EX POST PAPER
RAN Plenary – 30 October 2019 – Brussels (BE)

RAN Plenary

After 8 years of RAN, and with a network of over 5 000 first-line practitioners and currently 10 Working Groups, this year's RAN Plenary (Brussels, 30 October 2019) provided the opportunity to reflect on RAN's main achievements as well as map potential themes and future constituencies. This ex post paper covers the main outcomes that were discussed during the RAN Plenary. It describes what **themes** will require the attention of RAN participants in **2020** and beyond, what we should **continue** and what should be **changed**. Moreover, and where relevant, it suggests which first-line practitioners and other stakeholders could be brought together in order to address **cross-cutting themes**. In addition, this paper reflects outcomes from the discussion on what **working formats** and **ways of dissemination** could be applied by RAN, in order to continue catering to practitioners' learning in the best possible way. Input to the discussion was found in a survey conducted among the RAN constituency preceding the Plenary. A concise report of the main findings of the survey is attached to this paper.

Working Groups' focus in 2020

This section reflects the outcome of the discussion by listing both the themes the Working Groups wish to **continue** and the **changes** they foresee in their forthcoming thematic agendas.

YOUTH, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES (RAN YF&C)

Continuity

First, **effective online or digital youth work** remains a challenge throughout the EU. Young people spend a significant amount of their time online and extremists know very well how to find them, provide them with high production value propaganda, and actively approach and recruit them online. Many youth workers are eager to engage in online youth work and online one-on-one interventions, but they need more knowledge, tools and methods.

Second, the topic of **returnees** can be further addressed in three different ways in the upcoming years:

1. Developing community-based reconciliatory models: how to work with extremist families, or families who have to deal with a family member's death, in Syria, for example.
2. Supporting and preparing families of children or relatives who have not returned yet.
3. Returnee children: activities that deal with traumas of child returnees, such as in schools, sports and community centres. Also, the gender aspect should be taken into account here.

Change

Relatively new for the YF&C Working Group is the question of how to deal with **individuals in far-right extremist (FRE) families and FRE environments**. The challenge is to develop adequate responses to such narratives, without losing contact with the young persons, their families and the communities concerned.

> It would be interesting to discuss the family environment of FRE and how FRE narratives are travelling through society these years.

In addition, there is a new desire to understand the **impact of sports upon radicalisation** better and to explore both its positive (as a deradicalisation tool) and negative (as used by extremist groups) potential and narratives. Furthermore, politicisation of football violence and the use of narratives herein could be a subtopic, as this results in polarising effects within society.

Lastly, a new topic that may be explored in upcoming years concerns **extreme ideologies of one generation passed on to the next generation**.

EXIT STRATEGIES (RAN EXIT)

Continuity

The RAN tool for peer/self-evaluation of exit programmes will be finalised in December 2019. It is deemed important that **evaluation efforts** to further develop the quality of exit programmes continue in 2020. Questions that should be leading in this include: Are we doing the necessary things, and do we apply the right approaches? Exit programmes are organised on both national and local levels, and in prisons as well as outside prisons. Therefore, the EXIT Working Group should not only continue to promote exchange of practices and approaches that work among practitioners but also with and among Member States.

With a rise in the number of **prison leavers** in the upcoming years, **multi-agency cooperation** is another theme that has growing importance for effective exit programmes. Other important subtopics

include information sharing, particularly in the development of tailor-made plans for both male and female individuals, and involving multiple actors (probation, municipalities, etc.) from the first day on.

Change

Different compared to existing programmes is the kind of issues to be addressed in FRE-oriented exit programmes. These include, for example:

- How can one work with violent FRE in polarised societies?
- How does the online world of FRE extremism affect the offline world, given the fact that some of the recent FRE perpetrators were **lone actors**? How is exit work carried out with a terrorist lone actor, and how do you know when a lone actor is disengaged when they are not directly linked to a specific terrorist group?
- Among FRE activists and supporters, relatively many people of an age over 25-30 are observed. This age group often has a more "regulated" and "stable" life than the younger generation that is primarily being addressed by exit efforts. They have a house, an income, a job and a relationship. These factors should be included in exit schemes that target the older groups.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES (RAN LOCAL)

Continuity

Local authorities need to manage the return of **foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their family members** and provide adequate support to **refugees**, who could be particularly vulnerable to radicalisation. Hence, **multi-agency structures** remain of vital importance, allowing and enabling municipalities to intervene immediately when there are signals of radicalisation or they detect a potential threat:

> … we need a **next-level multi-agency structure**. A case to look at could be a specific multi-agency setting, needed to support the reintegration and rehabilitation of FTFs or terrorist and radicalised offenders released from prison. This is the area where in the majority of the cases miscommunication and non-cooperation takes place with potentially serious consequences.

Change

Relatively new for RAN LOCAL is the need observed among local authorities to upscale their knowledge and skills in order to deal with **FRE**. RAN LOCAL considers exploring how to deal with these extremist groups that use strategic recruitment tactics, provoke polarised reactions and mostly know exactly how to stretch legal boundaries to the maximum.

Other questions addressed are how to set in place **city communications strategies** about preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) as well as how municipalities can communicate to citizens in times of polarisation (i.e. when FRE marches are organised in a city, an attack took place, etc.).

