RAN **Centre of Excellence**

RAN P&P Practitioners' working paper

Approaches to violent extremist offenders and countering radicalisation in prisons and probation

Product of the RAN Centre of Excellence and the RAN P&P Working Group. Authored by Ryan J. Williams, Research Associate, University of Cambridge, Centre of Islamic Studies and Prisons Research Centre.

Introduction

This paper aims to provide policy-makers, prison governors and prison and probation staff with information on current practice and issues relevant to managing Violent Extremist Offenders (VEOs) and individuals considered at risk of engaging in violent extremism in a prison and probation context ([1]). The paper is structured around these two contexts. While in practice this distinction may not exist in some EU Member States, it serves to identify key issues: prison conditions and reintegration strategies, risk assessment, prison regime choices, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, and staff training.

([1]) The working paper develops a previous working paper under a different title. Radicalization Awareness Network, 'Dealing with Radicalisation in a Prison and Probation Context Ran P&P - Practitioners Working Paper' (2015).

This paper also aims to provide guidance and to help support decision-making processes, both at policy, and at prison and probation management levels. It is therefore written for accessibility rather than comprehensiveness. A one-size-fits-all solution does not exist because EU Member States vary in many ways, including in legislation and how prison and probation systems are organised ([2]). However, multi-agency cooperation is crucial in the management of risks related to radicalisation and to ensure that VEOs are provided with opportunities for rehabilitation.

Since the launch of the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) in 2012, the Working Group on Prison and Probation (RAN P&P) has focused on preventing violent extremism, engagement with extremist groups and extremist behaviour during detention and probation. This paper is based on practitioners' input and up-to-date research on the subject, although research in this area remains limited due to the relatively small size of the population concerned. The RAN P&P Working Group comprises 250 practitioners, including representatives from probation services, prison governors, prison officers, Ministries of Justice and intelligence services, and NGOs and civil society organisations working with offenders. RAN P&P has convened 13 meetings with practitioners from all EU Member States (including three study-visits to prisons in three different countries) and leading researchers, enabling high-quality exchanges on a range of themes ([3]). These meetings have highlighted a range of promising practices in prison and probation contexts, which can be consulted the RAN Collection of Approaches and Practices ([4]).

Practitioners and policy-makers face enormous political and public pressure to ensure public safety. Regardless of these pressures, RAN P&P maintains the following guiding principles that are reflected throughout this paper:

- the safety of society is best ensured through promoting the well-being and rehabilitation of offenders;
- terrorism crimes cover a range of activities; individuals sentenced for terrorist acts do not all represent the same risk to society;
- offenders are capable of positive change and they need support to disengage from violent extremism;
- universal human rights must be upheld at all times and under all circumstances;
- promoting positive staff-prisoner relationships and healthy prison climates is a pre-condition for reducing risk around radicalisation and contributing to rehabilitation and reintegration;
- multi-agency cooperation is crucial to prevent radicalisation and support desistance processes.

This working paper concerns those convicted or on remand for terrorist-related offences and those considered to be at risk of radicalisation in prison and probation contexts.

([2]) United Nations, "Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons," (New York: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, October 2016). Global Counterterrorism Forum, "Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders," (Rome2012).

[3] Summary papers of these events are available online.

([4]) http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-best-practices/index_en.htm

It has become incumbent (and sometimes a legal requirement) upon Member States to prevent acts of terrorism within public institutions such as prisons and individuals at risk of radicalisation fall within this remit. In this report, we emphasise that these types of offenders are diverse and include individuals who have not committed acts of violence and who may never do so. Being radical does not mean that a person will in any way follow up with violent action. Any response to radicalisation needs to recognise this diversity. We also recognise that effective management of Violent VEOs and those considered at risk of radicalisation requires multi-agency cooperation. It is crucial that offenders receive continuous support and that information flows between organisations, including prison and probation services, police, and community organisations.

Did you know?

