

## **DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE**

**WORKING GROUP: RAN – DERAD**

### **1. Introduction**

RAN Derad – the working group “Firstline deradicalisation practitioners and interventions” focuses on practitioners that work “on the ground” in a direct and method-based relationship with radicalised or violently extremist young people. They work intensely both on the level of behaviours and of attitudes and though patterns of the clients.

While deradicalisation interventions seem to be the most challenging and demanding sector of any awareness project in the area of violent extremism, the principles and guidelines of good-practice derad work might be all the more helpful also for the fields of prevention, social media as well as for other sectors of radicalisation awareness.

### **2. Analysis of radicalisation leading to violent extremism, from the perspective of the WG**

The RAN-Derad practitioners’ workshops from 2012, recent research on radicalisation and, in particular, Saskia Lützingers’ 2010 study on violent extremists and terrorists from different affiliations and countries have reaffirmed the conclusion: Radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism derive from a complex set of social, familial, educational, mental, and economic deprivation. It has been clearly established for all sub-groups or extremists: (a) Radicalised persons overwhelmingly come from lower social strata. (b) They share a background of dysfunctional parenting and substantial degrees of relational stress in their social and family life. (c) They join alternative ‘surrogate families’ and become dependent on them. (d) Violence, alcohol and drugs and other dysfunctional coping strategies have already been in place in the family. (e) Ideology is secondary and often accidental in the radicalization process (but is deeply internalized later on). (f) The choice of a particular extremism is often accidental. (g) Radicalisation typically sets in during a phase of acute loneliness and disorientation. (h) Violent extremists’ biographies resembled those of other delinquent adolescents – and extremists often have a prior criminal record before becoming radicalized.

Hence, good and sustainable firstline deradicalisation methodology will take into account the consequences of social, familial, educational, mental, and economic deprivation.

### **3. Best and worst practices, related to the focus of the WG**

Factors of intervention work which tend to **be rather less effective** and may sometimes have adverse effects: (a) bad/ distrustful *work-relationships between NGO and statutory* practitioners of deradicalisation, (b) fully

planned modularized *cognitive-behavioral training programs* and (c) all too educational historical and civic educational modules, (d) pure *anti-aggression* or anger-management trainings out of context of any open-process, relationship-based and narrative intervention approach (biographical, group work, narrative capacity building, civic education issues, gender issues etc.; see recommendations).

Therefore, statements need to be cautioned which claim that “behavioural and cognitive skills programs” are recommendable in general (GCTF Global Counter Terrorism Forum) or that key to good-practice deradicalisation interventions is “an effective comprehensive message that dismantles and counter-argues against every dimension of the extremist narrative” (United Nation’s Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, UN-CTITF). For, “arguing”, “dismantling”, and “cognitive skills” – as opposed to emotional intelligence – might be too close to what has radicalized our target groups in the first place. In fact, extremist narratives feed on being counter-argued and dismantled.

For factors of **successful work** see point 4.

#### **4. Policy recommendations, from the perspective of the WG**

##### **( 4.1.a ) The need for non-governmental practitioners from outside state institutions**

The RAN-Derad practitioners’ workshops and recent research on deradicalisation interventions have clearly indicated: Key for the success of deradicalisation interventions implemented within state institutions – prison, probation, community, school, employment etc. – is that the intervention is delivered *by non-governmental practitioners* from outside the institution. The non-statutory practitioners are trained specialists in their field and undergo continuous quality management. Mostly working for NGOs and civil society organisation, these practitioners are not directly dependent on governmental institutions. They do not report on participants and thus may secure a safe space of confidential exchange.

Two reasons of this prerequisite deserve mentioning: (i) Deradicalisation is a process of *profound personal change* which requires confidentiality and does not respond well to control and assessment measures. It can only unfold on the basis of a trustful and resilient work relationship between clients and facilitators. Since radicalised individuals generally feel alienated from civil society and tend to be deeply distrustful of any governmental organisation. They will not easily develop confidence and trust in anyone – let alone in a governmental representative (who reports to ‘the system’). Hence, non-governmental practitioners are needed who are especially trained and who may act – and are perceived by their clients to be acting – independently from the governmental institution.

