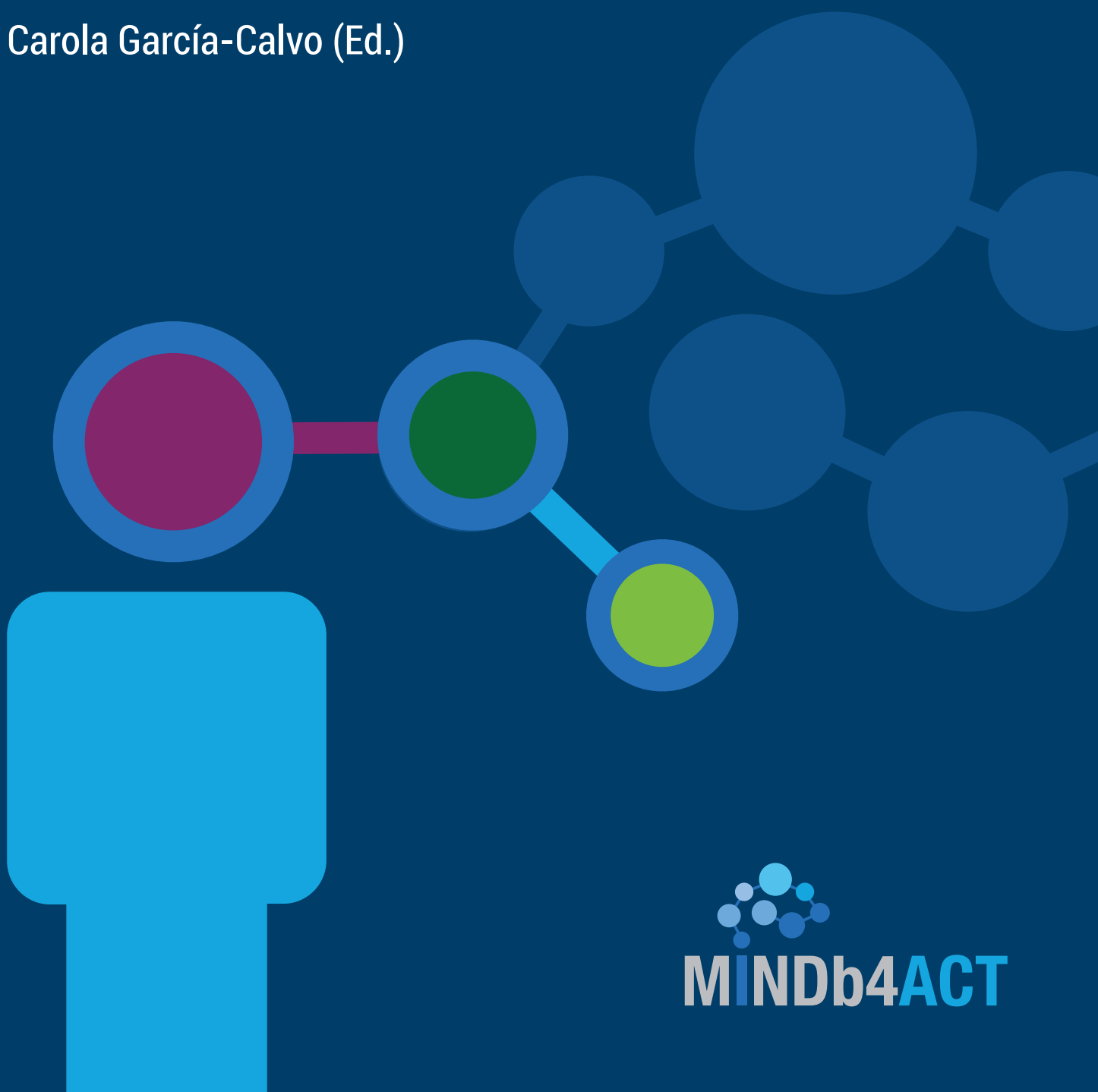Policy Paper

Preventing violent extremism: Current trends and debates in Europe

Carola García-Calvo (Ed.)

MINDb4ACT

Policy Paper

Preventing violent extremism: Current trends and debates in Europe

Editor

Carola García-Calvo, MINDb4ACT Scientific Coordinator. Senior Analyst in the Programme on Violent Radicalisation and Global Terrorism, Elcano Royal Institute, Spain.

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MINDb4ACT

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Introduction

The MINDb4ACT Project, which has been underway for three years, began its journey in the fall of 2017, shortly after the jihadist attacks in Paris and Brussels in 2015 and 2016, respectively. These attacks shook up the European citizenry, not only because of their severity, but also because the terrorists were young men attacking in the heart of Europe against the principles and values of open societies in which they themselves had been born or raised. These were the preamble of a succession of attacks – more or less sophisticated[1] – that likewise attempted to undermine the basic principles of respect for human rights and peaceful coexistence proper to liberal democratic societies, in favour of a political, social and economic model that is diametrically opposed to them. This model, defined by the ideology of jihadist Salafism, is an ultraconservative and exclusionary vision of the Islamic creed that justifies the use of violence to achieve its goal of restoring a global caliphate governed by a rigorist and totalitarian conception of Sharia law.

This intense terrorist activity sprang from the unprecedented jihadist mobilisation that started in 2012 and coincided with a wave of political upheavals in the Arab world in the context of the so-called *Arab Springs*. It reached its apogee in the civil war in Syria and the emergence of the so-called Islamic State (ISIS, as it is still known) terrorist organisation. This new matrix of global jihadism, which from its constitution presented itself as an alternative to al-Qaeda, developed audacious mobilisation strategies directed at young Muslims living in the European Union (EU). These included women, converts, and individuals with previous criminal records, who up until then had not played any major roles. In the context of those mobilisation strategies, ISIS made an intensive and novel use of the opportunities afforded by the Internet and social media to spread its message. As a result, an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 European passport holders or residents left the EU to join the ranks of active jihadist organisations, mainly in the Middle East.[2] Moreover, other manifestations of extremism, such as those linked to the far right, became more prominent in a context of increasing social polarisation.[3] All of the above forced to rethink the current preventing and countering practices, which have not proven to be effective.

The EU adopted a preventive model, in response to the 7 July 2005 attacks in London, as a way to confront the political violence within its boundaries.

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[1] For more information, see Europol's annual *EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT)* for 2016, 2017 & 2018, https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat-report

[2] Francesco Marone, " Tackling the Foreign Fighter Threat in Europe", ISPI *Dossier,* Milan: Istituto Per Gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, January 2020, https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/tackling-foreign-fighter-threat-europe-24756

[3] Europol, *TE-SAT*, ibid.

From then on, it began working in the space preceding the commission of a violent criminal act. In other words, it put the focus on the process of violent radicalisation – whether linked to the ideology of jihadist Salafism, the far right or the far left, among the many existing possibilities – by which an individual gradually embraces the radical system of beliefs that will lead him to adopt violence as a legitimate means to achieve political aims.[4]

In the context of the unprecented mobilization unleashed by the ISIS emergence, the European Commission asked for new developments in research for the understanding of current radicalisation processes, to implement more innovative and effectives approaches that take into consideration the best practices and lessons learned so far. For example, it was already clear to institutions that in order to be effective, a preventing or countering policy must include a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach in which society also played a role. The development of this whole-government and whole-society approach requires a complex architecture based on an inclusive philosophy of collaboration and exchange among a wide group of actors, stakeholders and end users with different origins, backgrounds and work cultures, such as policy makers, academics, frontline practitioners, the private sector and the security sector. In addition, the research and the needs directly identified by the frontline practitioners are the compass by which policy makers set the priorities of the political agenda and allocate resources. They bring to the forefront the need to evaluate these policies and projects based on scientific standards, not just to *know what works and what does not work*, but also as a fundamental principle of accountability.

Nevertheless, in practice, fitting all these pieces together is not without its difficulties and challenges. First of all, there remain important differences in the perception and definition of the very concept of violent radicalisation, as well as its potential as a terrorism-related threat. In addition, sometimes information does not flow in the way that the actors desire, either because of the lack of a common language or due to the lack of safe spaces and mechanisms for sharing it. Current data protection laws and professional deontological codes can also put limitations on exchanges. On the other hand, the complexity of the material in question requires very specific knowledge that has also not yet permeated all of the layers around the European system for

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[4] Fernando Reinares, "Jihadist Mobilization, Undemocratic Salafism, and Terrorist Threat in the European Union", *The Georgetown Security Studies Review, Special* Issue: What the New Administration Needs to Know About Terrorism and Counterterrorism, 70-76, http://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Reinares-Jihadist-Mobilization-Undemocratic-Salafism-and-Terrorist-Threat-in-the-European- Union.pdf

preventing violent radicalisation, and thus has not yet reached the frontline actors who are in contact with the vulnerable population. These topics and trends, among others, have been at the forefront of the European P/CVE system in recent years and are defining the response mechanisms.

The five chapters of this Policy Report cover some of the more relevant dimensions that have been the object of research in developing the MINDb4ACT project, and on which we wish to offer an applied vision combining theory and practice. Topics are also relevant because they are aligned with the research priorities flagged by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Centre of Excellence, dependent on the European Commission; the General Secretary of the United Nations (UN) and other organisations of the same system of global governance, such as the UNPD;[5] or by partnerships of excellence, as is the case of Hedayah.[6] Thus, the purpose of the document is to contribute to the improvement of the European system for preventing violent radicalisation, and also, on the global level, to provide a series of actionable recommendations directed not just at policy makers but also at practitioners and stakeholders. These are based on the research and practical experience of the contributing authors, who belong to think tanks and to organisations with extensive experience in their respective fields of research and intervention.

The first two papers refer to the collaboration between public decision makers and other relevant actors of the European system for preventing violent radicalisation. The contribution signed by Jean Luc Marret (Fondation pour recherche stratégique) focuses on the interdependence, broadly considered, between the policymaking level and research on P/CVE. To that end, the author combines concrete examples from practice and 'public policy theory'. The chapter by Elodie Rouge (European Organisation for Security) puts the focus on public-private partnerships (PPP) between policymakers (governments or EU agencies) and private technological companies working in P/CVE. In this particular case, a PPP is justified by the complexity of the task, which requires the use of state-of-the-art technological solutions, as the author argues. The third contribution, by Nicoletta

[5] See, United Nations (UN) General Assembly, "Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism", UN: 2016. Available at: **https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/L.41**Also, United Nations Development Program (UNPD): https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/peace/conflict-prevention/preventing-violent-extremism.html

[6] See: https://www.hedayahcenter.org/expertise/community-engagement/

Galllori and Serena Bianchi (AGENFOR) focuses on training frontline practitioners. The last two papers refer to cross-cutting aspects in efforts to prevent violent radicalisation: Yvonne Reif (Women Without Borders), argues in her article for policies and programmes grounded in a gendered and human-rights based model. Otherwise, she says, gender blind spots may lead to unwanted backlashes. Thus, the paper highlights a number of considerations and perspectives in the P/CVE space with a gendered lens, with practical recommendations for the inclusion of this perspective. Lastly, Álvaro Vicente and Carola García-Calvo (Elcano Royal Institute) propose the need to create a true culture of evaluation in P/CVE with standards comparable to those that exist in other spheres where public-private partnerships have also arisen.

In sum, this document is useful both for learning about the current status of some of the topics raised in academic, practical or intervention areas, and as a resource directed at a wide network of actors involved in this European system for preventing violent radicalisation. It is also useful for

incorporating new focuses and innovative practices that improve their respective approaches to the phenomenon, which is the project's ultimate aim.

Before concluding this presentation, in the name of the Elcano Royal Institute, which coordinates the MINDb4ACT H2020 project, I would like to thank not only the authors and external revisers who contributed to this Policy Report, but also the entire MINDb4ACT Consortium, which is representative of the diversity that characterizes the European P/CVE system today. Their work – and the years of productive exchanges–have borne many fruits, including this Policy Report, which is meant to help build a more cohesive and secure society

Carola García-Calvo

MINDb4ACT Scientific Coordinator

Senior Analyst, Programme on Violent Radicalisation and Global Terrorism, Elcano Royal Institute, Spain

The 'making of' P/CVE
(On policy making and research symbiosis)

Jean-Luc Marret, *Senior Fellow, Fondation pour la recherche stratégique, France*

1. Introduction

Various forms of violent extremism perpetrate terrorism – this horrible 'happening'. It is a sensitive issue for policymakers – broadly considered and with various agendas – due in part to the victims made and the media coverage. Violent extremism, leading to terrorism or not, is therefore a critical concern to them.

In recent years, many national (or local) public policies have emerged in Europe against violent extremism. Different postulates and political goals produced them: counterterrorism (CT) on one side, with its security standards, and prevention to curb violent extremism on the other.

Indeed, these last two decades, CT laws have changed with terrorism: new individual profiles (often isolated or with psychiatric conditions), evolutive terrorist practices (massive urban attacks), or online hate speech evolutions are game-changers that require new legal solutions. Prevention appeared to be an alternative solution, in particular when security appeared not to be enough, and with it, new actors and first liners. What may be called 'public security actors' (CT, intelligence and judiciary police) gradually lost their monopoly against violent extremism and terrorism, while new public policies – with a prevention purpose and a psycho-social focus – appeared with tools, concepts, doctrines, values and 'preventive actors'.

The relationship between policymaking and research – broadly considered, again – is similar to other public policies: many actors, with interests, contribute or compete to define the public agenda, composing together, here, a Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) complex or industry, in reference to the famous but old 'military complex'. This P/CVE complex is diverse by nature – a set of actors in negotiation to elaborate direct or indirect answers to counter or prevent violent terrorism, in a decision-making process; namely, the State, LEAs, experts, activists and civil society.

Amid such complexity, the purpose of this article is to focus on the interdependence between the policymaking level and research on P/CVE. To do so, we will combine concrete examples and 'public policy theory'.[1]

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[1] See for instance: Fischer, F., Miller G.J. and Sidney M.S. (eds.) (2007). *Handbook of public policy analysis: theory, politics, and methods*, Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC/Taylor & Francis.

2. Research for policymakers

From a policymaking perspective, research is never totally independent from the society in which it is carried out. By research, we mean a diverse professional community from various background and in charge of producing innovation in specific matters. It is especially true with violent extremism, a societally sensitive issue.

2.1 Research: Domestic and global perspectives

Consequently, a society's needs, its policymakers and its researchers' capacities tend to be nationally determined. It seems true for funding, conceptual frameworks (What are the priorities? Which population and theorical corpus? What sort of violent extremism?), and recruited researchers. The perception of priorities is in itself a complex issue that can be the result of collective – and therefore negotiated – decision-making. Depending on the initial institutional positions and forces, as well as the political values of the decision maker, some characteristics of violent extremism may be systematically overlooked, and others underestimated. Thus, it is noticeable to observe the systematic over-representation of P/CVE programmes against right-wing violent extremism in northern Europe. If a specific evaluation effort is beyond the scope of this article, it would be interesting to know why. Is there a real problem compared to other forms of violent extremism in northern Europe? Over-sensitivity to the phenomenon for historical reasons? Both?

The priorities may indeed be the detection of violent extremism or prevention; the populations in which to work may be youth, diaspora, unaccompanied minors, urban or peri-urban, women, or a combination of all of these. Here, for the worst affected, research will provide a justification. It will also feed into, and illustrate, ex ante policy choices.

France developed – after many other Member States (MS) – a specific national approach, by funding domestic research on a national concept: the 'sectarian approach', sometimes difficult to bring into being at the international level. This approach, now left behind, was favoured by a 'self centred' lack of capacity to integrate scientific and operational state of the art from other countries – at least at that time. It led to numerous biases – for example, an over observation of converts to radical Islam – before being abandoned two years later,[2] with great noise and after several ethical problems (intelligence scepticisms, lack of evidence, uncertain results, ethical funding issues). This 'exit-cult' approach was based on a specific French legal disposition against 'sects' that somehow contradicts some European conventions or Courts' decisions.[3] It was also a way to support a marginalised bureaucracy dedicated to the fight against sects.[4] In contrast, the emergence of specific P/CVE public policies in northern Europe was much more gradual. As a result, it had time to take root in local traditions and to address issues that were well perceived and represented[5]. The emergence of a special, country-specific public policy has taken place in a non-centralised and non-hyper-voluntary way, gradually taking into account national achievements in research and practice.

[2] Bouzard, D. (2014). *Désamorcer l'islam radical. Ces dérives sectaires qui défigurent l'islam*, Paris, éditions de l'atelier.

[3] Palmer S.J. (2008). France's "War on Sects": A Post-9/11 Update. *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions.* **11**(3): 104-120.

