

RAN PRISONS

29/11/2023

CONCLUSION PAPER*RAN PRISONS Working Group Meeting**16 – 17 November 2023, Berlin, Germany*

The role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in exit work and DDR programmes in prisons and enhancing cooperation with state actors

Key outcomes

Across the EU, exit work and DDR programmes (deradicalisation, disengagement and resocialisation) differ substantially in terms of implementing actors, type of programmes, objectives, as well as target groups and setting. Increasing number of EU Member States involve civil society organisations (CSOs) in implementing these programmes and interventions. Collaboration between state agencies and CSOs demand a serious debate and constant improvement to enrich working relationships among the different stakeholders, allow learning from different local contexts and create a better foundation for more countries to include CSOs in DDR programmes for VETOs in prisons. This RAN PRISONS Working Group meeting aimed to examine the existing work of CSO practitioners in tertiary radicalisation prevention in prison, discuss lessons learned, best practices, and challenges deriving from multi-agency case work. The meeting took stock of the different interventions and the added value CSOs provide in tertiary prevention across different context and discussed the challenges they face. CSOs-led exit interventions exist in at least 10 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden) and while in many others they play a supportive role in DDR in and outside prisons.

- CSOs bring specialised expertise and are well positioned to reach out to and build trust with radicalised or terrorist offenders, because they are perceived as distinct from state actors. They can serve as a bridge linking to communities.
- CSOs bring flexibility to move between institutional mandates and support VETOs throughout detention, imprisonment and post-release, providing long-term care, along the prison-exit continuum. Many CSOs hold multi-professional teams, including first line practitioners, research, programmes for variety of audiences (such as exit work, tertiary prevention, family counselling, community work).
- CSOs work in tertiary prevention is insufficiently resourced as it is often based on fixed-term project funding, which leads to problems of sustainability and the potential for long-term planning.
- CSOs who provide DDR interventions in prison are often external, but not alien to the prison. Mutual acceptance between CSOs and prison staff is key so all actors can realise their respective

mandates. Communication is needed to approximate different perspectives, approaches and priorities of CSO and state actors involved in DDR in prison. Case conferences remain one of the most useful methods.

- Confidentiality vs security needs continue to be a point of tension between CSOs and security actors. A strong rapport and full transparency with the inmate on what information CSOs are obliged to share is useful – the client might (partially) waive their confidentiality right if they sense it will help them.
- Trust is a two-way street; it is built via recurring interactions between different actors. Useful practices are work shadowing, 'doing the rounds' together, introduction sessions of CSOs to a new prison (and addressing mutual biases from the beginning of the relationship), mutual feedback rounds, joint trainings and team building, conducting interviews with inmates jointly, having a point of contact from each actor, as well as good structure for documentation.

Highlights of the discussion

In most of the EU Member States (MS), case management and interventions and management of VETOs in prison is delivered by state agencies; however CSO involvement is increasing across many countries. The opening session of the meeting presented an overview of the role of CSOs in exit work across the EU and provided many examples of DDR programmes led or supported by CSOs in prisons, as well as on the modalities of cooperation between different actors along these interventions. The RAN comprehensive overview paper 'The role of CSOs in exit work' (2022) found that in 10 EU MS there are exit interventions/programmes delivered by CSOs, while in many others they provide supporting services in and outside prison.

CSO can provide diverse interventions throughout the detention-prison-probation continuum, as shown in Figure 1: while their work can take place within the prison settings, in many cases it goes beyond the detention period, with a focus on social reintegration and prevention of recidivism.

