparation of the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 10 March 2020
- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 11 March 2020](#)
- Informal meeting in preparation of the European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 10 March 2021
- [European Remembrance Day for Victims of Terrorism, 11 March 2021](#)

Practices

Not applicable.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- When organising remembrance and commemoration events, victims/survivors of terrorism and their stories should be at the centre of the event. This can, for example, be ensured by giving them the floor first during these events.
- The ceremonial aspect of the Remembrance Day is paramount and enough time should be dedicated to ceremonial remembrance such as a minute of silence and the tree ceremony.
- Music is an essential part of commemoration events; it underlines the solemn atmosphere and provides attendees with time to gather their thoughts.
- Including young people as participants but also in the performances — for example, by inviting a school choir — can increase the inclusiveness and outreach of the meeting.
- Supporting victims/survivors of terrorism should be a main focal point and new victims/survivors should be invited to the Remembrance Day each year, as representation of all (recent) attacks is key.
- Avoiding retraumatisation of victims/survivors is essential; make sure those invited and those asked to share a testimonial are ready and prepared to do so.
- Each Remembrance Day should have a central theme that reflects the unification of victims/survivors in Europe and mutual support amongst them. This theme should be included in different elements of the programme.
- As commemorating victims/survivors of terrorism can be emotionally demanding, psychological support should be available during the event.
- The event should be livestreamed to include those victims/survivors who are not able to attend physically.
- Those who have lost their lives in terrorist attacks should be honoured and remembered, for example through showing a presentation of pictures and a list of recent attacks at the event.
- A remembrance event should allow for spontaneous testimonies from attending victims/survivors.

What needs to be further explored?

- The main goal of the Remembrance Day — supporting and remembering victims/survivors of terrorism — needs to be at the centre of the event. The Remembrance Day should remain firstly a day of commemoration and less a congress-style event. Each year, this should be reflected in the set-up of the Remembrance Day.
- The European Remembrance Day is not yet well known throughout the EU outside of the realm of victim organisations and victims/survivors of terrorism. In upcoming years, it should be explored how to best disseminate information on the Remembrance Day, for example by including media outlets and other multipliers or through Member States' Points of Contact.
- Solidifying the "brand" of the Remembrance Day would benefit from having a recognisable design that can be used every year.
- It could be explored how to allow for more interaction between attending victims/survivors of terrorism and EU officials.

Specific topic: International Congress for Victims of Terrorism

Meetings and papers

[VIIIth International Congress for Victims of Terrorism, 21-23 November 2019](#). This congress, attended by 41 RAN participants, was co-organised by the French Association for Victims of Terrorism (AfVT) and the city of Nice, in partnership with the RAN RVT Working Group. Two of the Working Group's core objectives — remembrance of victims of terrorism as well as the role of victims in the prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism — were addressed in this meeting.

Practices

Not applicable.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Training helps to prepare first responders for the emotionally, physically and psychologically demanding tasks of working with victims/survivors in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Building their capacities and increasing their preparedness is a strong investment in responding early to the needs of victims/survivors.
- Aftercare of first responders is equally important, for example in the form of a debriefing or supervision by professionals within the organisation.
- When working with children, it should be ensured that all family members are offered adequate psychological support.

What needs to be further explored?

- The impact of evaluating testimonies of victims/survivors of terrorism needs further exploration. The VoT Working Group should constantly put this topic on the agenda when talking about testimonies as a way to promote learning on testimonials as a tool in P/CVE.
- In light of the different level of support that victims/survivors of terrorism receive across the EU, there is need for more sharing of good practices, standards of fair treatment and support at the policy level.

Specific topic: Design competition

Meetings and papers

[Brainstorm session on the Remembrance Day design competition, 2 September 2020](#). At this meeting, which took place online, nine participants were present; (former) Working Group leaders of the RAN VoT, RAN Y&E and former RAN Education Working Groups were amongst the attendees, as well as communications experts. The meeting looked into the possibility of organising a design competition amongst school pupils throughout Europe to design the visual concept for the European Remembrance Day. As a result of the meeting, a brochure was developed that supports teachers in embedding the design competition in a broader educational approach on (prevention of) terrorism.

The outcomes below are based on the small-scale meeting of 2 September 2020. In January of 2021, it was decided to reopen the design competition after the 2021 Remembrance Day. Lessons learned regarding the competition are therefore not included in this paper.

