

15/01/2020

CONCLUSION PAPER

RAN event - Digital study visit to Canada

23-24 November 2020

Digital Study Visit to Canada

Key outcomes

The RAN digital study visit to Canada (23-24 November) brought together 35 European and Canadian practitioners working in local authorities, law enforcement and security agencies, prison and probation services, and social work. The aim of this study visit was to explore and exchange challenges and lessons learned in the field of preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE). A particular focus was on understanding the P/CVE landscape in Canada and on discussing instruments and tools to divert and/or disengage individuals from violent extremism in the Canadian context. The highlights of the discussions and recommendations are listed in this conclusion paper, with amongst others:

- Practitioners from Canada and the EU could benefit from more **in-depth exchange on relevant P/CVE phenomena**, such as the Incel movement, (returning) foreign terrorist fighters and violent right-wing extremist movements. More context on these topics is briefly outlined in the first section of this paper. The second section dives deeper into the following outcomes.
- Practice in both Canada and the EU shows that **multi-agency working versus working in silos** remains a complex issue. Trust between all stakeholders needs to be established in order for them to create reliable communication channels and procedures to tailor interventions to a case with all relevant information.
- **Case assessment tools** and “simulation exercises” between law enforcement actors and psychosocial/community sectors can: 1) help to create a holistic picture of a (radicalised) individual; 2) create a mutual understanding; 3) help to separate assumptions from facts; and 4) do justice to the non-linear, complex and rapidly evolving situations that practitioners work in.

This paper is meant for practitioners who work in a multi-professional context of P/CVE who are interested in learning more about the working methods and P/CVE landscape in Canada. A list of inspiring organisations and initiatives can be found in the last section of this paper.

This paper first briefly introduces the context and phenomena in the P/CVE landscape in Canada. The second section outlines the challenges and recommendations, focusing on multi-agency work and case assessment tools. Last, this paper outlines a list of inspiring practices in Canada and opportunities for follow-up exchange.

Context and highlights of the discussion

The P/CVE landscape in Canada

The September 11, 2001 attacks against the United States constituted the starting point for Canadian programming on P/CVE. The shift towards multisectoral prevention in terms of public policy officially began in 2017, with the creation of the Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence (Canada Centre). This psychosocial and preventive turn was completed with the launch in 2018 of the new National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence (Government of Canada, 2018). Since 2018, the Canada Centre has funded via its Community Resilience Fund various programmes, projects and laws that aim at reducing extremist radicalisation and violence within Canada. This has resulted in the set-up of organisations and programmes such as the Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence (CPN-PREV), OPV, SHIFT, ETA and Project Re-SET. The Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV) was established by the city of Montreal in 2017 as well. These organisations, all working towards developing excellence in P/CVE, hosted the RAN virtual study visit to Canada for European practitioners.

European and Canadian practitioners see similarities and differences when it comes to the phenomena and challenges they are facing in the context of P/CVE. Four examples are outlined below.

The Incel movement

In Canada, violent misogyny is now designated as a form of ideological extremism. This happened a day after an (alleged) individual of the Incel movement was charged with terrorism offences in 2020 for the first time ⁽¹⁾. Incels describe themselves as “involuntary celibates” and adhere to an ideology of violent misogyny. Incels surface throughout online forums since around the mid-2010s and advocate for violence against women, influencing over 50 attacks in the United States and Canada. Incel members disseminate their beliefs through online forums such as reddit, and it is reported that members have been known to also foster ultraconservative alt-right beliefs. The stabbing in February 2020 is the most recent amongst more Incel-claimed attacks (the first two took place in April 2018 and June 2019) ⁽²⁾.

Violent right-wing extremism

Violent right-wing extremism is on the rise in both Canada and EU Member States. In Canada, for example, the government designated white supremacist groups Blood & Honour and Combat 18 as terrorist groups in 2019 ⁽³⁾. This year, the Institute for Strategic Dialogue published a report claiming that over 6 600 violent right-wing social media pages/channels/accounts have been linked to individuals and groups from Canada. Also, the United States’ protests against systemic racism have had a large impact on the recent rise of violent right-wing extremist sentiments, mainly online ⁽⁴⁾.