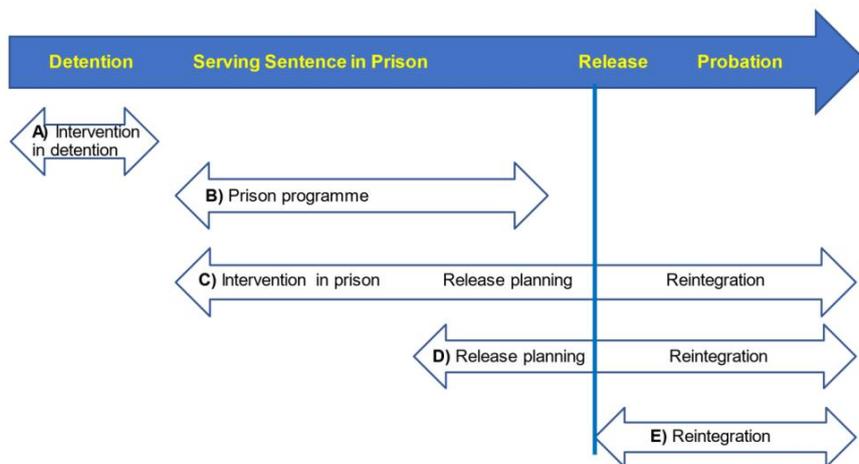


Figure 1. Types of CSO-led exit interventions with VETOs within the criminal justice system and along the prison-exit continuum.
Source: RAN (2022) *The role of CSOs in exit work*

Examples of CSO-led exit programmes for VETOs implemented in the prison setting include: Legato Hamburg (DE), DERAD (AT), JUST X (DE), Fokus ISLEX (DE), LSE Forsa (NL), while some of these also continue to work with VETOs post-release. Other CSO-led exit interventions target mainly individuals in pre-trial detention or in probation (e.g. NEUSTRAT in Austria and PAIRS in France), while a third groups only works with individuals in an open setting/outside the criminal justice system. Further examples for CSO-led exit programmes identified in the EU include: EXIT Germany (DE), CEAPIRE (BE), EXIT Sweden (SE), Aggredi and Exit 2020 (FI), Respect.lu (LU), CODEX Foundation (PL), Mladez Ulice (SK), among others.

- CSOs bring flexibility to move between institutional mandates and support VETOs throughout detention, imprisonment and post-release, providing long-term care, along the prison-exit continuum. Many CSOs hold multi-professional teams, including first line practitioners, research, programmes for variety of audiences (such as exit work, tertiary prevention, family counselling, community work). They are well-placed to establish trust with VETOs and to build a bridge to communities.
- Some of the challenges CSOs involved in exit work face is suboptimal funding and lack of access to resources and continuity of their programmes, lack of trust by other key actors in the prison environment, unclear attribution of roles and mandates, as well as challenges related to information sharing, security, safety and ethics.
- Most initiatives are project-based and, despite their quality, they end with the termination of the project. The risk is that lessons learned, experience and expertise are lost if mechanisms are not put in place to embed them into the prison system in a long-term perspective.
- There is a persisting need for legislation that allows CSO practitioners to enter this multi-agency work with VETOs, ensuring the flow of information, and defining the different responsibilities each actor will hold.

CSOs' role in DDR work in prison – perspectives from outside the EU

While RAN PRISONS Working Group is bringing together practitioners from across the EU to learn from each other's experience, there are more examples to learn from outside the EU. Participants who work in Albania and Indonesia contributed insights from their experience:

In **Albania** over the past years there has been a shift in the prison system, shifting from punishment to rehabilitation. The first convictions for crimes related to terrorism came in 2016, most of those were Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs); and most of the returnees were not convicted immediately upon their return. Therefore, DDR interventions were unfamiliar to the prison system until that time and have only recently been introduced, yet many challenges remain. Key achievements for the work of CSOs with prisons and detained VETOs are:

- **Safety and security:** Efforts towards strengthened security and safety mechanisms and capacity in prison and among prison staff, such as a new intelligence data management system.
- **Risk and needs assessment:** Tailored risk and needs assessment screening instruments are being piloted in 2 high security prisons (Burrel and Peqin). Staff skills have been built to individually assess the risks and needs of violent extremist prisoners.
- **Prison-based rehabilitation:** Enhanced capacity of prison administrations to information sharing and multi-agency approach for P/CVE interventions to violent extremist prisoners.
- **Social reintegration:** Good models of social reintegration prospects of returned/ repatriated individuals can be replicated to (former) violent extremists through improved coordination between pre- and post-release service providers.

