



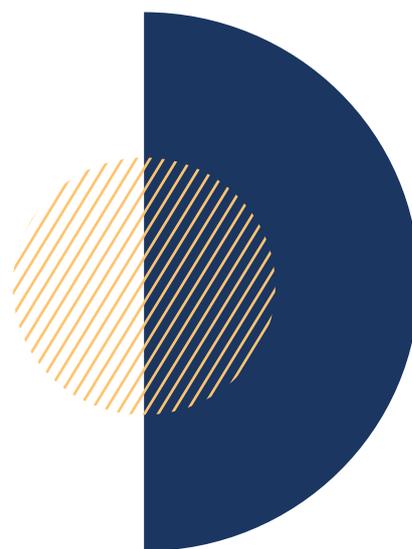
European
Commission



REPORTS

of the project-
based
collaborations
on prevention
of radicalisation

LED IN 2019

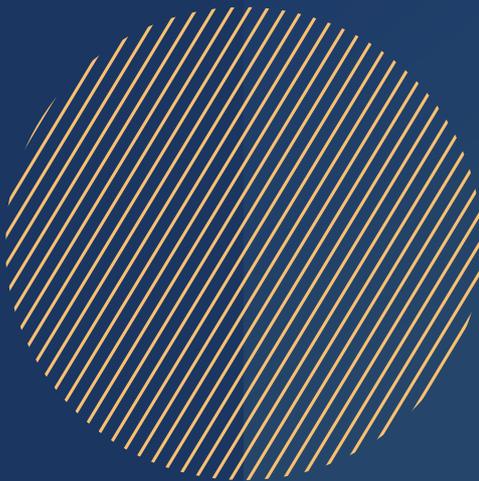


*Migration and
Home Affairs*

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION



General introduction

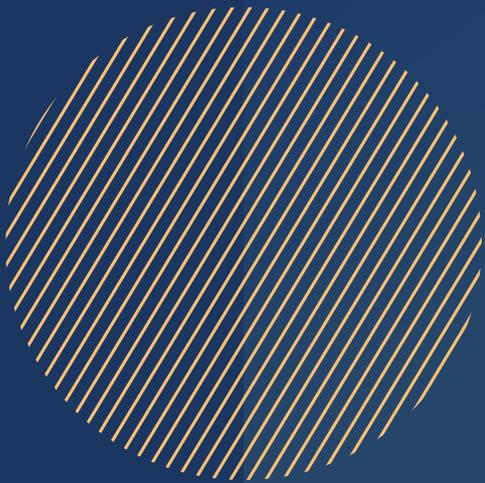
In its final report of 18 May 2018, the high-level Commission expert group on radicalisation (HLCEG-R) recommended creating a new collaborative format: 'project-based collaborations', led by Member States with the support of the Commission.

The purpose and added value of project-based collaborations was to allow like-minded Member States to collaborate through a series of meetings to produce specific deliverables that helped implement better policy responses.

Following input received from the Member States, the Commission organised in 2019 seven projects with various formats: study visits, workshops or combination of study visits and workshops.

Each group working on a project validated a final report with guidance and recommendations. This document compiles the final reports validated by the Member States.

NATIONAL SUPPORT TO LOCAL LEVEL



National support to local level

I. Introduction

The **overall objective** of the project is to explore structures and processes set up in the participating Member States to support local administrations in a multi-agency collaboration.

The participating countries met four times in 2019, and the recommendations below are built on the experience of national and local representatives from participating Member States.

The following first recommendations should be used as a basis for further discussion in the Network of Prevent Policy Makers and in the Steering Board on Radicalisation, and they could be further developed. The aim is that Member States can use them in strategic discussions before setting up prevention measures at national level, and to further develop their ongoing prevention work.

II. Participating Member States

Sweden took the initiative to develop this project, and co-led it with **Denmark** and the **Netherlands**. Other Member States showed an interest in the topic (**Spain, Italy, Finland and Belgium**) and participated as ‘active observers’.

III. Main insights

1) NATIONAL SUPPORT TO THE LOCAL LEVEL

Violent extremism is both a security issue and a social problem. Coordinating and implementing prevention work should reflect this complexity, balancing the two dimensions. If a country decides to create a national prevention structure, it needs to be built on this understanding, and its core tasks as well as identification of the ministries to be involved should reflect this understanding.