Violent extremist offenders - a special case? EU Member States currently have a range of opinions and approaches to VEOs and issues around radicalisation. Some normalise the risks associated with VEOs (e.g. Italy, through its rehabilitation approach which is not tailored to VEOs) and radicalisation, while others treat these risks as requiring special structures and/or processes (e.g. the United Kingdom Healthy Identity programme, targeting VEOs specifically) ([5]).

- *General Approaches*: There is overlap between theories of desistance from crime and desistance from terrorism; it is important to provide for vocational and social support as required, alongside specialist approaches([6]).
- *Specialist Approaches*: Offenders' individual circumstances may lead them to require unique approaches. For example, individuals who have committed violence with ideological motives, have experienced trauma after fighting in a foreign conflict or developed specialised combat skills, or have network ties with extremist groups, may require specialist interventions and processes. These specialist approaches may include unique psychology- and/or religion-based interventions.

Context

The context of terrorism has changed dramatically for prisons and probation. 'Foreign terrorist fighters' ([7]) now account for the highest proportion of arrests and convictions in Europe (Table 1). The number of arrests has tripled over the last three years, putting increased strain on prisons and probation as offenders

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([5]) United Nations, "Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons."

([6]) Adam Calverley, *Cultures of Desistance: Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Ethnic Minorities* (Taylor & Francis, 2012); Stephen Farrall, *Understanding Desistance from Crime: Emerging Theoretical Directions in Resettlement and Rehabilitation*, ed. Adam Calverley (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2006).

([7])'Foreign terrorist fighters' are defined by the UN Security Council (resolution 2178) as '…nationals who travel or attempt to travel to a State [other than their own territory or state]… for the purpose of perpetration, planning, or preparation of, or participation in, terrorist acts, or the providing or receiving of terrorist training in connection with armed conflict'. This includes individuals leaving Europe and travelling to Syria, Iraq, Mali or Ukraine.

move through criminal justice systems. According to Europol, Jihadist terrorism and foreign fighters represent the largest proportion of arrests in the EU over the past three years (Table 1) ([8]).

Other types of terrorism, including ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, plus left-wing and anarchist terrorism, are on the decline. Concerns over right-wing extremism have however grown as polarising and nativist social and political discourse fuel acts of violence against Muslims and migrants by reactionary movements, individuals and small groups. These tensions are expected to continue increasing for the foreseeable future. This complex social and political climate is reflected in prisons, and adds to the diverse populations and tensions that require managing.

A range of activities are now considered terrorism offences, many of which are non-violent and therefore represent a limited risk to society. 'Lesser risks' include those associated with fundraising, intention to travel, or possession of material considered extremist. The characteristics of those committing the offences have also changed; the population is younger, more diverse, and includes more women. Practitioners report that the radicalisation process can be remarkably short, as little as two weeks, and that recruitment can occur in prison([9]) .

Did you know?

Special terminology? Agreeing on terminology is helpful for describing specific processes and interventions. Particularly in multi-agency settings, a shared language can help different parites understand each other and cooperte. The extent to which this language is also used when working with the offenders themselves should be considered carefully.

- 'Disengagement' refers to behavioural change, such as leaving a group or changing one's role within it.
- 'De-radicalisation' refers to a cognitive shift in understanding and outlook that moves individuals away from legitimising violence ([10]).
- In some instances, using (the term) 'de-radicalisation' may lead to inappropriate labelling and stigmatisation, which can be harmful.

With some VEOs receiving short sentences, criminal justice systems have a limited window in which to affect the process of change. Because these periods for intervention are brief, continuity as an individual moves from prison to the community is crucial, and should involve multi-agency cooperation as needs are

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([8]) Europol, 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat), ' (The Hague: European Union, 2016). p.18.

([9]) Research, however, has not documented a single recruitment process. United Nations, 'Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons', p. 114. For a discussion of the complexities around radicalisation in prison, see Alison Liebling, Helen Arnold, and Christina Straub, 'An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at Hmp Whitemoor: 12 Years On', (Cambridge: Cambridge Institute of Criminology, Prisons research centre, 2011); Alison Liebling and Helen Arnold, 'Social Relationships between Prisoners in a Maximum Security Prison Violence Faith and the Declining Nature of Trust', *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40 (2012).

