



# Risk Assessment in Prison

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This paper provides a picture of risk assessment tools used in EU Member States both in the prison and security contexts. It focuses on existing instruments, their content and how they are used at the moment. The goals of such assessment and the challenges for the future in this field are also mentioned.

The paper is divided into two different parts. The first one reflects aims, benefits, limitations and general functioning of risk assessment, with special mention of the objectives in the prison setting. The second one reviews the most commonly used tools in Europe and how much support they have from scientific studies. How instruments are currently implemented, their main characteristics and the main differences amongst them are discussed. Finally, validation of tools, best practices and the need for further research is summarised.

Main outcomes are related to the need for further validation and agreement on common terminology, the clarification of goals, and the necessary link between disengagement interventions and the evaluation of risk and criminogenic needs. Furthermore, sharing good practices amongst EU Member States seems paramount in order to shed some light on the issue.

## Part A – A background on risk assessment in prison

### Introduction

In recent years, several initiatives aimed at the assessment of and intervention with violent extremist offenders (VEOs) have been developed and implemented throughout Europe. Some of these actions are carried out in community settings and involve actors with specific roles in the prevention of extremist violence. Others have been specifically designed for their implementation in probation and prison settings, and they are usually related to disengagement interventions and risk assessment practices. In the present paper, we will focus on the latest, although some of the tools developed to be used out of prison are taken into consideration as well.

Prisons, as a specific behaviour setting, have often been described as “breeding grounds for radicalisation”. This explains the importance of these places when it comes to addressing initiatives in the field of intervention, assessment and rehabilitation to prevent violent extremism (VE).

Risk assessment can be defined as “any process involving the systematic gathering and interpretation of information pertaining to an individual in order to predict the likelihood that the individual will engage in the behaviour of concern in the future” (1). Even though assessment has traditionally been carried out by clinical psychologists in the field of mental health, the challenge posed by new forms of violence has led to considering new types of risk assessment as a key element in the prevention of extremism. In fact, instruments for the risk assessment of extremism have not really been available until very recently. However, new forms of extremist violence showed the limitation of the use of instruments originally designed for common violent offenders. In this regard, “the significant differences in the characteristics of violent extremists compared to ordinary violent offenders highlighted the need for a specialised and relevant tool for this population” (2).

When the prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) are discussed, two ideas should be considered: firstly, it is essential to have in mind that not all EU Member States have the same needs, which causes several differences in the way judiciary and prison services work (a “one-size-fits-all” approach does not match particular needs); secondly, these tools are something new and there are different opinions about their real effectiveness. There is no homogeneous use of instruments, and the evaluation of these practices seems to need further development in most cases.

Also, a thorough discussion of assessments needs to be linked to some relevant considerations: the legal framework of the country, data protection, multi-agency cooperation or even the recommended training for the implementation of such tools, for instance. How to share information and its use for further decision-

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(1) Herrington & Roberts, Risk Assessment, pp. 282-305.

(2) Council of Europe, Draft Council of Europe Handbook, p. 13.

making are critical issues, and there is no doubt these are things to be considered. Here, psychosocial intervention and effective risk assessment seem to be two sides of the rehabilitation process, on the whole.

At the same time, even though there is a high level of agreement on the importance of risk assessments, target groups also differ: a clear understanding of relevant groups to be assessed is needed. Despite some differences mentioned, current practices for the assessment of risk usually identify specific elements of concern: beliefs and attitudes, criminal past, tendency to violence, social environment and family connections with certain/terror groups, capacity of the individual (training skills), ideological needs and motivation, intention to commit and promote ideological violence, etc. In some cases, mitigating and protective factors are included and may also help the evaluation.

Another relevant issue concerns the goals of such assessments. In this regard, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) has already described the diversity of such objectives: organisational tool, as a way to organise some sources of information; decision-making tool, aimed at some measures such as placement, for instance; rehabilitation instrument, helping the rehabilitation process; reviewing tool, to assess individuals during their detention; and/or multi-agency cooperation tool, allowing the sharing of information with other agencies <sup>(3)</sup>. Taking into consideration these possibilities, it seems clear the relevant role of risk assessment tools in P/CVE. Prison management, including security and disengagement processes, may benefit from consistent and reliable assessment practices. At the same time, preventing VE is also related to multi-agency cooperation and the key role prisons may play: cooperation with law enforcement, sharing intelligence and the promotion of research are elements of interest.

This paper will focus on different issues concerning the risk assessment process and will include different sections. The first part includes an introduction to risk assessment instruments, focusing on the aims, limitations and benefits of such practices. The second part contains three different sections: a description of commonly used tools in EU Member States and their support from scientific reviews, a general overview of trainings provided across Europe, and an outlook for the future.

## Aims, benefits and limitations of risk assessment tools

This section aims to describe and address concrete goals of the risk assessment process, as well as the benefits and limitations so far. It will provide a general overview focused on current approaches.

Firstly, how tools function today is closely related to the framework in which instruments are generally designed and implemented. **Four main approaches** have been considered by practitioners and researchers when carrying out individual (violence) risk assessments: unstructured clinical judgment, the actuarial method, structured professional judgement (SPJ), and self-assessment questionnaire. SPJ is now recognised universally as good assessment practice <sup>(4)</sup> and, what is more, it has been considered the best approach for the assessment of VEOs <sup>(5)</sup>. It provides a flexible methodology and gives great importance to the role of the assessor, who is ultimately responsible for interpreting dynamic factors contained and scored in the tool. The SPJ approach allows a systematic evaluation that should be evidence-based, as most factors are empirically related to the nature of extremist behaviours.

Other approaches, such as actuarial and/or clinical methodologies, present important weaknesses. Thus, Borum points out that “a purely mechanical, actuarial approach seems impractical, if only because the outcome events are so infrequent that quantitative estimates of probability in individual cases would be highly unstable and unreliable, at best” <sup>(6)</sup>. On the other hand, he considers that a purely clinical and unstructured approach would be undesirable as well “because it would succumb to the many biases and limitations in human judgment that have plagued these assessments in the past, making them inconsistent, inaccurate, and lacking in transparency.”

Focusing on SPJ and indicators for the risk assessment tools, it is paramount to highlight **dynamism** as an essential underlying concept. Thus, it does not make any sense to understand the risk as something static over time. Elements such as attitudes, behaviours, emotions and ideology may change during imprisonment,

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<sup>(3)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Developing, Implementing and Using, p. 3.

<sup>(4)</sup> Hart & Logan, Formulation of violence risk, pp. 83-106; Logan & Lloyd, Violent extremism: A comparison of approaches, p. 3.

<sup>(5)</sup> Monahan, The individual risk assessment of terrorism, pp. 520-524.