[4] Elise Vincent, 'Vents contraires pour Dounia Bouzar, « Mme Déradicalisation »', *Le Monde,* 23 February 2017 https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2017/02/23/vents-contraires-pour-mme-deradicalisation_5084078_3224.html

[5] Vidino, L. and Brandon, J. (2012). *Countering radicalisation in Europe*. ICSR https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ICSR-Report-Countering-Radicalization-in-Europe.pdf

The **decision-making process**, in P/CVE as in other public policies is often – if not always – characterised by strategic non-linear negotiations with N actors.[6] However, the dangerousness of violent extremism, or even terrorism, adds an acute passionate and societal dimension: the terrorist attack. In practice, this can lead to a crisis decision being taken under pressure from citizens or the media. The decision-making process is therefore both fast and reactive by definition. It can be postulated that in such a situation the security dimension prevails, especially perhaps in personified democratic regimes (presidential regime), when the head of state sometimes tends to mobilise with a 'strong-man' attitude and a war rhetoric.[7]

In a calmer, non-reactive configuration, researchers play their role, as those considered legitimate by policymakers, or recruited or self-promoted as legitimate: they support political decision-making with expertise accepted as 'objective', even if it is not, because of their status and social or bureaucratic influence. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the scientific expertise of the private sector, in such a configuration, can be intrinsically marginalised. However, this is not a universal rule among Member States, since some countries largely favour the role of civil society (e.g. Germany, The Netherlands, Scandinavian states).

However, these developments have not been without criticism. Thus, in the UK, many negative appraisals appeared against biases or choices made by practitioners (and researchers): lack of evidence, difficulty in evaluating results, ambiguities towards certain forms of radical Islamism, etc.[8] Similarly, a 'Latin' consideration of northern European research and public policy may be surprised to see how much political and scientific efforts have historically focused there on the following sorts of violent extremism – namely far-rightism and jihadism. From a western and southern European perspective, other forms of violent extremism did indeed exist, which were not taken into account by northern Europe: separatist forms of violent extremism (Basque, Corsican, Kurdish, although in decline) or forms of left-wing extremism. This, which would deserve systematic analysis, is probably indicative of a particular agenda-setting for immediate domestic political reasons: to fight and prevent the most visible, politically sensitive forms of violent extremism. It can be observed that there are no P/CVE programmes that deal with violent left-wing extremism – to our knowledge – while such violence exists, albeit to a lesser degree than other forms of violent extremism. We will argue that actors producing or participating in public policy development have not yet expressed any interest in developing tools against this violence. An analysis of the content of the public debate around the Black Blocks, which is not relevant here, would perhaps allow us to see some development of this issue. From a domestic perspective, research is sometimes guided, via funding, by State perceptions and interests (see below). Research thus becomes justificatory rather than prescriptive. It becomes a tool rather than a solution.

[6] Harrison, E.F. (1996). A process perspective on strategic decision making. *Management Decision*. **34**(1): 46-53.

[7] Rachel Bierly, 'War-Rhetoric and "Strong-Man" Politics in the Americas', *Panoramas*, 26 March 2019 https://www.panoramas.pitt.edu/news-and-politics/war-rhetoric-and-%E2%80%9Cstrong-man%E2%80%9D-politics-americas

[8] Vidino, L. and Brandon, J. (2012).

2.2 The European Union as agenda-setter and innovation sponsor

In reality, in research agenda setting, EU is a sort of positive challenger to member states. Deriving from the historical core of northern European public (and research) policies, the European Union (EU) played a dual role as continental agenda setter and innovation producer, through its multi-national programmes FP7 and H2020. If they have been and are autonomous, MS' public policies on P/CVE are all linked to different instruments and initiatives supported by the EU. Some MS drew from this initial input to implement their national strategies and programmes: a first wave (in Italy, Spain, Belgium, and France in particular), and a more recent one in eastern and south-eastern Europe.

Here, clearly, research – multi-national and most often interdisciplinary – preceded both politics and policy programming. Through cooperation mechanisms, policy instruments and high-level talks, the EU adopted some strategic documents, from 2005 onwards, to support MS on radicalisation leading to terrorism. By doing so, the EU acted as major input setter – the nexus between national research, often internationalised by being part of such programmes, and domestic policymakers made, and still make, P/CVE national policies something typically 'glocal' (global + local) – and research learnt often at an early stage from international state-of-the-art, domestic policymakers started to elaborate an agenda and domestic effort. Via a feedback loop (internationally influenced) research provided hybrid solutions, between the global state of the art and local needs and frameworks. The dissemination, a few years ago, of the so-called Aarhus model, at that time the Alpha and Omega, is possibly the best example.[9]

Since then, the EU effort is consistent and rather logical. An examination of a few research programmes shows that it has been able to display support and dissemination based on feedback from the field (practitioners and MS). This was ordered in a logical cycle of innovation:

- Thus, for example, the FP7-SAFIRE programme (2010-2013), which focused on a robust definition of radicalisation, was considered a multi-variable and non-linear process (challenges, opportunities, proof of principle).

- Then other programmes such as FP7-IMPACT-EU (2014-2017) focused on specific problems – the crime-terrorism link, radicalisation on social media, regional issues (Balkans, MENA, Africa region), and the huge and very critical issue of evaluation (programme and beneficiaries) (proof of value, impact).

- And even now there are emerging innovations (H2020 MINDb4ACT or RAN-3) (towards best practices and standards).

States and local authorities benefited from this massive innovation, an organisational capacity that sustained a flow of multiple, value-creating initiatives from coordinated research production through to the EU's meta-agenda setter.[10] This is particularly true, once again, for MS that had not yet developed a national policy. They were able to benefit from a wave of innovation coming from northern Europe and supported by the EU. The research pre-existed the European effort. It was multiplied by EU action, for instance in developing multi-national research cooperation, then relocated by some MS or public local actors (e.g. cities) in their emerging public policies. Such 'hybridity' can go very 'micro' – to the field itself: this author shaped his P/CVE programme, 'AMAL', on preventing

[9] More information available at: https://efus.eu/files/2016/09/PS_Aarhus_PreventionRadicalisation_ENG.pdf

[10] Princen, S. (2007). Agenda-setting in the European Union: a theoretical exploration and agenda for research. *Journal of European Public Policy.* **14**(1): 21-38.

jihadi recidivism in jail, by using some lessons learned from other countries – and even from the US experience on prison gangs' disengagement – while dismissing the official French 'exit cult' doctrine. Here, typically, research dismissed the national doctrine, by using international state-of-the-art research.

2.3 Research as participative actor

This does not mean, however, that research itself is by definition objective and robust, with no real (e.g. programme funding) or symbolic (e.g. the strategy of researchers to appear as legitimate experts) stakes. Thus, research can act in itself as an expert interest group in charge of legitimising the consideration of a problem (here, violent extremism) and advocating solutions considered to be objective, even robust, but which can nevertheless be as much of a problem: here, the question of the capacity of a given scientific community to embody scientific expertise, without its capacity to sell itself to prescribe, is fundamental. The researcher's social role, his or her ability to say and do what is real, will be emphasised here.

In a number of cases, a scientific community's or network's ability to take ownership of a societal issue determines – at least initially – the policy responses developed, since this scientific community has a scientific monopoly at that moment. In the hypothesis that this scientific community comes from only one field, it is then possible that it is an ontologically biased view of the problem and the solutions to be proposed. Each science or scientific corpus contains possible biases for the study of a phenomenon as complex and multi-variable as violent extremism: a sociological approach thus focuses on the perception of violent extremism as a social phenomenon, extremists as 'militant' victims of social or societal injustices, etc. A psychological approach will, by definition, be more micro- and inter-individual, and will eventually over-observe some psychological or psychiatric factors. The same applies to criminology or to the 'security' approaches.

The integration of research into public policy is thus not necessarily or entirely based on a rational assessment. For example, a cooperative network may pre-exist, encouraging the public entity from the outset to use familiar expertise, especially if it is itself public. Researchers are thus actors engaged in a competition to say and do – say the problem, with their tools, and provide solutions to policymakers who themselves have a particular agenda and values.

3. P/CVE policy for policymakers

A policymaker – for instance head of state, mayor, or civil-servant – is someone who elaborates policy, doctrine or plans, especially those carried out by a government or a local entity like a city. Thus, policymaking is exercised in many ways, and by actors with different capacities and interests to act, taking into account for example their mandate (if elected) or their functions. Incidentally, multi-level coordination between local and national policymakers is necessary to be effective.

Moreover, their policymaking action is not carried out autonomously: they act within rules (e.g. the constitution, or budgetary transparency), and with a pre-existing administrative or operational organisation or variable material resources.

3.1 Policymaking diversity and P/CVE research

Finally, there is an important framework that determines any action: a society's administrative and political organisation. A federal state may grant the capacity to act to local and regional authorities, while a highly centralised one will give an exclusive mandate to its administrative representative at the local level, in a kind of power spin-off.

There are clear examples here:

- The Länders in Germany deals with P/CVE operational programmatic issues.

- The major role of cities in this field in The Netherlands or Spain could be highlighted.[11] With significant administrative powers and capacities in these two countries, cities have developed – in all legitimacy – capacities, preventive urban policies, and P/CVE programmes.

- In contrast, France gives the essential role to the 'Préfet' (Prefect), an unelected high-ranking civil servant who represents the central state at the local level. He organises the specialised bureaucracy around him, including in connection with local civil society (NGOs, psycho-social workers), which is the French embodiment of the fusion-centre concept, so important for detecting, analysing and preventing violent radicalisation.

Another policymaking determinant is whether or not religion is taken into account by the law – ranging from explicit recognition (Germany/Spain/The Netherlands/Italy) to total secularism (France).

Policymakers are thus numerous in kind and function. This diversity leads to variable actions, with the central government contributing at the very least to providing standards or budgetary means.

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[11] See for instance: 'Amsterdam Against Radicalisation', Municipality of Amsterdam, November 15, 2007.

PVE research and policy process stages:

Whether national or local, policymakers will be keen to have methods of action selected especially for them, given their context and needs (youth, individuals returning from conflict areas, public-private partnerships, local or national programmes, various violent-extremists) to determine their decisions regarding CVE programmes. Evaluation means various things for policymakers, in association with the classical stages of the policy process:[12]

- *Agenda setting/identification of problems. Here, research can provide data on the radicalisation process, or on evaluating such a process leading toward violent extremisms or terrorism.*

- *Policy formulation. Research can help policymakers to conceptualise a policy, for instance through providing CVE examples (intervention goals, drawing on lessons from past CVE evaluations).*

- *Policy adoption/legitimisation. As said above, research can contribute by supporting legitimacy – of public actions or statements by state officials, either elected or appointed – through providing scientific analysis of CVE programmes and evaluations.*

- *Policy implementation. Research can provide data on what works in terms of CVE design, operation and communication, as well as for CVE evaluations, drawing from previous CVE evaluations.*

- *Policy assessment/evaluation. Even though its focus is more micro and operational, in supporting project- and programme-level evaluations, research can support macro evaluations on a policy level. This could be through choosing CVE methods or evaluations, or even through generalising or promoting them through public communication. As such, guidelines for planning and conducting evaluations can also be used by policymakers for purposes from choosing appropriate evaluation approaches to disseminating evaluation findings and altering policy course according to evaluation evidence.[13]*

All of this has palpable consequences: society's values determine not only the perception of a problem (in this case the prevention of violent religious extremism), but also the efforts and priorities in P/CVE: research, development, programme design, partner selection, and evaluation.

Thus, a city committed to prevention will specifically use research to find out, for example, its 'urban geography' of violent extremism. The research focus will thus necessarily be very micro, combining quantitative variables (e.g. association of the crime rate with the unemployment rate) with more qualitative variables (e.g. the nature and influence of radical religious networks and organisations, extremist socio-demographics).

National policymaking will be more interested in more global or macro variables. For example, it could carry out a meta-analysis of the local analyses above, in order to see the variants and invariants of the phenomenon taken as a whole (bottom up). It may also bring down certain scientific/operational priorities or results to determine programme development (top down). In practice, it should be noted that such a top-down perspective requires, in a centralised MS, that there be no factual or conceptual error, otherwise the base will apply/duplicate the error that comes from the centre. Thus, in France, the dissemination of the

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[12] Fischer, F., Miller, G.J., and Sidney, M.S. (2007).

[13] Marret, J-L., Bellasio, J., van den Berg, H., van Gorp, A., van Hemert, D., Leone, L., Meijer, R., Warnes, R., & Van Wonderen, R. (2017). EU Report. Final report providing background for using and further developing the validated toolkit. FP7-IMPACT-EU, 30 June 2017.

'exit-cult' doctrine – which was not in line with international scientific achievements or other MS' practices – was an error that had to be corrected.

Conversely, it is likely that a local authority whose administrative law guarantees a certain autonomy, including in the field of P/CVE, will not have the R&D resources of an MS. It should be emphasised that networking between cities enables them to acquire a critical mass of funding and expertise to develop research and, ultimately, robust P/CVE tools. The most institutionalised and famous examples, here, are certainly *the Strong Cities Network, the European Forum for Urban Security (EFUS)*, and *European Cities against Radicalization* (a DG Home network launched in 2019). Generally, these networks involve mayors, municipal-level policymakers and practitioners united in building social cohesion and community resilience to counter or prevent violent extremism in all its forms.[14] *The Cities for Local Integration Policies* (CLIP) project, which took place from 2007 to 2011, can also be brought up here as a pioneer initiative that focused on intercultural relations.

3.2 Policymaking and P/CVE evaluation

Evaluation seems to be at the heart of the relationship between policymakers and research. It is true that the stakes are critical: justifying the use of public money requires being able to evaluate quantitatively and qualitatively the P/EVC programmes selected and carried out. Even more sensitively, the beneficiaries' post-programme evaluation is fundamental: here it is a question not only of having a precise notion of their potential for peaceful reintegration into society, but also – as a precautionary principle – of their residual dangerousness.

Therefore, policymakers have a role as evaluators. They must be able to prove to voters and citizens that funding a public policy on P/CVE, a policy that becomes concrete and operational, is worth the money it costs. This refers to the need for communication of rationale and the establishment of a comprehensive evaluation. Therefore, policymakers have an evaluative role. Here, through a feedback loop, research will regain its place to produce expertise on justification and evaluation tools, which will be used for illustrative purposes.

In the P/CVE area, the evaluation focuses on two distinct aspects, the programmes and the beneficiaries:

- Programme evaluation is probably the least sensitive and probably the most rewarding aspect of a political or policymaking action. Among other variables, the number of radicalised individuals who have gone through a programme will allow the policymaker to justify his/her action on the basis of this simple number, a real mass effect. In this case, success is superficial, a simple quantitative variance minimal enough to be superficial. Indeed, whether x individuals have benefited from a P/CVE programme (or P/CVE training) does not provide any qualitative data on success, residual dangerousness assessment or understanding of the training provided. Research, at this stage, can help the policymaker by evaluating and proposing the best tools to measure a programme's performance. Several classic assessment tools from audit or management can be applied here, although some constraints may exist in the P/CVE – such as data protection or anonymity, which are potential ethical or legal constraints.

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[14] Strong Cities Network. What is the Strong Cities Network? https://strongcitiesnetwork.org/en/about-the-scn/

- Evaluating the impact of a P/CVE programme on individuals (e.g. beneficiaries or victims) is much more convoluted. However, this evaluation is critical, since in practice, the political or electoral (and obviously human) costs of seeing a beneficiary leaving a programme to commit an act of terrorism is the worst-case scenario. Such possibility is the ultimate challenge for practitioners, researchers and policymakers alike. If researchers can tolerate a marginal recidivism as a 'statistical variable' – a horrible term, given its bloodiness – it is a different matter for the policymaker, and therefore for practitioners. As much as the policymaker can benefit from a positive political-media impact by communicating on the creation of a P/CVE programme, such a case would be a failure with possibly dramatic effects for him/her. Conversely, the media coverage of ex-violent extremists and their public confession is likely to give real or symbolic gains for the practitioners and the policymaker behind the programme. Between crisis communication and public relations, the P/CVE offers the policymaker a contrasting alternative.

The tools used to assess beneficiaries are most often micro-individuals. Indeed, a non interdisciplinary sociological approach will focus on the social facts determining an individual or group of individuals to become radicalised and to fall into a form of violent extremism. It will ignore other factors, such as psychological factors. There are in fact a large number of assessment tools, often derived from clinical psychology or criminology. Some tools suitable for the assessment of violent extremism, in particular Vera2-R, among others, will be mentioned here, but these tools often have inherent flaws, for example related to the length of time needed for their use in the operational field. They are also sometimes somewhat static and tend to underestimate some of the reactions of beneficiaries of P/CVE programmes in certain considerations. For example, the frustration produced by detention sometimes produces self- or hetero-aggressive behavioural issues.

