

**Good practice in – “policy making”  
about preventing/ distancing of violent extremism –  
and group hatred**

Brussels, European Parliament

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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,

Hostile prejudice,

Anti-social attitudes,

(Self-)harmful styles of life,

...

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Including all sorts of violent extremism – and having 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 phenomena anyhow.
- The principles of good practice methods in prevent/ derad are the same anyway with all sorts of extremism.

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(2)

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 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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(3)

As policy maker or prevent program maker:

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

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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 much 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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(4)

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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# European Fair Skills

Exchanging good practice in strengthening community-embedded prevention of hostile prejudice/ group hatred, hate crime and violent (right-wing) extremism





Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
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**CoCoRa**

*Community Counteracting Radicalisation*

(5)

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/engl/Draft\\_RAN-Derad\\_Declaration-of-Good-Practice\\_Harald.pdf](http://cultures-interactive.de/tl_files/publikationen/engl/Draft_RAN-Derad_Declaration-of-Good-Practice_Harald.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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