<sup>(6)</sup> Borum, Assessing risk for terrorism involvement, pp. 63-87.

and this is something that needs to be reflected in the instruments. The content and nature of such tools will be analysed in subsequent sections of this paper.

The most common **goals** of current instruments can be briefly outlined as:

- the exchange of information amongst different institutions/agencies (police authorities, intelligence services, prison and probation administrations, for instance);
- the detection of risk levels that could lead to consider behavioural risk in the future, in the presence of some external triggers;
- the identification of targets that could benefit and guide some penitentiary measures, such as disengagement interventions, allocation, classification, placement and isolation, in order to avoid recruitment, for instance;
- the promotion of research, both internal and external to prison, to better understand radicalisation processes.

When it comes to addressing benefits and drawbacks of these instruments, some considerations must be made: firstly, it should be clear that instruments should never replace human judgement; and secondly, any information obtained from the assessment must be considered as changeable over time. Furthermore, risk estimation is not a mathematical precision procedure. Some benefits and limitations are described below.

Concerning **benefits**:

- They offer systematic information to the professional, wherever they work (prison, probation, police, intelligence services, etc.). Instruments provide more-in-depth knowledge of the individual.
- Risk estimation helps decision-making processes in the prison context: replacement, classifications and any other measure aimed at the effective management of offenders.
- Risk assessment may also help to identify concrete intervention/rehabilitation targets. In this sense, models such as Risk-Need-Responsivity include clear references to risk level as a criterion to decide the intensity of interventions, for instance.
- Risk assessment instruments are easily implemented in the prison context, due to the structured setting and the large number of offenders available. Also, in the post-criminal period, there is a wide range of information of interest: medical screenings, interviews, observation from prison staff, etc.

As for the **limitations**:

- The instrument will never provide a mathematical estimation of the risk, and human judgement is necessary to understand factors and their meaning. Tools can never predict who will become a terrorist or who will commit harmful actions after serving the sentence.
- Instruments need availability of accurate information. Otherwise, estimations may depend on subjective criteria. In this regard, some specific information may be unknown and/or not available.
- As mentioned by Logan <sup>(7)</sup>, “SPJ assessments require a reasonable understanding of risk assessment and violence literature as well as appropriate training to assure a proper understanding of all aspects of the specific tool.” In this regard, it must be pointed out that structured training is only available in some cases and needs further development.
- There is no agreement on terminology. This reveals many differences amongst definitions and concepts in the literature related to VE and terrorism.
- In most cases, there are no structured communication channels and multi-agency cooperation needs to be developed. This makes it difficult to share data and information.

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<sup>(7)</sup> Logan, Reporting Structured Professional Judgement, pp. 82-93.

- There are several differences in the way prison services work. Also, challenges posed by extremism and particular needs are not equal across EU Member States. This has led to understanding risk and its assessment in different ways.
- Some criticism is related to the usual lack of published empirical evidence that may support the validity of instruments. However, there is a high level of agreement on the difficulty this represents, which leads to diverse approaches that are neither validated nor empirical.

Finally, **within which bounds should instruments be used?** This is a relevant question related both to the utility and limitations of tools. Although this paper gives a key role to instruments implemented in prison, it seems necessary to take into consideration other contexts and common uses such as police and/or security fields. Thus, the potential of instruments needs to be addressed in a broader way: prisons are not the only setting where instruments can be found helpful. In fact, some tools to be addressed in the present paper are commonly used by police forces, and this needs to be highlighted to provide a comprehensive overview of risk assessment.

## Prison context

The use of risk assessment instruments in the prison setting is usually aimed at the detection of radicalisation processes. Such detection, especially at early stages of radicalisation, seems necessary to prevent individuals from becoming further involved in extremism. This idea is linked to prevention as a paramount purpose of these tools.

Bearing in mind the fact that prison is a specific setting, risk assessments should help “to avoid blind spots and to find common grounds in decision-making processes”<sup>(8)</sup> for both security and psychosocial interventions, by identifying key targets for disengagement processes, for example. However, it seems advisable not to confuse extremism with people who have discovered or started to practise their faith: the existence of **false-positive cases** and arbitrary conclusions must be clearly avoided. This is clearly related to the use of reliable risk factors, instead of oversimplified ones. False positives will always lead to the unfair, unjust and potentially stigmatising treatment of those falsely assessed individuals, which will have a negative impact on their disengagement process.

Besides, given the dynamic nature of risk and radicalisation, risk assessment instruments should not be used to categorise inmates in a static and/or inflexible way: risk is changeable and radicalisation does not always follow the same progressive pathway. This is why assessments need to be updated and “the **multiple-check principle**”<sup>(9)</sup> has been proposed as a necessary working method in this field.

When the limitations of instruments are analysed, discussion on predictive capability arises. In this sense, it should be clear from the very beginning that **mathematical prediction is not possible**. The “probabilistic approach” seems to be recognised: instruments are not developed to provide precise estimations, but to offer information in terms of risk factors that could lead to certain behaviours under certain conditions. Besides, two risks could be distinguished: the risk to the outside community, where contextual and social factors play a key role; and the risk inside prison, where recruitment or violent behaviours are elements of concern, amongst others.

Finally, the **interpretation of results** is an important element to be mentioned. Instruments are implemented to provide useful, dynamic and practical information to be taken with caution, not to “sentence” individuals by considering certain ideas a crime and/or offence. In EU Member States, entry into prison is a result of the commission of crimes. Ideology and extreme thoughts need to be taken into consideration, and they are interesting elements when extremism is studied but are not sufficient to label individuals as terrorists or to establish high and clear risk.

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<sup>(8)</sup> Schwarzl, Final Paper, p. 2.

<sup>(9)</sup> Ibid.

## Other contexts

The use and limitations of instruments outside prison will also be briefly described. In this respect, some areas of interest are mentioned below:

- **Judicial scope:** the use of risk assessment instruments or screening tools (usually shorter) has been recommended for pre-trial detainees, in order to detect elements of interest in their ideological or behavioural functioning. However, “instruments should never be used to determine a sentence” <sup>(10)</sup>.
- **Police scope:** sharing information with police authorities and external partners (intelligence services, for instance) has been thoroughly discussed in recent years. In this case, it is interesting how information related to the risk can help to monitor individuals in the community after release from prison. In fact, two instruments developed for police research/work on Islamist extremism are included in the present paper: the IR46 and the RADAR-iTE.
- **Probation scope:** screening versions of risk assessment instruments and periodical assessments in a broad sense (interviews with families, social agents, etc.) can help reintegration into society and prevention from further extremism.
- **Research scope:** universities, researchers, experts and non-governmental institutions have shown interest in the study of radicalisation and could support and reinforce methodological improvements. Here, data protection, ethical standards and clear procedures should be clarified.