Here, clearly, there may be an appreciation divergence between policymakers, researchers and practitioners in charge of using the assessment tool(s) in the field. Experience has shown that in some countries (in France in particular), practitioners are sometimes more inclined to write clinical assessments in the form of an analytical text, rather than filling in boxes that can be exploited by automatic computer processing. Whatever the scientific validity of an evaluation tool or the policymaker's interest in using it, practitioners must also find something to gain from it.

A binary 'Yes' and 'No' evaluation, to put into grids, may be too 'implicating' for first line practitioners. In truth, the field evaluator, face to face with the beneficiary on a daily basis, will have to bear the consequences of his evaluation, more than the policymaker or researcher who intervened upstream to introduce the evaluation protocol:

"The objectives of researchers are sometimes too far removed from, or even contradictory to, those of practitioners. Some are interested in 'why' while others need to know 'how'. The first group may try to understand the association between different types of social, psychological, anthropological, cultural or religious variables in order to describe the process of violent radicalization. The second group looks for robust operational methods that offer concrete means of helping their beneficiaries to distance themselves from violent ideology."[15]

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[15] Marret, J-L., Bellasio, J., van den Berg, H., van Gorp, A., van Hemert, D., Leone, L., Meijer, R., Warnes, R., & Van Wonderen, R. (2017).

In other words, the evaluation process must be a shared one from the outset, considering – as a determining variable – the constraints of use and practitioners' work culture.

To complicate matters, and to emphasise once again that evaluation is a sensitive, technical and contextual issue, policymakers waiting for an evaluation to make a decision will have a different perspective depending on their hierarchy level and focus – urban/local, regional or national. Observation and evaluation change with distance and the size of the beneficiary population.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

P/CVE is public policy like any other in many respects. It responds to a societal need – security through prevention – perceived by citizens. It stems from political-administrative decision-making, using science or expertise as a substrate, before addressing practitioners. However, both policymakers and researchers are acting within the framework – and among other actors – of a rather classic decision-making process.

Using an analogy drawn from the field of public policy theory, we can say that the P/CVE 'industry' has now reached a point of maturity. Some concepts may be in decline (radicalisation?); others may be emerging. Specialised administrations are being set up in the MS. The links between policymaking and research have thus become commonplace. This does not mean that they are fluid, that information flows perfectly between these two worlds. Each has its own objectives and capacities, but also its own interests, in a way 'below' the general interest which considers that disengagement should be a success.

With this in mind, we suggest a few recommendations for policymaking – a tryptic of innovation-threat-communication:

- Research innovation: The choice of a team of researchers should always be mindful of possible biases in recruitment – such as over-representation of a single speciality (sociology, psychology, theology) – or in the design of the requested study. When one looks only for social explanatory factors, that is all one finds. Here, employing a team that is already known may have certain advantages, but also disadvantages. The ubiquitous researcher, or one in a position of strength, is not necessarily the best or most innovative.

- Insofar as research, in particular applied research, precedes policymaking, the latter should include and have the capacity to observe scientific developments and advances in P/CVE. This will enable it to integrate possible advances which may be useful, or even highly innovative, for programmes already active or under development. Detecting innovation requires a methodical observation of the scientific networks working on P/CVE. It goes without saying that from the perspective that the policymaker (e.g. local) should only duplicate locally a nationally defined programme, this dimension is probably less sensitive.

- The selection of partners or practitioners is also a critical step for the policymaker. Under the rule of law, financial and ethical procedures exist to guide this choice. Within this framework, the choice of partners must be open and truly competitive. We believe that routine is a recipe for failure. A regular partner will find an additional motivation in competition. Here research can make a contribution to the evaluation of exit skills. The worst thing is the employment of usual partners, who have been working for a long time in a different field (e.g. foreign training of young people in the city) and who, by their omnipresence and legitimacy, 'slip' professionally into the field of P/CVE, without any real competence in the matter.

- Threat assessment is critical to policymaking. If it is likely that the security services (police), or psycho-social services can and should contribute their analysis, it is up to the policymaker to concretise these developments or threat appearances in preventive programmes. Concretely, if the wave of intense recruitment by IS is declining, one should ideally think, as a precautionary principle, about the next possible wave of recruitment and violent radicalisation of recruitment (the Sahel crisis, while being critical for local States, is not mobilising in Europe as the Syrian crisis did during its climax). Of course, this not only applies to violent religious forms. Probably here, research has only a supporting interest of the relevant operational services.

- Communication is a fundamental dimension of policymaking. It enables an action, a programme, but also – of course – its results to be publicised. Given the sensitivity of the prevention of violent extremism, this communication must be well mastered, and sometimes resembles crisis communication. In this case, the policymaker must be prepared to justify a failure, or, more realistically, to accompany a failure (in particular the occurrence of an attack, or worse still, one by an individual who has been through a P/CVE programme) with adaptation measures: the exercise will then consist of drawing systematic conclusions from this dramatic situation according to the circumstances and priorities. From a crisis communication perspective, research can be used to objectify problems and solutions. It then becomes a tool for 'objectifying' legitimisation.

- Finally, policymaking should systematically rely on research for the design and implementation of evaluation tools. It is likely that poor policymaking will focus on setting up a P/CVE programme to benefit from media coverage on a very sensitive societal issue, but will forget about ex-post evaluation – assessment of programme performance and evaluation of beneficiaries at the end of the programme.

Public-Private Partnership and P/CVE: When policymakers and private technological companies work together on preventing radicalisation to counter violent extremism

Elodie Reuge, Crisis Management Project Manager, European Organisation for Security, Belgium

1. Introduction: The concept of Public-Private Partnership

A public-private partnership (PPP) exists when the public sector (federal, tribal, state, or local officials and agencies) joins with the private sector (families, employers, citizens, philanthropies, the media, civic groups, service providers, and community-based organisations) to pursue a common goal.[1] PPPs involving cooperative research and development between industry, government, and universities can contribute to national missions in health, energy, the environment and national defence and to the nation's ability to capitalise on its R&D investments. When expanded internationally, PPPs can also contribute to identifying and responding to common problems. There is a wide experience of formal and informal cooperation between public and private in national-security-sensitive sectors. Practices have been established, for example regarding information sharing and trust building, confidentiality and compliance at domestic and international levels.[2] Although partnerships are diverse in structure, mechanisms and goals, the ultimate aim of a PPP is to pool competences, experiences and resources to achieve a common objective that could not be reached if pursued through separate and independent actions. Besides this overall aim, both public and private actors pursue specific interests through PPPs. In the context ofMINDb4ACT, the focus of the paper concerning what is meant by public-private partnership will be placed between policymakers (Governments or EU agencies) and private technological companies working on the issues of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).

2. Public-Private Partnership in the context of P/CVE

2.1 The rationale for a PPP in the context of P/CVE

In the field of P/CVE one important reason to implement PPPs is that the threat represented by violent extremism does not exclusively concern the nation-state but rather the society as a whole. A criminal environment disrupts economic activities, discourages local or foreign direct investments and diminishes the rate of growth, thus representing a barrier to normal businesses operating under the rule of law.[3] A close collaboration between public and private entities is therefore necessary to better knowing, preventing and responding to the threat of violent extremism. In particular, successful partnerships tend to be characterised

[1] Relave, N. and Deich, S. (2007). A Guide to Public Private Partnerships for Youth Programs. *The Finance Project.* January 2007: p.8. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED499567.pdf

[2] Hardouin, P. (2009). Banks governance and public-private partnership in preventing and confronting organized crime, corruption and terrorism financing. *Journal of Financial Crime.* 16(3): 199-209.

[3] Ibid.

by clear objectives, cost sharing, and learning through sustained evaluations of measurable outcomes, as well as the application of the lessons learned to programme operations.

In the case of P/CVE, a PPP is justified by the complexity of the task which requires the use of state-of-the-art technological solutions.

The fusion of different data streams is necessary to construct complex models capable of providing indicators of radicalisation both at micro and macro level. Models then need to be field-tested to verify their accuracy and predictive power. Micro-level models are aimed at identifying the risk of radicalisation of single individuals or small groups of people; macro level models focus on structural (cultural and societal) drivers of radicalisation. Both statistical and machine-learning-based tools can be employed to identify subjects at risk. Data cleaning, labelling, fusion, and analysis requires tools and competences provided mostly by the private sector, while data collection is a task often shared by the private and public sector.

A key requisite for a successful development and deployment of models with different levels of granularity is the cooperation of diverse, specialised competences from different ecosystems such as law enforcement, industry, academia, and in some cases even defence. International cooperation may be necessary to employ local teams' expertise. Models, especially if machine learning-based, need to be maintained to ensure adherence with changed boundary conditions.

Given the complexity of the challenge, a structured partnership between the private and the public sector is necessary to ensure a comprehensive approach capable of accessing reliable data sources (from social media content to foreign publications, to external intelligence), identifying operational requirements, implementing and maintaining data pools, and receiving feedback from operators on the field. Without a continuous, structured interaction among the different public and private stakeholders it is not possible to provide meaningful and unbiased data to the solutions developers, and to verify the accuracy of the predictions once the solutions are deployed.

A PPP on P/CVE needs to be structured in a way that addresses all the different nodes of the value chain, from identification of requirements, to gap analysis, research and development, and capabilities testing. In consideration of the importance that Artificial-Intelligence-based technologies will have in providing optimal solutions, appropriate governance must be implemented at PPP level to ensure adherence to ethical principles and avoidance of bias.

A European PPP in the P/CVE domain will also need to include among its public stakeholders the European Commission. The Commission's role will be key when dealing with R&I funding and policymaking.

3. Concrete examples of PPPs in the field of P/CVE

In the last few years various PPPs have been established in order to prevent and counter violent extremism. These initiatives vary in form and composition, but they all highlight the importance of bringing together industrial and public resources for public security purposes.

The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), established in 2017, regroups companies with the vision of "preventing terrorists and violent extremists from exploiting digital platforms"[4] with the aim of

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[4] Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism https://gifct.org/

disrupting terrorist abuse of member's digital platforms. The GIFCT will shortly become an "independent organization capable of sustaining and deepening industry collaboration and capacity while incorporating the advice of key civil society and government stakeholders."[5] In the field of P/CVE, one of the GIFCT's key partners is Tech Against Terrorism, a PPP launched by the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (UN CTED) in 2016. Tech Against Terrorism focuses on supporting smaller tech platforms to tackle terrorist exploitation of their services whilst respecting human rights. Indeed, the displacement of terrorist activity from larger platforms has accelerated the trend towards exploitation of the smaller platforms. In addition, the smaller tech platforms are often particularly vulnerable because they do not necessarily have the resources or know-how to tackle this alone. To deal with these vulnerabilities, Tech Against Terrorism works closely with UN Member States to provide practical resources and guidance whilst promoting knowledge sharing within the tech industry and seeks to develop links between the tech sector, government, civil society and academia in the domain of counter-terrorism.

A proxy for PPPs in the area of security technologies at the European level is represented by the PPP on cybersecurity. The partnership, launched in 2016 under the Commission's research and innovation programme Horizon 2020, also includes members from national, regional and local public administrations, research centres and academia. Its aim is to foster cooperation at early stages of the research and innovation process and to build cybersecurity solutions for various sectors, such as energy, health, transport, and finance.[6]

In the same year Europol initiated a close collaboration between law enforcement experts, the private sector and academia through the creation of the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) on terrorism and propaganda. The aim is to connect counter terrorism experts from different fields of expertise allowing them to exchange knowledge on recent developments in counter terrorism.[7] As the operations centre and hub of expertise, the ECTC also provides operational support upon request from EU Member States for investigations.

In May 2019 the G7 government and tech industry leaders met in Paris to discuss how to curb the spread of terrorism and extremism online. This initiative highlights the crucial need to enhance cooperation between public and private authorities to counter the complex threat represented by violent extremism. Among other commitments, collaborative work across industry, governments, educational institutions, and NGOs was agreed on, to develop a shared understanding of the contexts in which terrorist and violent extremist content is published and to improve technology to detect and remove terrorist and violent extremist content more effectively and efficiently.[8]

4. What is at stake in terms of security technologies

Over the last decade new threats have emerged all over the globe. These new and complex threats, no longer purely military in nature, ignore state borders and target European interests both outside and within EU territory. To deal with these threats, new technological solutions, such as European databases integrating external and internal security information related to terrorism or tracing criminality financing services, are needed. As the European Group of Personalities in the field of Security stated, "technology itself cannot guarantee security, but security without the support of technology is impossible".[9] This quote illustrates how on the one hand information and communications technology (ICT), biotechnology, neuroscience and nanotechnology contribute to the development of important counter-terrorist strategies and on the other

[5] https://gifct.org/about/

[6] European Comission (2016). *Commission Decision to establish a contractual public private partnership on cybersecurity (cPPP)*. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/commission-decision-establish-public-private-partnership-cybersecurity-cppp

[7] Europol. (2019). *Terrorism evolving: insights from research.* https://www.europol.europa.eu/events/terrorism-evolving-insights-research

[8] Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (2019). *Actions to Address the Abuse of Technology to Spread Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content.* https://gifct.org/press/actions-address-abuse-technology-spread-terrorist-and-violent-extremist-content/

hand that one should be realistic about their impact.[10] Finally, as mentioned previously, data analytics and artificial intelligence techniques will increasingly represent the core technological tool for addressing these type of threats.

Security technologies are indeed a potential powerful means of social control by the state and there are anticipated and unanticipated social consequences to their use.[11] The search for a balance between security, especially in the counter-terrorism arena, and fundamental rights is therefore a crucial topic when it comes to implementing security technologies for counter extremism purposes. In this context the industry is expected by EU leaders to address the challenges posed by systems that allow terrorists to communicate in ways that competent authorities cannot access, including end-to-end encryption, while safeguarding the benefits that these systems bring for the protection of privacy, data and communication. For instance, given that the use of modern technology makes it easy and very quick to transfer money worldwide, new technological solutions aimed at better tracing and investigating money flows supporting radicalisation should be developed. However, since this may raise issues of privacy and data protection or standardisation in information and interoperability which represents a clear barrier to information sharing, a close collaboration between public and private authorities, particularly between governments and tech companies, can help in finding the optimum balance between security and fundamental rights. In fact, since the technological solutions developed by private companies have to comply with a legal framework set out by governmental authorities, it is of primary importance that both actors understand one another's needs and act accordingly in order to solve common problems.

5. Current security technologies

Many security technologies are already operating in the field of P/CVE. Surveillance information technologies and personal data processing are the building blocks of a large part of the EU counter-terrorism strategy.[12] Evidence suggests for example that combining information from different sources such as passenger name records or social media activity may prove very useful in determining whether the activity identified is indeed indicative of foreign fighter or other terrorist activities. Similarly, social media analysis is extremely important for tackling the root causes of extremism and hate online. For instance, in order to deprive extremists of realising their communication goals, solutions such as government censorship or media self-censorship may not be practicable. Therefore, content moderation, counter-narratives and counter-messaging aimed at potential followers of extremist groups should be prioritised in the struggle against violent extremism. Within this context, the tech industry can play a key role in facilitating the transfer of scientific knowledge to real products in order to prevent, identify and respond to the threats posed by violent extremism. Social media platforms that extremists exploit have indeed become crucial stakeholders in the governance of extremism. This means that companies such as Facebook, Twitter and Google have become important actors in countering extremism on the platforms they run. For example, Facebook has developed in house technologies and protocols,[13] is working with civil society for counter messaging and anti hate

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[9] Research for a Secure Europe. Report of the Group of Personalities in the field of Security Research (2004), p.12. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/security/pdf/gop_en.pdf

[10] Eijkman, Q. (2012). Counter-Terrorism, Technology and Transparency: Reconsidering state accountability? The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) - The Hague. 3(1).

[11] Bruggeman, W. (2011). The Boundaries and the Future of Technological Control: Technological control has its limits on ethical ground, but also from a social control point of view. In de Pauw, E., Ponsaers, P., and van der Vijver, K. (eds.). *Technological Led Policing. Cahier Politiestudies*. 20(3):127-164.

