# EX POST PAPER
# RAN LOCAL:
# Local Action Plan Academy

## Summary

The prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation is best done at local or regional level. For this reason, a wide variety of local approaches are being used to counter and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism across Europe, each influenced by different local circumstances, governance structures and politics, resources, risk assessments and traditions. Many local and regional authorities are also in the process of developing a local or regional approach to the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation. The RAN LOCAL Academy in October targeted local coordinators of a municipality or region just beginning to develop a local CVE approach. It provided an opportunity to look into the different elements involved in starting, setting up and developing a local or regional action plan. The challenges, solutions, and tips and tricks for each step are described in this paper.

# The Local or Regional Action Plan

The overall goal of a local prevention strategy/action plan is to create a shared vison of preventing extremism and radicalisation, to provide clear mandate, and to allocate responsibility for specific interventions to actors within local and regional organisations and agencies. The vision forms the framework of the local multi-agency approach.

*Co-create*

Local or regional authorities are usually the initiators of a local action plan. We recommend that they involve other local organisations and agencies in its creation from the start. The process of co-creation, involving all relevant partners from a local strategy or action plan is inherently useful for diverse local government agencies with different mandates and responsibilities. Formulating together the reasons why action against extremism and radicalisation is necessary (the vision), will be a huge help later, when carrying out the local action plan or strategy.

*Political support*

Creating an effective and sound local strategy or action plan requires first and foremost willing and backing from the political leadership – alongside the requisite resources. In a next step, getting the right stakeholders around the table to discuss their individual responsibilities and mandate provides an opportunity to create a holistic approach, synergies of cooperation and unity of purpose.

*Prevention framework*

Most municipal strategies or action plans use some form of the prevention triangle, which categorises prevention into different intervention levels:
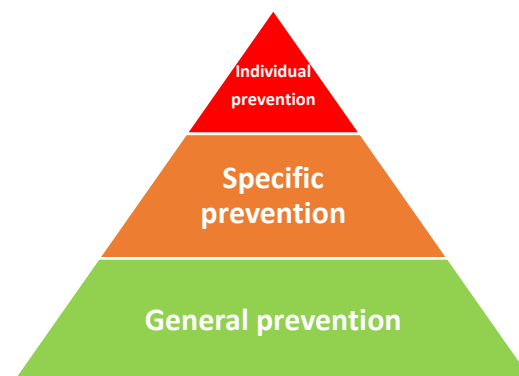


## General prevention – target audience is general society

General prevention is a crucial component and the foundation of most prevention intervention but the target group is broad-based. This level of general prevention primarily targets the development of social skills, involvement in society and a sense of responsibility among children and young people. Activities include the promotion of democracy, development of critical-thinking skills in educational settings, and the strengthening of general protective factors within society. Measures are designed to strengthen social resilience.

## Specific prevention – target audience is at-risk groups and individuals

At-risk groups are those who are vulnerable to radicalisation and at risk of recruitment for terrorist or extremist purposes. Typical initiatives targeting them include contact points for support services, mentors and parental coaches. The focus is on intervention in cases where there are clear indications that a person is at risk of being radicalised. This level does not work with broad target groups, unlike general preventive interventions, but with specific problems, groups and individuals. The objective is to reduce the number of people at risk of radicalisation

through activities that strengthen the individual's social skills and positive relations.

## Individual prevention – target audience is radicalised individuals

Prevention efforts are directed at individuals who are active in extremist environments and at risk of becoming violent or involved in other criminal activities. Typical initiatives involve preventative dialogue, rehabilitation after prison and exit strategies.[1]

# A local action plan for PVE/CVE: seven elements

A local or regional action plan or strategy should encompass at the very least:

1. *Regional analyses*
   Mapping the local or regional situation. What is the extent of the (potential) extremism problem? What are the risks? Are there already any signs of right/left/religiously inspired extremism within specific vulnerable groups? And, how urgent is it to take action?