## Part B – Risk assessment in Europe today

### Different types of risk assessment currently in use in the EU today

#### Most commonly used tools in Europe

At this moment, there exist across Europe different examples of assessment instruments aiming to measure the risk of acts of VE inherent in some individuals, both in prison and community settings. The selection of instruments included in this paper has been made mainly based on how widely used these tools are. The support that some of them have received from scientific reviews has also been taken into consideration.

Thus, in the next section, the following risk assessment tools will be analysed: the VERA-2R, the ERG22+, the RRAP, the IR46, and the RADAR-iTE.

#### Characteristics and functioning of the assessment tools

In this section, for each of the selected tools, the following points will be described: how it was developed, what its aims are, who the target population of the instrument is, what its main characteristics and structure are, who is responsible for carrying out the assessment, and who are the end users benefiting from it.

#### The Violent Extremist Risk Assessment 2 Revised (VERA-2R)

##### Origin

The VERA-2R is the improved version of the original Violent Extremist Risk Assessment (VERA), a Canadian tool first published in 2009 and developed independently by researchers (Pressman and Flockton). It was

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<sup>(10)</sup> Schwarzl, Final Paper, p. 3.

the first instrument specifically developed for assessing the risk of VE <sup>(11)</sup> and it has been adopted by several EU countries like the Netherlands, Belgium and Finland.

### **Aims of the tool**

The VERA-2R is firstly aimed at evaluating an individual's risk of radicalisation to VE. Additionally, it can be used to obtain information on the likelihood of violent extremist action and ways to prevent this, to assist in intervention and to monitor efficacy.

### **Target population**

The VERA-2R focuses on all types of violent extremists, both youths and adults, motivated by religious, social or political ideologies, pre-crime or post-crime and in any judicial setting (prison/probation, forensic mental health, police, intelligence, etc.) <sup>(12)</sup>.

### **Main characteristics and structure**

The VERA-2R is an SPJ tool that includes 34 indicators categorised under five domains (Beliefs, attitudes and ideology; Social context and intention; History, action and capacity; Commitment and motivation; and Protective/risk-mitigating indicators) with 11 additional factors divided into another three domains (Criminal history, Personal history, Mental Disorder) <sup>(13)</sup>.

The assessor of this tool is required to make two types of judgements. First, they have to decide whether or not an indicator is present in relation to the examined individual and rate the severity of this factor (high, medium or low). For that purpose, all indicators have well-described criteria for those three levels of rating and lead questions are provided to guide the assessor. Second, the responses need to be incorporated into a final judgement, which gives insight into the risk for violence of the subject in question <sup>(14)</sup>.

The final professional judgement made by the assessor is not simply based on a numerical overall score but on the weighing of all available information and data related to the risk and protective indicators as well as on the context of the examined individual <sup>(15)</sup>. Whenever an interview with the subject in question is not possible, the assessment can be based on collateral information alone (psychological evaluations, surveillance intelligence, legal documents, etc.) <sup>(16)</sup>.

The risk and protective indicators included in this instrument are considered dynamic and changeable over time and, therefore, repeated measurements are required. This monitoring allows the establishment of risk trajectories that are considered essential for assessing increasing or decreasing risk at an individual level <sup>(17)</sup>.

### **Assessors**

Ideally, the assessors of this tool will be professionals in key criminal justice and law enforcement agencies (psychologists, psychiatrists, etc.) and security and intelligence analysts with experience in carrying out individual evaluations <sup>(18)</sup>.

### **End users of the tool**

The VERA-2R is currently being used and implemented within the criminal justice system (police agencies, high-security prison wards, specialised probation service, etc.) of some EU Member States <sup>(19)</sup>.

### **Key outcomes of scientific reviews**

In 2013, an independent study conducted by Beardsley and Beech demonstrated that the VERA-2R's risk factors can be applied with the same accuracy both to lone actors and to members of extremist groups, regardless of the spectrum of ideological motive. That same study also pointed out the importance of the

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<sup>(11)</sup> Dean & Pettet, The 3 R's of risk assessment.

<sup>(12)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, pp. 40-41.

<sup>(13)</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>(14)</sup> European Commission, Violent Extremism Risk Assessment.

<sup>(15)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 40.

<sup>(16)</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>(17)</sup> European Commission, Violent Extremism Risk Assessment.

<sup>(18)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 43.

<sup>(19)</sup> Heide et al., The Practitioner's Guide, p. 16.

tool's protective factors for identifying individuals who are less prone to carrying out a terrorist action in the future <sup>(20)</sup>.

Van der Heide and Schuurman, in their 2018 evaluation of the Dutch approach to reintegrating jihadists, concluded that most practitioners from the Dutch Probation Service, although highly interested in the VERA-2R, barely used the tool due to a lack of skills and information <sup>(21)</sup>.

In a 2018 study, Herzog-Evans noted that the VERA-2R, compared to the ERG22+, presents a more complex structure and requires more classified information to complete the instrument <sup>(22)</sup>. However, Lloyd pointed out, in 2019, that the updated version of the VERA had become more user-friendly and its indicators had been better defined and explained <sup>(23)</sup>.

## The Extremism Risk Guidelines 22+ (ERG22+)

### Origin

The Extremism Risk Guidelines (ERG22+) tool was developed for the then National Offender Management Service (NOMS) in the United Kingdom (UK) by a group of researchers (particularly, Lloyd and Dean) <sup>(24)</sup>. It was created by relying on both the literature and real case studies and has been in use since 2011.

### Aims of the tool

The main goal of the ERG22+ is not to predict who will commit an extremist crime, but to “manage” that kind of risk <sup>(25)</sup>. Thus, this instrument is aimed at informing sentence planning, intervention and release planning for convicted extremist offenders <sup>(26)</sup>.

### Target population

In England and Wales, those individuals convicted of an extremist offence (including Islamist, far-right, far-left, animal rights, etc.) will be assessed with the ERG22+, generally, within the first year of sentence <sup>(27)</sup>.

### Main characteristics and structure

The ERG22+ is an SPJ tool that includes 22 risk indicators divided under three dimensions: “engagement”, “intent” and “capability”; the “+” suffix in the title of ERG22+ allows the incorporation of any other factor deemed relevant by the assessor <sup>(28)</sup>. It has been noted <sup>(29)</sup> that behind this triple classification lies the idea that one can be engaged but not have intent, or can have intent but not capability, and so on.

Each indicator is assessed as being “strongly present”, “partly present” or “not present” and scores are registered on a summary record sheet. For that purpose, the instrument provides clear guidance regarding its use <sup>(30)</sup>.

It must be said that while the ERG22+ focuses on the individual, it also takes into consideration the role of factors and circumstances external to them that may have influenced their engagement and/or involvement in extremism <sup>(31)</sup>.