[12] Hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), February 2010, Counter-Terrorism Policy and Data Protection, p.6, available at: https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/resources/docs/edps_counterterrorismanddataprotection.pdf

work,[14] and moderates content and suspends users where necessary. Content moderation also involves multiple stakeholders that include governments (particularly law enforcement), industry and civil society. For example, Internet Referral Units run by police organisations such as Europol and London's Metropolitan Police play an important role in encouraging platforms to take down content.[15]

The need to include tech companies in the fight against violent extremism is widely acknowledged by EU politicians. At the European Council of June 2017, EU leaders called on the industry to help combat terrorism and crime online. Specifically, EU leaders expect industry to establish an industry forum and to improve the automatic detection and removal of terrorist related content. This should be complemented by the relevant legislative measures at EU level, if necessary.[16] Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that those who develop new technological services and those who use them on the ground come to closely interact and to exchange new insights and perspectives on the optimum way to deconstruct and delegitimise extremist narratives and propaganda. It is also extremely important to ensure a high degree of situational awareness among public and private actors at the European level, for instance by developing and maintaining European databases integrating external and internal security information related to terrorism. In addition, the use of artificial intelligence techniques to learn from those data and suggest course of actions, therefore helping in the decision-making process, should be encouraged.

6. Policy recommendations

- To launch a European PPP in the P/CVE domain either in a stand-alone manner or, in consideration of the key role of data analytics and artificial intelligence, as part of a dedicated security pillar within the planned European PPP in artificial intelligence.

- To ensure that new technological solutions developed by tech companies are effectively used on the ground for public security purposes, it would be desirable that tech companies also offer resources and training to LEAs and first-line practitioners on the optimum way to use their services. This could be done within the framework of a PPP since tech companies would get specific benefits and incentives (opportunity to influence national legislation and obligatory standards, access public funds or public sector knowledge and confidential information, etc.).

- If the intent is to bring together industrial and public resources for public security purposes, then it is necessary to establish long-term relationships between industry and public authorities. Such relationships must go beyond a pure client-supplier format and should include building trust and bidirectional knowledge sharing in order to identify and respond to relevant common threats.

- Similarly, since the technological solutions developed by private companies have to comply with a legal framework set out by governmental authorities, it is of primary importance that both actors

[13] Facebook (2017). Hard Questions: How We Counter Terrorism. https://about.fb.com/news/2017/06/how-we-counter-terrorism/

[14] Life After Hate (2019). Life After Hate working with Facebook to help individuals leave behind hate groups. https://www.lifeafterhate.org/blog/2019/3/27/life-after-hate-working-with-facebook-to-help-individuals-leave-behind-hate-groups

[15] Vieth, K. (2019). Policing 'Online Radicalization': The Framing of Europol's Internet Referral Unit. In Wagner, B., Kettemann, M., and Vieth, K. (eds) *Research Handbook on Human Rights and Digital Technology*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

[16] European Council Council of the European Union. (2016). *European Council conclusions on security and defence.* https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/06/22/euco-security-defence/

understand one another's needs and priorities. Organising frequent face-to-face meetings may facilitate such understanding.

- It is extremely important to ensure a high degree of situational awareness among public and private actors at the European level, for instance by developing and maintaining European databases integrating external and internal security information related to terrorism. In addition, the use of artificial intelligence techniques to learn from those data and suggest course of actions, therefore helping in the decision-making process, should be encouraged.

7. Conclusion

This paper aims to underline the importance of the development of Public-Private Partnerships in the context of P/CVE. Industry and public entities together can play a crucial role in addressing the threats posed by radicalisation and violent extremism characterising our contemporary society. Moreover, bidirectional knowledge sharing is nowadays needed to identify and respond to relevant threats. The collaboration between these actors can improve the ability to counter violent extremism. The initiatives described above highlight the importance of bringing together industrial and public resources for public security purposes. To do so, it is necessary to establish long-term relationships between industry and public authorities, thus going beyond a pure client-supplier relationship.

The importance of knowledge transfer through training activities of P/CVE first-line practitioners

Nicoletta Gallori, *Project Manager, Trainer & Senior Researcher, AGENFOR International, Italy/Switzerland*

Serena Bianchi, *Project Manager & Junior Researcher, AGENFOR International, Italy/ Switzerland*

1. Theme

The purpose of this policy report is to provide recommendations to policymakers for improving their Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) approaches in relation to knowledge transfer/training of first-line practitioners.

One of the main pillars in the search to innovate and create new knowledge is the development of the human resource through training courses. In the past, training courses have been classified as one of the most popular knowledge transfer methods.[1] Even though knowledge transfer is a very popular topic and has been studied, some gaps still need to be filled to attain full comprehension of knowledge transfer and how the influencing factors affect its results.[2] Specifically, in the field of training courses, the transfer of knowledge has become a current activity in the planning and operations of all organisations and institutions, and something in which they have also invested plenty of money.[3] Organisations and institutions have reached a consensus on the fact that the human resource plays a vital role. They invest huge amounts of money in training subjects in the search for improving their operational indicators.[4] Training courses are expensive for organisations in terms of time and money. However, most of them simply calculate the impact and return of their investment by evaluating learning, without considering performance, even if the intention of a training programme is the improvement of organisational performance and not only the individual acquisition of knowledge.[5]

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[1] Brennenraedts, R., Bekkers, R. N. A., & Verspagen, B. (2006). The different channels of university-industry knowledge transfer: empirical evidence from biomedical engineering. (ECIS working paper series; Vol. 200604). Technische Universiteit Eindhoven; Bekkers, R.R., & Freitas, I.M. (2008). Analysing knowledge transfer channels between universities and industry: To what degree do sectors also matter? Research Policy, 37, 1837-1853; Arnold, E., Knee, P., Brown, N., Jávorka, Z., Giarracca, F., & Sidiqui, S. (2012). Knowledge transfer from public research organisations. STOA - Science and Technology Options Assessment. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2012/488798/IPOL-JOIN_ET(2012)488798_EN.pdf

[2] Zhao, Z., & Anand, J. (2009). A multilevel perspective on knowledge transfer: evidence from the Chinese automotive industry. Strategic Management Journal, Vol. 30, No. 9, pp. 959-983.

[3] ATD Research, 2016.

[4] Raji, & Khan (2016). Human resource development through training and development: A case study of HAL Lko. International journal of applied research, 2, 353-359.

[5] Griffin, R. (2012). A practitioner friendly and scientifically robust training evaluation approach. Journal of Workplace Learning V.24 (6).

2. Introduction

Over the past few years P/CVE trainings and materials have been significantly increasing, due to a higher awareness from European and national institutions, as well as public opinion, of the importance of implementing a prevention strategy to tackle radicalism and terrorism. However, the progress is not uniform, since some countries have suffered more from terrorist attacks while others, especially from Eastern Europe, almost did not experience the threat. The difference of legislation between the European countries in terms of preventive measures, but also criminal law, determines a variable scenario of tools and opportunities. The number of trainings for each entity depends on the size of the structure and the personnel involved. Regarding the typology of trainings, some entities decide to deliver them through classroom lessons, others only with online platforms, but often the two modalities are combined (synchronic and a-synchronic). Technological and digital innovation has facilitated the creation of online platforms and databases able to collect useful information for the trainings, teaching material, and to evaluate the results. Despite these remarkable improvements, the digital domain also poses further challenges in terms of data protection, data management and ethical standards.

Transnational entities, such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have contributed to training Law Enforcement Agencies' personnel (LEAs), civil society and teachers. Despite the fact that some of the trainings fit into one of the following domains (prisons, local initiatives, schools, the internet/media), others cannot be limited to one specific sector. A multi faceted approach would always be desirable to interlink different stakeholders that must necessarily work on a comprehensive strategy.

3. Analysis

3.1. Agenfor International knowledge transfer/training experience

As has emerged from previous research carried out,[6] responses to radicalisation vary from country to country, depending on the national legislative framework, the diverse preventive practices and the different ways of implementing national and European laws and regulations, as part of the mandates of the agencies involved. In addition, it is important to design courses for a wide variety of users, composed of welfare and educational agencies, ministries of justice, and ministries of the interior, as well as the private sector, according to the methodological framework of the European Security Agenda. For this reason courses of European scope in the field of P/CVE require a flexible and up-scalable methodological model, capable of responding to all the different needs of users and jurisdictions.

The Council of the European Union recently approved the new 'Strategies on preventing and combating radicalisation in prisons and on the management of violent terrorists and extremists after release' (9366/19). Top priority on the Council's agenda, the fight against terrorism and radicalisation poses continuous challenges with a view to a multi-agency, public-private approach at European level and in cross-border regions. The threat assessment on counterterrorism has highlighted the urgent need to identify effective enforcement measures and reintegration projects in the light of the fact that many violent extremist

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[6] DERAD (DG-Justice) & TRAINING AID (DG-Home); H2020 ProjectMINDb4ACT

prisoners or those accused of terrorism will be released in the next two years. The conclusions of the European Council, where the Justice Ministers of the 28 Member States sit, identified the initiatives with the most impact, called 'good practice', in various areas, including training. Among the most important training activities were those implemented by EU agencies and networks (CEPOL and RAN) and the European project DERAD, which identified the latter as the standard in legal training.

Agenfor International has developed significant experience in knowledge transfer/training activities of first-line practitioners in the field of P/CVE. The courses implemented over the years, in collaboration with the Italian Ministry of Justice (IT-MoJ), have aimed at preventing the escalation of radicalisation in the prison environment and have helped prisoners and probationers, who are often exposed to jihadist recruitment or self-radicalisation, to overcome the different problems and push factors usually exploited by recruiters, aspects that the DERAD project aimed to approach. The courses have been implemented within two different EU-funded projects: DERAD & TRAINING AID, respectively from DG Justice and DG Home. Another important objective was the formalisation of an inter-agency group, for cross-sectors specialised in dealing with radicalised detainees. The specific project actions were directed to create original content for the training of 55 European trainers with e-learning modalities on the phenomenon of radicalisation and to organise cascade training activities in 27 countries. The course included different modules: radicalisation in prison, evolution of prevention in Europe, evolution of policing models, juridical tools for disengagement, and exit strategies. For implementing the courses, a new European online e-learning platform has been implemented - HERMES[7]- in collaboration with one of the partners involved in different EU-projects and collaborating with Agenfor International (České vysoké učení technické contro Praze - CVUT). The platform contains not only the content of the Training of the Trainers (ToT), but also the content of every national course in Europe. The training was delivered through classroom lessons and online courses. Many of the trainings were tailored for the personnel of the prison and probation service. This material is currently available in the HERMES platform both in English and in the national languages of the practitioners trained. Well-established and prestigious forums such as RAN were involved in the dissemination of the training opportunities offered by DERAD. The HERMES platform has already been adopted in the project JSAFE (co-funded by DG Justice), and this will guarantee that the platform will be up and running well beyond 2021. Moreover, HERMES has recently been adopted in the framework of the recently funded project JPCOOPS (DG Justice). Under the JPCOOPS activities, HERMES will be updated and improved through the running of a new testing site. HERMES is also already part of the H2020 projectMINDb4ACT for the anticipated training activities. Up to now, HERMES includes about 3,000 users across 26 countries. Six new modules will be available in the national languages of the 26 countries involved.

3.2. Lessons learned

The main lesson learned concerns the difficulties of combining the national competences on security and radicalisation with the obligation to comply with the implementation of the EU Decisions within the framework of a juridical area focused on prevention. The lack of a clear and shared definition of radicalisation, accompanied by a European legislative vacuum on 'prevention', have made it extremely difficult to provide a comprehensive solution valid for all Member States. The solution was indeed found thanks to the technical possibilities of the HERMES platform, which offers the opportunity to customise courses at a national

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[7] www.traininghermes.eu

level. Therefore, as previously highlighted, Agenfor International implemented a technical solution based upon the centrality of the trainer and the course: each trainer (or each Member State) has the possibility to customise its own training course, in line with the national plan on radicalisation and framed within the national legislation adopted, resorting to a common database of e-content (video, cases, best practices, legislation). Up-scalability, flexibility and centrality of the trainer are the key factors which offered a practical solution. The second most urgent lesson learned, which was important to address, concerns the difficulties of properly compiling the "transfer certificates", when profiling data on radical behaviours are available. The third key lesson learned relates to the data management: how to technically consider data produced from the observation of radical dynamics, who can manage it, and to what extent this information impacts on the rehabilitation programmes. In order to address all these problems in a comprehensive way, Agenfor International fixed a strategic framework common to all courses: 1) Compliance with the EU framework (mainly EU Decisions and Directives, but also ECJ and ECHR rulings) and 2) Complementarity between judicial and police cooperation. Based upon these fundamental principles, a free space for each trainer to adapt the practices to their national legislations was produced.

The security of the established order of the Member States requires the development of a single front, which also moves from a homogeneous basic formation, in contrast to the concrete danger arising from the tragic consequences that violent radicalism can generate. With the DERAD project, for the first time in the history of the European institutions, the Council of the EU finally recognises that the Department of the Italian Penitentiary Administration (with the fundamental support of Agenfor International) has a leading role in the project of legislative and training homogenisation.

4. Technology and Training activities

Development trends in e-learning are leaning towards continual growth that keeps pace with the growing digital literacy of the population and with the explosion of social networks and new technologies in 3D virtual environments. Agenfor International sees these new training trends as a potential technological solution to reconcile the diverse needs into a flexible unity.

The Virtual Reality product being developed is a new simulator which aims to train police forces on digital and mobile forensics through virtual reality, developing different scenarios. While theory provides an extremely good basis for learning, situation /context based experience within prisons or different real operative environments is where authentic learning can be implemented and higher-level metacognitive activities, such as planning and evaluation, and critical and creative thinking, can take place, facilitating the application of knowledge and skills.

The product reproduces a virtual prison cell scenario, where the prison staff can enter, searching for micro mobile phones and learning step by step how to apply the procedures to maintain the integrity of the forensic chain.

However, from this initial but highly qualitative product, Agenfor plans to step to a new Multi-Player Virtual Reality System to allow human interaction within diverse virtual environments. M-P VRS is the most innovative technologies in the market, usually deployed in high-quality entertainment and cinema. M-P VRS uses body tracking to generate animations and camera movements. This will be a portable and user-friendly system equipped with a full-body detection camera without requiring additional sensors. This new VR technology will have a dual function: training and production of 'cold' data for scenario awareness.

A video reproduction of the product can be found at https://youtu.be/sVB5exQwPAA

The development of solutions involving the use of new technologies to serve security within prisons aims, among other initiatives, to implement the training processes of the prison staff through the introduction of virtual and augmented reality, exploiting the advantages of digital transformation. Thanks to the aid of tools such as motion detectors, virtual reality viewers, joypads and interactive displays, greater user involvement is possible. The objective is to put in place procedures which simulate major critical events within the penitentiary buildings. These tools will be an innovative way of training prison staff, allowing workers to achieve a high level of situational awareness by rehearsing the need to plan, according to the procedures in use, the required interventions in order to deal with potential critical issues, thus avoiding the risk of ineffective action that emergency contexts and the resulting emotional pressure can cause. Firstly, the experimentation envisages the detection of the environments that will constitute the virtual and augmented reality in which significant scenarios typical of the prison context will be recreated, such as riots, assaults, escapes, murders, and suicides, through the integrated use of 3D rendering software, photogrammetry and laser scanning. Beyond the benefits in terms of costs and timing, virtual and augmented reality allows, thanks to the increasing appeal, an assimilation of information which clearly exceeds regular training experiences. Furthermore, these solutions create new opportunities for working group collaboration, also innovating planning moments and for example turning a training room into an interactive three-dimensional map on which to study and analyse situations. It is also possible to envisage the involvement of other personnel belonging to different professional fields requiring decision-making skills or specific abilities to act in stressful conditions.The technological tool can contribute to better management of preventive actions in prison, having the potential to detect risk indicators at an early stage through forensic methodologies.

Results obtained: Technological tools acquired contribute to better management of preventive actions in prison.

Actual Results: The technological tools acquired and tested have the potential to detect risk indicators at an early stage through forensic methodologies.

5. Policy implications and recommendations

National specificities have emerged from research and analysis, particularly that carried out by the MINDb4ACT Consortium members. Within the prison context, while Italy reiterates the importance of a training activity plan aiming at preventing the escalation of violent radicalisation, and shows gaps and needs still to be fulfilled, Spain focuses more on relevant competences and skills, and refers particularly to the knowledge on protocols, procedures, legislation, and regulations that apply to the penitentiary system. Within the local initiatives, while France has for several years organised an umbrella administration committee which provides training on radicalisation, Spain concentrates on the importance of knowledge on multi-agency work management, and Poland on social assistance resources in the prevention of radical behaviour. In a schools context, Poland highlights the need for competences of people working in such an environment, while within the internet and media context, England particularly refers to the ability of using law enforcement technology and powers responsibly, proportionately and in a justifiable manner.

In order to produce a coherent training tool out of a fragmented dataset emerging from very diverse sectors and national practices, needs and gaps have been identified and framed within a logical design based on consolidated training methodologies. During the research carried out, information collected from partners' countries has shown diverse sets of informal competences and skills needed to properly fill the gaps and implement training activities. During the analysis needs and gaps emerged within structured training topics, units, skills and competences, sub-divided per context.