There are remaining challenges and future efforts will focus on constructing a more comprehensive multi-agency case management. For that, roles should be defined, and formalised; vocational education, health and social protection structures should be introduced into the work with VETOs in prison; and collaboration post-release with CSOs and community and religious leaders should be deepened.

In **Indonesia**, the Counterterrorism Agency was established in 2010, even though tertiary prevention was introduced largely after the 2002 Bali bombings. At first these efforts were made by law-enforcement agencies (primarily the police) who strived to build trust with detainees, such as by supporting families, and providing good medical care and different aid. Some inmates agreed to participate in programmes and few cases were successful. In the late 2000s CSOs started working in the field with support of US based and funded organisations. One of the first CSOs working with VETOs was Yayasan Prasasti Perdamaian which focused on reintegration. Security agencies were concerned by foreign organisations working with extremists, which led the military to get involved with Counter

Terrorism (CT) and P/CVE. Since then, more CSOs became involved in reintegration assistance, implementing several prison-based programmes, while most of them are grass-roots organisations who provide consistent and personal aid. The government is still not keen on giving more space to CSOs, but do appreciate some of their work, which leads to copying CSO activities especially by entrepreneurial assistance for reintegration and victim-former reconciliation meetings. So far, these attempts were not very successful. The returnees who were deported from Turkey during the years 2017-2018 increased cooperation between the government and CSOs, while many more FTFs are still in Syria and might be repatriated in the future. The main challenge in the cooperation between government and CSOs is the lack of trust. There were no relations during the dictatorship and there is a long way to go to improve this. For the most part, government agencies perceive CSOs as ones who work primarily or only with human rights, while CSOs tend to think of state agencies as unprofessional.

Cooperation between CSOs and state actors in multi-agency case management in prison

The involvement of CSO practitioners in DDR programmes for VETOs in prisons require frameworks for multi-agency cooperation. As in previous RAN meetings, the question of how to improve this cooperation, build and maintain trust, were a main subject of the discussion.

- CSOs who provide DDR interventions in prison are external, but not alien to the prison. **Mutual acceptance** between CSOs and prison staff is key so all actors can realise their respective mandates. Communication is needed to **approximate different perspectives**, approaches and priorities of CSO and state actors involved in DDR in prison. **Case conferences** remain one of the most useful methods.
- **Confidentiality vs security needs** continue to be a point of tension between CSOs and security actors. There is reluctance to share information on both sides, but for different reasons: prison staff and security actors are reticent to share private information with practitioners who are out of the system; and CSOs practitioners don't want to risk the safe space they have created for clients to "open up".
 - A strong rapport and full transparency with the inmate on what information CSOs are obliged to share is useful. The client might (partially) waive their confidentiality right if they sense it will help them.
- Practitioners agreed that creating trust can be achieved by **recurring interactions** and continuous efforts to understand the other's perspectives, their concerns and their approach/methods, and creating a mutual language and opportunities for continuous feedback.
- A good example is the cooperation between **LEGATO and the prison system in Hamburg**. The CSO's practitioners have shared their goals and work methods with prison staff, updated them about progress or challenges working with inmates and taken part in team meetings. From the prison side, they gave practitioners the respective access and maintained constant communication with them. This successful relationship is the product of ongoing work between the two parties.
- In **Italy, there is a disengagement program implemented in a multi-agency setting**, where CSO experts, along with educators, religious counselors and academic experts implement activities with VETOs in a high security unit hosting inmates convicted for international terrorism. The multi-agency case management also includes the prison governor, police, a case manager who is a reintegration officer, social worker, psychiatrist, criminologist or psychologist, educators from CSOs and cultural mediators. This team strive to work together for the success of the process. The activities are focused on geopolitical aspects, biographical storytelling and interreligious dialogue, combined with creative manual activities and role play. There is also a joint P/CVE training for penitentiary staff.