Assessors are encouraged to use as many sources of information as possible and individuals subject to this instrument are invited to participate in the process, either through interview or in writing. When they decide not to collaborate, the tool is completed based on collateral information, but they can still review the completed ERG22+. For this reason, this tool's assessment process is said to be “collaborative” <sup>(32)</sup>. The assessment process includes a narrative pointing out those elements significant to an individual's

<sup>(20)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism, p. 62.

<sup>(21)</sup> Heide & Schuurman, *Re-Integratie van Delinquenten*.

<sup>(22)</sup> Herzog-Evans, A Comparison, pp. 9-10.

<sup>(23)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 43.

<sup>(24)</sup> Herzog-Evans, A Comparison, p. 7.

<sup>(25)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, ERG22+ structured, p. 6, p. 8.

<sup>(26)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 17.

<sup>(27)</sup> Ibid., p. 13, p. 18.

<sup>(28)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, The Development, p. 40.

<sup>(29)</sup> Herzog-Evans, A Comparison, p. 9.

<sup>(30)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, The Development, p. 47.

<sup>(31)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 13.

<sup>(32)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 16.

engagement in extremism, and their offence, a case formulation, an evaluation of risk and need, and guidance regarding how to appropriately manage risk and aim at intervention <sup>(33)</sup>.

Most of this instrument's risk factors are dynamic, so new assessments must be carried out regularly to signal progress or change, for the purpose of informing risk and sentence management decisions <sup>(34)</sup>.

The ERG22+ contains a screening tool to be used with vulnerable offenders not convicted of terrorist crimes but deemed to be at danger of being radicalised. This shorter version of the ERG22+ allows to decide whether a full assessment is required <sup>(35)</sup>.

### Assessors

Ideally, only fully qualified forensic psychologists or experienced probation officers with practice in using structured professional guidelines should employ the ERG22+ <sup>(36)</sup>.

### End users of the tool

The ERG22+ is widely accepted within England's and Wales' security departments that supervise extremist risk in custody, where the use of this tool is aimed at guiding decisions about sentence planning, intervention, relocation, parole, etc. <sup>(37)</sup>.

### Key outcomes of scientific reviews of this tool

A study conducted by Lloyd and Dean in 2015 <sup>(38)</sup> pointed out that the ERG was used to support assessment in the UK with extreme right-wing offenders, animal rights activists, women extremists and gang members whose criminality is based on joint enterprise. Therefore, they concluded that this tool is likely to continue to prove valuable for assessing demonstrations of extremism elsewhere as the geopolitical situation develops.

In 2018, Herzog-Evans compared the VERA-2R and the ERG22+ for the French probation context with convicted terrorists and highlighted the ERG22+'s emphasis on identity issues as drivers for extremism. Moreover, the author concluded that the ERG22+ was more suitable for the assessment of terrorist criminals who have not necessarily carried out an act of extremist violence <sup>(39)</sup>.

In a recent study, Knudsen noted that any advantage related to the ERG22+ indicators would seem conditioned on them being reserved for the uses, assessors and target groups they were first designed for, warning that the use of this instrument applied to non-terrorist criminals could prove problematic, as well as when carried out by only one assessor (psychologist or psychiatrist) not properly trained <sup>(40)</sup>.

In a 2019 study <sup>(41)</sup>, Powis, Randhawa and Bishopp examined the structural properties of the ERG22+ as part of a validation process. A total of 171 ERG22+s were included in the analysis and it was concluded that the tool was successful as a risk and need formulation instrument for VEOs. The analysis proposed five areas of differentiation: Identity and External Influence; Motivation and Ideology; Capability; Criminality; Status and Personal Influence; Nevertheless, two factors (Mental Health and Excitement and Comradeship and Adventure) showed some ambiguity and did not spatially cluster into those areas. The study also found good overall consistency for the ERG22+ but low consistency on some domains, particularly those containing few items. It was pointed out that the study had a number of limitations; only Islamist extremists were included in the analysis and few women participated in it.

## The Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons (RRAP)

### Origin

The Radicalisation Risk Assessment in Prisons (RRAP) toolset has been developed since 2015 under the European Commission project "Radicalisation prevention in prisons" <sup>(42)</sup>, resulting from transnational

<sup>(33)</sup> Lloyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 15.

<sup>(34)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(35)</sup> Cornwall & Molenkamp, Developing, Implementing and Using, p. 6.

<sup>(36)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, ERG22+ structured, p. 22.

<sup>(37)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, The Development, p. 49.

<sup>(38)</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>(39)</sup> Herzog-Evans, A Comparison, pp. 9-10.

<sup>(40)</sup> Knudsen, Measuring radicalisation.

<sup>(41)</sup> Powis et al., An Examination of the Structural Properties, p. 1.

<sup>(42)</sup> R2PRIS, RRAP.

cooperation across academia, private sector research, and correctional sector representatives and practitioners <sup>(43)</sup>.

### **Aims of the tool**

The RRAP is aimed at providing a comprehensive evaluation of inmates' vulnerabilities and risk of radicalisation <sup>(44)</sup>, allowing prison staff to act in specific situations <sup>(45)</sup>.

### **Target population**

The RRAP focuses on individuals within the general prison population who are vulnerable to radicalisation or show signs of radicalisation <sup>(46)</sup>. Thus, this tool is not meant to be used with inmates convicted of extremism-related violence or terrorism crimes or for being part of a terrorist organisation <sup>(47)</sup>. Additionally, it must be noted that all types of extremism are targeted by this instrument <sup>(48)</sup>.

### **Main characteristics and structure**

The RAPP consists of a battery of risk assessment instruments for prison staff at different hierarchical levels <sup>(49)</sup>. The first instrument, the "Helicopter View", is aimed at gathering information from prison governors and/or administrators and takes into consideration the role of situational factors in the process of radicalisation <sup>(50)</sup>.

The second tool, the "Frontline Behavioural Observation Guidelines", helps frontline staff (prison officers, educators, teachers, social workers, etc.) to signal inmates' behaviours (or changes in behaviours) that might show the externalisation of their cognitive radicalisation <sup>(51)</sup>.

The third instrument, the "Individual Radicalisation Screening", provides a more specific picture of the risks connected with the examined inmate <sup>(52)</sup>. It follows an SPJ approach and includes 39 items divided into 9 dimensions. The "severity" of each dimension is rated using a one-to-five scale, which indicates low, moderate or high vulnerability. Finally, the assessor determines the category of risk or the need for intervention <sup>(53)</sup>.

### **Assessors**

The different tools included in the RRAP set assess the perception of three diverse audiences: prison governors/administrators, frontline staff, and technical staff (mainly psychologists or staff properly trained to carry out psychological assessments) <sup>(54)</sup>.