(ii) Engaging in a process of deradicalisation – i.e. of personal development and change – touches upon *deep-seated convictions*, sensitive *biographical issues*, and *intense affects*. Such processes may be as emotional and powerful as those occurring in psychotherapy. Hence, once again, they need to be based on a *trustful and resilient client-facilitator-relationship*. It is for this reason that individuals wanting to take up psychotherapy, are generally advised to choose a facilitator who they are not related to and/or dependant on in any personal or professional respect. The same principle applies to processes of deradicalisation. While *psychotherapy* will not properly work when it is delivered, for instance, by the client’s superior/boss/relative, a *deradicalisation* intervention will not properly work when delivered by a governmental and/or institutional representative (prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.) – particularly if this representative is at the same time reporting on or assessing the client.

Member States that have a longer history of deradicalisation work have partly succeeded in developing a professional *third sector* of NGOs and a *pool of expert practitioners* who are able to deliver radicalisation prevent work, civic education and deradicalisation interventions. In these state it has also been noticed that non-governmental practitioners are quite advantageous in facilitating the – immensely important – *cooperation between the statutory organisations* that engage in deradicalisation (prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.) Hence, they assist in securing that the intervention is both *long-term* and *cross-sectoral* (see 4.2).

It thus seems advisable to take to heart – and follow through with – the EC’s 2009 *Stockholm Programme* assertion which states: "Key to our success (in de-radicalisation) will be the degree to which non-governmental groups [...] across Europe play an active part". Recent research and the RAN Derad practitioner exchange indicated that playing an “active part” really also means to ‘fulfil key functions as non-governmental expert practitioner of deradicalisation working from outside the institution.’

#### **(4.1.b) The need for support by statutory staff, for a secure embedding of the deradicalisation activity within the institution – and for sound quality management**

The deradicalisation intervention delivered by outside non-governmental practitioners need to be *securely embedded* in the governmental institution and *supported* through the informed assistance of the institution’s statutory employees. Since good-practice deradicalisation *is systemic* by nature (including aspects of biography, civic education, emotional learning, group work, community networking; see 4.5), the intervention needs to be systemically grounded in and complemented by the everyday procedures of the institution. For this purpose *statutory employees* need to be educated about the methodological and attitudinal principles of state-of-the-art deradicalisation interventions. Also they need to be trained in how to best *complement and assist* these interventions during their everyday work in the institution.

**Recommendation 1:** A key objective of policy making in the area of preventing violent extremism and hate crime should therefore be: (i) to proactively support *non-governmental practitioners* and organisations that work in deradicalisation, (ii) integrate them in key functions into *governmental deradicalisation programs* – delivered in prisons, probation, community, schools etc. –, also: (iii) facilitate a good and *resilient working relationship* between NGO practitioners and these state institutions, and lastly: (iv) to procure a state-of-the-art *quality management* for the practitioners and institutions involved in deradicalisation programs.

(v) This also implies to put in place intelligent mechanisms of *long-term financing* of non-governmental actors, thus allowing for responsible human resource and capacity building. In particular policies should help to *avoid short-term project activism* and recurring *loss of expertise* (brain-drain) which is often caused by short-term project structures. At present, the NGO actors’/organizations’ financial support and capacity building is either insufficient or insecure in most Member States, which results in a lack of available services and brings about less than good-practice performance.

#### **(4.2) The need for interventions to be long-term and cross-cutting institutions (i.e. continue through prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.)**

Deradicalisation is a difficult and volatile process of personal development. Hence, aside of specific methodological recommendations (see beneath), deradicalisation interventions and support relationships need

to be long-term. Most importantly, they need to remain in place when the client *leaves/ changes institutions* and moves on towards another sector of society (prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.). The *continuous relationship* of the (non-governmental) facilitating person is key for providing such *cross-sector* change coaching. Project-style short-term interventions that do not transcend the institutional borderlines may sometimes even be counter-productive since they tend to repeat the experience of fragmented/ unreliable care-taker relationships by which the biographies of this target group are usually characterized. In contrast, long-term and cross-sectoral facilitator relationships secure the necessary continuity – and allow for effectively implementing of both support and challenge (according to the principle of accepting-confrontational work; see methodology).