2. *PVE/CVE strategy and goals*
   Description of the vision and reason why it is important to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism.

3. *Political Support[2]*
   The 'beliefs' behind the CVE strategy are mostly a political matter and should be decided and developed in conjunction with political representatives (mayor, prefect or leader of the local council). It might be a challenge to get this political support, but investing in it is crucial.

Without political support, finding funding for the local strategy and most importantly the interventions can be difficult.

4. *Definitions*
   Descriptions of the terms used to describe radicalisation, violent extremism and polarisation, as well as the different types of radicalisation and extremism that exist.

5. *Setting up the local network*
   The preventive approach needs to be tailored to the needs of the individuals who are susceptible to violent extremism. To do this, several local agencies and organisations with different types of expertise need to work together with local communities. A local network has multiple parts. Part comprises employees of the different organisations, like schools, police, mental health institutions and civil society organisations; this is the formal network. Furthermore, the network comprises inhabitants and communities from the municipality. The ex post paper 'How to create local networks?' offers tips and tricks regarding the creation of a local network.

6. *Conditions for multi-agency cooperation*
   a. Shared goals: description of the sub-goals on which all involved partners agree.
   b. Defined roles for all partners: description of specific roles, mandate and tasks per partner involved in local efforts to prevent radicalisation and counter violent extremism.

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[1] RAN Policy Paper Developing a local prevent framework and guiding principles, Magnus Ranstorp RAN CoE, 2016.

[2] Political support will be the specific focus of the RAN LOCAL meeting in September 2018.

c. <u>Coordination</u>: description of the process of cooperation and the overall coordinator.
d. <u>Information sharing:</u> description of which information will be shared, and an information-sharing agreement.

*7. Interventions*

A description of all interventions that will or could be used by all partners, from training programmes to individual programmes. For a more detailed description of these elements, see: ´<u>Local strategy: Elements of an effective local action plan to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism</u>'[3]

During the RAN LOCAL ACADAMY, we addressed three of these elements - those needed most when the process of drafting a local/regional action plan is launched.

1. **Local analyses: mapping the situation**
2. **Strategy and goals**
3. **Conditions for multi-agency cooperation**

This paper contains a brief description for each element, and an overview of the challenges, solutions and tips from local coordinators.

# Local analyses: mapping the situation

Before drafting the actual action plan, an analysis of the local context should be made. What is the extent of the (potential) extremism problem? What are the risks? Are there already any signs of right/left/religiously inspired extremism within specific vulnerable groups? How urgently is action needed? A successful local analysis lays the ground for a clear idea of the risk and protective factors at play, and where more investment is needed.

*Sources of information*

When looking for information for the local analyses, you may turn to several sources :

- Civil society
  Local meetings and outreach work are ideal opportunities to speak to civil society representatives. Discuss the risks of radicalisation and how they can contribute. Ask the community in which area the prevention work should be done.
- Frontline staff
  These people are out there on the ground; they see, know and act in response to a situation. They can provide lot of information about possible extremism and radicalisation in the local or regional setting.
- National data and overviews
  A lot of EU countries have national databases for social, geographical, crime and security data per region, city or village.

*Challenges and solutions*

- Mapping the situation costs time and money. When launching work on a local or regional strategy or action plan, reserve time and money to for analyses of the local context.

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[3] ´Local strategy: Elements of an effective local action plan to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism', Marije Meines, published in 'Resilient Cities; Countering Violent Extremism at Local Level', CIDOB September 2017.

- People may not feel comfortable sharing information. Prepare to explain why information is being collected, what will be done with it and how it will be handled. These conversations will also provide a good opportunity to explain the reasons why a specific local strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation is needed.

*Tips from local coordinators:*
- Focus on risk and protective factors within your community. This way you not only map the weaknesses within the local or regional context but also the strengths.
- Besides those potentially at risk, identify the good guys, those working from within the community. They can help you in your prevention work.
- Distinguish between what is useful for the type of radicalisation we face today, the type we faced yesterday, and the type we will face tomorrow.
- Focus on the behaviour of people when evaluating possible risks, not on what they are. Behaviour might be an indicator of risk.
- Visualise the local context analyses, if possible using tables and graphics – and maybe even a map of the city or region.