EDUCATION (RAN EDU)

Continuity

Outcomes such as the Prevent Pyramid and the Education Manifesto have proven useful, valid and still relevant to the everyday work of school teachers. Schools have the ability to function as laboratories for democracy (and often do so). This is bound to continuous support for educators, who are often the first ones observing and witnessing new trends. Nevertheless, too often, they lack support structures to address them appropriately.

Efforts to engage youth on a higher level (such as through RAN YOUNG) are much appreciated. However, the discussion showed that this should be complementary to approaches that aim to work directly with young people on the ground, in a localised setting. These programmes should not be seen as a replacement. Within RAN, peer-to-peer delivery among young people is a useful and highly effective approach that could be increased, for example through EDU meetings within school settings, thus increasing the mutual/reciprocal understanding between educators and students.

Change

Our world has become more digital and so has the classroom. The most pressing issue for schools and educators is dealing with the complexity of **the online world**. Teachers have expressed difficulties with this new reality and wish to be better equipped to deal with it. Schools can contribute to P/CVE better when they invest in **digital awareness and digital skills for teachers,** by combining online skills with, for example, supporting them in coping with perceived and real injustices and grievances.

> Terrorist and extremist groups reach out online while extremist content is spread within school environments through social media, including micro platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram. Some teachers know very little about peer influence taking place online through extremist sites and platforms, like 4Chan and 8Chan.

Furthermore, RAN EDU could focus on improving and defining the curricula of teachers and develop a **'digital safeguarding awareness training'** (train-the-trainer) that could build upon existing curricula.

Lastly, worrying are the (few) cases of teachers allegedly spreading problematic or extremist content. RAN will have to find answers to this tendency.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT (RAN POL)

Continuity

Whereas **FRE** is not an entirely new topic, RAN POL proposes to exchange more in-depth knowledge on the threat emanating from **lone actors**, **more organised FRE groups** and the **links between different FRE movements** across Europe. For the development of practical know-how for the police, it is deemed important to collect experiences and approaches of police practices in countering and/or preventing FRE. Leading questions are: What recent initiatives have had positive results? How can these initiatives be replicated in other Member States?

In addition, it is necessary to address the difference in prevention and intervention efforts towards Islamist extremism versus those towards FRE. In other words, what experiences and knowledge of experts on Islamist extremism can be applied to formulate effective strategies for the police to use in countering and preventing violent FRE? And, what experience or knowledge should not be "reused"?

Also, attention should be paid to the **grey area** – where political ideas could potentially turn into extremist violence. It is important to define the role of police in this grey area, especially in terms of legal limitations. It has been addressed that, from the police perspective:

> It can be hard to identify extremists/lone actors, as well as to identify where the turning point from belief/freedom of speech changes into hateful speech and violence.

Change

Training police in a common language to identify signals of radicalisation and the understanding of FRE radicalisation and recruitment, both offline and online, is an essential addition to **intercultural/interreligious sensitivity training**.

COMMUNICATION AND NARRATIVES (RAN C&N)

Continuity

The **psychology of propaganda and narratives** continues to be an urgent theme. The neurological science behind the problems and solutions faced when dealing with propaganda and alternative narratives are not yet sufficiently understood. In 2020, C&N will dive further into **how and why (certain) narratives resonate** and what we can learn from this for countering future extremist narratives. Also, the influence of **gender-specific approaches in extremist narratives** could be part of this neuroscientific approach. The outcomes would be linked to the GAMMMA+ model, making it accessible for other practitioners. This would build on the 2018 ex post paper ('Checklist of relevant mental biases and mechanisms for developing counter or alternative narratives').

Another topic brought forward by C&N practitioners:

> For 15-year olds, communication online and offline is the same, it has become hybrid. We should look more into what is real for them (youth), what is credible, who are credible messengers and what platforms they use.

It is possible to focus here on **cross-collaboration between online and offline audiences**. For example, school groups could be involved to improve in targeting the audience of campaigns or to talk about videos and podcasts. Additionally, practitioners should be provided with the tools to be more confident in working online (youth and social workers, for example).

Change

RAN C&N will expand its focus on all kinds of extremism, including FRE and potentially also ecological or environmental extremism. As voices in societies are becoming more extreme and polarised, C&N will start to explore **how to communicate and restore less-extreme values and beliefs** in alternative narratives and enhance social cohesion by preventing extremist narratives from becoming normalised.

People who are doing counter- or alternative narratives are often personally exposed to "the other side" and can suffer from threats from outside. In order to work on this, C&N could develop a set of rules and methods to safeguard the practitioner, to **help the helper**, such as a list of protective factors for the people who are communicating.

REMEMBRANCE OF VICTIMS OF TERRORISM (RAN RVT)

Continuity

Whereas social cohesion has been addressed as a topic in the past year, it is necessary to explore how victims can be more present in the public space to **strengthen community resilience** online and offline. To achieve this, it is first needed to widen the practitioner base of RAN RVT and collaborate with, for example, journalists, local authorities and/or communication specialists. Second, victims can contribute to prevention of FRE by touching upon social cohesion and community resilience. As one participant explained:

> Far-right extremism is characterised by the thought that there is a threat or danger from outside. If victims of terrorism explain that they see this threat differently and seek no revenge, they are extremely powerful.