It's important to conduct a proper assessment before deciding under which ministry to establish a national structure for coordinating prevention work. This decision can make the difference in terms of the tools available to conduct Preventing-Countering Violent Extremism (PVE/CVE) activities, including tools to support the local level. The decision can have an impact on how the role and the purpose of the prevention work is perceived at local level; what kind of support the local level can expect to receive; and on the capacity to cooperate with stakeholders.

Background and examples. It is important to have a national structure responsible for defining and coordinating prevention work. The choice of setting up this structure can have an impact on the level of collaboration and engagement between national and local level.

In *Sweden*, (the ‘Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism’) the Ministry of Justice is responsible for action to prevent violent extremism. In the *Netherlands*, (the ‘National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism’) the Ministry of Security and Justice is responsible. In *Denmark*, (the ‘Danish Centre for Prevention of Extremism’) the Ministry of Immigration and Integration is responsible, with the security aspect handled by the national police and the Intelligence and Security Service (therefore the Ministry of Justice).

All three countries have developed a national support structure (‘Centre’ or ‘National Coordinator’) to support municipalities, either as a national agency or as an independent unit within a national agency. Over the past years, the Danish and Swedish national authorities have changed the ministry responsible for prevention measures against violent extremism, and this had an impact on the work in different ways. In Sweden, the work was connected to safeguarding democracy between 2010-2017, but since 2018, it is connected to crime policy and crime prevention, which relates to the work that practitioners and local administrations already conduct in the local multi-agency settings.

The decision to establish a national centre to coordinate prevention work and support the local level is just one of the possible choices that a country can make. Indeed, *Belgium* and *Spain* opted to establish a different kind of central structure.

In any case, it is crucial to have a common understanding - both at national and at local level - of which phenomena the P-CVE activities aim to prevent. Identification of the forms of extremism to focus on at national and local level may vary from country to country, which is illustrated even in the different names chosen for each national centre.

2) CLARITY ON THE ROLES AND RESPONSABILITIES IN COOPERATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL BENEFITS THE LOCAL LEVEL

Prevention of violent extremism involves different ministries and different national agencies and authorities. Although each has specific competences and responsibilities, cooperation needs to be established in a well-structured way. The municipalities need to have a clear understanding of the national mechanisms of cooperation, and in this context, clarification of the roles, competences and responsibilities in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism is an important first step for both the national and the local level.

A clear legal framework helps to better define the different roles and tasks and to work in a multi-agency setting. National and local strategies and action plans can serve as unifying documents for all stakeholders, bringing clarity on the forms of cooperation and responsibilities, and on the financial support that will be provided to conduct P-CVE activities. When drafting these key documents, it is therefore important to involve the main national and local stakeholders in the drafting process from the beginning.

Background and examples. Preventing violent extremism involves engaging in a broad set of activities, from general initiatives such as work in schools, to specific initiatives such as targeted outreach to specific individuals in prison. The roles and competences in the prevention work of all agencies and of the police must be clear, both at national level and at local level.

In *Sweden*, one of the tasks for the national centre is to coordinate the prevention work. A network of the main national agencies involved has been established, and the government

has tasked several national agencies to develop guidelines to support first-line practitioners in their work (staff working in prisons, teachers, social workers, police etc.).

The *Spanish* National Strategic Plan to fight Violent Radicalisation (PEN-LCRV), which is currently being updated, distinguishes different levels in the administration. The central inter-ministerial body under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior is the highest national authority and is tasked with coordinating local activities. There are also multi-sectoral groups at municipality, province, and autonomous-community level.

In *Finland*, the national action plan to prevent violent extremism and radicalisation is drafted in cooperation with different local and national authorities, civil society and relevant communities. These stakeholders are also members of the national network that coordinates and supports implementation of the national action plan.

3) NATIONAL MAPPING OF HOTBEDS OF RADICALISATION AND SUPPORT TO THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

As a starting point, it is crucial to have a national map of the hotbeds of radicalisation and violent extremism, especially if a legal framework and a national strategy/action plan are not in place yet. The map will provide the knowledge to understand which violent extremist groups are active in a country, and in which municipalities violent extremism is more of concern, creating a solid base for further action.