**Recommendation 2:** Deradicalisation interventions need to be conceived of as long-term, cross-sector and based on a reliable and continuous facilitator relationship. The institutions and statutory organisations (prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.) which engage in deradicalisation programs need to closely cooperate with each other and provide a sound change management for clients passing from one institution to another.

#### **(4.3) The need for a train-the-trainer program in deradicalisation interventions on EU level – and for a pool of expert practitioners assisting in local implementation**

The build-up of a good-practice deradicalisation program within a particular institution and/or a Member State is a quite challenging task. It relies on various sorts of *practitioners' skills and knowledge* as well as on numerous *contextual prerequisites* to be arranged for by the institution and the national/ regional sphere of the Member State. However, no one has ever been able to implement a state-of-the-art methodology just from reading examples of best-practice (on a website). Both developing the practitioners' skills and arranging a sufficiently conducive work context in the country of implementation requires training and consultancy. A post graduate *train-the-trainer program* and a *pool of expert practitioners* is needed who have experience with and in-depth knowledge about state-of-the-art deradicalisation methodology and about how to personally implement, adjust and employ it in different work fields and local areas

Such training program would need to be especially sophisticated and comprehensive in terms of individual capacity building, since the professional skills which are required to successfully do this work are highly demanding. It is a frequently held notion that a successful deradicalisation practitioner would have to be endowed with certain talents, attitudes and motivations – and that these can hardly be trained. However, while it is true that a high level of professional skills is required – which are comparable to the skills of a good-practice mental-health practitioner – it is not true that these skills cannot be trained. Broadly speaking, these skills lie in the areas of analytic perception, relationship and trust building, non-judgmental interaction, curiosity/ respect, self-delineation, calm, courage and similar communicational and emotional intelligence capacities. An adequately comprehensive and sophisticated training will be able to effectively build and/or strengthen such professional skills with suitable trainees.

The experts from the *pool of experienced practitioners* would deliver the training, assist the implementation in different areas/ regions of application, consult local administrations on best-practice guidelines, mediate the local interaction between practitioner-administration, and offer on-the-job coaching and follow-up case work for practitioners.

**Recommendation 3:** Key objective of policy making in preventing violent extremism and hate crime should therefore be to develop a *train-the-trainer and personal skills program* in good-practice deradicalisation

methodology that may be delivered on EU level and implemented in different Member States and areas of work. Furthermore, a *pool of expert practitioners* and consultants needs to be put in place to assist implementing the training locally, offer consultancy and on-the-job coaching and secure quality management.

#### **(4.4) The need for methodological guidelines and principles of good deradicalisation and anti hate crime work with perpetrators and at risk groups.**

The RAN-Derad practitioners' workshops and recent research on deradicalisation and anti hate crime interventions have clearly indicated: Good practice follows specific methodological principles which are recommended to form the conceptual core of any EU level train-the-trainer program in deradicalisation. These principles are as follows:

##### **(i) Trustful and resilient work-relationship – accepting-confrontational approach**

Good-practice interventions put a key emphasis on establishing a *sustainably trust- and respect-based work relationship* between the client and the practitioner(s) – and between the clients as a group. This objective constitutes a big challenge since it means to build trustful and resilient rapport with a type of client that is generally very distrustful and volatile – sometimes bordering a paranoid mind set.

The facilitators then proceed in an intervention style of *critical attentiveness* (or respectful enquiry) which encompasses both understanding/ support (for the person) and contention/ conflict (with her/his beliefs and actions). Hence, this intervention style is *accepting and confrontational* at the same time.

##### **(ii) Voluntary participation – and incremental buy-in**

Participants sign up *on a voluntary basis*. Enrolling and attending is up to the person's own decision and motivation. Participation must *not be assigned*, drop-out must *not go on her/his records* (drop-out under these circumstance is usually minimal, around 3%). By the same token, only modest forms of *incentive* should be held out (which are directly linked to the intervention itself).

However, it is recommended that the (non-governmental) facilitators conduct one-on-one motivational conversations in order to encourage any client once s/he has expressed some degree of interest in taking part.