Third, victims have the power to soften the tone in polarised communities or can even play a role **in restorative justice** that provides recognition to the victim and may enhance the rehabilitation process of the offender. To further delve into restorative practices and hands-on tricks for victims, an in-depth

meeting could contribute to this understanding. The focus could be directed at **victims as survivors or change-makers**, who contribute to community resilience.

The practical approach of the RAN RVT Working Group is highly valued, and guidelines and checklists for victims and their associations should keep on being published.

Change

First, as a newly emerging trend, some violent extremists are choosing their victims based on their origin, religion, or any other aspects of their personal or professional profiles. This could make them be perceived as a stigmatised target and an "enemy" of the violent group (such as far right vs "foreigners"). RAN RVT could look at the victimisation process of these **specifically targeted victims** of extremism, their needs and ways in which these victims can contribute to P/CVE efforts.

Second, new weapons and attacks, such as cyberattacks and cyberbullying, lead to victimisation processes of a different nature. RAN could map this online dynamic and its consequences for victim support.

Third, the mental health of victims should be addressed more; for example, "how to avoid transgenerational trauma among victims and their families", and "how to prevent rebound effects between victims' frustration/anger and radicalisation processes".

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE (RAN H&SC)

Continuity

The outcomes of the RAN Plenary show that

> There is still a missing link between prison, probation and life after probation, when it comes to rehabilitation.

Mental health and social care play a vital role in all these stages (prison, probation, life after probation). With the guidance of the RAN Rehabilitation Manual and the support of different Working Groups, questions of information sharing and **continuity of the rehabilitation process** should be discussed.

Second, there is still a lack of knowledge in mental health organisations about **religious and cultural minorities and differences**. More tools and knowledge for mental health practitioners on these topics could contribute to better care for (radicalised) clients. The other way around, the **stigma around mental health** is still eminent and high on the priority list, and it should be addressed more thoroughly.

Change

It is furthermore suggested to focus on **"helping the helper"** in 2020. RAN H&SC underlines the importance of looking at different ways to build support systems for professionals to maintain their own mental health and overall well-being while working with (radicalised) clients. RAN H&SC could explore to which extent violent extremism requires a different form of support for professionals compared to any other activity related to other crimes. Questions that can be asked include: "Can we learn from adjacent fields?", and "Does this theme deserve a special focus on P/CVE?"

The target audience for meetings related to this topic would be practising psychotherapists, social workers, nurses and psychiatrists.

YOUNG (RAN YOUNG)

Continuity

At first, RAN YOUNG was a regular exchange working group setting. Now, it has evolved to a year-long training programme that empowers young people with knowledge and skills to be able to set up their

own PVE initiatives. So far, the young participants as well as the local mentors have expressed their satisfaction regarding the Academy. For sustainable impact, it is beneficial to continue working with **the current group of participants**. However, it should be noted that not all current projects focus equally on the issue of prevention. It is recommended to relaunch a new group of Academy youngsters who will be tasked explicitly to think of projects with a high prevent profile.

Change

A basic training programme containing the necessary general knowledge and skills should be developed as well as two specialised curricula. First, one for the support of initiatives on online PVE campaigns and, second, one for community engagement. **Specific skills** that could be trained include campaigning, leadership and communication to ensure successful initiatives. Furthermore, training sessions should provide insights into the structures of the European Commission and related authorities in their own countries, so participants know how and with whom to collaborate. Also, the Academy should dive deeper into learning how to deal with difficult questions, situations and/or opponents. Lastly, the sessions should aim at gaining more knowledge on the root causes and process of radicalisation.

PRISON AND PROBATION (RAN P&P)

Continuity

For 2020, P&P Working Group leaders and participants propose to first **dive deeper into the current risk assessment tools and rehabilitation methods** and, second, to dive deeper into the systems and structures in which these tools and methods are embedded. Questions that can be asked include: "How do prison officers and probation officers value the use of these instruments?", and "How do management and staff stay vigilant and raise awareness of radicalisation as a permanent element in prison regimes and probation policies while preserving attention for reintegration/rehabilitation and the prevention of recidivism as well?"

Furthermore, the influx in both the prison and probation system of persons with an extremist or terrorist background might continue to grow. P&P can contribute to assessing what is needed in order to contain this development in three ways. Firstly, by organising exchanges of professionals (**visiting each other's facilities**) to discuss at a peer level what works well, what needs improvement and what good practices can be used for their own work. Secondly, by organising meetings for prison and probation workers to look at the state of play, and to develop suggestions on **how to work more effectively**. Finally, Member States could learn from each other with regard to how to support and counsel prison and probation workers working with (former) extremists.

Change

Whereas in earlier years P&P focused on risk assessment on a regular basis, there is, in addition, a call to further explore **needs assessments and tailor-made programmes**. Staff should be sufficiently trained in implementing these assessments and programmes, in particular in relation to the fact that many offenders convicted of terrorist crimes will be released in the upcoming years. The Rehabilitation Manual can serve as a guideline.

Moreover, it was proposed to look at the new topic of **communication with terrorist offenders**. Guiding questions herein could be: "How can you communicate effectively with prisoners?", and "How do you manage the information flow from outside prison to inside prison?"

Cross-cutting issues

Cross-cutting themes are relevant for more than one RAN Working Group, being themes that touch upon the daily working practices of different practitioners. Often, these themes define the broader

context of P/CVE work. This raises the question how these themes should be approached by the RAN network as a (holistic) whole.

