

Good practice principles for PVE policy making and program design

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Some basics of good policy making

in the area of prevention of violent extremism
and group hatred

according to RAN practitioner experiences
(RAN/ Radicalisation Awareness Network)

And the IMPACT Europe project on CVE evaluation.

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(1)

As policy maker or prevent program maker:

Never talk about only one sort of violent extremism!

(in conferences, national prevention programs, meetings etc.)

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Why?

- Focusing on one extremism has polarizing effects !
- It polarizes both the population and political parties.
- It also tends to stigmatize a certain group of population.
- It raises fear/ resentment/ hatred.

Extremism polarises/ radicalises –
Prevention shouldn't radicalise !

How to do this ?

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In our programs/ conferences/ meetings ...

- let's always include at least the main two sorts of violent extremism
(e.g. neo-Nazi, religious)!

- Ideally, also include some others (also cults/ sectarianism, gangs/
organized crime)

When including two and more sorts of violent extremism ...

- find a common denominator between them – and ...
- find one key term which covers all phenomena.

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Finding one key term for “the topic” means: the term is

- agreeable to all political fractions
- is helpful for field practitioners on the ground

What could that name be?

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Appropriate terms for the topic could be:

Group hatred,

Intolerance,

Hostile prejudice,

Anti-social attitudes,

(Self-)harmful styles of life,

...

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To include all sorts of violent extremism – and have one key term – makes sense not only politically, but also academically and practically:

- All different sorts of violent extremism are strikingly similar in their basic psychological phenomena.
- The same principles of good practice methods in prevent/ derad apply across all sorts of extremism.

(2)

Never prioritize one sort of violent extremism over the other, as being more or less threatening! – unless there is compelling evidence and good reasons, quantitatively and qualitatively.

For instance, weighing right-wing terrorism against religiously based terrorism does not seem reasonable; since these are comparable quantitatively and qualitatively.

Yet, weighing right-wing terrorism and left-wing extremism may be less comparable quantitatively and qualitatively.

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(3)

Avoid terms which implicate ethnic or religious groups, such as Islamism and Salafism.

Instead use general concepts, such as “violent extremism” or “religiously motivated violent extremism”.

These terms don’t discriminate against certain groups.

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(4)

As policy maker or prevent program maker:

De-politicize !

- Take the issue of extremism and prevention/exit out of the party political rhetoric.
- Stop the party-political blame game around extremism.
- Form bipartisan and all-partisan bodies for program development.

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One political scandal currently in Europe is:
Governmental and EU actors everywhere are talking about Islamism
only, even those who are not really at risk of Islamism – as Eastern EU
countries.

Massive right-wing terrorism is neglected or under-emphasized (also in
the RAN).

Right-wing populist Eastern EU governments use the EU Islamism
rhetoric to campaign against refugees.

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(5)

As policy maker or prevent program maker:

When talking about violent extremism ...
... never stress ideology / religion too much.

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Why is this?

- Focusing ideology/ religions also polarizes/ stigmatizes!
- The majority of religious/ ideological groups is not violent extremist!

Extremism polarises/ radicalises – Prevention shouldn't radicalise !

- Ideology/ religion is less important in extremism than assumed. Stressing the Ideology/ religion means missing the point – and foregoing windows of exchange with extremists

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What should we the focus on ? – if not ideology/ religion?

Many additional, more important issues:

- Social / political grievances - geopolitical issues
- Personal grievances
- Personal values und future plans
- Community and peer group issues
- Biographical and family issues
- Traumas/ violent acts – other personal/ psychological challenges
- Ideology/ religion, too, of course – but secondary and in a personalized perspective

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So, you should not single out one extremism !
– and you should not focus ideology/ religion!

How are we doing with our conference title !?

“Antidotes to Islamism” ???

Oops, we messed it up – big time ! One two accounts !

This always happens !

We messed it up – and this always happens !
Why does this always happens ?

We all want to appear smart/ competent –
“brief well” in meetings, i.e. say most people like to hear,
and we want to please our superiors and the politicians.
There is a “Want-to-brief-wellism” across the board

But: “What briefs well in presentations to policy-makers likely won’t work on the ground”.

Hence, we need to avoid the “Want-to-brief-wellism” in policy making !!

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(6)

Prevention cannot really be done by the government (primarily)!

Prevention should never be done top down !

Rather, prevention needs to come bottom-up – from civil society!

But: Of course you facilitate !

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Prevention needs a non-governmental/ NGO base!

It needs to be owned by civil society – and local communities!

Methods need to be build together on the social ground.

Government needs to provide the frame, quality control and
finance.

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(7)

Bottom-up prevent designs also means:
“First-line practitioners” need to lead!

Practitioners are the ones who know most about it!
The Radicalisation Awareness Network/ RAN:
“First-line practitioners” from *prevent* and *derad work*.

Measures of “practitioner mainstreaming“ are recommended.

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“It’s about emotions, stupid”

Emotions, impulses,

Pre-existing patterns of behaviour (aggressive, criminal),

Psychological issues.

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What is preventing violent extremism about?

Its not about terrorists! – or extremists!

Or about chasing/ identifying would-be terrorists/ extremists!

But who then is it about?

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Its about the young people (of a society)!

Its about safeguarding (vulnerable) young people –

and about safeguarding society itself (free/democratic societies)

>> Hence, focus on young people/ schools and on families!

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And have a wide, comprehensive spectrum of prevention!

What does comprehensive prevention mean?

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Pursue a wide, comprehensive spectrum of prevention!

Do “social risk prevention” in a broad context!
and do PVE within this context,

including prevention of drug addiction, social addiction,
.... mental health issues domestic violence gender
violence

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De-securitize prevention!

Prevention does not “counter”, “tackle”, “combat” anything!

What then does prevention do?

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Prevention is not against it is for!

It does not combat it builds / creates something!

Prevention builds social skills – it creates resilience in society !

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Civil society based prevention needs to be financed/
supported by government.

An all-government approach across all different sectors is
needed, ...

... which also is a multi-agency approach!

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Principles of good practice in prevent/ exit mentoring

“RAN Derad Declaration of Good Practice – Principles of Sustainable Interventions in Disengagement and Rehabilitation (Deradicalisation) ... ”

Published in:

http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/Fachartikel/2015_Draft%20RAN%20Derad%20Declaration%20of%20Good%20Practice_Summary%20in%20progress.pdf

Good practice ...

- ... depends on personal *trust building*
- ... needs *safe space / confidentiality*,
- ... needs *external, non-staff practitioners*
- ... is *open-process* no session plans,
- ... is *participatory, peer-facilitated*,
- ... is *voluntary* (incremental buy-in)

... good practice ...

- ... follows a *narrative mode*, lesser so arguments, debate, counter-speech,
- ... focuses on *social skills* and *emotional intelligence* (conflict, anger, shame, and anxiety)
- prefers *group settings* as much as possible (accompanied by one-on-one settings if needed),
- ... needs focus on *gender identity* conflicts, inter alia

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Further literature:

<http://www.cultures-interactive.de/de/fachartikel.html>

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