### **End users of the tool**

The RRAP toolset is developed to help professionals working in a prison setting <sup>(55)</sup>.

## **The Islamic Radicalisation Model 46 (IR46)**

### **Origin**

The Islamic Radicalisation model 46 (IR46) was introduced in 2016 by the Dutch Police in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice and Safety <sup>(56)</sup>. It was developed by relying on international literature, interviews with academic experts and case studies; the tool is updated every three years <sup>(57)</sup>.

<sup>(43)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Developing, Implementing and Using, p. 4.

<sup>(44)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism, p. 11.

<sup>(45)</sup> R2PRIS, RRAP.

<sup>(46)</sup> Heide et al., The Practitioner's Guide, p. 14.

<sup>(47)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism, p. 12.

<sup>(48)</sup> Cornwall & Molenkamp, Developing, Implementing and Using, p. 4.

<sup>(49)</sup> R2PRIS, RRAP.

<sup>(50)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(51)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism, p. 12.

<sup>(52)</sup> R2PRIS, RRAP.

<sup>(53)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Developing, Implementing and Using, p. 5.

<sup>(54)</sup> Radicalisation Awareness Network, Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism, p. 11, p. 12.

<sup>(55)</sup> Heide et al., The Practitioner's Guide, p. 19.

<sup>(56)</sup> Heide et al., The Practitioner's Guide, p. 14.

<sup>(57)</sup> LLoyd, Extremist Risk Assessment, p. 19.

## Aims of the tool

The Dutch Police describes the IR46 as an early warning method for professionals within the security field, aimed at recognising signs of Islamist extremism in individuals and determining to what extent someone is “ready” to exert violence (the degree of radicalisation) <sup>(58)</sup>. Thus, the goal of this tool is not to predict but to assess the current risk. For that purpose, the IR46 provides a general outlook of the information available about an individual <sup>(59)</sup>, from which professionals can estimate if there is actual cause for concern and, if so, take proper action <sup>(60)</sup>.

## Target population

The IR46 is used pre-crime, focuses on individuals (from 12 years and older) in the general population, and is specific to Islamist radicalisation only <sup>(61, 62)</sup>.

## Main characteristics and structure

This tool adopts an SPJ approach and consists of four phases (Preliminary; Social estrangement; Jihadisation; Jihad/Extremism) with 46 indicators connected to two axes: “Ideology” and the “Social context” of the examined person <sup>(63)</sup>. These two axes operate in parallel and, depending on each case, “ideology-related indicators” are more pronounced than “social context indicators”, or the other way round <sup>(64)</sup>.

**Table 1: IR46 output outcome**

	Ideology	Social context
Phases	Jihad/Extremism	
	Jihadisation	
	Social estrangement	
	Preliminary phase	

The model comprises unlimited protective indicators <sup>(65)</sup> and the assessor can also add case-specific factors to the evaluation when considered appropriate <sup>(66)</sup>.

The IR46 does not rely exclusively on objective data; information based on the “gut feeling” of a police officer can also be incorporated <sup>(67)</sup>. It must be noted that this instrument does not require a minimum level of information <sup>(68)</sup>; more information might result in scoring more factors, but more factors do not necessarily represent a higher level of extremism. The factors correlate either to phase or degree of radicalisation <sup>(69)</sup>.

All indicators are considered dynamic and changeable over time; in fact, the validity of this instrument depends, amongst other factors, on how frequently reassessment takes place <sup>(70)</sup>. In that sense, it is

<sup>(58)</sup> Politie Nederland, *Islamitisch*.

<sup>(59)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 19.

<sup>(60)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 16, p. 18.

<sup>(61)</sup> Politie Nederland, *Islamitisch*.

<sup>(62)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 16.

<sup>(63)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 15.

<sup>(64)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>(65)</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>(66)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 15.

<sup>(67)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 15.

<sup>(68)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>(69)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 20.

<sup>(70)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 21.

recommended that the IR46 become part of a continuous multidisciplinary strategy for supervising and corrective action <sup>(71)</sup>.

### Assessors

Ideally, they should be experienced practitioners within a police force, intelligence services or probation/prison service with analytical skills and full access to the highest level of information <sup>(72)</sup>.

### End users of the tool

The IR46 helps police, intelligence services and so-called care providers (organisations with close interaction with those suspected of radicalisation) to recognise signals of Islamist extremism at an early stage <sup>(73)</sup>.

### Key outcomes of reviews of this tool

In a 2019 report documenting frameworks to assess extremist violence, Monica Lloyd pointed out some strengths of the IR46; amongst these are its strong utility for law enforcement staff supervising the risk of radicalisation in the community and the fact that this tool is user friendly and meaningful to stakeholders. Among its limitations, it was noted that the tool only focuses on the assessment of Islamist extremist offending and the fact that it is designed for pre-crime evaluation only, not including the criminal in the assessment process <sup>(74)</sup>.

## RADAR-iTE (Rule-based analysis of potentially destructive perpetrators to assess acute risk – Islamist terrorism)

### Origin

RADAR-iTE is an assessment tool created as a result of the cooperation of the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and academics from the University of Konstanz <sup>(75)</sup>. It has been used in Germany since 2017.

### Aims of the tool

The tool is aimed at identifying an extremist Islamist individual who is likely to engage in violent behaviour; some have called this instrument a “predictive policing system” for jihadists <sup>(76)</sup>.

### Target population

The RADAR-iTE focuses first on those already considered to pose a very high risk (well-known terrorists, including jihad returnees from Iraq and Syria), followed by incarcerated Salafists who are about to be released from prison <sup>(77)</sup>.

### Main characteristics and structure

This instrument, which is now on its second version (RADAR-iTE 2.0), facilitates a largely standardised risk assessment procedure of an individual through a quantitative and qualitative estimation <sup>(78)</sup>.

The assessment process is carried out in two phases. The first one requires the gathering of all available information about the extremist individual by the police officer in charge of the case. The second phase involves a questionnaire (73 questions) about the jihadist, with possible answers being “Yes”, “No” or “Unknown”. It includes questions concerning personal and social life events and social network, as well as proof of jihad-motivated travel, history of violence, etc. <sup>(79)</sup>. The questions also take into account

<sup>(71)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 21.

<sup>(72)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(73)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 14.

<sup>(74)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 22.

<sup>(75)</sup> Bundeskriminalamt, *Presseinformation: Neues Instrument*.

<sup>(76)</sup> Flade, *Germany’s risk assessment tool*.

<sup>(77)</sup> Ibid.

<sup>(78)</sup> Ambos, *The terrorist*.