At the Plenary, participants were asked to indicate which cross-cutting issues should be addressed by RAN in 2020. In the survey, conducted among RAN participants preceding the Plenary, **far-right extremism**, **gender**, **the crime–terror nexus**, **polarisation** and the impact of **online communication** (social media, the internet) were indicated among others as cross-cutting themes (see attachment for a concise survey report). In addition to the survey outcomes, the following additional six cross-cutting issues were underlined at the Plenary.

1. All forms of extremism

Although **FRE** was decidedly mentioned the most in the survey, during the Plenary unceasing alertness was asked from RAN for all forms of extremism. The fact that much attention has been given to Islamist extremism over the past years should not imply that the network's attention can now be drawn away and should focus solely on FRE instead. Islamist extremism will still require our full attention in the near future. Moreover, vigilance is needed for other types of extremism that might seem relatively marginal at the moment, but which could develop in size and impact in the forthcoming period. Examples of this are environmental extremism and far-left extremism. Moreover, the term **hateful extremism** was coined at the Plenary, referring to behaviour that is not forbidden legally, but which is undesirable socially and poses some sort of threat to European democratic values (think of Salafism, for example). Within RAN, it could therefore be explored what exchange and education formats best cater to the network's constituencies' needs for information about all forms of extremism.

2. Rehabilitation efforts in and after prison

All over the EU, the number of inmates with an extremist/terrorist background and/or a vulnerability for violent extremist ideologies and ideas is rising. With the return of FTFs, this number of inmates may increase. Similarly, in the forthcoming years, the number of these types of offenders who will be released from prison after detention will increase. The challenge for a wide variety of practitioners is to jointly develop **effective rehabilitation programmes** that will help prevent recidivism among these persons after their release. Also, awareness raising among practitioners of the **gender-specific aspects of women** as perpetrators should be on the priority list.

Hence, rehabilitation requires the enduring involvement of police, prison staff and probation workers, for example in the sharing of information (with regard to risk and needs assessments) obtained through intelligence and surveillance about the persons concerned. Municipal services and local institutions have to contribute their efforts as well, securing for the persons concerned a good start after their detention (think of support with regard to housing, work, income, health, mental support and support in establishing new social networks). In sum, within RAN, one could imagine joined efforts of several Working Groups around these themes.

3. Lone actors and extremist online communities

Several tragic incidents (Christchurch, Utrecht) in the course of 2019 suggest that acts of terrorism are more and more committed by individuals, who seem to be radicalised via the internet/social media and find a sense of belonging within extremist online communities. We need to at least try to get a better grip on this phenomenon. Further research regarding their motives (push and pull factors), their *modus operandi*, by whom and how they were contacted, what the personal element is that recruiters via the internet use to engage with them is being carried out ([1]). This will provide more insights that should be translated to practical and tangible information for practitioners. Among others, the question should be answered as to how practitioners can recognise signals of radicalisation online at an early stage, and

---

([1]) For example, the Countering Lone Actor Terrorism (CLAT) is collecting data from 12 known lone actors from across Europits on this Europe. Phenomenon collecting data from all known lone actors

how they should respond accordingly. Within RAN, joint efforts in this field could be considered by practitioners involved in the C&N, RAN LOCAL, RAN YOUNG and H&SC Working Groups.

4. Extremist infiltration

Extremist infiltration into extracurricular activities of young people such as youth clubs, but especially sports centres and supplementary schools (e.g. religious madrasas), is an issue that needs to be considered continuously by all those involved. But also, on the meso and macro levels, "influencers" play a role in the dissemination of extremist ideas, as they try to draw young people into their narratives with seemingly unsuspicious content. As long as extracurricular activities remain outside of the focus of most P/CVE programmes, this remains a threat. The topic is an issue spanning FRE and Islamist extremism and would offer a good opportunity for LOCAL, YF&C and EDU to cooperate on. Generally, the wider community environment of young people needs to be addressed more.

5. Help the helper

Building resilience among practitioners who deal with, for example, hate speech, or who are confronted with tense situations as a consequence of polarisation, is important. Growing numbers of practitioners report FRE-inspired harassment. Furthermore, individuals who are involved in counter- and alternative narratives are often personally exposed to "the other side" and can suffer from threats or violence. The risk for harassment and threats for these individuals would be something to consider and work with. RAN could work on a set of rules and methods to safeguard the practitioner in a cross-cutting way over the network. Furthermore, it could develop a list of protective factors for people who are communicating directly with extremists.

6. Other

Other cross-cutting issues mentioned at the Plenary include:

- **Transgenerational trauma**, which refers to the mental impact that the trauma of victims of terror can have on their children. This theme could be addressed by RAN RVT in a joint effort with, for example, mental health practitioners.
- The role of **sports as a liaising mechanism** between vulnerable groups (notably youth) and first-line practitioners.
- The complexity and unavoidability of the **constant connection between the online and offline** worlds, especially among younger people.

Working methods

At the Plenary, participants were invited to share ideas not only about what to address in 2020 but also on how to work together in the future. Two main insights result from this part of the discussion. First, new working formats would be appreciated because these might **boost the creativity and energy** among participants and thus enlarge the network's impact in terms of innovation in P/CVE.