The national authorities should be responsible for carrying out this mapping work, taking into account also the information received from the local level. As a follow-up, national authorities should prioritise relevant support to the municipalities that most need it.

The mapping work can be conducted in different ways, collecting different types of information (including information on the local online dimension of radicalisation) and factual elements from the main stakeholders. The national authorities should regularly repeat the exercise, as violent extremism is a constantly changing phenomenon. This will also help the local level adapt to emerging challenges and avoid blind spots in their prevention work. It is also important that, in addition to contributing to the national mapping work, the local level can get support in conducting additional local mapping, which can be used as a platform for its work.

Background and examples. It can be extremely useful to complement a national threat assessment with a geographical map of the hotbeds of radicalisation. A proper map will increase awareness of the phenomenon both at national and local level, and will help prioritise action properly, avoiding a waste of money and energy, and helping to put in place targeted measures. For bigger countries, autonomous regions, or areas with a high population density, the mapping work will probably be more complex.

The *United Kingdom* carries out well-structured mapping work once a year, providing a platform for the most affected areas or municipalities to apply for funding to adopt local prevention measures. The exercise is conducted taking into account quantitative data (e.g. the number of arrests for terrorism in a specific municipality), a qualitative assessment (a multidisciplinary and cross-government assessment conducted by different experts) and specific 'soft security' information coming from the local level. For a number of reasons (including the aim to avoid stigmatisation), the results of the mapping are not made public. The national government is able to conduct peer reviews to assess the measures put in place in the critical municipalities. After the map is created, it is crucial to build reciprocal trust

between central and local level. The local level must have confidence in the assessment process that has resulted in identifying a specific municipality as critical. The central level must also have confidence in the capacity of the municipality to develop a strategy that recognises local variations in risk and threat, allowing scope to implement a local interpretation of national policy.

Sweden maps hotbeds of radicalisation and Denmark does to a certain extent. A national mapping of vulnerable urban areas has been done in Denmark in connection to crime prevention and dealing with integration issues. This mapping has formed the basis of a project carried out by the Danish Centre in selected municipalities mapping both challenges and resources in connection with preventing extremism.

In the *Netherlands*, the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism conducts national threat assessments three times per year, and makes them public. A process is ongoing to institutionalise and better structure the national mechanism to provide financial support to the local level in their prevention work. In Denmark, the Security and Intelligence Service conducts and publishes a yearly terror threat assessment. In Sweden, the Security Service, the National Defence Radio Establishment and the Swedish Armed Forces conduct and publish a yearly terror threat assessment.

In *Finland*, the threat assessment has been published regularly since 2013. It gives an overview of how the threat has evolved and includes more specific analysis (e.g. on the trend of violent extremism in the schools). It is a public document.

If a municipality is designated as a hotbed of radicalisation, the local administration will probably need support from the national authorities in developing prevention measures and in dealing with pressure and expectations coming from media and from the general public. The local administration may need support in developing a communication strategy to explain measures taken locally to conduct programmes, for instance to reintegrate returnees. It may also need support in mapping local violent extremist propaganda online. Some local administrations have experienced threats from conspiracy theories spread on digital platforms by far-right extremists.

Agile prevention measures should be put in place. Violent extremism and terrorism are constantly changing phenomena, and it is crucial to take prompt action and to adjust prevention work accordingly at local, national and international level. It is important to have 'an ear to the ground' in order to get an overall picture of the problems, and to be able to understand the local variations. Regular media monitoring reports can be a helpful tool. In *Sweden*, the national centre provides this service to municipalities and other bodies. The Swedish Defence Research Agency has the task to map and analyse violent extremist propaganda online.

4) SUPPORT LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS IN DEVELOPING A MULTI-AGENCY APPROACH

National authorities should support municipalities in dealing with the challenges coming from violent extremism and should help establish a multi-agency mechanism for local cooperation.

When providing support to the local administrations in using a multi-agency setting, it can be useful if the national authorities provide methods and guidelines, as well as an overview of the legal framework applicable to local cooperation between different stakeholders.