During the meeting, a practical group workshop was conducted to introduce a useful **tool for casework with VETOs in collaboration with CSOs and other non-security actors**, allowing participants to reflect on their own

role in case management and learn from the approaches of other colleagues. The workshop was based on the [DesistKit](#) tool, developed under the EU-funded project icommit. It consists of the CaseReflector and the DesistCards, which participants had the chance to test in groups during the meeting.

- Feedback from participants demonstrated that such tools bring different actors closer together and allow them to better understand their perspectives and priorities in DDR work. Since the tool is designed for non-security actors working on tertiary prevention cases, familiarizing correctional staff in particular with it can help them better understand the work of CSOs and bring the different roles closer.
- The tool was found very useful to assist caseworkers with needs assessment, prioritization of different themes that are important for the inmate, and to subsequently help structure discussions in a multi-agency setting (such as a case conference).
- The DesistKit was also found to be very flexible, as it can be used on many different occasions with the inmate, to break the ice but also to capture changing needs.

DesistKit- Resource-oriented distancing from extremist behaviors and ideologies

The DesistKit is a set of tools developed for professionals working closely with individuals holding extremist views or showing extremist behavior. The two core tools are the CaseReflector, and the Desist Cards as well as the accompanying Manual aim to strengthen caseworkers within multi-agency-collaborations and support them in structuring distancing processes with the affected individuals. The DesistKit supports professionals to gain a nuanced understanding of the individual's situation. This allows them to reflect on their own projections on the individual as well as prioritize their unique needs and available resources for change. The CaseReflector visualizes the progress they make throughout the distancing process.

CASEREFLECTOR

The CaseReflector is a digital tool in the form of a PowerPoint slide deck that supports case workers in reflecting on and better structuring and documenting cases in the field of CVE. The core of the CaseReflector is a table consisting of multiple distancing factors that can play a role in the context of distancing processes and relate to important topics in counselling sessions. The distancing factors are grouped in four main categories (Relationship & Belonging, Individual Development, Practical Life, and Challenges) and based on the research project DISLEX3D1, along with insights gained from modus|zad's scientific monitoring of and support to organisations in the field of CVE. Additionally, the list of factors was evaluated by external experts. The CaseReflector promotes a resource-oriented and gender-focused point of view on distancing processes from extremist behavior and ideology of the individuals they are working with.

DESISTCARDS

The DesistCards are a set of cards that can be used in counselling sessions to help start a conversation and strengthen the working relationship. Reflection questions that refer to the distancing factors gathered in the CaseReflector are listed on the back of the cards. They can also serve to identify which topics the individual wants to work on, what are important resources for the individual, and to jointly set goals for the counselling process.

DesistKit- Resource-oriented distancing from extremist behaviours and ideologies

Overview of Distancing factors

Relationship & Belonging

- Family of origin
- Partnership and children
- Friends
- Community
- Support services

Individual Development

- Motivation to join
- Motivation to leave
- Personality traits
- Reflectivity
- Identity
- Emotions
- Beliefs & values
- Wellbeing
- Gender lens
- Appearance

Practical Life

- Home environment
- Educational & vocational training
- Employment
- Financial situation
- Leisure & joyful activities
- Online life

- Retaliation
- Contact with scene (members)
- Alcohol & substance consumption
- Losses
- Administrative hurdles
- Crime & violence
- Stigmatization
- Prosecution & imprisonment

Challenges

The overview of distancing factors provides at a quick glance several relevant topics and can help case workers to remember certain topics they may have not addressed yet, uncover blind spots, and help to prioritise topics to work on in counselling sessions. In addition, it allows caseworkers to take a step back from their casework to reflect on (1) what they already know about the individual's situation, feelings, and desires, (2) what they only suspect or may be projecting onto the individual, and (3) what they do not yet know and what would be helpful to talk about with the individual. Intertwined with the reflection process is the working relationship. To establish this relationship is a key goal of each counselling setting. Another relevant objective built into the instrument is the opportunity for goal setting, ideally together with the individual.