Practices

Not applicable.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Having a visual concept that can be used each year for the Remembrance Day will help shape a recognisable identity for this event, supporting the need to generate more awareness of the Remembrance Day throughout the EU.

- By providing teachers with the tools needed to embed the design competition in a broader discussion on (prevention of) terrorism and victims/survivors of terrorism, the design competition also serves an educational goal for European pupils.
- Having victims/survivors visit participating schools supports the message of their resilience and can possibly aid them in their healing process.

What needs to be further explored?

- Creating a social media campaign on the design competition could help with the visibility of the Remembrance Day throughout the year and not only in the weeks prior to 11 March. Pupils posting about their participation in the competition and videos of victims/survivors of terrorism visiting participating schools could be part of the campaign.

Subtheme: Support to victims/survivors

For victims/survivors of terrorism, it is paramount that they receive the right support, both in the immediate aftermath of the attack and in next phases in which they try to rebuild their lives. The RAN VoT Working Group has, throughout its existence, explored how victims/survivors can best be supported. Support can take many forms: it ranges from receiving information on loved ones who were possibly victimised in the immediate aftermath of an attack, to receiving psychological or emotional support (whether or not from peers) and knowing how to get in touch with government agencies to receive recognition and support as a victim/survivor of terrorism. Support can be organised in formal ways, for instance through (national) victim organisations, but also through informal means, including via independent self-help groups.

Specific topic: General support

Meetings and papers

- [Introductory meeting RAN Voices of Victims of Terrorism, 29-30 May 2012](#). At this first meeting of the RAN VVT Working Group, 40 participants from 5 Member States and 8 non-EU countries came together in Paris. At the meeting, the members of the Working Group had the opportunity to get acquainted and to determine the goals of the Working Group together.
- [Voices of Victims of Terrorism, 6-7 November 2012](#). Fifty-two participants from 8 Member States came together in The Hague to discuss how to achieve the goals of the RAN VVT Working Group. Four topics were discussed: 1) the position of victims/survivors of terrorism in society; 2) their legal rights/recognition; 3) what kind of narratives practitioners working in P/CVE may be looking for; and 4) to test a concept table developed to facilitate categorising existing testimonials.
- [Discussion on the Handbook for Victim Organisations, 24-25 September 2015](#). Fifteen participants from five Member States were present at this meeting in Madrid, all of them representatives of victim organisations. Before the meeting, a first draft of the 'Handbook: Voices of victims of terrorism' was shared with the participants. The meeting consisted of a review of and discussion on the handbook.
- [Handbook: Voices of victims of terrorism \(authors: Guillaume Denoix de Saint Marc et al.\)](#). The handbook is a compilation of all insights gained and experiences shared during all meetings of the RAN Voices of Victims of Terrorism Working Group from 2012-2015.
- [RAN Issue paper – Enhancing the resilience of victims after terrorist attacks \(authors: Josée Netten and Maarten van de Donk\), March 2018](#). This issue paper looks into how the resilience of victims/survivors of terrorism and the communities they live in can be enhanced, building on the experiences of other victims/survivors and by using the Resilience-Needs-Challenges model.
- [Study visit: Responding to crisis – Building resilience, Manchester, United Kingdom, 21-22 March 2019](#). Visiting local actors and communities, this RAN study visit sought to learn from how the greater Manchester community responded to and has been recovering from the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