The following are the major gaps/needs that emerged:

Gaps

- Lack of legal, conceptual or theoretical models explaining how individuals pass through the dynamic process of radicalisation and how they relate to violence and terrorism (nexus radicalisation/terrorism).

- Limitations of current risk indicators, which do not capture the complexity of the situation.

- Problems with the qualification of information derived from penitentiary observation which are channelled into security systems.

- No general vision and no real integration programmes are envisaged.

- Although the problem is faced from different perspectives (schools, judiciary, probation offices, NGOs, Ministries), the integration of the various interventions is lacking.

- Lack of awareness about the profound change that digital and communication technologies have brought to the world of security and prevention and about the consequent development of models of prevention and investigation that deeply modify the operational practices of police forces and operators.

Needs

- Taking into account the digital dimension that must be considered as part of the rehabilitation model as well as a new component of prevention.

- Understanding how new danger indicators associated with digital technologies can be monitored in a way that does not conflict with the principles of privacy and ethics underlying the GDPR and fundamental rights, as well as European good practice in protecting prisoners.

- Distinguishing social security issues from security issues related to jurisdiction.

- Finding extra-judicial instruments such as mediation in criminal matters and restorative justice.

- Paying attention to new communication channels.

- Need for extra-judicial instruments, keeping in mind that the problem of radicalisation hides a lack of social integration.

- Identifying more scientific methods of observation.

- More effective, efficient and above all uniform treatment, management, operational and organisational models at a national level.

- Need for multi-agency models, each respecting its own role, expertise and jurisdiction.

- Need for greater culture with regards to the phenomenon: operators need knowledge and a deeper involvement of cultural mediators in training activities.

- More structured training activities.

- Inter-force trainings.

At a second level, the importance of filling these gaps is determined by the mandate of the organisations or institutions involved. At a third level, all organisations or institutions involved recognise the importance of transversal skills and competences in the area of communication and privacy (GDPR). From a methodological point of view, the analysis highlighted a few constraints which need to be addressed in order to provide a comprehensive, sustainable and flexible model of training that can grasp the different needs and thus will bring coherence. Indeed, despite relevant differences in CVE policies and practices among the Member States and within the diverse sectors of activity, some common elements emerged. This paved the way for the creation of a catalogue of national courses that should be taken into account when planning new training activities for first line practitioners in the field of P/CVE. The analytical work produced an integrated map of skills and competences articulated into training units, subdivided into several micro modules and four training areas (see below).[8]

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[8] Kindly note that, after the research was carried out, most of the trainings fitted into one of the domains highlighted in the table below; however, others cannot be limited to one s

	Prisions / LEAs	Local Initiatives	Schools	Internet / Media
Security	(1) European and National Laws (substantial and procedural) (1.1) Global Jurisdiction for online crimes (1.2) Digital and mobile forensics (2) Investigative techniques (2.1) SITs for terror-related crimes and relations with FR (3) Interagency cooperation (EU agencies and national LEAs, LEAs/ intelligence/judiciary/ juvenile/courts/welfare services) (4) Scenario Awareness (13) Transition and exit strategies for inmates and probationers (15) Penal mediation and restorative justice	(5) Public-private cooperation (5.1) Cooperation between social preventive and security agencies (6) Legal prevention and penal measures (substantial and procedural)		(1) European and National Laws (substantial and procedural) with a focus on the 'E-commerce Directive' and (COM(2018)0640 - C8-0405/2018 - 2018/0331(COD) (1.1) Global Jurisdiction for online crimes (1.2) Digital and mobile forensics (2.1) SITs for terror-related crimes and relations with FR
Prevention	(5) Public-private cooperation (6) Legal prevention and penal measures (substantial and procedural) (7) Risk assessment (8) Measure results (14) Understanding the multidimensional nature of radical phenomena (mental health, social vulnerability, criminality, etc.) (11.3) Community Impact Assessment (15) Penal mediation and restorative justice	(5) Public-private cooperation (5.2) Interagency cooperation between educational and social services (14) Understanding the multidimensional nature of radical phenomena (mental health, social vulnerability, criminality, etc.) (7) Risk assessment (7.1) Customised tools for social services and welfare) (8) Measure results (11.1) Bias control and prevention of polarisation (11.2) Counter fake news and disinformation (15) Penal mediation and restorative justice (15.1) Social mediation as alternative to punishment and penal execution		(1.3) Online prevention (1.4) Accountability and transparency of the service providers in preventive operations (1.4) OSINT techniques for prevention (5) Public-private cooperation
Communication / GDP	(9) Data managements, ISA and other forms of information exchange (10) GDPR compliance in prevention (11) Cross-cultural and cross-agency communication channels (12) Communicative leadership	(9) Data management, ISA and other forms of information exchange (10) GDPR compliance in prevention (11) Cross-cultural and cross-agency communication channels (11.3) Community Impact Assessment (12) Communicative leadership		(9) Data management, ISA and other forms of information exchange with a specific focus on the new Eurojust Database (9.1) Accountability and transparency as part of data management (10) GDPR compliance in prevention (Art. 6)

As part of the major and sustainable outcomes of theMINDb4ACT project, a toolkit with different elements and target groups is proposed, considering the diverse policies and practices at national levels and the different needs stemming from a variety of practitioners in the four sectors. The concept for the toolkit derives from the need to grant coherence, up-scalability and flexibility to the delivery of the training catalogues. As a general concept for the development of the toolkit, a coordinated and lean programming approach was chosen. The basis of the toolkit is represented by a common interface and a database that allows the integration of existing content with new training materials, which need to be developed and then delivered in conjunction with additional services and functionalities. The toolkit designed within the H2020 projectMINDb4ACT aims at providing sustainable services and support for judicial staff, law enforcement agencies and social/educational practitioners during and beyond project termination, by implementing four main components of the toolkit: (1) the common Learning Management System (LMS); (2) the National Experts Navigator through training of trainers; (3) a catalogue of training modules articulated through a flexible upgradable learning package (snippets or bite-sized training) with information and guidelines; and (4) a coordination strategy with other EU-funded projects, with a view to continuing the 'training cascade effects' in the coming years.

Courses of European scope in this area require a flexible and up-scalable methodological model, capable of responding to all the different needs of users and jurisdictions. To meet these needs, Agenfor has adopted a three-fold case-based formative design methodology:

(1) The HERMES platform has three complete modules, immediately usable by users and based on specific cases: Module 1: Investigations and SITs in terror-related cases; Module 2: Mediation and Social Prevention; Module 3: GDPR and communication. This is the simplest solution, but also the most rigid. For this reason, snippets or bite sized training units have been introduced into the three main modules, to offer better customisation and adaptation of the syllabus to the specific geographic or sectorial needs. The 'Main Material' of the three training modules was designed in English for the ToT.

(2) Within the three modules, the material is divided into 'Main Material' (complete course levels), 'Support Material' (snippets or bite-sized training units) and 'Other Material'; these last two sections are freely configurable by national trainers according to their needs. The support material and other material can be freely integrated by the trainers, with specific information content of the reference country (cases, procedures, laws, exercises, etc.). This material can be uploaded in all national languages, without any translation requirements.

(3) Finally, a final delivery method provides that the e-content (videos, slides, documents, exercises, etc.) is freely manageable and modifiable by national trainers, so they are able to lead their own autonomous courses. This content is different from the 'Main Materials', as it is in line with the specific needs of the country and the guidelines of their own authorities.

To this end all trainers will also be trained on the use of the Learning Management System platform, with the aim of customising training content and its delivery to specific audiences at national levels.

Moreover:

- Comprehensive training programmes for prison and probation staff – including specific awareness-raising and radicalisation prevention modules during the initial training – could be developed and implemented, especially in those prisons hosting inmates with a terrorist or radical history.

- The programme could focus on improving staff understanding of violent extremism, radicalisation phenomena and extremist ideologies (including how to detect early signs of radicalised behaviour and how to provide alternative narratives), or in implementing specific prevention measures aimed at young and vulnerable inmates with significant risk factors. Staff should thus be able to equip themselves with the knowledge and tools to address the challenges they face during normal interaction with inmates, developing their situational response abilities and facilitating their work with violent inmates. Training should be tailored to the needs of different types of staff and their specific responsibilities.

- A toolkit to assist prison and probation staff in working constructively with inmates who may be subject to radicalisation could be useful.

- Training activities organised by EU agencies (e.g. CEPOL) or relevant EU networks (e.g. RAN, CEP, EuroPris, EPTA), or facilitated by EU-funded projects, are beneficial. Manuals, guidelines and other types of support are also useful.

- Training sessions on radicalisation for judges and prosecutors at national level could be promoted as a follow-up to the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) EU-wide testing of training modules.

6. Conclusion

As already highlighted, responses to radicalisation vary from country to country, depending on the national legislative framework, the diverse preventive practices and the different ways of implementing national and European laws and regulations, as part of the mandates of the organisations and institutions involved.

Development trends in e-learning are leaning towards continual growth that keeps pace with the growing digital literacy of the population and with the explosion of social networks and new technologies in 3D virtual environments. New training trends are seen as a potential technological solution to reconcile the diverse needs into a flexible unity.

The introduction of effective blended methodology calls for planning tools that are streamlined and usable, combining the technologies of online synchronic and a synchronic delivery with face-to-face lessons; it requires the development of enjoyable interactive and engaging blended courses, which can be adapted to the new operational methodologies based on virtual and enhanced reality. All these technologies allow a high degree of customisation and open the way for tailor-made solutions, which can be adopted at national or sectorial levels.

The inclusion of the gender approach in P/CVE policies

Yvonne Reif, Project Manager, Women without Borders, Austria

1. Theme

This policy report seeks to inform policymakers as well as stakeholders and practitioners in the fields of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) about gender dynamics and violent extremism. Drawing from existing research and evidence from good-practice models, this report will shed light on the intricacies and layers surrounding gender and gender mainstreaming that require attention in the design of P/CVE policies and programmes.

2. Introduction

Violent extremist ideologies challenge social cohesion and democratic values and terrorist action and violence are being used to destabilise societies across Europe and worldwide. In Europe, while Jihadist terrorism continues to be the most lethal threat, there are rising concerns about right-wing extremist violence, as for instance in Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Greece and Finland.[1]

Still to be examined in more detail, some experts expect the current COVID-19 crisis to exacerbate the threat of violent extremis.[2] Youth are over-proportionally being exposed to the internet and conspiracy theories and alternative facts have gained momentum during the lockdown. Worldwide the pandemic has further led to an increase in domestic and gender-based violence, leaving women locked in their homes with their abusers and without access to support services.[3] These are only some of the concerns echoed by experts and researchers that have the potential to fuel violent extremism or spread extremist ideologies.

Extremist groups have historically undermined gender equality and human rights, yet P/CVE and hard security approaches typically do not take these violations or nuances into account.

At the same time questions of 'why' and 'how' young people are radicalised have been explored extensively, but viable universal explanations are still lacking. Instead, a common conclusion has

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[1] Jones, S., Doxsee, C. and Harrinngton, N. (2020). The right-wing terrorism threat in Europe. Center for Strategic and International Studies. https://www.csis.org/analysis/right-wing-terrorism-threat-europe

[2] Rosand, E., Koser, K. and Schumicky-Logan, L. (2020). Preventing violent extremism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/04/28/preventing-violent-extremism-during-and-after-the-covid-19-pandemic/

[3] United Nations (2020). Policy Brief. The Impact of COVID-19 on Women. https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en.pdf?la=en&vs=1406

arrived at acknowledging that sources and appeals of extremism vary over space and time, tend to originate out of context-specific circumstances, and transcend socio-economic and political factors that impact individuals. More recently, an understanding has emerged that gender as a cross-cutting attribute adds another layer to the kaleidoscope of factors impacting individuals in the context of violent extremism.[4]

With the emergence of the Islamic State (IS), recent research and policies have focused on the threat of terror from Jihadist violent ideologies, often falling short of recognising and identifying gender norms as relevant to recruiting dynamics and narratives. This has substantially changed through the proactive recruiting of women by IS, which has demonstrated that extremist ideologies build on rigid concepts of gender and adapt narratives to context specific grievances of men and women.

In order to design gender-sensitive responses to violent extremism, it is key to decipher the underlying concepts of gender.

At the same time, if prevention and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) policies are to be practised sensibly and sustainably, approaches to increase gender equality need to be emphasised, in line with the notion that societies with higher gender equality are more resilient to violent extremism .

Despite the fact that substantial expertise has been developed in the past 30 years on women and gender in war and violent conflict and included in the landmark 1325 Resolution of the Security Council of Women, Peace and Security in 2000, the role of women as agents of peace is still neglected in P/CVE, and has only recently gained interest with a general trend to look at gender more broadly.

The following analysis will attempt to draft current perspectives of gender in P/CVE by first providing insights into how gender is addressed in international policies, second by outlining insights into gender and violent extremism, and third by demonstrating how a gendered perspective should be included in P/CVE strategies and programmes moving forward.

3. Analysis

This policy report draws from and has considered policies, the latest research papers, and research-based evidence that put a gender lens on violent extremism and on P/CVE.

3.1 Gender Terminology

Although 'gender' has been discussed for some decades, it is still often misunderstood or not interpreted as comprehensively as is necessary for an in-depth discussion of gender-related aspects in P/CVE.

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[4] General Assembly United Nations (2015). The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism

In order to address the relevance and current practical approach of gender aspects in P/CVE policies and strategies, clarification is needed about how gender and gender-related terms are understood within the framework of this paper.

Kuehnast and Robertson define **gender** '*as a dynamic organizing principle in society. It is more than an individual's biological sex (male/female). Gender is a learned pattern of behavior that is embedded in everything we do at the individual, community, and institutional levels. Gender mindset is the socialization and internalization of the described roles and expectations that a society finds most appropriate and valuable for a person—men, women, girls, boys, and sexual and gender minorities. A person's gender mindset can alter during societal change based on new community values, norms, and expectations.*'[5]

The policy paper will thus draw on this definition as it describes gender not as a static attribute, but as a principle, subject to a diverse range of influences over space and time.

Gender mainstreaming '*involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination.*'[6]

Gender analysis is the examination of the relationships between women and men with respect to their access to resources, the constraints and opportunities they face relative to each other, and different ways in which they are involved in political, economic, legal and social structures. Gender analysis can identify, assess and address inequalities that emanate from different gender roles and norms, unequal gender power relations, and contextual factors such as education, culture, tradition, ethnicity or employment status.[7]

3.2 Gender and International P/CVE Policies

On an international level, the potential of women as agents of peace, and the necessity of designing a global security architecture with a gendered perspective, has been recognised for almost two decades.

With the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000, the UN has set out a mandate both for the participation of women in the security architecture as well as for a gendered perspective in security and peace policies and programmes (UNSCR 1325).

The resolution has been understood as a tool and gives P/CVE actors the opportunity to enhance protection of women and girls using a human rights-based approach. Furthermore, rather than the use of strictly military strategies, the resolution and its framework is used by policymakers and practitioners to avoid the pitfalls of stereotyping or securitising women's roles. Women's participation in P/CVE is understood by many as crucial to shaping effective policies and practices to prevent extremist violence.[8]

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[5] Kuehnast, K. and Robertson, D. (2018). Gender Inclusive Framework and Theory. A Guide for Turning Theory into Practice. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/gender-inclusive-framework-and-theory-guide.pdf

[6] European Institute for Gender Equality. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming

[7] *Ibidem*.

[8] Dharmapuri, S. (2016). UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and countering violent extremism: using a gender perspective to enhance operational effectiveness. In Fink, N.C., Zeiger, S. and Bhulai, R. (eds.) (2016). A Man's World? Exploring the Roles of Women in Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism. Hedayah and The Global Center on Cooperative Security. http://www.hedayahcenter.org/Admin/Content/File-44201684919.pdf

How the UNSCR 1325 has been translated into P/CVE practice remains an issue of discussion. While programmes targeting the empowerment of women seem to have prospered and have been elevated, there is less evidence that the call for the incorporation of a comprehensive gender perspective is bearing similar fruits. Critics argue that policy responses still treat gender as synonymous to women's issues, to the effect that harmful masculinities have been largely ignored.

Calls from activists to address male issues from a distinct 'Men, Peace and Security' (MPS) perspective, corresponding to the 'Women, Peace and Security' agenda, have resulted in two United Nations Security Council Resolutions including language around engaging or enlisting men. This in turn has increased programming that specifically targets men.[9]

UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) recognises the need for engagement of men and boys in furthering the Women, Peace and Security agenda while also calling for member states to continue to increase inclusion of women and women's organisations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism. Furthermore, one of the issues addressed in the resolution urges member states' UN bodies to 'gather gender-sensitive data on the drivers of radicalization for women and the impacts of counter-terrorism strategies on women's human rights and women's organizations in order to develop targeted and evidence-based policy and programming'.