It is important to put in place a legal framework if it is completely lacking, and to develop the existing framework if needed, shaping it in a way that will make it responsive to both national and local needs. As the revision process can be complex and can take some time, in a short-term it's important to be practical, and to conduct the prevention work making the best use of the existing legal framework.

In some countries, experience shows that it can be extremely useful to build prevention work on existing structures, either connecting the prevention of violent extremism to crime prevention or to the prevention of a range of social problems. Indeed, in some countries, the municipalities may already have multi-agency cooperation mechanisms in place, e.g. between schools, social services and the police, and these mechanisms could also be used as platforms for starting cooperation in initiatives to prevent violent extremism.

Background and examples. Prevention work at local level must be conducted jointly by several actors: schools, social services and the police are some of the main actors to be included in a multi-agency approach. As these stakeholders have different tasks and responsibilities, a legal framework regulates their cooperation and information sharing. Municipalities could face practical barriers such as the lack of clear guidelines on how to collaborate, or the lack of a practical inter-agency cooperation for structural or cultural reasons.

In several Member States, adopting a prevention action plan is not mandatory for municipalities, meaning that the initiative to adopt preventive action in many cases depends on the willingness of local authorities, and on the extent to which they themselves have identified problems with radicalisation and the need for support.

The national level should encourage, support and empower the local level in putting in place prevention activities and provide support in defining the roles for the different local actors. If needed, the national level could provide local training for staff working in a multi-agency setting, as this can create a platform for further local cooperation. However, it must be clear that without political backing, and without financial support (when needed), no municipality can build a thorough prevention approach. In the *United Kingdom*, the adoption by the municipality of a proper action plan on P-CVE, and the nomination of a local coordinator are preconditions to receive financial support from the national level: this mechanism encourages the local level to take the necessary steps with the aim of receiving support in conducting prevention work. The legislation in place in the United Kingdom – The Prevent Duty – also plays a key role, including on providing support to local administrations.

In some countries, prevention mechanisms/activities at local level have been built on existing multi-agency cooperation mechanisms. This is what happened in *Denmark* with the Info Houses (built on the existing 'SSP' – School, Social Services and Police), in the *Netherlands* with the Safety Houses, and in *Finland* with the multi-professional anchor teams.

5) INFORMATION SHARING IN A MULTI-AGENCY SETTING

Information sharing among stakeholders is one of the most sensitive issues concerning cooperation in a local multi-agency setting for preventing violent extremism and terrorism. The national authorities should provide guidance to national agencies and local

administrations. Without information exchange, it is complicated to put in place local cooperation, for example between the police, the social services, schools, the healthcare sector and others, or to have a shared overview of the specific challenges.

The lack of a proper legal framework regulating this specific aspect can be a challenge. If a legal framework is in place, it is important that both the national and the local authorities have a shared understanding of the boundaries and the opportunities under the legal framework. In some countries, the police and other stakeholders experience that legislation sometimes can constitute a difficulty in engaging in cooperation on individuals at risk (e.g. between social and healthcare authorities and the police).

Background and examples. *Denmark* and the *United Kingdom* have a legal framework that plays a key role to facilitating information exchange between the different stakeholders cooperating in a multi-agency mechanism.

In *Denmark*, Section 115 of the Administration of Justice Act provides a foundation for the Regional Info Houses. This enables the police, municipalities, the Danish Prison and Probation Service and the health services to exchange information so that they can deal with concerns relating to extremism, radicalisation and individuals travelling to conflict zones.

The *United Kingdom* strengthened its legislative framework in 2015. The Prevent Duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 requires all specified authorities to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. Local authorities and their partners therefore have a core role to play in countering terrorism at local level and helping to safeguard individuals at risk of radicalisation.

6) THE NATIONAL LEVEL MUST ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH MUNICIPALITIES

A regular dialogue and knowledge exchange between the relevant national authorities, local administrations and practitioners is crucial to pool experience, knowledge and views. National support for local prevention work must be built on local needs by taking a bottom-up approach.

It is important to support the local level in establishing a network of local coordinators/municipalities, as sharing experiences can be extremely useful, and can help draw the attention of the national level to the challenges and needs faced by the municipalities. A network of municipalities can be a valuable framework for establishing peer learning among local actors. This network can have a time-limited or issue-specific mandate. Supporting the dialogue with associations of municipalities can be a useful way for the national level to achieve a bottom-up approach.