Secondly, the aim of the network reaches beyond the education of its participants. Ideally, knowledge and know-how developed by RAN must reach as many practitioners as possible, and **dissemination strategies should help develop sustainable and effective P/CVE approaches EU-wide**.

New formats

The following suggestions offered at the Plenary could be explored further in 2020.

1. Internships and job shadowing

Practitioners from one Member State join an organisation in another Member State, similar to their own, in order to learn about approaches that are new for them. Cross-border experience could be helpful for,

for example, prison and probation staff in understanding differences in legislation underlying rehabilitation programmes.

2. RAN on location

In addition to meetings that take place in the secluded environment of a hotel or conference room, events could be organised in venues or at sites that have some direct relationship with the theme at stake, such as schools, community centres and police precincts.

3. Community engagement

Direct involvement of **citizens, volunteers, victims and civil society organisations** in meetings and events organised by RAN amplifies the chance to interact directly with the people RAN practitioners are working for. More people who can give personal testimonies of the effects of (violent) extremism should be included in meetings to make the relevancy more visible and tangible.

Dissemination and consolidation

The dissemination and consolidation of the learnings of the network require attention. Neither RAN and its participants nor the Commission should be satisfied when the knowledge and know-how remain in the hands of only those who participated in its activities.

Currently, RAN utilises a variety of means to disseminate its outputs, including ex post papers, manuals, videos, social media outlets and the RAN website.

The following seven suggestions have been noted at the Plenary, all of which are intended to enlarge the reach and impact of all communication efforts.

1. Dissemination part of preparation

Design of **dissemination strategies should be included** in (the preparatory work of) each event. Part of this strategy should be to define the means and effects for the targeted practitioners group. Furthermore, it should answer the questions "What change/development do the deliverables of the activity contribute to?" and "How can we best disseminate outcomes of and lessons learned from this meeting?"

It is suggested to precede each activity with a **needs assessment** (e.g. survey), indicating the expectations among the target audience with regard to the skills, tools, know-how and information that RAN could produce.

Each RAN activity should start deliberately with **agreement about the desired output** and target audience: what will be the final "product" of the meeting or event concerned, for whom will it be produced, and what, by consequence, are the criteria to be met during the meeting in order to deliver such output?

2. Brief and debrief participants

At each RAN event, participants come together in order to develop skills, tools and knowledge. They do so not only for themselves but also for their colleague practitioners at home. In order to **secure dissemination at the workplace**, colleagues could be briefed before, and debriefed after, the event. An idea would be to task participants to collect issues among their colleagues that could be discussed in the Working Group before a RAN meeting takes places. After their return, they could report their findings in a meeting with colleagues and/or via the organisation's digital platforms.

Furthermore, it is suggested to conduct surveys among participants approximately 6 months after meeting, inquiring if and how working practice has changed sustainably as a consequence of their participation in a RAN activity. Another suggested way of keeping track of results after meetings is the

creation of an online forum or blog for participants, where they can share their reflections, motivate each other, or send some short notes and reflections in the first hours after the meeting.

3. Flexibility of formats

The **shape and duration of activities** should not follow a fixed format but reflect the goal of the meeting. It is noted that the currently often-applied lunch-to-lunch format works well. Some of the Plenary's participants indicated that they would favour longer events but do understand that this is a budget issue. Nevertheless, they would appreciate having 3 days to discuss two topics. On the other hand, it was also suggested to make meetings shorter, which might enable practitioners to participate who cannot currently do so due to time constraints.

4. Dissemination is a common responsibility

Although RAN is a practitioner-oriented network, **policymakers** need to be informed properly about deliverables too, and it is good to consider how they will be **involved** in further dissemination. For instance, it could be considered to make various "tailor-made" versions of RAN deliverables, which might help the **consolidation of generic insights within a country-specific context**. Examples of this are translation of documents into multiple languages and adaptation of documents to local situations (e.g. with regard to legislation and/or socio-cultural characteristics of the Member States concerned).

On the other hand, enduring success of RAN is dependent on common ownership. Member States and local authorities can play a role in securing the right conditions for the consolidation of know-how and knowledge themselves. RAN could explore how to facilitate Member States in this responsibility. Good practices in this field can be found in various Member States already; for instance, Belgium has a well-developed dissemination infrastructure — mirroring RAN Working Groups' structure — in place that is being utilised for sharing RAN insights too.

5. Make it easy

Consolidation of knowledge and know-how depends on the degree of **direct applicability of the information** provided. Practitioners are not researchers and often do not have much time to study lengthy documents. They prefer tips and tricks based upon convincing evidence and appealing examples (inspiring practices). These should be accessible through handheld devices and in their own language, and should be **easy to digest** within a few minutes. Visuals and other contemporary means of communication have a huge educational impact. Easy-to-share materials, simple give-away instruction cards and short key messages are all highly appreciated. It has been suggested to develop a **RAN app** in all EU languages.

6. Quality counts

Impact should be made with quality, not quantity. Over the years, RAN has produced a **wealth of guidelines and manuals** of which the actual use should be reviewed. Nevertheless, many prove to still be very relevant, such as the Education Manifesto and the Returnee Manual. Efforts could be undertaken in the further dissemination of all existing materials, instead of production of new materials. One example is the approaches and methods that have been developed over the years as part of exit programmes. Despite changes in the characteristics of the target groups, the methods remain the same. Moreover, **monitoring and evaluation** of the use and applicability of RAN deliverables should be standard procedure in the network's communication strategy.