As a final component, **the CaseReflector** supports caseworkers in communicating about distancing processes with other stakeholders, including in multi-agency settings, while not disclosing any personal data. The goal is all actors involved to gain a more nuanced understanding of the importance of distancing work and its underlying approaches. In general, the CaseReflector can help summarise observations, thoughts, hypotheses, and developments in the distancing process, prioritise the individual's needs, and reflect on structures of discrimination that the individual may face.

Recommendations

Participants reflected together on the work CSOs with VETOs in prison, about trust building and multi-agency collaboration in case management and implementation of DDR programmes in prison.

- Trust is a two-way street. CSO practitioners providing DDR interventions as well as prison staff and prison management should strive to create **recurring interactions between different actors** involved in

VETO management and treatment. **Useful practices** include: work shadowing, 'doing the rounds' together, introduction sessions of CSOs to a new prison (and addressing mutual biases from the beginning of the relationship), mutual feedback rounds, joint trainings and team building, periodical joint case-management meetings in prison, conducting interviews with inmates jointly, having a point of contact from each actor, as well as good structure for documentation.

- Develop **clear task division** among actors and ensure **transparency on respective work processes** and methods. This further requires a **shared strategy**, as well as a **coordination mechanism** that would ensure consistent and sustainable involvement of CSOs in DDR.
- Create and implement **good data exchange communication channels** among prison staff and CSO practitioners in line with legal framework and respective limitations such as the GDPR¹.
- A **legislative framework** is a pre-requisite to enable and ensure multi-agency cooperation along DDR interventions and programmes with VETOs, that is inclusive of different actors, including CSOs.
- **Ensuring continuity** is important for trust building. Due to possible financial instability and the nature of CSO work, staff turnover affects established relationships with other agencies and actors. Ensuring continuity is key, including through timely communication of changes and organising proper handovers.
- **Ensure sustainable funding** for CSOs with proven expertise in delivering DDR interventions and programs as part of a wider ecosystem of actors and approaches working with VETOs along the prison-exit continuum.
- **Introduction of the key principles of multi-agency work** with CSOs during **basic and continuous training** of prison staff and vice versa. That is for CSO practitioners and prison staff to learn about the challenges and opportunities awaiting them in their work with VETOs in a multi-agency work and to better their mutual understanding at an early stage.

Follow up

Topics for further exploration through within RAN Practitioners meetings include:

- How to improve case management in a multi-agency setting?
- How to ensure sustainability and financial stability of CSOs programmes and interventions in the exit field?
- Transferring working methods/approaches to rehabilitation in other fields (for example: organized crime) to the work with VETOs in prison.
- Practical tools and exercises for trust building among different actors in multi-agency work.

¹ [The general data protection regulation - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32016R0679)

Relevant practices

1. The DeBintal Foundation (Indonesia): a CSO established by former prisoners with support from counterterrorism police. It facilitates reintegration and disengagement through a range of activities, alongside an active media presence engaging with extremists online.
2. LEGATO: Individual case conferences of all agencies involved
 - Following final sentencing and risk & needs assessment or prior to significant relaxation, i.e. temporary release, transfer to open custody, release.
 - Informing rehabilitation planning, possible parole conditions, and/or release.
3. The DesistKit set of tools for caseworkers for resource-oriented distancing from extremist behaviours and ideologies.
4. Italy: disengagement program for VETOs in a high-security prison unit, implemented in a multi-agency setting with CSOs, led by The Pope John XXIII Community Association.

Further reading

icommit Project (2023), [Project Manual, a practice-rooted guide to P/CVE collaboration & casework](#)
 International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Topics (2022), [Yayasan Debintal: Community-Based Deradicalisation Program](#)
 RAN (2020), [Rehabilitation Manual](#)
 RAN (2022), [The role of civil society organisations in exit work](#)
 RAN (2022), [What is in the European prison toolbox of DDR programmes?](#)
 RAN [Collection of Approaches and Practices. Exit Strategies](#) (p. 130-200)