<sup>(79)</sup> Itälunni & Frisk, *Creating an instruction*.

characteristics that may imply a decrease in risk <sup>(80)</sup>, such as: Is the examined person collaborating with law enforcement? and Is this individual connected to people outside of the Salafist community?

According to findings, the RADAR-iTE classifies individuals into a two-category risk scale of extremist Salafism: “moderate” and “high”. This classification is used to determine the need for intervention, and also to state the timing of subsequent assessments depending on whether the person is considered to be a danger or relevant risk <sup>(81)</sup>.

However, it must be noted that the mere classification of a person as “high risk” does not trigger on its own any measure; instead, police carry out a case-by-case assessment in a second stage, within the framework of [RISKANT](#) (*Risk analysis of those inclined to act on Islamist motivations*). The RISKANT was developed between 2017 and 2020 and provides action guidance specifically adapted to the perceived areas of concern of high-risk individuals <sup>(82)</sup>.

The RADAR-iTE takes advantage of all available information with regard to an individual’s life, and bases its analysis on a suspect’s “observable behaviour”, rather than their religious habits or ideology, which might only play a small role for some of the dangerous people targeted <sup>(83)</sup>.

### Assessors

Since 2017, the BKA has started training police agencies across the country in the use of the RADAR-iTE. Trained police officers are responsible for conducting the assessment.

### End users of the tool

This instrument is currently used by police agencies in Germany and is considered to be the first nationwide assessment of the militant Salafis known to the German police <sup>(84)</sup>.

### Key outcomes of reviews of this tool

In 2018, Itälunni and Frisk <sup>(85)</sup> concluded that the RADAR-iTE had a great potential to minimise the communication gaps between bureaus inside the provinces of the 16 German states with different legislation amongst them. The RADAR-iTE was also recently explored at Laurea University, Finland, aiming to introduce an instruction card in order to be used for the commissioner’s and general police training purposes. This card is targeted for people who are using the tool for the first time or are handling their first case and need reminding and advice on how to use it <sup>(86)</sup>.

## Main differences between these tools

### Basis for tool development

While the VERA-2R and the RRAP were developed mostly by relying on the literature available at the time, the ERG22+ and the IR46 relied on both literature and case studies. As for the RADAR-iTE, some existing risk assessment tools focused on violent criminals were taken into consideration for its elaboration.

### Aims of the tool

By assessing a person that is likely to engage in violent behaviour, both the VERA-2R and the ERG22+’s main goal is to manage risk, which allows to guide sentence planning, to promote effective and targeted intervention, and to supervise efficacy <sup>(87, 88)</sup>. In contrast, the main purpose of the RRAP is to evaluate the degree of vulnerability and risk of radicalisation of inmates in the general prison population <sup>(89, 90)</sup>.

<sup>(80)</sup> Bundeskriminalamt, *Presseinformation: Neues Instrument*.

<sup>(81)</sup> Itälunni & Frisk, Creating an instruction.

<sup>(82)</sup> Ambos, *The terrorist*.

<sup>(83)</sup> Bundeskriminalamt, *Presseinformation: Neues Instrument*.

<sup>(84)</sup> Flade, *So funktioniert*.

<sup>(85)</sup> Itälunni & Frisk, Creating an instruction.

<sup>(86)</sup> Itälunni, Development of the RADAR-iTE instruction card.

<sup>(87)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, ERG22+ structured, pp. 6-8.

<sup>(88)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 17.

<sup>(89)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner’s Guide*, p. 16.

<sup>(90)</sup> R2PRIS, RRAP.

As for the IR46 and the RADAR-iTE, both instruments help professionals in the safety field to recognise an individual who shows signals of Islamist extremism and is prone to committing violent behaviour; by assessing that risk, these tools allow those professionals to take appropriate action.

### Target population

While the VERA-2R and the ERG22+ highlight individuals convicted for terrorism-related crimes and RADAR-iTE mainly focuses on those already considered to pose a very high risk (well-known terrorists and imprisoned Salafists) <sup>(91)</sup>, the RRAP focuses on incarcerated individuals susceptible to radicalisation. As for the IR46, it targets those subjects in the general population who manifest signs of radicalisation <sup>(92)</sup>.

On the other hand, whereas the VERA-2R, the ERG22+ and the RRAP focus on all forms of extremism, regardless of the spectrum of ideological motive (religious, political or social), the IR46 and the RADAR-iTE are specific to Islamist extremism only.

Additionally, it has been pointed out <sup>(93, 94)</sup> that while the target population of the ERG22+ refers to lower-threshold extremism, which does not necessarily involve participation in a terrorist attack per se, the VERA-2R focuses on higher-level acts of “classic” terrorism.

### Main characteristics and structure

The five assessment instruments previously analysed adopt an SPJ approach. As explained in the first part of this paper, this kind of approach means that the tools are structured but still reserve a role for professional judgment, allowing individualisation and flexibility in their usage <sup>(95)</sup>.

All these tools differ in terms of the number of risk factors that they include, and some of them specifically enable the assessor to accommodate any other indicator that is deemed relevant to the process; such is the case of the ERG22+ and the IR46.

In terms of protective indicators, while the VERA-2R includes them specifically, the IR46 model contains unlimited protective factors and the RADAR-iTE’s questions take into account characteristics that may imply a decrease in risk. Conversely, for the ERG’s designers it made more sense to consider the lack of a given risk indicator as being a protective factor <sup>(96)</sup>.

It must be pointed out that all these tools, though focusing on individuals, also take into consideration the situational factors (networks, personal ties, etc.) that may have affected their involvement in extremism <sup>(97)</sup>. What is more, the ERG22+, particularly, incorporates a case formulation approach in which assessors contemplate not only the existence of a factor but also its role in the crime <sup>(98)</sup>.

And, although some overlap is detected amongst the different indicators included in these tools <sup>(99)</sup>, there is, however, an overall emphasis on different issues; whereas ideology is key for the VERA-2R, the ERG22+ focuses more on identity <sup>(100)</sup> and the RADAR-iTE bases its analysis on the suspect's social background <sup>(101)</sup>.

Regarding the quantity/quality of information that is required to fill out an assessment process, this differs across the instruments, but all of them are completed by the professional rather than the suspect <sup>(102)</sup>. In fact, whereas all these tools recommend the use of all available information on the examined individual, they can be filled out without an interview with the person in question <sup>(103)</sup>. As for the IR46, no minimum level of information is required for using it, and the assessor can also rely on “gut feeling” information.

<sup>(91)</sup> Flade, Germany's risk assessment tool.

<sup>(92)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner's Guide*, pp. 16-18.

<sup>(93)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, ERG22+ structured, p. 11.

<sup>(94)</sup> Herzog-Evans, *A Comparison*, p. 12.