Background and examples. Violent extremism and the radicalisation process develop at local level, affecting lives of other people and challenging local administrations to provide responses. Some municipalities may have their own proposals to develop prevention work, others may have already started this work before a national initiative is put in place.

Through regular dialogue, national authorities can increase their awareness of local needs. A national action plan for preventing violent extremism should reflect the needs and challenges of the local level.

In *Denmark*, the government took the initiative to discuss with all municipalities before it developed a national action plan in 2009.

In *Finland*, when framing a new action plan in 2019, the Interior Ministry initiated a dialogue with municipalities and local organisations with the aim of reflecting their needs in the plan.

In *Sweden*, the National Centre for Preventing Violent Extremism has created a network of the municipalities more affected by violent extremism.

In *Spain*, collaboration between the national level and the federation of municipalities and provinces is in place.

7) SUPPORT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN PROVIDING TRAINING AND DEVELOPING OPERATIONAL TOOLS AND METHODS

Upgrading the skills of the professionals working at local level is important, and national authorities should play a key role in this.

The national level should take the initiative to support local authorities in mapping and analysing existing tools and measures used in prevention work, also with the aim of developing new methods if needed.

Background and examples. More than the lack of knowledge and resources, the lack of experience at local level on how to handle cases of violent extremism can be the real challenge.

As the prevention of violent extremism is a quite new field (even though it is an old problem), there may be a need for method development. National authorities should engage with local authorities in developing new tools if needed.

In *Denmark*, the national centre has developed a Risk and Resource Assessment Model, with the aim of ensuring a consistent approach across municipalities and a common language for handling concerns at local level. Denmark has also developed a concept for municipal action plans on the prevention of extremism. One of the main goals of the Danish Centre is to provide counselling to municipalities. It provides further support through national standardised mentor training, training for professionals on online prevention of extremism, and knowledge synthesis to provide a standard to guide strategy and underpin the quality of research.

In *Belgium*, joint training sessions are organised for the police and other stakeholders at a very early stage, with the aim of forging constructive collaboration in a multi-agency setting.

In *Spain*, *Finland* and *Denmark*, handbooks have been published and provided to the stakeholders involved in P-CVE activities. This includes handbooks on specific topics, e.g. how to set up cooperation with civil society organisations.

8) A CENTRAL KNOWLEDGE HUB TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL LEVEL: GREATER DIALOGUE BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND LOCAL PRACTITIONERS

National authorities have an important role in supporting local authorities regarding access to a well-organised and easily usable source of knowledge to prevent violent extremism. They should collect, organise, study and select, summarise and circulate key resources on P-

CVE. National authorities should also identify gaps and local needs in terms of research, prioritising them and producing knowledge to respond to those needs. Municipalities should also be active in producing knowledge on radicalisation and violent extremism, and in reporting the results to the national authorities. Networks of researchers can be extremely useful.

National authorities should step up dialogue between policy, practice and research. It is important to stimulate research into the methods used in prevention work, and to explore the scope for using already evaluated existing tools. For local practitioners working on specific prevention measures, it can be valuable to compare their experience with research results, and get support from researchers in trying new methods, evaluating them, and if they show good results, in implementing them.

Background and examples. Nowadays many researchers from different fields and disciplines are involved in research into violent extremism. Interest in this subject has increased exceptionally in recent years. In addition to researchers, several other stakeholders now produce analyses and studies on violent extremism. However, literature reviews show that the research on terrorism and violent extremism is more theoretical than empirical: this creates a gap between research conducted and the specific needs of local practitioners.

It is extremely useful to have one national entity in charge of compiling and sharing research findings and information. Short summaries of research findings and evaluations can help local actors develop their prevention work. Spreading knowledge on violent extremism together with initiatives on how to work on prevention can in itself also become a prevention tool against polarisation, as this shows that the national level takes the issue seriously.

In *Denmark*, the national centre has summarised and analysed research on violent extremism and circulated it to the local level. As practitioners are the end-users of knowledge, *Denmark* is working to facilitate exchanges between researchers and practitioners with the aim of 'translating' the knowledge into the practitioners' 'language', and shaping it to their needs.