The extent to which the mandate of UNSCR 2242 has been considered in research and implemented in national policies will be examined in the following section.

3.3 Gendered perspectives in violent extremism

While promoted intensely at the international policy level, scholars continue to stress the importance of applying a gender lens to P/CVE initiatives in order to make them effective and sustainable.

Three main foci of interest in gender and P/CVE have been dominant in recent years: (1) Gendered pathways to radicalisation and the role of women in extremist groups; (2) Toxic masculinities and unequal power relations; and (3) The role of women in P/CVE.

Gendered pathways to radicalisation and the role of women in extremist groups

Why do women and men feel drawn to violent extremist groups? Are they forced into the groups or is it their free will? Which unsatisfied needs or grievances do the groups fill? The process of analysing the various push and pull factors for men and women has proven to be a complex issue and requires detailed, context-specific understanding and analysis.

Existing research supports the idea that there are gendered pathways into radicalisation, both in jihadist as well as in far-right groups. While both men and women are pushed and pulled by personal and political reasons, these factors are gendered, or in other words, experienced differently by men and women because of gender norms.[10]

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[9] Duriesmith, D. (2019). Engaging or changing men? Understandings of masculinity and change in the new 'men, peace and security' agenda. Peacebuilding, DOI: 10.1080/21647259.2019.1687076. https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1687076

[10] Brown, K., Huckerby, J., and Shepherd, L.J. (2019). Gender Mainstreaming Principles, Dimensions and Priorities for PVE. UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/09/gender-mainstreaming-principles-dimensions-and-priorities-for-pve

With the rise and fall of the Islamic State (IS) and the opportunity to gain insights through work with returning foreign fighters, scholars have had the chance to study extensively both the (gendered) narratives in recruiting strategies, the individual motivations of men and women to join, as well as the different roles assigned to men and women within the organisation of the group.

Blinded by perceptions of violence as highly male-driven, women have long been ignored as (active) participants in violent extremist groups. However, evidence shows that IS women were assigned active roles in recruiting, in disseminating propaganda, and in fundraising. In addition, they played active roles in education, media operations, healthcare, policing, and charity work as well as in the enforcement of morality laws. Furthermore, there is some evidence of fighting and suicide bombing by women; it has been noted that, during the period 2014–2018, combat roles were opened for women.[11]

Paradoxically, IS has been successful in presenting a narrative around empowerment and agency given to women, by offering a way to gain more freedom to those living under strict gender oppression. Moreover, there is evidence that some women took on a more active role as perpetrator in the groups so they could escape their role as 'victim' – to violent extremism, domestic violence, sexual violence, slavery, forced marriage and trafficking.

Pull factors range from ideological motivations, the portrayal of women's empowerment by IS, seeking a husband (in the case of having passed the age of marriageability) and travelling with family – whether willingly or not.[12]

At the same time, men were addressed with traditional masculinity values and privileges related to men, including sexual slavery and the subjugation of women's bodies. The latter may have constituted a powerful argument for young men in European states who suffer from the feeling that their traditional male power has fallen victim to gender equality.[13]

Right-wing extremist groups in Europe are a scattered and fragmented phenomenon and have been perceived as mainly male-dominated. Similar to violent Islamist groups, the role of women in right-wing extremist groups has long been underestimated and overlooked, as outlined by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, which found both an increase in "the number of active extreme right-wing women as well as a growth in the number of right-wing extremist women's groups".[14]

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[11] For detailed background information on the role of women in ISIS, see: Khelghat-Doost, H. (2017). Women of the Caliphate: The Mechanism for Women's Incorporation into the Islamic State (IS). Perspectives on Terrorism. 11(1): 17-25.; Vale, G. (2018). 'Cubs in the Lions' Den: Indoctrination and Recruitment of Children Within Islamic State Territory. International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence. https://icsr.info/wpcontent/uploads/2018/07/ICSR-Report-Cubs-in-the-Lions%E2%80%99-DenIndoctrination-and-Recruitment-of-Children-Within-Islamic-State-Territory.pdf; OSCE (2019). Understanding the Role of Gender in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism – Good Practices for Law Enforcement. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. https://www.osce.org/secretariat/420563?download=true; Johnston, M., True, J. (2019). Misogyny & Violent Extremism: Implications For Preventing Violent Extremism. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/misogyny-violent-extremism

[12] Cook and Vale (2018); OSCE (2020). A Whole-of-Society Approach to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization That Lead to Terrorism. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/7/444340_0.pdf

[13] Lahoud, N. (2018). Empowerment or Subjugation: A Gendered Analysis of ISIL Messaging. UN Women. https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20arab%20states/attachments/publications/lahoud-fin-web-rev.pdf?la=en&vs=5602; Brown, Huckerby and Shepherd (2019); Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). (2019). "Gender-specific approaches in exit work". Ex post paper. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-exit/docs/ran_exit_gender_specific_approaches_rome_22-23_102019_en.pdf

[14] Expert Centre on Gender and Right-Wing Extremism (2014). Overlooked and Underrated: Women in Right-Wing Extremist Groups in Germany: Theoretical Analysis and Practical Recommendations for State and Civil Society. https://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/pdfs/fachstelle/140407_overlooked-and-underrated.- german-women-in-right-wing-extremist-groups.pdf

Exploiting traditional perceptions of masculinities, the narratives of right-wing extremist groups frequently centre around misogyny, anti-feminism and fighting women's rights[15] with a clear assignment for men to protect 'their' women.

While it can be observed that female right-wing extremists share the same anti-feminist and hostile attitude towards women's rights, explanations for this paradox remain vague and indicate a need for further research.[16]

Insights to date suggest that violent extremist groups in general exploit context-specific gender uncertainties, grievances, and anxieties to recruit both male and female members and offer attractive roles rewarding the longing for empowerment. An understanding of these mechanisms is therefore crucial for the impact of P/CVE programming.[17]

Toxic Masculinities and the Role of Power Relations

The analysis of gendered pathways and motivations to violent extremism has shown that despite much effort, there are limitations and even paradoxes when it comes to explain why men and even more so, why women join violent extremist groups.

It is yet another paradox that, although violent extremism has been viewed as a predominately male problem, the focus of gender-related questions in the context of violent extremism has been on the role of women in violent extremist groups and women's victimhood while relations between masculinities, femininities, power relations and violent extremism have only been researched on a superficial level.[18]

Broadly speaking, masculinities within violent extremist groups, both in Islamist and far-right extremist groups, have been attributed as brave, warriors, violent, and dominant, frequently referred to as toxic masculinities. From a historical viewpoint, the discourse on toxic masculinities was applied to Muslim men during the War on Terror and was later applied to the new subordinate men in populist islamophobia extremism.[19]

Recent discussion around masculinities warns that the notion of toxic masculinity, which is likely to be understood as a singular set of problematic practices and ideas, may lead to the ignorance of power relations and could prevent practitioners from understanding the nuances and complexities of masculinities, which depend largely on the respective local context and situation.[20]

[15] OSCE (2019).

[16] Provost, C. and Whyte, L. (2018). Why are women joining far-right movements, and why are we so surprised? opendemocracy.net. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/women-far-right-movements-why-are-we-surprised/

[17] See for instance Brown, Huckerby and Shepherd. (2019); Kimmel, M. (2018). Healing from Hate. How Young Men Get Into—and Out of—Violent Extremism. Oakland: University of California Press.

[18] See for instance Duriesmith, 2019; Kimmel, 2018; UN Women, 2020.

[19] Pearson, E. (2019). Extremism and toxic masculinity: the man question re-posed. International Affairs. 95(6): 1251-1270. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz177

[20] Pearson (2019); Duriesmith, D. (2020). Adaptation of Militarized Masculinity and Violent Extremism in the Southern Philippines. In Conflicting Identities: The Nexus between Masculinities, Femininities and Violent Extremism in Asia. UNDP and UN Women. https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/the-nexus-between-masculinities-femininities-and-violent-extremism-in-asia.html

The role of women in P/CVE

The role of women in P/CVE efforts has been discussed extensively in the literature in recent years. On the one hand, the positive effects of women participating in security and peace processes remain unquestioned. Women are seen as uniquely placed to challenge extremist narratives as decision-makers, community leaders, professionals and as wives, sisters and mothers, since they are placed centrally in families and communities and are therefore best positioned to detect early warning signs of radicalisation such as unusual behaviour and activity.[21]

Specific roles within the security architecture are as manifold and diverse as women themselves. For a better understanding the following examples aim to provide insights.

Firstly, women are often the first targets of violent extremists when they violate women's rights and physical integrity and therefore frequently the first to notice negative trends in their immediate surroundings.[22] Undetected and unreported, these notions of violence and/or adoption of extremist ideologies receive little attention and have the potential to develop into violent extremism and terrorism. In this context, Anderlini also points out the noted correlation of domestic abuse and violent actors.[23]

Secondly, the role of women in the police force has also gained attention since women tend to have a more specific focus on human rights violations and can de-escalate tension more efficiently without using excessive force. This in turn allows them to establish trust and ties within communities.[24]

Thirdly, women-led organisations, which either work overtly under a P/CVE umbrella or more generally under a softer umbrella of social cohesion and development, should be highlighted because they show parallels with extremist movements. As Anderlini describes, they are locally rooted and trusted in their communities and they address grievances in a nuanced way. Therefore, they are able to adapt quickly to evolving changes.[25]

In order to fully realise their potential in the aforementioned examples and in additional roles, women need to be empowered to challenge violence and violent extremism by taking on leadership roles, be it in their families, communities or at the decision-making level.

Moreover, policies and programmes have shown a tendency to use women as a subject or a vehicle as opposed to rights-holders and activists in various private and public spheres.[26]

Despite their crucial role in providing peaceful narratives, civil society organisations in general, and women's organisations more specifically, lack both the legal framework and financial resources to sustainably

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[21] Schlaffer, E., Kropiunigg, L. and Kropiunigg, R. (2019). Mothers Preventing Violent Extremism: The Example of MotherSchools in Macedonia from Philosophy to Practice. NATO Science for Peace and Security Series – E: Human and Societal Dynamics. Volume 144: Enhancing Women's Roles in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE).

[22] OSCE (2019).

[23] Anderlini, N. (2018). Challenging Conventional Wisdom, Transforming Current Practices: A Gendered Lens on PVE, Transforming Current Practices. In Austin, B. and Giessmann, H.J. (eds.). Transformative Approaches to Violent Extremism. Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series No. 13. Berlin: Berghof Foundation. https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Handbook/Dialogue_Chapters/dialogue13_violentextremism_naraghi_anderlini_com.pdf

[24] Fink, Zeiger and Bhulai. (2016).

[25] Anderlini, N. (2018).

[26] Giscard d'Estaing, S. (2017). Engaging women in countering violent extremism: avoiding instrumentalisation and furthering agency. Gender & Development. 25(1): 103-118, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2017.1279823

contribute to the peace and security agenda and are often instrumentalised by governments.[27] A clear call for whole-of-government and whole-of-community approaches is implied here, in order to avoid these negative consequences that women's organisations may experience when contributing to P/CVE efforts.[28]

3.4 Integrating Gender in Practice

Violent extremism is a complex phenomenon in and of itself and the previous analysis has tried to shed light on questions related to the relevance of gender-related factors and questions that require further research. International policies have long called for gendered approaches, but how can gender be effectively and sustainably included in P/CVE strategies?

Gendered and human rights-based approaches

While some programmes, projects and initiatives worldwide have been seeking to draw from the potential of women as agents in preventing the spread of violent extremism worldwide, a large number of PVE efforts are perceived as gender-blind, or even harmful, if they exacerbate gendered inequalities and forms of discrimination.[29]

PVE must therefore be grounded in a gendered and human rights-based framework to avoid adverse effects. This includes the anticipation and mitigation of potential backlashes, such as negative impacts on women participating in PVE programmes from their male family members.

A comprehensive, human rights-based gender mainstreaming model has been developed by Brown, Huckerby and Shepherd.[30] The model integrates the UN architecture and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) and provides guidance throughout the lifecycle of P/CVE approaches including design, implementation, and evaluation of gendered PVE approaches (See Figure 1).
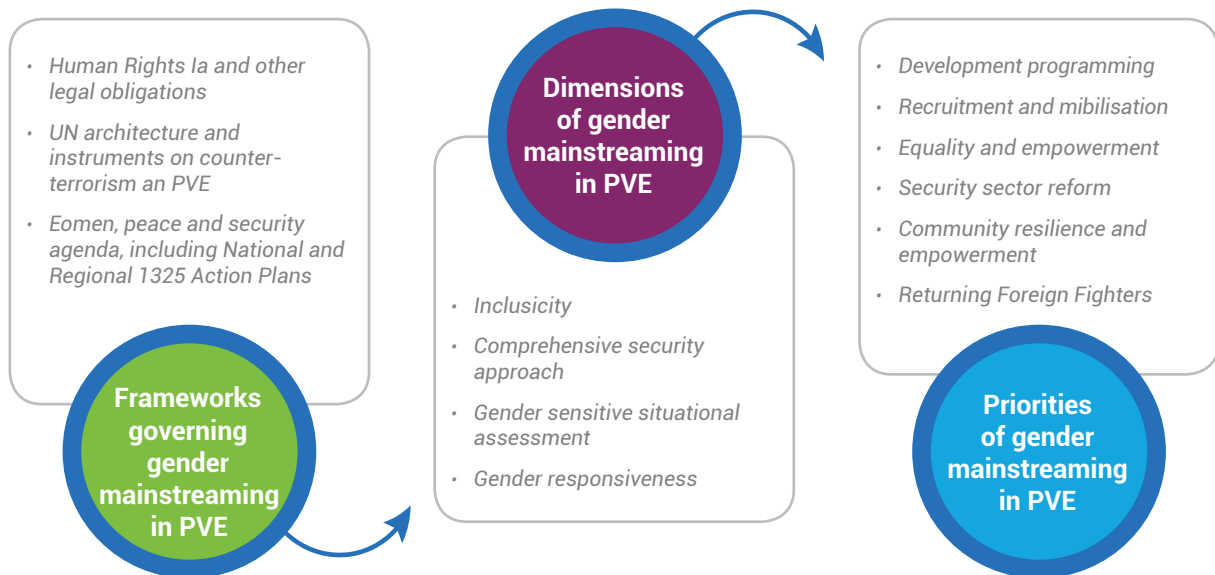
[27] Anderlini, N. (2018).

[28] OSCE. (2020).

[29] Brown, K., Huckerby, J., and Shepherd, L.J. (2019).

[30] Ibídem.

[31] Kropiunigg, U., Kropiunigg, R., Schlaffer, E., and Kropiunigg, L. (2019). Can Fathers Challenge Extremism? Studying the Violence Prevention Potential of East African Fathers. Women without Borders, Vienna, 2019.

Figure 1.
Three Components of Gender Mainstreaming in PVE: Frameworks, Dimensions and Priorities

- *Human Rights Ia and other legal obligations*
- *UN architecture and instruments on counter-terrorism an PVE*
- *Eomen, peace and security agenda, including National and Regional 1325 Action Plans*

Dimensions of gender mainstreaming in PVE

Frameworks governing gender mainstreaming in PVE

- *Inclusicity*
- *Comprehensive security approach*
- *Gender sensitive situational assessment*
- *Gender responsiveness*

- *Development programming*
- *Recruitment and mibilisation*
- *Equality and empowerment*
- *Security sector reform*
- *Community resilience and empowerment*
- *Returning Foreign Fighters*

Priorities of gender mainstreaming in PVE

Source: Brown, Huckerby and Shepherd: 2019, p.8

Whole-of-community and family-oriented

One of the global programmes drawing on the potential of women and mothers as role models is the MotherSchools Parenting for Peace Model, developed by Women without Borders. The programme was designed on the basis of an in-depth study on the knowledge and interest of some 1,000 mothers about their prevention potential in regions affected by violent extremism: Nigeria, Pakistan, Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine.[31]

MotherSchools are based on a curriculum which includes 10 workshops and teaches mothers to understand early warning signs, address violent extremism, and counter radical influences in at-risk children, families and communities.[32] MotherSchools are implemented in close cooperation with local civil society organisations, enabling responses to grievances to be locally- and context-specific. The best practice model also ensures that mothers, at the heart of society, are able to take on leading roles within the local communities.[33]

With a view to engage and enlist fathers as agents of peace, a corresponding FatherSchools has been pioneered with the intention of including fathers as the missing puzzle piece in a family-oriented and whole-of-community security approach.[34]

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[32] *Ibídem*.