##### **(iii) The narrative mode and life-world focus – versus debate/ argumentation**

The interventions generally focus on facilitating *narrative exchange*. Here, the clients speak about *personally lived-through* experiences that constitute a part of their individual's biographical memory and carry personal investment (rather than engaging in argumentative *debates* or in *discussing* historical issues). As such narrative mode always ensue an exchange on issues from the immediate *life-world context* of the participants – and in a *relationship based* interaction. Hence, good-practice interventions will be geared towards supporting the clients' ability of and appreciation for expressing her/himself in a *narrative way* about first-hand experienced occurrences – and to actively listening to such narrations of others.

##### **(iv) Importance of group-work and group-dynamic**

A particular key element of deradicalisation is the work *in the group and with the group* and raising awareness about the *group-dynamic* process between the participants. The emotional intensity of this group-work is kept at a level which is *manageable and conducive* for this target-group. It will be off-set by pedagogical exercises and supplementary one-on-one sessions for individual clients – especially in moments when the client changes from one institution/ life period to another (prison, probation, community, school, employment etc.).

**(v) Emotional intelligence – rather than cognitive**

The methodological emphasis is put on *emotional learning* and *emotional intelligence* rather than cognitive learning and debate skills. The intervention specifically aims at acquiring *conflict intelligence*, i.e. the ability to handle conflict and ambivalence in productive and pro-social ways. Furthermore, the emphasis on emotional development includes work with experiences of *embarrassment/ shame, insecurity, fear, aggression, hatred and violence* (since these affects play a major role in acts of violent extremism/ hate crime). Hence, good-practice interventions don't overstress educational 'topics' or 'historical issues' as such but instead look for the subjective investments placed on them by each participating individual.

**(vi) Open-process, relationship-based approach – and methodological flexibility**

The methodology is based on *open-process interaction* which – as a matter of principle – builds on the participants' issues, suggestions and immediate reactions which come to the fore during the group interaction process. In open-process interaction there is *no strict syllabus* or *fixed session plan*. It rather is driven by upcoming issues and is, as such, primarily relationship-based.

**(vii) Likely topics and issues within the intervention**

If the aforementioned methodological principles of open-process narrative group-work are in place, the following *topics and issues* will most likely be brought up by the group – or may easily be suggested by the facilitators:

- challenging *biographical issues*, e.g. experiences of *dysfunctional parenting*, unstable family conditions and chronic relational stress, furthermore, experiences of *deprivation, denigration and violent victimization* in the family, also experience of *alcohol and drugs* as dysfunctional coping strategies
- one's *patterns* of behavior in groups, e.g. one's tendency to install or endure *power relationships*. Also, experiences of using a clique as '*surrogate family*', issues of *friendship, loyalty – versus dependency/ subjugation*
- *gender issues*, as manliness/ womanliness, the other sex, homosexuality etc.
- particularly important for narrative exchange: the scenes of having *acted as a perpetrator/ victimizer*, of having committed acts of hatred, denigration and violence against others
- politics/ religion, discussing and reflecting on *internalized ideological beliefs*,
- issues of overlap/ multiplication of *intra- and extra-familial conflicts*
- national or/and international events and *geo-political conflicts* – as portrayed *in the media*
- *fictional media narratives* in their particular function for personal thought and action

**(viii) Civic education, political/ religious discussion – and pedagogical exercises**

While the mode of narrative and life-world oriented exchange needs to be given methodological priority (and while it is usually not conducive to talk ideology or morals to people with extremists/ fundamentalist leanings), issues and strategies of *civic education* and *political/ ideological/ religious discussion* have to be part of the intervention, too. When the clients follow ideologies which are informed by issues or experiences of *migration and geopolitical conflict*, as for instance Jihadist attitudes, such geo-political issues need to be addressed. Here methods may come in that also use historical and cultural/ youth- cultural narratives, as well

as fictional media products, since such narratives/ products generally have a big influence on peoples' ideological and motivational set-up. Furthermore, exercises from approaches as 'democracy education', 'diversity training', 'anti-bias' and 'human rights work' are helpful. However, such exchange around civic and political issues needs to focus on the individuals' emotional investment and on the biographical embedding which these issues have in each participant's actual experience and life-history.