In *Finland*, the network of researches is a member of the national network preventing violent radicalisation and extremism. Researchers regularly participate in network meetings and the latest developments from academia are shared.

Sweden is active in creating opportunities for exchanges between local practitioners and academia. In 2019, the national centre arranged national conferences and smaller workshops with the aim of bridging gaps and improving dialogue between practitioners and researchers.

9) SUPPORT LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN COOPERATING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Civil society organisations (CSOs), including faith communities, play an important role in prevention work. To identify reliable partners among CSOs, the local level needs support from national agencies in the form of knowledge and guidelines. Dialogue with CSOs should always be encouraged by the national level, keeping in mind that a vetting process is needed before starting any form of cooperation, as there may be organisations that aren't considered as reliable partners for cooperation at local and national level. In some Member

States, national agencies provide state grants for CSOs. Local administrations can also provide funds to run CSO activities at local level, for example youth work.

Background and examples. Auditing and assessing civil society organisations and their work is important, but it can be a challenge for the municipalities to conduct a proper assessment, and they may need support from national agencies.

In *Denmark*, the national centre provides support to municipalities in the form of a handbook on cooperation with civil society organisations.

In *Sweden*, the national centre has signed a Civil Society Public Partnership with a civil society organisation in order to provide support by setting up a telephone line for people worried about a family member or a friend. CSOs are an important complement to municipalities, and the support line has been established with the aim to benefit local prevention work.

10) AN IMPORTANT AREA FOR FURTHER DEVELOPING COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND THE LOCAL LEVEL: THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN REINTEGRATION WORK

The work to reintegrate individuals convicted for terrorism, returned foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) and their family members and to reintegrate other individuals involved in violent extremist organisations is a challenge that can only be properly tackled with well-functioning cooperation between national and local authorities.

Work conducted as part of exit programmes shows that continuous development is crucial, and that it is paramount to guarantee continuity between initiatives conducted at national level and initiatives conducted at local level during the different phases of these programmes.

The role that the national level has to play to support the local level in this area is key. Here too, a local multi-agency setting is needed.

The national level should support the local level with guidelines that define the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. As rehabilitation and reintegration are based on cooperation between many different stakeholders, such as the prison and probation service, the police and social services, in this specific area too the national level should support the local level in mapping and analysing available measures and in identifying the gaps. Cooperation with civil society organisations is also important.

Background and examples. Close cooperation between the national and the local level, and between social services, the prison and probation service and the police, are prerequisites to effectively implement reintegration measures and programmes. Some Member States involve civil society organisations, others do not, and have (for example) entrusted the police to lead action on these issues.

The *Netherlands* has developed a model for cooperation between prison, probation and municipality and started implementing the model in April 2019. 'Team TER' is a specialised reintegration initiative within the Dutch Probation Service that takes part in local Safety House meetings. The multidisciplinary consultation table 'MAR' is an operational meeting to assess and plan the re-socialisation of detainees with a terrorist background, considering also the related social risks. The meeting is coordinated centrally by the Custodial Institutions

Agency of the Netherlands, which invites the probation service and the municipality concerned, as the latter is responsible for the individual after detention. The municipality is involved in drafting the individual reintegration plan from the very beginning of the detention period.

As in any other area of prevention work, it is crucial to have clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved, as at the local level could be reluctant to receive individuals who have been involved in terrorist or violent extremist activities, making it difficult to put in place re-integration programmes.

Civil society organisations can be important partners. In *Sweden*, organisations can apply for state grants for exit programmes. The organisation Fryshuset has developed and worked with the programme 'Exit', established in 1998, which gives support to individuals who want to leave the far-right extremist environment.

Concerning returned children, in the *Netherlands* the Council for Child Protection (RvdK) checks whether support is already being provided to the minor, and if necessary decides to open a council inquiry. Care and safety partners draw up an individual treatment plan, and a national multidisciplinary advisory team supports the local case consultation. The central level plays a key role in forging constructive cooperation with the local level, as sometimes a municipality can be reluctant to cooperate.

The municipalities will probably need support to put in place a proper communication strategy with the media and with the public on this topic, as the risk of stigmatisation is high. In the *Netherlands*, the national level provides support to the local level for strategic communication related to returnees.