Practices

- The [Counter-narration for Counter-terrorism – C4C project](#) was founded in Italy and aims to support and use the testimonies and the stories of victims/survivors of terrorism.
- The [Survivors Assistance Network](#) of the Tim Parry Johnathan Ball Peace Foundation supports victims/survivors of political violence in England and Wales. Through initial needs assessments, it is determined what type and level of support its beneficiaries require.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- When working with victims/survivors in P/CVE, adequate support for as well as physical and emotional safety of the victim/survivor must be guaranteed. This can be done, for instance, by using anonymous testimonies, the use of technical means to blur faces and voices, providing psychological assistance and sharing limited personal information.
- Societies have an obligation to acknowledge the social, political and moral significance of victims/survivors and their experiences. Building a “victim/survivor-oriented narrative”, including by focusing on their stories, needs and voices, can help break cycles of violence, in which perpetrators attempt to attract attention through violence.
- Victims/survivors of terrorism can make a powerful contribution to raise awareness of the danger and effects of radicalisation and terrorism and are promoters of European values in countering narratives of radicalisation.
- Member States’ recognition of victims/survivors both by law and in practice is paramount, also to ensure adequate access to legal and psychological support.
- A “hierarchy of suffering” should be avoided in the way that victims/survivors of terrorism perceive their treatment. Each victim/survivor deserves acknowledgement, recognition and support.
- Victim organisations should be aware of the valuable role they can play in P/CVE. Victims/survivors can be credible messengers through their testimonials, increasing the significance of messages of remembrance, dignity and justice. Support to victim/survivor-led programmes is a way to increase outreach to others affected by violence or hatred, whilst always keeping the well-being of the victim/survivor a priority.
- Even though peer support can be just as valuable in informal and unstructured settings as within official organisations, the form of organisation should be adjusted according to its goal. If influence on drafting policy is the goal, an official organisation with a dedicated spokesperson is beneficial. If peer support is the sole goal, however, informal groups may suffice.
- Identifying victims’/survivors’ needs and tailoring a response to these needs is essential for victims/survivors to regain a sense of control over their lives that have suddenly changed immensely. It needs to be acknowledged that those needs (and preoccupations) may change over time and are highly personal.
- There are five principles upon which support to victims/survivors in the early and mid-term stages after an attack should be based: 1) promoting a sense of safety; 2) calming; 3) a sense of self and community efficacy; 4) connectedness; and 5) hope.
- In some cases, perceived support can be sufficient for victims/survivors; knowing that help is available in case they might need it.
- Although there needs to be space for a community’s spontaneous and informal response after an attack, the needs of the victims/survivors need to be the top priority; those directly affected by the attack should not feel obliged to take part in these actions.
- In the immediate aftermath of an attack, practical support for the victims/survivors is the most relevant, whereas more symbolic gestures can also be beneficial to the community at large. These two means of recognition and support should go hand in hand.

What needs to be further explored?

- There is a need to further explore and promote policy-level dialogue on how to create a victim/survivor-oriented P/CVE culture to promote policy and approaches that do not exclusively focus on perpetrators of terrorism.

- Sharing of lessons learned and best practices is key to improving support and good standards across the EU. Victim organisations play a crucial role and should be further supported in their attempts to connect victims/survivors of terrorism and exchange experiences.
- Facilitating commemorative events should be central to the EU's P/CVE strategy, also to raise awareness of policymakers across Member States on the needs of victims/survivors and their crucial role. Making the European Remembrance Day more publicly accessible could be an essential part of these efforts.

Specific topic: Self-help

Meetings and papers

Self-help groups in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, 11-12 September 2017. At this meeting, 36 participants from 7 Member States and 1 non-EU country came together in Berlin. Amongst them were victims/survivors of terrorism, representatives of victim organisations, psychologists working with victims/survivors of terrorism and representatives from international organisations. The main aim of the meeting was to gather information on support for victims/survivors that can be translated into practical guidelines for those who feel the need to start a group after an attack and for victim support groups that want to improve the activities they provide.

Practices

- The [Omagh Support & Self Help Group \(OSSHG\)](#) was founded in Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing in August 1998 to act as a source of support for those affected.
- [Survivors Against Terror*](#) is a UK network of victims/survivors of terrorism. The organisation aims to reduce the role terrorism plays in our society and supports victims/survivors of terrorist attacks.

Lessons learned and recommendations

- Cooperation between the government and victim organisations is paramount; this way, victim organisations can not only provide (peer) support but also refer their members to legal support.
- The needs of victims/survivors within a victim organisation differ per person and per time period — starting with the direct aftermath of the attack, to coming to terms with the situation and, lastly, building resilience and potentially playing a role in P/CVE by sharing their experiences. Victim organisations should take these different phases and personal preferences into account and provide suitable support. If the organisation cannot provide certain types of support, they should know who to refer their members to.
- Within an organisation or self-help group there should be ample space to share emotions and stories but generating feelings of hatred or revenge should be avoided.

What needs to be further explored?

- Having a central online database (whether European or per country) where victims/survivors can find information on victim organisations in their Member State would make it easier for victims/survivors to find the right support.