**(ix) Local actors, community persons, family – civil society**

The (non-governmental) practitioners will on occasion bring in other actors from *different groups of civil society* and the surrounding community as visitors of the intervention group for particular purposes. Particularly, family members may under certain conditions contribute to the deradicalisation process if the visit is moderated in appropriate ways. Thus, personal bridges need to be built across distinctions such as civil/ statutory, professional/ volunteer, inside/ outside, local/national/international.

**Recommendation 4:** It is recommended that the aforementioned methodological guidelines of good-practice deradicalisation form the conceptual core for any further development of these issues on EU level – and particularly inform any endeavour of building-up a train-the-trainer program and pool of expert practitioners.

**(4.5) The importance of media and party-political discourses – and of awareness raising in mainstream society**

*Party-political* and *media discourses* on issues of extremism – as well as general societal awareness – are of crucial importance for the success of deradicalisation interventions with at-risk individuals. Hence, the manner in which representatives from *government(s)*, different *political parties* and other *public institutions* speak about issues and incidents of violent extremism, hate crime, and human rights – as for instance about victims, perpetrators, interventions, prejudices and possibly mainstream extremist views – needs to be taken into account.

Currently incidents of *group related hatred* and extremism are often neglected, covered-up, and/or instrumentalised for populist campaigning and partisan political interests in the overwhelming majority of EU Member States. While the awareness about the enormous risks of violent radicalisation undoubtedly is a cross-party and bi-partisan societal objective, the general practice in public rhetoric and political discourse throughout EU Member States does not yet sufficiently reflect this awareness.

Awareness work as well as targeted deradicalisation interventions would greatly profit from more vigorous and non-partisan support through governmental and political discourses as they powerfully appear in the media. They would profit from a code of ethics being developed to give guidance on how to best treat issues and incidents of hate crime and violent extremism of in public speech.

**Recommendation 5:** One mid-term objective of policy making in preventing violent extremism and hate crime should therefore be the development of a *code of ethics/ conduct* which provides guidelines on how to acknowledge and how to best speak about issues and incidents of hate crime and extremism in public discourse – be it as representative of a government, a (non-extremist) political entity or the media. This code of ethics/ conduct should be complemented by a set of sanctions. Furthermore, such code would need to be *formulated commonly* – in a multi-national and multi-partisan procedure. It should thus be owned by a maximum of governmental and political institutions throughout all Member States. In addition, it seems

advisable to develop *workshop materials* that would facilitate a better understanding of and successful adherence to the code.

#### **5. The role of local actors in preventing violent extremism, from the perspective of the WG**

Local actors are key – and indispensable – for firstline deradicalisation work (see e.g. 4.1.a : The need for non-governmental practitioners from outside state institutions, and 4.4. ix: Local actors, community persons, family – civil society). Hence: "Key to our success (in de-radicalisation) will be the degree to which non-governmental groups [...] across Europe" – and these NGOs 'local actors' – "play an active part" (*Stockholm Programme*).

#### **6. The role of diasporas in the process of violent radicalisation, from the perspective of the WG**

In the context of 4.4. ix: "Local actors, community persons, family – civil society", bringing in diaspora or home land representatives may be a worthwhile intervention. E.g. in the case of Berlin, the 4<sup>th</sup> largest Turkish city on earth, it may be worthwhile to facilitate exchange between Muslim, yet more liberal contemporary Istanbul citizens in derad work in Berlin – and vice versa.

#### **7. The role of communication on the Internet and elsewhere, from the perspective of the WG**

(1) Most strategy papers on policy making with regard to violent extremism include the demand to "counter extremist narratives" and create "counter-narratives" and/or testimonials – and to make them accessible through audio-visual media and the internet. However, in light of what has been concluded above in point 4.4 III – 'The narrative mode and life-world focus – versus debate/ argumentation' – it needs to be cautioned: What so-called "extremist narratives" usually contain is not a 'narrative' in the strict sense (of what narratology defines as the "narrative mode"). In fact, they are quite the opposite of a narrative: they convey arguments, points, explanations etc. (with a high emotional and existential charge attached to them).