⁽¹⁾ See: [Teenage boy charged in Canada's first 'incel' terror case](#).

⁽²⁾ More information on the P/CVE landscape in Canada can be found [here](#).

⁽³⁾ See: [Government of Canada Announces Initiatives to Address Violent Extremist and Terrorist Content Online](#).

⁽⁴⁾ If you are interested in the entire report, take a look at: Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2020), [An Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada](#).

(Returning) foreign terrorist fighters

European Member States as well as Canada face the issue of returning foreign terrorist fighters. According to officials, there are approximately 250 high-risk individuals with a connection to Canada who have travelled overseas to participate in terrorist activities ⁽⁵⁾. Compared to that, most European countries face a significantly higher number, with a total of around 5 000 EU citizens who have travelled abroad ⁽⁶⁾. Canada especially faces the challenge of repatriating, rehabilitating and reintegrating women and children. They have put a coordination plan in place and are now waiting for the return of foreign terrorist fighters. Just as in many EU countries, it is an ongoing debate with different calls for either measures to repatriate Canadian Daesh fighters or others who are not in favour of government action.

Multi-agency work and information sharing

As Canada is a large country with a comparatively small population, it can be harder for practitioners to connect and exchange with counterparts and to reach citizens to share the availability of prevention and intervention offers. Connecting with European practitioners to exchange and learn from each other is therefore a valuable opportunity to exchange challenges and information. The importance of gathering all relevant actors, when discussing cases of radicalisation leading to violence, is recognised by both European and Canadian practitioners. This topic has been discussed during the meeting more in depth. The key outcomes of this discussion have been listed below, focusing on the Canada-wide mapping of P/CVE collaborations as well as ways to get everyone at the table to discuss cases in order to prevent violent extremism.

Key outcomes and recommendations

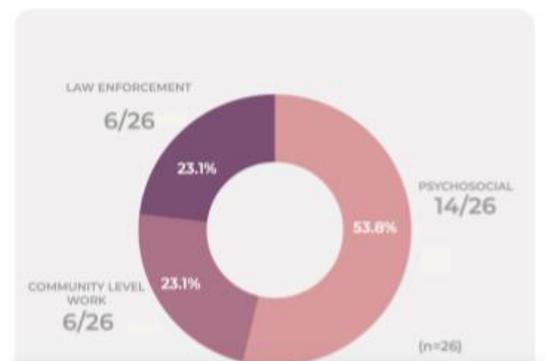
Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence

The CPN-PREV offers a variety of tools and resources for practitioners available on their [website](#). Moreover, it offers comprehensive training programmes that range from specialised short content (1-2 hours) to flexible training programmes up to 3 days. More information on their systematic reviews as well as their virtual Partnering in Practice Project can be found under "Relevant practices".

Canada-wide mapping of P/CVE collaborations

The CPN-PREV has developed an [interactive map](#) that serves both practitioners and members of the public who wish to explore the services that are available across Canada ⁽⁷⁾. The figures on this page show the expertise sectors and the number of cases. The organisations are unevenly distributed across the country (mostly concentrated in large cities in Quebec, Ontario and Alberta) and many areas of the country still lack specialised resources, so practitioners from other regions are required to take on additional cases. The main findings that follow from the Canada-wide mapping of collaborations are as follows.

EXPERTISE SECTORS OF ORGANIZATIONS

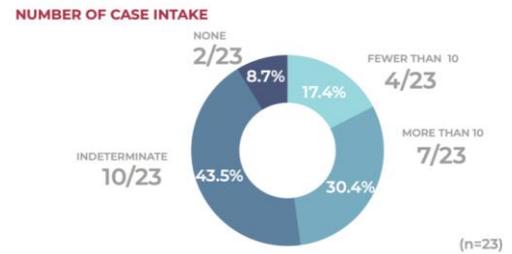


⁽⁵⁾ See: [Terrorism experts applaud minister's clarifications on returned foreign fighters](#).