## Strategy and Goals

Alongside the description of the local context and demographics, the local CVE strategy should also provide insight into the beliefs behind the strategy. Why is it important in this specific local or regional context to prevent radicalisation and violent extremism? And who within the local community should be protected against what (for example the youth against recruitment, society against radicalised persons or polarisation, etc.)? How does the preventive approach fit within the local, regional or national setting?

*Challenges and solutions*
- When discussing the goal and reasons for the local strategy, involve the partners from your approach. This may be troublesome and time consuming, but if an approach is to be effective, it is important to involve all relevant actors. Make use of cooperation management theories when starting this process. This will help you to have and keep an overview of what you are doing and why.
- Sometimes using the term 'radicalisation' might lead to misunderstanding. Depending on the local situation, not using this term, but instead referring to 'social inclusion', 'cohesion' or 'local safeguarding' might work better.
- Make sure for with every goal you select, it is clear whether it is a general or a specific goal, and what kind of prevention you are aiming for: general, specific or individual prevention.

*Tips from local coordinators*
- The local action plan or strategy that you are developing needs to be developed for the whole city, and not just for you. Terrorism and violent radicalisation are global problems, with local repercussions. Understand that almost everybody already has a view on the subject.
- Bottom-up commitment and appreciation of your strategy and thus the vision and goal is important. Work with all your partners from both your formal and informal networks to formulate the shared formulation of the strategy and goals. This way you create ownership of

the strategy among all the partners involved.

- Sometimes it feels as if efforts to prevent radicalisation absorb all (local)authorities' funding. Have this in mind when talking to other policy fields, like employment, integration, youth involvement, hate speech etc. Consider sharing funds as well as responsibilities and tasks with them.

- Maintain a critical approach. Don't incite radicalisation by for example not including all kinds of violent extremism and radicalisation in your plan, and only talking about one kind. Also stay critical of your own approach. Monitor and evaluate. This is best done in a climate where this is valued and not feared. Local, regional or national politicians can help to create such a climate.

## Conditions for multi-agency cooperation

**Shared goals & defining roles for all partners**
Shared goals on a general level should be described in the beliefs or introductory part of the strategy. The sub-goals can be described when listing the interventions that may be carried out by the partners of the multi-agency cooperation. In the strategy plan, there should be a description of all partners involved in the local effort to prevent radicalisation and counter violent extremism. For each partner, their specific role, mandate and task regarding the prevention of radicalisation should be described. It is best to develop this part of the strategy plan together with all needed partners. This provides valuable insights into each other's working processes, mandates and options.

*Challenges and solutions*

- It is a challenge to describe the reason why the region or city should invest in the prevention of radicalisation in a concrete way. Try to define the shared goal as concretely and tangibly as possible, such as '*we want to prevent our youngsters from being recruited by extremists*' or '*we want to make our society resilient against radicalisation*'.

- It is a challenge to make sure you have at least the most important partners in the prevention of radicalisation on board when developing the vision and goals of your strategy. Organise several brainstorming sessions with these partners on the parts in which they need to be involved. And be clear and transparent about why you want them involved in this process. Try to not only tick the box '*involving partners',* but find a way to really create ownership and get valuable input from them!

*"We had a huge struggle to get everyone on board. It started out as a 100 % antiterrorism strategy. Most money went to the police. They went to other partners to engage them as it was obvious they needed them. But the partners did not want to be affiliated with anti-terrorism strategy as such. They did want to be involved with social cohesion and safeguarding citizens. You need shared goals and the right wording to achieve it."*

*Tips from local coordinators*
- Create ownership and engagement, write down the names of your partners involved in the action plan, instead of the name of their organisation.