([10]) See https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-exit/docs/ran_exit-ex_post_paper_london_15-16032016_en.pdf online.

assessed and support provided. Family support mechanisms and partnering with third sector NGO's should be explored. Probation services will play an important role in designing these alternatives to rehabilitation in prison settings. The numbers of foreign fighters expected to come into contact with the judicial system also raises questions over interventions pre-trial and during the trial itself ([11]). Member States are currently exploring ways of preventing 'detention damage', and in some cases are making available alternative sanctioning options for less serious offences.

Table 1.

Year	2013	2014	2015
No. individual arrests in the EU for terrorism-related offences	537	774	1077
No. individuals arrested for jihadist terrorism	216	395	687
No. convictions for terrorist offences	258	345	417
No. acquittals for terrorist offences	78	107	110

Source: Europol ([12])

The challenge posed by VEOs and radicalisation is uneven among EU Member States, but it is clear that the number of VEOs is rising rapidly across the EU as a whole, with 258 convictions for terrorist offences in 2013 and 417 in 2015 (Table 1). France (424), Spain (187), the UK (134), and Belgium (61) reported the highest number of arrests in 2015.

Monitoring procedures are currently in place in many EU Member States (e.g. Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, the UK) to manage risks associated with offenders who are not convicted of terrorist-related crimes but who are at risk of committing violent extremist acts or influencing others to do so. Data on the numbers of individuals being monitored over concerns linked to violent extremism are not always reported by Member States, and are subject to frequent fluctuation. The figures that are available show that in the England and Wales, 600 individuals are being monitored while in Italy, 124 individuals in prison are being monitored. These monitoring procedures, while prudent, raise legal, resource, and ethical issues: how can risk be monitored appropriately without stigmatising individuals as 'extremist' and contributing to further alienation?

Did you know?

Reducing risk through support: prisons and probation have a duty of care towards individuals in custody, including care for the vulnerable. Those convicted of extremist offences, and those seen to be at risk of radicalisation need support at crucial times. Managing VEOs and persons suspected of becoming radicalised towards violence or influencing others towards a violent extremist mindset should not over-emphasise risk at the cost of meeting individuals' needs and providing support.

([11]) Global CounterTerrorism Forum, 'Prison Management Recommendations to Counter and Address Prison Radicalization' (2015).
([12]) Europol, 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat) '; 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat) ', (The Hague: European Union, 2014); 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat) '; 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (Te-Sat) '.

Key recommendations

- 'Terrorist offences' and the individuals who commit them are growing in range and do not all present the same risks to society. Responses should be proportionate; otherwise there is a risk of 'detention damage' among individuals, of fuelling the radicalisation process through disproportionate measures.
- All EU Member States have general rehabilitation programmes targeting different types of offenders. Whether VEOs should have access to specialised programmes should be explored. Decisions should be based on individual risks and needs, the policy perspective on dealing with VEOs, the proportionality of designing specialised programmes versus the size of the target group, and the potential risks of stigmatisation doing more harm than good.
- Multi-agency cooperation is necessary to ensure informed decision making about interventions (through information sharing) and to ensure intervention continuity from prison to the community. It should include representatives from at least the prison, probation, police, community organisations, social and health services and the family.

Prison context

Healthy prison environments

Research suggests that radicalisation in a prison environment is rare but that prison conditions can play a significant role in heightening or lessening risks ([13]). Recent terrorist attacks across Europe have been committed by individuals with a criminal past ([14]). The prison environment includes the physical environment and values, relationships, procedures and policies that constitute the day-to-day functioning of a prison. These factors shape the prison experience and can provide opportunities to reduce both the risk of radicalisation during imprisonment and the risk of reoffending after release into society. Overcrowding, a lack of staff or poor relationships between staff and prisoners, and poor facilitates — including poor access to meaningful activities such as education and work — can have a negative impact on prisoners. Underpinning 'dynamic security' ([15]) is a holistic approach to a healthy prison environment that includes the following dimensions ([16]):