[33] Women without Borders (2020). MotherSchools. Parenting for Peace. https://wwb.org/activity/motherschools/

[34] Kropiunigg, U. et al, (2019).

4. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Drawing from the analysis in this report, the following aspects are recommended to be taken into account when developing and implementing P/CVE policies and programming:

Research Level

- In order to facilitate the development of gender-sensitive policies and the design of gendered P/CVE programming, data on violent extremism and on the impact of P/CVE should be gathered and disaggregated for men, women, boys and girls.

- Research should not only analyse impacts on men and women, but also on power relations between them as well as correlations between context-specific policies and societal norms, such as violence against women and misogyny.

Policy Level

- Policies could consider context-specific power relations between men and women. This will help avoid backlashes that stem from prioritising either men or women.

- Policies should involve and support the empowerment and equality of women both in the public and the private sphere. Women can only exert their power in P/CVE when their voices are heard.

- Gender, as a cross-cutting perspective within P/CVE efforts, should be an integral part in whole-of-community approaches. Gender identities and gender relations are sensitive issues. Tackling existing and harmful gender norms requires safe spaces and trust as well as a long-term view, all of which can best be created by civil society.

- Policymakers and donors need to take into account that gender norms are manipulated and exploited by violent extremist and that they have developed over space and time and continue to evolve. Deconstructing existing norms implies that a project lifecycle may not suffice to achieve sustainable impact.

Practitioner Level

- Gender in P/CVE programming needs to consider the perspectives of women, men, girls and boys as well as underlying dynamics, relations and hierarchies between them. These considerations should include other social attributes such as age, class, religion and ethnicity.

- Programmes should include both women and men as agents of change to support alliances and foster partnerships between men and women in promoting transformative masculinities and femininities.

- Gendered P/CVE programming needs to be context- and location-specific and must take into account local masculinities, femininities and power relations.

- A gendered perspective should be integrated into all stages of a programme including a context analysis and research, the design and implementation of the programme, as well as monitoring and evaluation, dissemination of results and feedback mechanisms.

5. Conclusion

This policy paper has attempted to provide insights into recent developments, and highlight challenges in including a gendered perspective into P/CVE policies and approaches.

While the notion of gender is increasingly gaining attention among policymakers, researchers and practitioners, the analysis has also shown that more research is needed to understand the correlations between gender-specific factors and violent extremism.

Furthermore, substantial changes and a comprehensive view in policy thinking are necessary in order to draw from the full potential of gendered approaches in P/CVE.

In order to avoid backlashes policies should be questioned and reflected from both a male and female perspective as well as the impact on the context-specific power relations between men and women. A policy addressing the empowerment of women for example may increase unequal power structures within families, if husbands feel disadvantaged.

Given the sensitivity of gender issues and P/CVE it is crucial to understand that lasting social change depends on two factors: On the one hand, if sustainability is to be achieved, local ownership must be ensured and supported in the long run. And on the other hand, local grassroots actors need to be given more voice and agency.

A burgeoning field of practice: Lessons learned by implementing agents in evaluating small-scale P/CVE interventions

Álvaro Vicente, *Analyst, Programme on Violent Radicalisation and Global Terrorism, Elcano Royal Institute, Spain.*

Carola García-Calvo, *Senior Analyst, Programme on Violent Radicalisation and Global Terrorism, Elcano Royal Institute, Spain.*

1. Theme

The prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) is a burgeoning field of research and practical application that in recent years has attracted professionals from different sectors (academia, the private sector, security, civil society, public administration) who have limited direct experience in this area. Their contributions in the European P/CVE context face the challenge of developing a culture of evaluation that would help practitioners understand what works and what can be improved. This policy report captures specific lessons drawn from the experience of newcomer implementing agents in the development of evaluation frameworks for small-scale P/CVE projects.[1] It is based on evidence gathered during the H2020 MINDb4ACT Project. The findings fall into three categories: conceptualization (the definition of the evaluation objectives); operability (the design and use of the evaluation tools); and articulation (reporting outcomes).

2. Introduction

The European model of responding to extremist violence was established in 2005 after the 7th July jihadist attacks in London. In the aftermath of the terrorist event, the European Union (EU) approved a new strategy that establishes radicalisation and recruitment prevention as one of the four pillars of counterterrorism action, going beyond the traditional focus, which was exclusively security focused and reactive, in favour of one that incorporates the preventative and anticipatory perspective[2]. The change of paradigm also ushered in a gradual and widespread broadening of the range of actors involved in combating that threat. Non-governmental agents thus entered a sphere of action previously reserved to security forces and political decision makers.

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[1] The authors wish to express their gratitude to Aitor Pérez, Senior Research Fellow at the Elcano Royal Institute, and Nicolás Ayensa, Social Researcher, for their comments and suggestions, which have assisted in improving this policy report.

[2] Council of the European Union (2005). *The European Union Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, Brussels
http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST%2014469%202005%20REV%204

For more than a decade now, the European ecosystem of preventing and countering violent extremism (hereinafter P/CVE) has been populated by a heterogeneous group of actors (policy makers, front-line practitioners, the private sector, academic researchers, NGOs, law enforcement agencies, etc). Their participation in a still-developing field of research and practical intervention was largely favoured by government efforts to empower ground-level actors and civil society, both to define the problem and to design and implement responses through public-private partnerships.[3] It is a reflection of the "whole-government approach" and a "whole-society approach" that the public administrations and civil society have taken to give a comprehensive response to this complex and multifaceted phenomenon in which individual and group factors of a psychological, socioeconomic or political nature converge, and where these factors are in turn linked to events on the local, national and international level.[4]

The growing arrival of new actors on the European P/CVE scene has not been free of difficulties, however. Professionals from different sectors, attracted by the possibility of influencing the public agenda and decision-making processes – and of gaining access to new opportunities for funding and intervention – got started in P/CVE by transferring skills and knowledge built in other disciplines and spheres of action. They often lack direct experience in preventing violent radicalisation, so their performance in this field has shown some shortcomings. One that stands out among them is the lack a culture of evaluation that would give scientific evidence of the results of their efforts, as some in political and academic circles have pointed out in recent years. After the unprecedented jihadist mobilisation unleashed by the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2012, the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), the organism dependent on the European Commission for preventing and combating radicalisation, pointed out the scant foundation of knowledge about the effectiveness and impact of institutional and intergovernmental P/CVE efforts: "EU's Member States have rapidly implemented programmes and interventions for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism, but the evaluation of these measures is still in its infancy. Evaluation, however, is indispensable if we want to identify what works in PCVE and to design evidence-based interventions."[5]

Evaluation is not just an opportunity to examine the quality and effectiveness of these types of initiatives, but is also an indispensable control tool to safeguard the principles of transparency and accountability proper to liberal democracies.[6] It helps improve public policies insofar as it informs decision making. Nonetheless, it is now quite commonplace to affirm that the evaluation of policies and projects for preventing violent radicalisation is still a fairly underdeveloped field in which the many conceptual, analytical and operative challenges involved have made it difficult to reach the same quality standards as in other spheres of action where public and private efforts converge, as in the case of humanitarian aid.[7] One need only look at the state of literature available on this topic: it is meagre, lacking methodological and theoretical robustness, and skewed in its focus, since most of what is published is focused on analysing tertiary preventative interventions (aimed at disengaging, de-radicalising and rehabilitating terrorists) or on projects undertaken

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[3] Global Counterterrorism Forum (2013). *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism* https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/72352/13Sep19_Ankara+Memorandum.pdf

[4] Mohammed Hafez y Creighton Mullins (2015). "The Radicalization Puzzle: A Theoretical Synthesis of Empirical Approaches to Homegrown Extremism". *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38: 11, 958-975.

[5] RAN (2018). "Guideline Evaluation Of Pcve Programmes And Interventions", *Ex post paper*, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ms_workshops_guidelines_evaluation_of_pcve_programmes_and_interventions_july_2018_en.pdf

[6] Agencia Estatal de Evaluación de las Políticas Públicas y la Calidad de los Servicios (2015). *Guía Práctica para el diseño y evaluación de políticas pública*s. Madrid: Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas.

[7] Peter Romaniuk (2015). *Does CVe Work? Lessons Learned From the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism*. Global Center on Cooperative Security. https://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Does-CVE-Work_2015.pdf

in countries where terrorist organisations hold effective territorial control or have the support of their reference population.[8]

However, this literature may be of limited usefulness for European actors who are starting out in P/CVE, since they are operating in different contexts and facing various other challenges. Significantly, most newcomer implementing agents experience difficulties in planning and executing an evaluation, primarily because of their lack of capacities or capabilities. This policy paper thus argues for the development of a culture of evaluation among these agents, based on lessons learned from similar efforts. In order to develop mechanisms to institutionalise the process of learning evaluation methods, this document sets forth the experience acquired in the context of the H2020 MINDb4ACT project, identifying challenges in the design, implementation and analysis of the evaluation. It presents best practices and recommendations directed at policy makers and at other actors and interested parties so that they include a realistic evaluation strategy in their interventions.

3. Analysis

3.1 The MINDb4ACT experience

MINDb4ACT is aimed at improving the capacities of the European P/CVE system. It takes an eminently practical approach through the development of 15 small-scale interventions in 4 domains (schools, prisons, urban environments, and the internet) in 9 European countries that represent the EU's geographical axes.[9] Financed by the European Commission through its Horizon 2020 programme, MINDb4ACT is, to a large extent, a reflection and consequence of the configuration of the European P/CVE ecosystem. The driving force behind the project is a consortium embodying the so-called multi-agency approach, which brings together policy makers, the private sector, the third sector, academia (universities and think tanks) and law enforcement agencies. Although they have knowledge and experience in P/CVE, most of the partners are still fairly new to participating in and evaluating projects designed specifically in this area.

A series of elements come together in the 15 pilot interventions:

- **Methodology:** They are designed to meet the needs of different professional groups that work in contexts where violent radicalisation processes tend to occur or be detected (education, prison, cities and the internet). The methodology used to carry out the needs assessment is known as the Living Lab, a process of collective intelligence that allows practitioners, stakeholders and other relevant actors to work in a horizontal way, without hierarchies, for two ends: first, to identify

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[8] Feddes, A. R. y Galluci, M. A. (2019). "Literature Review on Methodology Used in Evaluating Effects of Preventive and De-radicalisation Interventions". *Journal for Deradicalization*, 19, 1-27. https://journals.sfu.ca/jd/index.php/jd/article/view/33/31; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland (2016). Surveying CVE Metrics in Prevention, Disengagement and Deradicalization Programs: Report to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security". https://start.umd.edu/pubs/START_SurveyingCVEMetrics_March2016.pdf; Eric Rosand, Emily Winterbotham, Michael Jones, Franziska Praxl|Tabuchi (2018). A Roadmap to Progress: The State of Global P/CVE Agenda. The Prevention Project and Royal United Services Institute. https://organizingagainstve.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GCCS_ROADMAP_FNL.pdf. There are notables exceptions, like the initiatives spearheaded by the EU RAN or the work done in the evaluation of Channel UK, but these are actions restricted to a few contexts (virtual counter-narrative campaigns, and educational).

[9] More information on the project can be found on its web page: https://mindb4act.eu

shortcomings and/or needs in the P/CVE area; and second, to co-design the solution, which is to say, the outcome of the intervention itself.

- **Objectives:** The interventions aim to have an effect on professional activity by developing and transferring knowledge, methods and techniques to third parties. It is thus a matter of projects directed at professionals who deal with issues of radicalisation and violent extremism (first-line practitioners, officials, educators, etc) and not at communities or individuals vulnerable to undergoing violent radicalisation processes. The professionals' needs have given way to capacity development interventions, by delivering skills- and knowledge-based training, or to information and resource referrals.

- **Limitations:** Because of the framework set by the funding project, the interventions are built on short-term time horizons, with tight budgets, albeit with the goal of expanding the number of direct beneficiaries in subsequent versions of the projects. Therefore, they are pilot experiences from which project implementers hope to extract lessons for future improvement and sustainability.

- **Evaluation model:** In almost all of the cases, the projects were evaluated by the implementing agents themselves, in other words, by the teams in charge of designing and implementing the pilot intervention. This internal evaluation is a widespread practice in low-budget pilot interventions since it allows actors to adopt a "trial and error" approach to refine the project before replicating it. Although the evaluations carried out by external evaluators guarantee objectivity and technical knowledge, they are often costly and require an expertise that is hard to find in many contexts.[10] Their lack of familiarity with the project and with the relevant agents is also a major limitation in an area like P/CVE, where mutual trust facilitates access to information. In this way, an internal evaluation is not only the most pragmatic approach for low-budget, short-term projects, but it also favours the professionalisation of the practitioners/evaluators. On the other hand, questions about their reliability can be counterbalanced with a design that is structured and methodologically sound, and with an orientation based on standardised evaluation criteria, such as the framework established by the OECD and the DAC Standards.

What challenges have implementing agents faced in designing their intervention evaluations? What were the limitations and solutions during the implementation phase? How did they analyse the results? The following pages capture specific lessons drawn from the development of an evaluation framework in P/CVE projects in MINDb4ACT.

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[10] Department for Communities and Local Government (2009). *Evaluating local PREVENT projects and programmes. Guidelines for local authorities and their partners and Resource pack for local authorities and their partners.* https://www.tavinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Tavistock_Report_Guidelines_Evaluating-PREVENT-Projects-and-Programmes.pdf; World Health Organization (2013). *WHO Evaluation Practice Handbook.* https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/96311/9789241548687_eng.pdf;jsessionid=AC66FEAC681F5B59BA87A59A2AA3E2D7?sequence=1; European Forum for Urban Security (2017). *Prevention of violent radicalisation - Methodological guide for the development of a local strategy*; RAN (2019) "Evaluating disengagement, deradicalisation and resocialisation efforts", *Ex Post Paper*. https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-exit/docs/ran_exit_policy_practice_evaluation_exit_programmes_spain_08112019_en.pdf
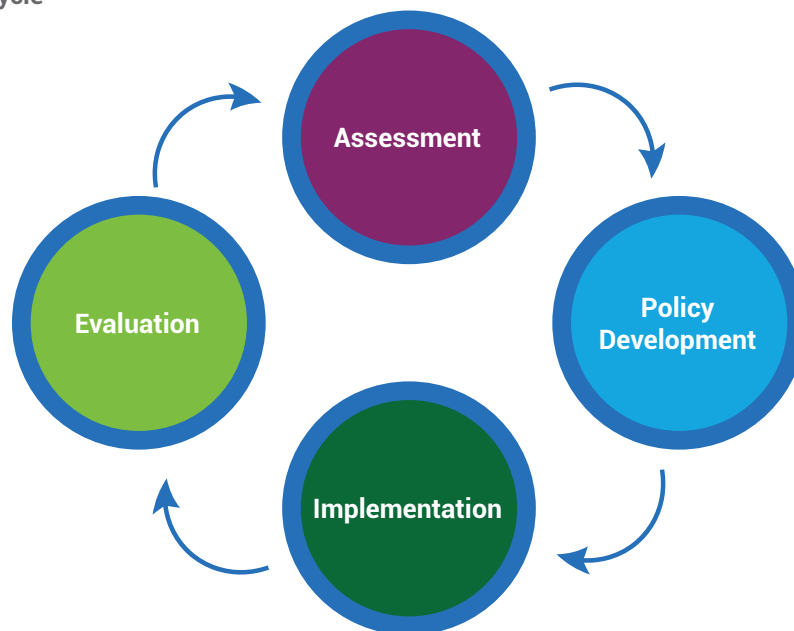
3.2 An evaluation in three phases

Conceptualization: The definition of the evaluation objectives

In the framework of a cycle of public policies, evaluation is always featured as the last phase of the process (see Figure 1). Practice shows, however, that the evaluation design must be conceived from the very start of the intervention in order to anticipate the results to be measured, the indicators to be used, the type of data needed and when it will have to be collected, among other aspects. A common mistake among inexperienced implementing agents is that of not incorporating the evaluation design as an integral element of project planning, which can limit its usefulness insofar as it will be difficult after the fact to cover the main questions that the intervention may bring up.

The first step of formulating an evaluation is to define its objectives. When projects have a short life cycle (designed and implemented within approximately one year), it is very likely that the evaluation will be focused mainly on studying the product (output evaluation) or its short-term result (outcome evaluation), and to a lesser degree on analysing its effects in the medium term (impact evaluation). An example of the first type would be an assessment of the quality and relevance of the contents of a course on preventing violent radicalisation; an example of the second would be testing the degree to which participants have improved their knowledge and aptitudes in that area; and finally, an example of the third would be a review of the degree to which those skills have transferred into professional practice.