⁽⁶⁾ See: Europol (2018), [Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018](#),

⁽⁷⁾ Find the full report (in French) of the Canada-wide mapping [here](#).

- P/CVE initiatives in Canada are very recent, working in silos, and mostly in small local and non-specialised networks.
- There are tensions between law enforcement and psychosocial sectors.
- There are better relationships with community police in general.
- It can be difficult to collaborate with the press.
- Limited sources of financing create a climate of competition between the organisations, which can result in tensions and make collaborations harder to achieve and/or sustain.



Lessons learned from the Canadian Practitioners Network's mapping ⁽⁸⁾:

- **Promote exchanges between practitioners and the communities they work in**, to develop a better understanding of upstream needs.
- Organisations would benefit from **developing explicit theories of change** that are articulated and in harmony with the organisations' founding values and missions. Such theories would help clarify objectives and ensure that these objectives are measurable.
- Establish and encourage **dialogue with the media sector**.
- Establish communities of practice or meetings for "**simulation exercises**" between the police/security and psychosocial/community sectors. Doing so will make it possible to develop consensual solutions for important challenges in the field (e.g. recognising each sector's culture, understanding national and provincial legal frameworks, and framing the issues of consent, confidentiality and information sharing).
- Authorities should diversify funding sources, particularly for newer, smaller, under-funded initiatives that rely primarily on volunteers to operate.
- Encourage collaborations between the research and practice communities by putting research into practice.

Case assessment tools

Besides the mapping of the P/CVE field by both the Canada Centre and the CPN-PREV, the CPRLV has presented its [Hexagon tool](#), a pedagogical case assessment tool for analysing case studies of radicalisation leading to violence that can be used in multi-agency contexts. During the study visit, participants took on an individual role in a fictional case study, such as the role of street worker, school, patrol officer, parole officer or clinical counsellor. During the interactive session, participants made several observations, such as:

- The strength of the tool is that it represents reality with **non-linear, complex and rapidly evolving situations**.
- The sharing of information is crucial to establishing a **holistic picture of an individual**. In case discussions, it then helps to also map the **protective factors** of an individual.
- In contrast, the **limitations of multi-agency work** come into play, when relevant actors are missing around the table or decide not to share certain information.
- Include a structured section for "collecting open questions" and another one for "assumptions", which could be helpful during case discussions to **clearly separate assumptions from facts**.
- There are potential avenues to expand the impact of Hexagon and its related training programme, including the creation of a concrete tool to guide the development of a personalised service plan. The CPRLV is currently also working on **digital versions in order to discuss cases**.

⁽⁸⁾ Find more recommendations in the summary of the Canada-wide mapping (in English) [here](#).

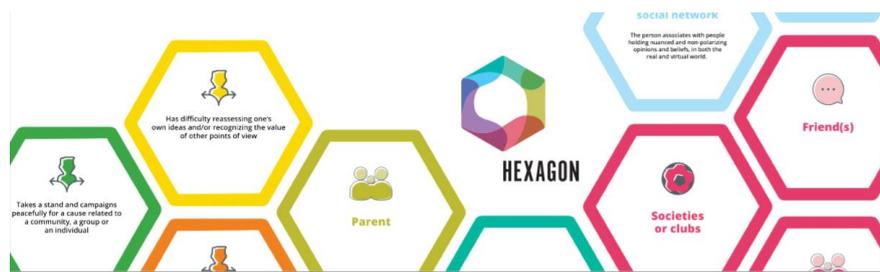


Figure 1: Hexagon is a participative approach that mobilises the expertise of a variety of prevention actors

Recommendations from CPRLV (specifically for holding case discussions):

- Show respect, empathy and judgement-free listening (*Stigmatisation risk*).
- Avoid criticising the individual's beliefs or values. Do not confront his or her arguments (*Isolation risk*).
- Involve organisations or individuals that have the right expertise for the intervention (*Aggravation risk*).
- Beware of not triggering a paranoia through your intervention, due to an increase in surveillance (*Generalised fear risk*).