Staff-prisoner relationships: Prisoners must be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy at all times. Good relationships involve care for the vulnerable as well as help and assistance. Effective staff-prisoner relationships contribute significantly to the safety and security of staff, prisoners and the public by smoothing the flow of information and improving its quality. Good relationships between VEOs and staff can facilitate the building of trust and help break down 'us' versus 'them' barriers and the distrust and suspicion towards 'the authorities' often seen amongst people with an extremist mind-set. Therefore

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([13]) Mark S. Hamm, *The Spectacular Few: Prisoner Radicalization and the Evolving Terrorist Threat* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).
([14]) Simon Cottee, "Reborn into Terrorism: Why Are So Many Isis Recruits Ex-Cons and Converts," *The Atlantic*, 25 January 2016.
([15]) See https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UNODC_Handbook_on_Dynamic_Security_and_Prison_Intelligence.pdf online.
([16]) Alison Liebling, *Prisons and Their Moral Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

investing in effective day-to-day interaction between staff and prisoners is a key element of dealing with VEOs.

Well-being and personal development: Offenders' well-being and development must form the core of rehabilitation in prison. Ensuring this involves meeting baisc needs (access to decent food, clean sanitary facilities, time outside) and providing vocational training so that prisoners may pursue personal development. Access to education, creative endeavours such as art and music, and a space for practicing and developing a religious faith are all important avenues for encouraging personal development and minimising distress.

Conditions and family contact: Prison conditions encompass facilities to maintain personal hygiene and decency, a clean living space, and access to and respect for cultural and religious considerations through processes and facilities. For instance, body searches and searches conducted by dogs must be performed in a way that respects cultural and religious norms. Family contact is a crucial form of support for prisoners and contributes to healthy relationships after release. Frequency of contact with family, a meaningful space for visits that includes comfortable spaces for children, and an appropriate time allocated for meaningful contact are all important for family contact. Family bonds are important for the reintegration of VEOs as they can be (although not in all cases) a positive driving force for rehabilitation.

Security, safety and control: An organised, controlled and efficient prison provides prisoners with a structure that meets expectations and allows them to feel safe. A lack of structure and inconsistencies in security and control can negatively impact prisoners' experiences, and safety needs may be met through other means, including groups (e.g. religious groups, gang-like groups) that offer protection. These groups can enhance and entrench prisoner hierarchies (sources of status) and conflicts between groups of prisoners, heighten risks in prisons and decrease perceptions of safety. Understaffing or inexperienced personnel have a negative impact on security and control.

Did you know?

Placing trust appropriately encourages a safe and nurturing staff-prisoner culture: intelligently placed trust is crucial for security and control, fostering good relations between staff and prisoners. It is also crucial for the rehabilitation of prisoners. Not trusting individuals can damage their self-esteem and can have a negative impact on offenders' capacity to see themselves as trustworthy and to reintegrate into society. A well-run prison must be grounded in intelligent trust: trusting prisoners who are trustworthy and allowing opportunities for those considered untrustworthy to build trust. Heavy-handed or punitive policies, as well as poor staff-prisoner relationships, can erode trust, contribute to alienation, legitimise extremist views against the state, undermine efforts to rehabilitate and jeopardise safety.

Professionalism: Professional staff apply rules and distribute privileges fairly and equally. They also communication prison rules and expectations clearly. Professional discretion should be exercised to ensure that punitive practices are enforced only when other options have been exhausted. Staff should communicate clearly with prisoners so that they understand why certain disciplinary actions are being taken towards them and are aware of what behaviour they need to change. Professionalism involves equal treatment of VEOs and others offenders. Professionalism might be tested by offenders. VEOs with a strong ideological inclination and trust issues towards authorities may test staff by explicitly 'dehumanizing' them (e.g. calling them dogs) and targeting their personal views and opinions. Prison staff need to be trained and

offered supported to help them recognise this behaviour and to understand how to respond to it professionally.