Figure 1.
The CVE Policy Cycle

Source: Peter Romaniuk (2015). Does CVE Work? Lessons Learned From the Global Effort to Counter Violent Extremism. Global Center on Cooperative Security, p. 11

One of the first challenges project implementers face is getting all actors who are directly or indirectly related to the intervention – particularly those who will become its end users – to participate in designing the evaluation. An evaluation should be an inclusive and transparent process that gathers the concerns of those who participated in launching a project, can safeguard its sustainability or will experience or study its effects across time. It will facilitate the subsequent gathering of data and will assure that the results are taken into consideration. The evaluation experiences developed in MINDb4ACT show that implementing agents, political decision makers, academic researchers and local communities often have differing needs: while some are mainly interested in knowing the project's outcomes, others also want to know if the resources invested were used optimally and accountably. It is good to find an equilibrium between the actors' interests, adjusting the questions that will constitute the evaluation, and that can be structured according to standardised criteria like those of the DAC of the OECD (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability).[11]

Achieving a shared vision among practitioners and stakeholders is also relevant when examining the intervention's Theory of Change, which diagrams the chain of results from the project's inputs and activities to its potential effects.[12] Formulating together the theories about how change happens and how an intervention can bring it about it will allow all of the actors to be realistic as regards the desired outcomes. It will also help them to agree on the criteria for what constitutes a successful project.

Many implementing agents in the P/CVE area have high expectations as regards the strengthening of professional capacities and the possibility of measuring them. However, some of the expected changes are cognitive modifications (increases in knowledge, an improvement in professional confidence or attitude changes) that are difficult to measure in a rigorous way. Supervising behavioural changes (for example, the application of specific practices or the intensification of interprofessional collaboration) also entails certain difficulties, particularly in work contexts where the dynamic complexities of work can slow down the incorporation of new cultures of action (as in prisons or social work). Being realistic involves defining evaluation criteria that consider the conditions and characteristics of the intervention context and discarding unreachable goals, such as wanting to establish causal relations between the project and a specific result when it is not possible to define control groups or isolate other factors that contributed to, facilitated or affected the result. It also entails choosing the appropriate indicators, both in terms of quantity (some evaluators are inclined to define too many of them) and quality (there may be also a tendency to define indicators that can not be measured using available data).

Often, there is interest in knowing the effects of capacity development interventions or referral mechanisms on professional practice, or even on the institutional level. However, to measure the long-term impact, sufficient time has to elapse since the completion of the project, but this is not a very viable option for programs built on short-term time horizons. A good alternative is to evaluate the degree to which a project has helped make progress on a defined trajectory toward long-term impacts. In other words, it is a matter of seeing the distance that has been covered from the starting point to the end goal. Other reasonable questions that the evaluation can answer have to do with the relevance and sustainability of an intervention (for example, if the outcome of the intervention meet end-users' needs; if project participants act as multiplying agents who transfer knowledge and techniques to other professionals from their own organisations, or if they retain their newly-acquired knowledge over time).

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[11] OECD. *Evaluation criteria*, https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

[12] Joanna Hofman and Alex Sutherland (2018). *Evaluating interventions that prevent or counter violent extremism. A practical guide.* RAND Corporation. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2094

When defining the evaluation goals, it is also good to be aware of factors outside the project that condition the capacity to evaluate the defined indicators. Among the most important, it is worth considering that the incidence of violent radicalisation in Western Europe is relatively limited in comparison to third countries, even in contexts where it seems to occur more frequently. Some of the projects carried out in MINDb4ACT in prisons and urban environments with professionals who work with groups that are at risk for undergoing radicalisation processes show that the real possibilities of measuring an intervention's impact are reduced, as there tend to be rather few cases on which the professionals can apply their skills, tools or protocols. Likewise, examining the results of an intervention through the gender lens can turn out to be complex if there is no relative equilibrium between men and women among the project participants (in some sectors, particularly in the security world, there are significantly fewer women than men)[13] or among the secondary target population of the intervention (as is well known, there is a higher incidence of violent radicalisation among men than among women). It is also possible that ethical and data protection standards can hinder access to the information needed to evaluate the selected criteria.

Operability: The design and use of the evaluation tools

The choice and configuration of data collection tools is another challenge for newcomer implementing agents. A good strategy for choosing data collection tools should be based on the evaluation's objectives and questions, and its guiding principle should be the triangulation of information—that is to say, the combination of different data collection tools (preferably combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies) and of different sources of information. In the MINDb4ACT experience, the practitioners who are looking to capture cognitive or behavioural changes (knowledge, attitudes, practices or relationships) used pre/post-tests, assessment surveys and evaluation sessions. To a lesser degree, they also used direct (on-site) observation and documentary reviews. When designing the data collection tools, it is good to bear in mind that the ideal goal of an evaluation is not just to assess whether a project worked or not in general terms. Preferably, it should be able to shed light on which elements worked and which did not, for which beneficiaries, in what way, under what circumstances, to what degree, and why. Anticipating some of those questions and establishing variables that can allow for segmenting the answers (by gender, by professional field, experience in P/CVE, etc) will allow for a more detailed and realistic analysis.

Even when the instruments for data collection are appropriately selected, practical limitations and analytic problems can end up affecting the validity and usefulness of the results. Principal difficulties include the timeline planning, which is crucial for the evaluation to answer the formulated questions. The experience of the MINDb4ACT practitioners shows that measuring the effectiveness and impact of a project generally requires collecting baseline data before starting the intervention, but also some time after its completion. For that purpose, evaluators should have an idea of how long it takes to see the results of the intervention. If not, the changes brought about by the project cannot be monitored and analysed objectively. Likewise, various practitioners stated that online data collection tools (mainly virtual surveys) tend to generate lower response ratios and less exhaustive information than similar tools used in offline methods, which certainly can have a negative impact on the data's relevance.

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[13] To give just one example, according to Eurostat data (2017) women now make up 17% of the total membership of EU Law Enforcement Agencies. Eurostat Statistics, Police officers, EU-28, 2009-2017. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Police,_court_and_prison_personnel_statistics#One_in_six_police_officers_is_a_woman

Practitioners may also struggle to gain access to the sources of information. Most evaluations of projects aimed at professionals take a participant-centred approach. Creating an atmosphere of trust and sensitising the beneficiaries of the intervention about the usefulness of the evaluation will be key to getting them to commit and to clearing away anything that could dissuade them from getting involved. In an environment as sensitive as preventing violent radicalisation, professionals can be reluctant to share opinions or information based on real situations, can have ethical questions or may simply be overburdened with ordinary work and not see the evaluation as a priority. It is crucial to explain how the evaluation can have a positive repercussion on improving public policies and even on the professional work of the evaluation participants. Some practitioners also consider the project stakeholders' assessment, so it should be a priority objective from the start to get them to take ownership of the process. Alternatively, the pool of collected data can be increased by bringing in actors who were not involved in the project, through methodologies like expert panels or key informants.[14]

Finally, another of the evaluators' main concerns during implementation is managing ethical criteria. For the procedure to comply with the regulations in that subject matter, the evaluation participants must know the objectives and the consequences of their collaboration, and must have the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers guaranteed, as well as their right to withdraw from the activity at any time, among other aspects. Making informed consent available with pertinent and complete information is already a widespread practice. Nonetheless, the MINDb4ACT practitioners mentioned that the main challenge in the recruitment process was to ensure a balance between protecting data and keeping participation voluntary. It could seem reasonable to think that the best way of achieving that balance is to delegate the recruitment to the stakeholders themselves; however, it is possible that the subjects may be less free to forego participating in the evaluation when the proposal comes from their hierarchical superiors.

Articulation: Reporting results

Identifying and controlling biases is one of the major difficulties in analysing the results. At first, implementing agents may feel tempted to hide negative results and emphasize the positives for fear of the reputational costs of an intervention that does not achieve the expected changes, or due to the risk of losing the funding to continue the project. A realistic definition of the intended effects and of the results that are expected from the evaluation can reduce the pressure on practitioners who are evaluating their own interventions. The lack of a culture of evaluation among inexperienced actors can also cause a deficient understanding about the usefulness of an evaluation, which should not only help to identify best practices but also allow for identifying necessary changes to help the project develop optimally. Failing to achieve the expected results, or partially attaining them, do not necessarily mean that an intervention failed. Rather, it implies the need to make improvements to its design and implementation.

Lessons learned from MINDb4ACT also shows that newcomer implementing agents often ignore in their analysis the indirect and unwanted effects that projects engender. Often, the unwanted effects that worry practitioners the most in the P/CVE area are the so-called iatrogenic effects, such as the stigmatisation and misrecognition of communities and groups.[15] However, another series of unwanted results can remain off the implementing agents' radar, such as those affecting the organisational and institutional context in which

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[14] Joanna Hofman and Alex Sutherland (2018).

[15] Lasse Lindekilde (2011). "Neo-liberal Governing of 'Radicals': Danish Radicalization Prevention Policies and Potential Iatrogenic Effects". *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, vol. 6, num.1, pp. 109-125.

the intervention is unfolding. Other actors who are involved in analysing the collected data may be better at spotting those results, so it is highly recommended to include them.

A consistent analysis of the intervention should be based on the principles of transparency and data triangulation. Admitting the methodological and analytical limitations of the evaluation and sharing the raw data with stakeholders and other relevant actors favours accountability and the credibility of the process. In the same way, contrasting the quantitative and qualitative data of the evaluation will give a realistic sense of how the project has helped bring about the expected outcomes. The project beneficiaries' opinions and assessments should be compared with those from other sources of information to see the real scope of the results.

The identification of biases in the project beneficiaries' answers is also critical for ensuring the trustworthiness of the analysis. Some MINDb4ACT practitioners indicated that results were sometimes affected by participants' non-aligned expectations for how the intervention can meet their needs. Project beneficiaries' assessment should be considered alongside the fact that preventing violent radicalisation is still a developing area of research and intervention. The answers to the challenges that it entails in any area of activity (whether in prisons or in cities, schools or online) are still based mainly on trial and error and on a personalised and highly contextual approach, which limits the availability of advanced training resources, protocols or tools. As a result, some of the needs that the professionals identify can be met only in a limited way and perhaps not to their complete satisfaction.

At the same time, an inappropriate choice of the individuals who participate in the evaluation can also skew the results. The evaluation of a tool by practitioners who lack the skills to use it (for example, knowledge of a language or access to a potential audience on which to apply it) can foreseeably result in a skewed assessment that does not shed any light on how the tool helps improve professional practice. Likewise, in projects that adopt the multi-agency focus and have a target group that is a heterogenous mix of practitioners with different professional needs and expectations, it is to be expected that the different groups will not perform equally during the project and that their perceptions of the results will also vary.

The need for a pragmatic and realistic focus becomes clear once again when writing recommendations based on the evaluation results. The challenge is to avoid formulating suggestions that would be difficult to carry out, or that do not follow logically from the results of the project. Some practitioners may have the temptation of proposing to replicate or scale their intervention in other contexts or places when the results of the evaluation do not show that the need that inspired the project can be generalised in a work area or sector. The evaluators must remove themselves from political agenda priorities and the concerns of public opinion about terrorism and violent radicalisation, and opt for the sustainability of their proposals only when they turn out to have clear relevance. A good strategy for formulating realistic recommendations consists in following the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound). Additionally, recommendations must be directed at those actors who can put them into practice, leaving sufficient room for them to shape the following actions. Furthermore, experience shows that stakeholders have a better knowledge of the intervention's context and that their diagnosis of the situation can be especially useful for defining actionable recommendations.

Fostering a culture of evaluation in the P/CVE ambit also requires that the intervention results be openly disseminated so that all of the actors who are part of the community can be made aware of the lessons learned and avoid the typical mistakes during their own work. Contributing to knowledge-sharing and promoting good practices is key to improve evaluation competences in the field. Inexpert evaluators can

feel insecure sharing their limited results, but that is the only way to broaden the base of knowledge in this matter. With that in mind, it would help to develop formats for sharing the results beyond the project report (for example, by participating in workshops and scientific seminars, or by publishing articles or posts).

4. Policy implications and recommendations

- **Inclusivity:** Both implementing agents and stakeholders must understand the logic of an inclusive process. For the former, a participative evaluation will facilitate data collection and ensure that the actors responsible for maintaining the intervention take the results into consideration. For the latter, the appropriation of the process will ensure its usefulness; only in this way will it respond to their interests and needs and reflect viable solutions pointing to achievable goals while optimising available resources. Not involving the stakeholders in the evaluation work from the start of the project, or losing their help along the way, can prevent the evaluation from informing decision making and thus truly contributing to an evidence-based policy.

- **Pragmatism:** During the evaluation, it is critical to manage expectations, both in terms of the process' ambitions and in relation to the established objectives and expected results. It will allow a rigorous and reliable working structure in which efforts are not limited to testing results that can be externally questioned. Realism should govern the design of the evaluation criteria as well as the implementation of the work, thus enabling the collection of detailed data that will allow for a better understanding of how a project helps bring about a specific change. Finally, realism must also prevail in the analysis, since the recommendations drawn from the evaluation must be actionable enough to bring true improvements to P/CVE.

- **Transparency and ethics:** Choosing an internal evaluation model is a pragmatic decision in short-term, low-budget projects. It allows for optimizing resources while strengthening the implementing agents' competencies. However, its usefulness can be affected by the caution with which its results are usually interpreted. Ensuring a transparent process with stakeholders and political decision makers will make it possible to counter those doubts. To that end, it is important for the evaluators to keep up a regular and fluid conversation with the rest of the actors who are involved or interested in the project. They should share the methodological design of the evaluation and the data collection tools in order to allow for their validation and report on the progress of the process implementation. Evaluators should likewise offer the raw data collected as well as any other element used in the analysis (relationship of analysed documents, interviewed individuals, etc) so that they can be studied independently. Transparency must also prevail in the relationship with the evaluation participants, in compliance with ethical standards. The subjects evaluated must be informed about the project initiatives and the consequences of their involvement in the evaluation. Being transparent with them will also foster a greater degree of involvement in the process. Finally, transparency with the rest of the P/CVE ecosystem should take shape in the publication and dissemination of the evaluation results, which will allow for an exchange of best practices and empirical findings, thus contributing to expanding the available literature on the evaluation of P/CVE interventions.

- **Utility/finality:** The objectives of the evaluation must be clear both for the evaluators and for the stakeholders, such that they can guide the work to be done. It must be considered that an evaluation can serve various purposes: while the practitioners will have a stake in knowing the results of an intervention, policy makers can use the results to make decisions about the distribution of resources or investment increases. Besides, the evaluation does not only have the

single aim of determining whether a project works or not; it also sheds light on which elements worked and which did not, for which beneficiaries, in what way, under what circumstances, to what degree, and why.

- **Gender perspective:** Incorporating a gender perspective in the evaluation of P/CVE projects meets the need of understanding in a comprehensive way the effects of an intervention on its beneficiaries and, ultimately, on the institutional and organisational level. Gender-segmented data collection must be considered in the evaluation design, executed during the implementation and reflected in the analysis. Ideally, it must include recommendations to usher in changes that improve the project's impacts in this dimension.

5. Conclusion

In European political and academic areas, there is a widespread perception that there is currently an insufficient empirical knowledge base on the effectiveness and impact of P/CVE efforts. If this is evident on the level of national and regional policies, it is even more so for small-scale interventions led by actors who are just starting out in this field. This policy report takes the pulse of the challenges and limitations that these actors face, with the goal of encouraging them to develop a culture of evaluation. Some of these deficiencies emerge in the very conceptualisation and planning of the evaluation efforts, and have to do with the lack of inclusiveness and pragmatism in the design of evaluation frameworks. Others come up in the actual implementation of the work, due to operative and analytical constraints that affect the data collection. Finally, some of those limitations crop up in the analysis of the results, and can be due to the presence of bias among the evaluators and evaluated persons, but also to a lack of transparency and realism.

The MINDb4ACT Project ('Developing skills and opportunities to develop ethical, innovative and effective actions against violent extremism') is a Horizon 2020 research project led by the Spanish think tank Real Instituto Elcano (ELCANO) and funded by the European Commission. It brings together seventeen partners from nine European countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom) to research the phenomenon of radicalisation in Europe. By adopting an innovative participatory method known as Living Lab, the project will test existing prevention and counter practices in the field of violent extremism to detect possible gaps and advance with effective actions. The project expands over 2017-2021 and has a total budget of €3 million. The four domains around which the project will revolve are prisons, schools, local initiatives and the Internet and media.

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