Organisations who wish to integrate Hexagon into their practice can contact the CPRLV and organize a tailored training session for their team. The training information can be found [here](#)

Relevant practices: Inspiration from Canada

- The **Canadian Practitioners Network for the Prevention of Radicalization and Extremist Violence** is an evidence-based and practitioners-centred network that collects and supports best practices and encourages cooperation and trainings between different stakeholders in the field.
 - The **Partnering in Practice (VPIP) project** is a private practitioners' hub, where practitioners can exchange and have actual virtual clinical case discussions on a monthly basis.
 - The CPN-PREV is conducting **systematic reviews** that will identify and support the best available models for assessing the risk of and countering violent radicalisation. (Reviews will be published here: <https://cpnprev.ca/research-overview/>)
- The **CPRLV** is the first independent non-profit organisation in Canada aimed at preventing violent radicalisation and providing support to individuals affected by the phenomenon. Besides the Hexagon tool described earlier, the CPRLV also provides a visual **Behaviour Barometer** that helps practitioners to identify signs of radicalisation.
- The **Canada Centre for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence** was founded in 2017 and leads the Government of Canada's efforts to counter radicalisation to violence. The Canada Centre provides policy guidance including the development and implementation of the National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence and promotes cooperation between different stakeholders of the field. Specifically, the CPN has created the *Community Resilience Fund*, a key tool for supporting partnerships and innovation in countering radicalization to violence in Canada.
- **Yorktown Family Services** operates 'ETA - P/CVE', which is a biopsychosocial approach that empowers people to move beyond ideations that create co-dependency on groups and ideas supporting violence.
- The **John Howard Society of Ottawa** offers prevention and intervention services, advocacy, public education and community partnerships. Their target group includes individuals who are at risk of or

have come into conflict with the law, e.g. in their **Youth Diversion Program** which supports youth aged 12 – 17 focusing on peer influences and healthy relationships.

- **Shift BC** is led by the British Columbia Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and acts in the sphere of secondary prevention. It offers support to individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation leading to violence. Shift offers a voluntary programme with a collaborative, evidence-based and multisectoral adapted Hub model, also known as Situation Tables where cases are discussed.

Follow-up

Canadian participants and European practitioners agreed that both sides can benefit from an ongoing exchange on P/CVE phenomena and working methods. Examples of *topics* could be: the Incel movement, dealing with (returning) foreign terrorist fighters, supporting the reintegration of returning women and children, addressing challenges related to exposure to trauma, and dealing with violent right-wing extremist movements. In addition, follow-up exchange on developed *working methods and/or tools* in Canada and the EU could help practitioners, such as risk assessment, evidence-based working, and case management and reintegration.

Further reading and viewing

- Counter Extremism Project. (2020). [Canada: Extremism & counter-extremism](#).
- Davey, J., Guerin, C., & Hart, M. (2020). [An online environmental scan of right-wing extremism in Canada](#). Institute for Strategic Dialogue, June 19.
- Gurski, P. (2019). [The foreign terrorist fighter repatriation challenge: The view from Canada](#). The Hague, the Netherlands: International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague (ICCT).
- More examples of multi-agency working? Read the RAN Ex Post Paper (2018), [Strasbourg's P/CVE approach and its multi-agency partners](#).
- The CPN-PREV publishes papers and [webinars](#) on a regular basis that are relevant for practitioners in all RAN Working Groups. Find their most recent publications [here](#).
- The CPRLV offers practitioner kits on several topics. Find them [here](#).
- Need more academic understanding or a new perspective on a certain phenomenon? Check out the research of the [Canadian network for research on terrorism, security and society](#).