Appendix: Survey report

Inquiring for ideas

Preceding the Plenary, a survey was sent out to a large part of the RAN community. The survey inquired about themes and topics that could be addressed by RAN in the forthcoming period. The aim of the survey was to explore, firstly, whether the themes and topics that are currently on the agenda of the RAN Working Groups will still be relevant and urgent for the network's constituency in the near future. Secondly, the survey asked for any new trends that have been observed in the field of competence of the practitioner and that would deserve to be addressed in the future. Thirdly, the participants were asked to mention cross-cutting themes that go beyond their primary field of expertise. The input received from respondents can contribute to identifying possible adaptations to the working methods or Working Groups of RAN in order to keep the network relevant and responsive.

Validity of results

The survey was sent out to all participants who were present at a RAN meeting between July 2017 and June 2019; 2 006 participants in total received an invitation to fill in the inquiry. The number of **341 responses** reflects the close proximity of the RAN participants to their network. Among the Plenary's invitees, the response rate was 70 % (73 out of 105 respondents). Moreover, respondents come from all 28 Member States and from all 10 RAN Working Groups (varying from RAN EDU being represented by 14 % of all respondents to 5.5 % for RAN YOUNG).

How to interpret results

The survey offered maximum room for ideas and suggestions: it purposely contained **open questions** only (see box). This resulted in abundant input. In the processing of the collected data, some classification of answers in overarching categories has been done. While presenting a general analysis of the survey's outcomes here below, interpretation and consideration of these facts and figures were undertaken by the participants during the Plenary, both during the Working Groups' breakout sessions ([2]) and during the Plenary debate in the afternoon. Conclusions from these discussions have been fed into the ex post paper that summarises the main outcomes of the event.

Questions
1.   In your main RAN Working Group or field of expertise, which theme do you believe will become or remain important in the upcoming years?   2.   Which cross-cutting themes do you observe that should be addressed by more than one Working Group?   3.   Please mention any important topics which are beyond your main Working Group and that would deserve attention in your opinion.

Tentative analysis

In processing the survey's data, much overlap has been noticed between the answers to the three questions mentioned above. Overall, the following facts and figures have been extracted from these answers.
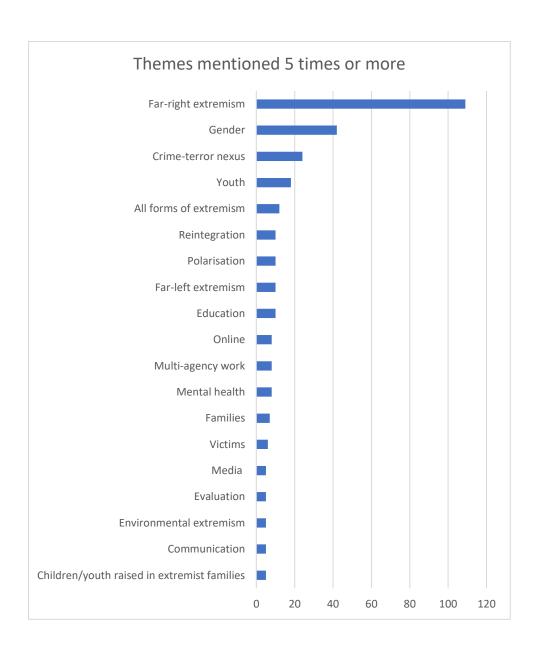
1. The main themes

The graph below provides an overview of the 19 themes that have been mentioned 5 times or more as an answer to the questions for 'cross-cutting themes' and for themes remaining important 'for your own Working Group'. Apparently, respondents have these themes at the top of their minds while considering what is relevant for broad groups of practitioners among the RAN community. Yet, further interpretation of these figures is needed. Are these topics practitioners want to know, learn, exchange more about (because they think they have insufficient knowledge)? Or are these topics that practitioners think will be the most urgent considering the risk for society, communities, individuals?

The 'Big 19' are being addressed by one or more of the current Working Groups to varying degrees already. None of the themes mentioned are fully new to RAN, although some only gained attention relatively recently, such as

---

([2]) In addition to the general information provided here, further material will be prepared for each Working Group that will be presented in the breakout sessions during the Plenary. In each breakout session, the particular Working Group will discuss its constituency's answers to the three questions.

gender and **crime–terror nexus**. However, terms like these are not yet well defined and therefore not completely ready to be addressed by RAN. Further clarity about their meaning might be needed before these topics can be put properly on the RAN agenda.

Themes mentioned 5 times or more

Theme	Count
Far-right extremism	~110
Gender	~42
Crime-terror nexus	~24
Youth	~18
All forms of extremism	~12
Reintegration	~10
Polarisation	~10
Far-left extremism	~10
Education	~10
Online	~8
Multi-agency work	~8
Mental health	~8
Families	~7
Victims	~6
Media	~5
Evaluation	~5
Environmental extremism	~5
Communication	~5
Children/youth raised in extremist families	~5

2. Far-right extremism, Islamist extremism, environmental extremism, far-left extremism

The topic that was decidedly mentioned the most is **FRE**. Answering the question 'Which themes will become or remain important for your main Working Group or field of expertise?', FRE was mentioned by many respondents from all Working Groups, most notably POL (31 %), EDU (22 %) and YF&C (20 %). Indeed, with multiple meetings in different formats — a thematic event, several Member States' Support Workshops, expert missions and a factbook — RAN has already extensively focused on FRE in 2019. Now, Working Groups wanting to keep FRE on their agenda in 2020 might find a justification to do so in the survey's results. For instance, one respondent suggests that EDU could address.