<sup>(95)</sup> Guy et al., *Assessing Risk of Violence*.

<sup>(96)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, ERG22+ structured, p. 19.

<sup>(97)</sup> Lloyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 13.

<sup>(98)</sup> Lloyd & Dean, *The Development*, p. 48.

<sup>(99)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner's Guide*, p. 13.

<sup>(100)</sup> Herzog-Evans, *A Comparison*, p. 14.

<sup>(101)</sup> Bundeskriminalamt, *Presseinformation: Neues Instrument*.

<sup>(102)</sup> Heide et al., *The Practitioner's Guide*, p. 20.

<sup>(103)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

A final key characteristic shared by these tools is the fact that risk is considered to be dynamic and changeable; therefore, often reassessment is highly advisable (if not required).

**End users of the tool**

The intended users of these tools can be divided into two main categories. On the one hand, the VERA-2R, the ERG22+ and the RRAP were mainly developed for professionals working in a prison setting (although the VERA-2R can be used within the whole criminal justice system). On the other hand, both the IR46 and the RADAR-iTE were designed to primarily assist police and intelligence services.

It has been noted <sup>(104)</sup> that what is shared by almost all end users of these instruments is that they tend to be in close contact with the subjects considered at risk of (further) radicalisation.

On the next page, Table 2 provides an overview of the five selected instruments, highlighting their main characteristics.

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<sup>(104)</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

**Table 2: Main characteristics of risk assessment tools for violent extremism currently used in Europe**

	VERA-2R	ERG22+	RRAP	IR46	RADAR-ITE
<b>Aims of the tool</b>	To assess the likelihood of violent extremist behaviour in order to manage risk	To assess the likelihood of violent extremist behaviour in order to manage risk	To evaluate the degree of vulnerability and risk of extremism, in order to take appropriate action	To recognise signs of Islamist extremism; to determine the readiness to exert violence	To recognise Islamist individuals who are prone to engaging in violent behaviour
<b>Target population</b>	Terrorism-related offenders and extremist individuals	Individuals convicted for terrorism-related crimes	Individuals in the general prison population prone to violent extremism	Individuals in the general population who manifest signs of extremism	High-risk individuals (well known terrorists and imprisoned Salafists)
<b>Types of radicalism considered</b>	All types of extremism	All types of extremism	All types of extremism	Islamist extremism only	Islamist extremism only
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPJ approach</li> <li>• 45 indicators / 8 domains</li> <li>• Protective factors are specifically included</li> <li>• Emphasis on ideology</li> <li>• Interview not required</li> <li>• Need for reassessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPJ approach</li> <li>• 22 indicators / 3 domains</li> <li>• Any other relevant factor can be included</li> <li>• Absence of factor is analysed as a protective factor</li> <li>• Role of factor is considered</li> <li>• Emphasis on identity</li> <li>• Interview not required</li> <li>• Screening tool available</li> <li>• Need for reassessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Battery of tools for prison governors/administrators, frontline staff and technical staff</li> <li>• Its "Individual Radicalisation Screening" has an SPJ approach</li> <li>• 39 items / 9 dimensions</li> <li>• Need for reassessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPJ approach</li> <li>• 4 phases / 46 indicators</li> <li>• 2 axes: Ideology and Social context</li> <li>• Unlimited protective indicators</li> <li>• Other case-specific factors can be included</li> <li>• No minimum level of information required</li> <li>• Need for reassessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largely standardised tool</li> <li>• Questionnaire: 73 items</li> <li>• It includes questions that imply a decrease in risk</li> <li>• Emphasis on suspect's observable behaviour</li> <li>• Case-by-case assessment during a second stage within the framework of RISKANT</li> <li>• Need for reassessment</li> </ul>
<b>End users</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals within the criminal justice system</li> <li>• Widely used across EU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prison professionals supervising extremists</li> <li>• Used in England &amp; Wales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prison professionals at different levels</li> <li>• Used by some EU MSs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals in the safety field</li> <li>• Used by Dutch police</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police and intelligence services</li> <li>• Used by German police</li> </ul>

## Trainings Provided in EU Member States

Since there are several differences in the needs and contexts amongst EU Member States, neither the use of instruments nor the trainings provided can be easily compared. However, there seems to be a high level of agreement on the fact that staff training is needed in order to carry out assessments in the most effective and professional way. Given the diversity of approaches throughout Europe, this paper will review some proposals on the whole, focusing on existing initiatives in this field and trying to provide an overall view with concrete elements of interest.

The VERA-2R provides training and licensing, as does the ERG22+. Professionals have to follow a specific VERA-2R training course to obtain the manual or official VERA-2R handbook<sup>©</sup>. They receive a certificate and have access to the extranet environment of the VERA- 2R website. The registered handbook involves description of scientific background, guidelines for using the tool and a deep understanding of the VERA-2R variables. On the other hand, the training course goes deeper into research findings, essential concepts of the tool and key elements of the SPJ. Some discussions about real experiences and implementation are also included, and a follow-up day every year after completion of the training course is advised. This focusses on understanding implementation issues and writing reports with example formats and a training case. Regarding the licensing, the VERA-2R has a copyright and a trademark for European countries (NIFP, Dutch Custodial Services, Nils Duits) and for countries outside Europe (D. Elaine Pressman). Details regarding training and certification costs are not publicly available.

- Concerning the ERG22+ in the UK, both guidance and training are provided. The duration is around two days and some relevant elements are addressed, such as: “a brief history of the instrument itself, key literature on the matter, how guidelines are intended to be used, significant risk and circumstances associated with extremism, how to translate analysis into concrete conclusions, how to report assessments and, most importantly, practice with three case studies” <sup>(105)</sup>. Such training is delivered only by Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), typically to HMPPS staff. When training is completed, the user is allowed to make use of the instrument. Licensing is considered and both educational and commercial ones are available.
- As for the RRAP, training is systematically scheduled. With regard to specific instruments, Helicopter View and Frontline Behavioural Observation Guidelines, two days of training and a half-day of online training are needed. Also, after implementation, another half-day of supervision is expected. Finally, for the Individual Radicalisation Screening, three days are needed (online and face-to-face) and supervision after implementation is also required through two half-day sessions.
- With regard to the IR46, training seems to be shorter and lasts over half a day. It includes “background of the model, literature studies, case studies, comparison with other models and how to use guidelines or interpretation of possible outcomes, among other skills” <sup>(106)</sup>.
- For the RADAR-iTE, training is also necessary, focusing on technical and ethical guidelines. Legislation to be observed, data collection process and assessment itself are issues of concern. For this instrument, the diversity of information sources and their use are addressed, trying to promote an effective procedure aimed at accurate risk assessment. In some papers, the RISKANT system has been reported as a framework to provide a helpful approach to police, giving some advice on actions against some individuals in the field of VE.