In contrast, a narrative or "narrative exchange" in the strict sense, as stated above, means "that the clients share personally lived-through experiences" that form a part of their individual biographical memory and carry active personal involvement. Most importantly, this narrativity is what is needed for good-practice prevent and deradicalisation interventions, because "narrative exchange" in and of itself deradicalizes. By the same token, so-called "extremist narratives" do not only not contain any narrativity, they even actively avoid it! Extremists of any sort instinctively know that narrative exchange deradicalises. More often than not they are plain incapable of engaging in narrativity, because narrative exchange is relatively complex and intimate by nature. Therefore, extremists' strategies are profoundly anti-narrative by nature (and sometimes use narratives in a purely formal/ rhetorical – and impersonal –manner). They rather communicate arguments, points etc. without any authentic narrative/ personal investment.

In consequence, what good-practice deradicalisation methodology – and the work with testimonials (!) – needs to pay attention to is: Avoid to fall into the trap of anti-narrative, argumentative communication. Hence, just "countering" extremist arguments/"narratives" won't do! It will not deradicalize anyone. On the contrary, it will, most likely, have avers effects. For, extremist arguments/"narratives" feed on being "countered", they feed on arguments psycho-dynamically, while they avoid narratives proper, i.e. avoid any situation in which "personally lived-through experiences" are shared/narrated.



Hence, whoever attempts to create a deradicalising narrative needs to keep in mind that most notions of “counter-narrative” are based on a fundamental misunderstanding (and that the widespread term “extremist narratives” is a misnomer). Hence, if the United Nation's Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (UN-CTITF) states that we should produce “counter-narratives” and that they need to put forth “an effective comprehensive message” which “dismantles and counter-argues against every dimension of the extremist narrative”, it will not succeed in stimulating a deradicalisation process.

(2) Having said this, mediated testimonials and narratives proper may very well be used in addition to and/or in lieu of real face-to-face encounters with civil society representatives. I.e. audio-visual footage of interviews with victims, survivors and other groups of civil society may be brought in. In principle, mediated narratives of this sort can be a powerful tool to facilitate deradicalisation processes. In particular, victims’ testimonials may be of great effect – and comparatively little risk – in the area of public awareness raising, political discourse, and general prevent work.

Victims’ testimonials may also, under certain circumstances, become a key element of a facilitated deradicalisation process – since, in any event, victimization turns out to be a biographical issue with practically all hate crime offenders. However, certain precautions seem advisable if a methodological tool as affectively charged as a victim testimonial should be brought in. As little as we know about deradicalisation – which is even less if it comes to the possibilities and risks attached to the use of victim narratives – we should reckon with the following fact: Not every victim narrative may in fact have a deradicalising effect with every kind of at-risk person at every moment of his/her deradicalisation process. On the contrary, being as highly relevant and affectively charged as experiences of victimization generally are – which holds true for hate offense perpetrators in particular! – narratives about victimization experiences might be the most difficult to apply methodological element. Here it needs to be kept in mind that a triggered deradicalisation process may fail and even backfire, i.e. have avers effects.

At this early point of practical experience it seems:

- (a) that 80% of a victim testimonial method – metaphorically speaking – would be concerned about the careful preparation before, precise timing of, and profound working-through after any exposure to victimization narratives, and it would be only 20% about the quality of the narrative itself;
- (b) yet, there are certain principles of leading a (victim) interview and formulating questions (as know from biographical interview methodology) that decisively increase the narrative qualities/ narrativity of any testimonial and therefore may also increase its deradicalisation potential;
- (c) not immediately visible but potentially decisive might also be the questions in what way and to what extent victims’ human rights have been observed during the production process of such testimonial, i.e. in the selection of the interviewees, the handling of the interview process as such and the post-production editing of the footage.
- (d) One particular issue in applying victim testimonials – also in public awareness and prevent work – will always be: To what extent might this application have the involuntary effect that the audience strongly engages in and identifies with the victim side – and its own victimization associations and experiences – at the cost of also looking at their own associations and experiences of acting out as perpetrator and/or in condoning perpetration of victimization (on whatever level).