- Make sure you listen to the interest and doubts of your partners about getting involved. Find out under what conditions they want in order to get involved!

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*"Only after we were clear about the focus on all kinds of violent extremism did we get more interest of our partners. Partners for example wanted to become more involved in tackling far-right extremism and also violent Islamism but were afraid to stigmatise Muslims and therefore hesitated to become involved."*

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- Create a win-win situation. Seduce your partners by translating the topic into their area of interest and expertise.
- Terminology and language are very important! Use words that people can relate to in your local context.
  - For example, use the word 'safeguarding'.
  - Stay away from harsh security terms, as well as religious terms.
  - Don't use terms that push communities away if you want them on board.

**Coordination & information sharing**

Multi-agency cooperation needs coordination. In a partnership between many, only one can be the coordinator. This coordinator should be able to count on their partners' acceptance of their coordinating role. The general working arrangements – those that make the cooperation possible – should also be overseen by the coordinator. The description of the process of cooperation should be part of the (internal) local strategy plan. To be able to discuss tailored interventions and actions regarding targeted persons, it is crucial to be able to share information between employees of organisations about at-risk or radicalised persons and his or her environment. To assess whether someone/group of persons might be radicalising, information from different persons and angles need to be shared. To discuss tailored interventions and actions for specific individuals, it is crucial that information is shared with the different partners from the multi-agency partnership, for example on the person him/herself and his or her environment. In short: an effective local or regional strategy or action plan can only function when information on at-risk persons can be exchanged.

*Challenges & Solutions*
- A major barrier to the effective prevention of radicalisation and violent extremism is a lack of information sharing between different organisations. Schools, police, youth workers, health care organisations, family support organisations and child support workers have personal information that they may not share. For sharing to take place on a need-to-know-basis, possible set up an information sharing agreement and protocol.
- Take inspiration from existing information-sharing agreements. They are likely to be in place for partners working together on other topics, such as truancy, or indicators of child neglect. Find the persons who developed and signed these and ask them to help you to set up the new information-sharing agreement and protocol.

*Tips from local coordinators*

- Coordination very much depends on the individuals involved; trust and chemistry play an important role. Invest in them. As coordinator, you should facilitate this trust and goodwill between the partners.
- If partners do not wish to cooperate, you could try 'stepping on their toes' – gently provoke them, and when they say: 'Hey, that's my job', you ask them to join you.

*"We could not share information with organisations that were not clear about what they would do with the information they got from us. We reckoned that it would be the same for the other organisations. So we sat down with them and talked through why each of us needs what information and what would be done with this information once shared. That helped."*

- Trust leads to information-sharing! Practitioners hide behind confidentiality, but it is vital to share and therefore to create something safe.
- Use sociogrammes – these are a way to visualise all the practitioners who work together on one relationship, and to define the type of relationship. They can provide great insights.
- Describe how the shared information will be used and what happens or could happen with the information once shared. Frontline practitioners who rely on a trust-based relationship with people at risk or their peers and family will in particular be reluctant to share information without knowing what will happen to it.
- Make a list of the types of information that each partner has and the rules for why,

when and how they may share this information.
- General rules that all partners in the information-sharing agreement must adhere to will also help organisations and their employees to share information when necessary, and when appropriate.
- Agree on an evaluation or monitoring mechanism about the process of sharing (regularly ask questions such as: is the right information shared on time? Is the shared information handled according to the agreement).
- All partners need to trust each other when sharing information. Invest in creating and maintaining this trust.

Further reading:
- RAN policy paper 'Developing a local prevent framework and guiding principles', November 2016
- RAN EXIT ex post paper 'Exit Work in a multi-agency setting', November 2016
- RAN LOCAL ex post paper 'How to create local networks?', February 2016
- RAN Health & Social Care ex post paper 'Handbook on how to set up a multi-agency structure that includes the health and social care sectors?', May 2016
- RAN LOCAL ex post paper 'Cooperation between local authorities and schools in multi-agency interventions and the prevention of radicalisation', February 2017