For other instruments, even though not addressed in the present paper, training is not structured. For example, for Multi-Level Guidelines (MLG Version 2), the instrument can be used without specific training, as this can be achieved in a variety of ways. Tools such as IVP (Identifying Vulnerable People) could implement formal training in the near future. This variety of approaches supports the idea that training has not been formally developed in all cases.

Some common aspects of the training provided are shown below:

<sup>(105)</sup> LLoyd, *Extremist Risk Assessment*, p. 16.

<sup>(106)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

- Trainings are typically related to the use of specific instruments. No broader trainings focused on multiple instruments, and their possibilities, have been carried out so far.
- Trainings have a short duration.
- SPJ is the usual framework within which instruments are developed and training sessions are set. The combination of both professional judgement and empirical factors related to VE is the common approach for most instruments and training courses.
- The existence of case studies is a common component of most training courses, as well as supervision after implementation and/or licensing.

## Outlook for the future

This final part of the paper addresses some recommendations and fields to be explored in order to improve the use of risk assessment instruments.

In the first place, it seems advisable to reach a **common definition of concepts related to VE**. This lack of agreement has consequences not only for theoretical developments but also for daily professional practice. Thus, although instruments seem to measure similar things and their goals are often alike, the underlying concepts and the framework often differ. In this sense, though tools are usually designed according to national needs, some kind of common language should be explored and agreed on.

Also, **what are instruments expected to measure?** Some proposals are aimed at identifying risk levels, others are expected to assess risk and dynamic factors, and some approaches try to predict the likelihood of future violent actions. Real outcomes and specific goals are something worth clarifying: assessing the existence of extremist ideas and thoughts is one thing, trying to predict future actions through structured assessments seems to be something different.

Concerning the **validation of these tools**, the first question is related to who should be in charge of such validation, as “many evaluation studies have been conducted by their own authors”<sup>(107)</sup>. In this sense, even though psychometric validation of instruments for the prison context seems difficult, the truth is that “none of the existing assessment instruments have undergone the degree of validation that assessment tools in other disciplines have”<sup>(108)</sup>. Could validation of existing tools be something to consider in the near future? What is the role to be played by the developers with regard to such validation processes? Is it possible to give instruments a greater methodological rigour? If so, how can it be achieved?

With regard to this, it seems interesting to consider whether future risk instruments will use factors empirically related to VE. It is obvious that such an empirical approach will need research, if only to get a more in-depth understanding of the elements directly connected with some behaviours of concern. Besides, if we agree that risk is dynamic and changeable, tools need to prioritise dynamic elements and factors, instead of focusing on static variables, however relevant they seem to be. The existence of protective factors, with regard to instruments that do not contemplate them, should also be considered.

One of the most important discussions related to **risk assessment instruments** lies in the potential benefits of such tools: **why do we need them?** According to intervention models such as Risk-Need-Responsivity<sup>(109)</sup>, the intensity of intervention programmes should be based on previous risk evaluations. Here, effective treatments to reduce risk and disengage from extremist violence could benefit from accurate assessment. Also, programmes need to be aimed at clear targets (lack of empathy, tolerance towards violence, anti-social personality traits, etc.). In this regard, assessments could play a key role in providing a picture of the social, cognitive, emotional and behavioural functioning of the individual.

<sup>(107)</sup> Meloy & Gill, The lone-actor terrorist.

<sup>(108)</sup> RTI International, Countering Violent Extremism, p. 35.

<sup>(109)</sup> Andrews & Bonta, The psychology.

In view of the above-mentioned, some questions arise for the future: Are current programmes based on the identification of concrete psychological targets? Is risk being assessed in order to decide the intensity of disengagement interventions? Are the psychological proposals based on effective evaluations?

Besides, it seems clear that all assessment will lead to some type of decision-making, not only in terms of rehabilitation programmes but also concerning allocation and other measures in the field of security. Do existing instruments provide enough and accurate information for such decisions? And, even more important, are assessments regularly delivered in order to update changes?

Finally, **what is the exchange of information amongst countries?** Which findings and improvements are shared and discussed? Have we agreed on “achievement indicators” to consider what seems to work and what does not seem to work in terms of risk assessment?

To summarise, some **recommendations** and concrete **outlooks for the future** are mentioned here:

1. Some validation of instruments is needed, if only to know limitations concerning the setting (mainly prisons) and population of interest (VEOs). Even though the most frequent criticism is related to the absence of psychometric validation, limitations should also be highlighted in this regard. Assessment and intervention in prison do not always fit mathematical methodology. However, the reliability of tools needs to be discussed and addressed in more depth.
2. Target groups need to be clarified: terrorists, radicalised inmates, vulnerable inmates, recruiter inmates, inmates at risk, etc. It seems advisable not to use a single instrument for all profiles. If the same tools are to be used, it will be necessary to separate risk factors and picture different profiles.
3. Questions about which professionals are in charge of assessment, when it is delivered and the purpose of such tools are paramount, something that is not totally clear at the moment.
4. Disengagement programmes should benefit from previous risk assessments. In fact, risk levels and criminogenic needs are elements to be considered when an intervention is carried out. In this regard, there appears to be little relation between evaluations and programmes.
5. Most instruments have been implemented in the prison context for years. However, it is necessary to consider external triggers and social context as the future setting where the individual will return to.
6. Training is always needed, if only to explain the nature, factors, goals and types of assessment. Also, professionals in charge need to be specified: the roles of prison officers, psychologists and/or security staff do not appear to be clear.
7. Developers, authors and prison administrations need to share their work with researchers and universities. This could be an effective way to increase accuracy and to deliver validation initiatives not easily carried out only by prison staff.
8. There should be permanent exchange of information amongst professionals: what seems to work and what does not seem to work, as well as the achievements and use of different tools, are things to be discussed. In this respect, the role of RAN or EuroPris, as well-known European networks, is essential.
9. Some practical considerations need to be discussed and addressed: how and when to use instruments, the intelligent use of sensitive information, whether updating such information is or is not expected, and the concrete work carried out by frontline staff, amongst other relevant issues. This is closely related to the “what seems to work” approach and the clarification of intended goals.
10. Since VE poses new challenges for all EU Member States, efforts aimed at developing a European risk assessment instrument, with adaptations to particular national needs, is something well worth discussing.

## Further reading

For readers interested in more in-depth knowledge on the topic of risk assessment in prison, these are some reading suggestions:

- Monahan, J. (2012). The individual risk assessment of terrorism. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 18(2), 167-205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0025792>
- Roberts, K., & Horgan, J. (2008). Risk assessment and the terrorist. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 2(6), 3-9. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/38>
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