> The rise of far-right extremism in schools. ([3])

([3]) For readability, all quotes have been corrected on grammar.

Another respondent sees

> … linkages between populism, polarisation and far-right extremism on social media and beyond…

And, while referring to FRE, requests are made for

> … translating research into policy and actionable practices.

Yet another respondent indicates a correlation between the rise of FRE and society's anxiety about

> … returning foreign fighters.

In any case, for a large number of respondents, it is clear that the theme transcends constituencies: almost 32 % flagged the cross-cutting character of FRE.

The shift in focus to FRE might continue in the next couple of years, but the survey indicates also unambiguously that concerns about **Islamist extremism** will continue to be present among practitioners in all Member States. Like one of the respondent's remarks,

> I think we must acknowledge that whilst hate speech and RW extremism appears to be on the rise, there, nonetheless, continues to be concern about Islamic-inspired extremism. Need to look at potential release of families from the Kurdish camps. ([4])

Although Islamist extremism has been explicitly mentioned by respondents only 9 times, the fact that related topics are mentioned very often (such as **child returnees** and **returning FTFs**) signifies that it is still high on the priority issues to be dealt with. Both topics are perceived by all but the RVT and C&N Working Groups as important for their own field:

> Dealing with Foreign Fighters male/female and their children who are coming back to their home countries.

There is relatively less knowledge among the network of practitioners about the complex problem of FRE, whereas the network's knowledge of Islamist extremism has matured already. Regarding Islamist extremism, respondents have moved on from exploring the theme in general terms towards expertise on highly specific, specialised subtopics that are currently relevant for their profession.

A few times, it is suggested to juxtapose

> The immense diversification of extremist groups and movements on the Islamist and the far-right sides.

One respondent would like to explore the

> … connection [between] gangs and Islamist extremists.

Furthermore, one finds reference to two other types of extremist ideology among the survey's answers: **environmental extremism** (mentioned 15 times) and **left-wing extremism** (21 times). Respondents use various descriptions for both phenomena. Both themes are seen as topics that could be addressed either by one of the current Working Groups (mentioned are notably POL and/or P&P) or, from a cross-cutting perspective, by

---

([4]) It should be noted that, following the framework for RAN activities, hate speech, hate crimes, vandalism, political protests and hooliganism are not the primary focus of the network.

various Working Groups jointly. Overall, over 12 % of the respondents believe that RAN should look at these specific types of ideology.

3. Gender

Over 12 % of the respondents believe gender deserves more attention than it has gotten so far within RAN. Both the roles of **women in extremist organisations** and **gender-based power imbalances** were mentioned in regard to this topic.

> It might be a good idea to have a global view. What have extremism, gender, (psychology) and attachment theory in common? They are involved in every second of our lives and of course in the exit process. Finding the lines between them might lead us to diverse methods which can be even more effective. This includes the reflection of us (especially about our attachment pattern) as counsellors or exit workers.

Another respondent wants to apply a gender approach in the repatriation of victims, and support

> …victims or perpetrators of Daesh (how to empower them to prevent radicalisation) or unaccompanied minors.

Some relate the gender issue to children too:

> Women and their children, who are coming back to EU [from] the caliphate, some are being sent to prison, others are still radicalised, what about their children and the traumas they have experienced.

Whereas only four respondents think their own Working Groups (EXIT, POL, YF&C) should take the lead on the gender/radicalisation issue, many respondents state that the theme has cross-cutting importance, touching upon the work and expertise of many different practitioners. Some respondents are in favour of the idea to have a gender-focused Working Group:

> Linked to the above, I'd like to see a gender working group. Both far right and Islamist extremist groups stand for an anti-gender movement. We are witnessing increased aggression targeting women from those groups in connection to narratives, the role of the media and media best practices in this field (for example, peace journalism).

4. Other main topics

Other themes mentioned 5 times or more (see graph above) by almost all Working Group constituents who responded include **polarisation** in society (3 %) and **reintegration** (or **rehabilitation**, 3 %) of extremist offenders.

On polarisation, one respondent, for instance, suggests looking into the

> … impact of broader EU policy agendas and their communication (e.g. enlargement and migration) on polarisation and radicalisation in the EU and the EU candidate countries.

On reintegration of extremist offenders, one respondent suggests applying a cross-border approach,

> … because in some cases radicalisation process of people in one country could be linked with the radicalisation process in another country (for example, young people in Latvia and young people in Finland). So, these links could be as a hurdle to overcome during rehabilitation process.

Youth (5 %) has been mentioned as a theme both from the perspective of **involving young people** more in the field of P/CVE and from the perspective of **children growing up in extremist families**, which could be related to

> Cooperation between local and police.

Regarding the involvement of young people, it is suggested by one respondent to apply the technique of

> … storytelling to combat the phenomena of discrimination and various phobias as well as to reduce reciprocal stereotypes.

One could also opt for a broader perspective, such as:

> … integration practices such as sport activities, social activities or educational programs for both children and youth and ways to bring the local and foreign cultures together. Also, would be great to hear about projects which take and integrate 2nd generation migrants in an attempt to solve larger societal problems (poverty or ecological problems for instance).

Mental health (2 %) has been mentioned too, among others as a cause for vulnerability to radicalisation among people with a migrant background. In those cases, an approach to mental health issues can be found in

> … positive examples of cross-cultural adaptation (as a condition to prevent from radicalisation). […] Building self-esteem among migrants, based on positive cultural adaptation. Creating the culture of empathy and courage to say "no" to hate speech.

The role **(online) media** play is flagged in many different aspects and various definitions and wordings, including online **recruitment**, online **disengagement/deradicalisation**, and the way media publications fuel the **polarisation debate** through the way they report on topics such as far-right and Islamist extremism. Media is also mentioned as an important topic in relation to the **education of youth**. For instance, some respondents see the need for further investments in citizenship education and management of polarisation as strategies in the prevention of radicalisation:

> I think that it could be important to discuss the role of human rights education through different working groups as a tool to prevent radicalisation at any level.

And:

> Understanding ideology beyond it as text but through how it is mediated by young people and groups […] opens opportunities to intervene. […] experimenting with dialogue between polarised groups/positions [helps understand] the impact on the participants and their relationship to their 'own' points of view/ideology.

Last but not least, the **crime–terror nexus** (7 %) has been identified as an important cross-cutting topic. However, we seem to deal here with a typical buzzword: no suggestions are provided for a RAN-based approach to the theme.

5. Working methods and collaboration with other stakeholders

Furthermore, and next to the substantial themes ('What'), respondents have suggested various possible **methods and approaches** ('How') for RAN in the future. Respondents from virtually all Working Groups express the desire for continuing to address **multi-agency cooperation**. Not only do they express a wish to cooperate more closely

with other Working Groups within RAN, practitioners from all backgrounds believe we are stronger in the fight against radicalisation if different actors, agencies and organisations work together.

> I'd like to share we are happy to this joint work between EFRJ, RAN RVT and RAN Exit in responding to violent extremism and radicalisation through restorative justice approaches. I am sure we can find other connections with other working groups (with prison/ probation, youth, education, families and communities...).

Furthermore, some suggestions are given for the **set-up** of RAN meetings and events, for instance:

> Perhaps to address topics more practically oriented, maybe with some real-case scenarios, possible field visits etc. (theoretical/case study aspect 1st day, field trip 2nd day).

Moreover, there is quite a lot of interest in **working more closely together with policymakers**. RAN has facilitated this exchange in the past few years and, for example, organised a Policy & Practice event on 8 November in Madrid. Policymakers and researchers are mentioned as relevant partners by many practitioners in the survey. For instance, one respondent states that collaboration with policymakers has relevance because of the

> ... widening of the range of types of extremisms we face in Europe, evaluation and research of emerging trends, the impact of polarization on how we locally respond ...

Yet another respondent seems a bit more critical:

> Make sure that practitioners do not get obscured or silenced by policy makers and academics. All are important.

When different actors work together, however, **information sharing** can be a challenge. This was mentioned a total of eight times throughout the survey. Regarding the need for information, one of the respondents pointed to the opportunities of the digital era and stated that in understanding why vulnerable groups do what they do,

> ... using data mining and data analysis combined with strategic communication [...] could be a topic for RAN C&N and RAN YF&C.

Also, **evaluation** is identified as an important topic by practitioners. One of them indicates that we need

> ... mechanisms for feedback and evaluation; critical reflection of current activities and move away from anecdotal evidence to systematic research.

Moreover, some respondents made suggestions for the **composition of meetings and events** in general:

> I consider that engaging civil society and developing platforms for dialogue can [help] developing a culture of inclusion ...

Concluding, the need is stressed by several respondents to keep the focus of RAN **geo-balanced**, and even to reach **beyond the EU** boundaries, engaging with priority third countries. RAN must pay

> Equal attention to the situation in all EU-regions.

And:

> Taking into account the accumulative experience and expertise of the RAN project, it would be beneficial to further organise train-the-trainer sessions in EU Member States, so as to enhance dissemination of knowledge at national level, as well as to actively engage with countries outside the EU from the western Balkans region.

6. The idea box

Many participants have used the survey to share a wealth of tentative, often rudimentary ideas. Some of these ideas are raised by several respondents, although often referred to by using different words. Below, four sets of these ideas are listed, of which the relevance for RAN was assessed further during the Plenary.

1. Words such as **social exclusion**, **wealth inequality**, **deprived areas** and **poverty** imply that some respondents have the desire to explore how to deal with the apparent linkage between vulnerability to radicalisation and socioeconomic living circumstances. This issue could possibly be tackled by developing the right **community responses**.
2. Some respondents indicated a phenomenon described as **transgenerational extremism**. Others refer also to prevention work addressing **second-generation vulnerability**, and it is suggested by one respondent to look into the use of attachment theory in order to better understand long-term and short-term interpersonal relationships between humans.
3. Reference is being made by some respondents to parallel societies and subcultures: they point to **paramilitary groups**, (online) **communities of white sovereign citizens**, the **incel movements**, **gangs** and the existence of **supplementary schools**.
4. References to **Turkish nationalism** and the **influence of migration on local communities** indicate awareness about the fact that radicalisation is being fed by international developments constantly.