Did you know?

Professionalism requires fairness (legitimacy): fairness involves just processes and just outcomes. Just processes imply quality decision-making procedures and fairness in the way people are personally treated by prison and probation staff. Just outcomes imply that individual groups are treated equally and fairly. Favouring or disadvantaging one group can decrease the legitimacy of the prison. Singling out one group, such as Muslim offenders or terrorist offenders, can reinforce an 'us' versus 'them' divide (e.g. 'the state is against Muslims') and erode the legitimacy of the prison and the state, reinforcing extremist ideology.

It is important to consider that different ethnic and religious groups have different experiences (e.g. in relation to discrimination, marginalisation, Islamophobia, or racism) and that that recognising equality and diversity avoids reinforcing these experiences and causing harm. Research has shown how unhealthy prison environments can create the conditions that contribute to radicalisation and can more broadly contribute to negative outcomes for all offenders ([17]), including the heightened levels of distress that lead to suicide ([18]).

Did you know?

'Difficult' prisoners and the prison environment: problematic prisoner behaviour can be linked to the prison environment. Unfair treatment, poorly organised regimes, or frustrations around contact with family are all circumstances that may influence a prisoner's behaviour. Research has shown that difficult prisoners may be difficult in some environments but not in others([19]), suggesting that challenging behaviour – including behaviour related to radicalisation – must be considered alongside in relation to the prison regime.

Key recommendations

- A healthy prison environment is the primary deterrent for radicalisation. The risks of radicalisation are reduced through a professional, secure and fair prison. The absence of these elements can reinforce the extremist mind-set and distrust towards authorities, and increase both the formation of groups and triggers for violence.
- Investing in day-to-day staff-offender relationships, through staff empowerment, professionalism, respect and dynamic security measures, is key to dealing with VEOs.

([17]) Hamm, *The Spectacular Few: Prisoner Radicalization and the Evolving Terrorist Threat*.
([18]) Alison Liebling, *Suicides in Prison* (London: Routledge, 2002).
([19]) Roy D. King and Kathleen McDermott, "'My Geranium Is Subversive': Some Notes on the Management of Trouble in Prisons," *The British Journal of Sociology* 41, no. 4 (1990).

Risk assessment and support

EU Member States are currently inconsistent in how they use the results of intelligence and risk assessment, and how they collect information. Approaches range from professional judgement to formal risk assessment tools.

Risk evaluation and assessment currently take two forms:

- information gathering, monitoring and analysis;
- specific risk assessment tools used for VEOs and those suspected of being radicalised or influencing others.

Member States are encouraged to follow the guiding principles outlined on page 1.

Did you know?

What is subversive behaviour? in an effort to prevent violent extremist acts, more attention has been given to identifying non-violent extremist behaviours that may be a precursor to violence either inside or outside of prison. This has raised significant issues for staff who are tasked with identifying behaviours of concern. Spotting risks related to radicalisation is also difficult in a prison environment. The line between 'prison behaviour' (resistance, power struggles, or joining a group for protection) and 'extremist behaviour' (committing violent acts), is often blurred. Structured individual assessments and trained staff can help assess risks, motivation, and prisoner needs more accurately.

Procedures are currently in place in several Member States (e.g. Belgium, France , Italy, the Netherlands, , Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom) to detect radicalisation. These procedures include intelligence gathering and reporting[20]. Intelligence is crucial to the safe functioning of prisons, but monitoring for extremism is subject to false positives. We therefore recommend four sets of considerations to assist decision-making linked to intelligence:

(1) if intelligence is used to inform decision-making, including placement of prisoners in special units, it must be used in accordance with legal frameworks and human rights;

(2) the intelligence systems around the 'target group' must be multi-levelled: they must recognise degrees or levels of risk or threat (e.g. in relation to capability, intent and engagement) and must specify whether this threat relates to the offender him/herself, prison officers, other prisoners, or the public;

(3) intelligence must be used in a dynamic way, allowing for individuals to have their risk lowered and for intelligence to be dismissed if invalid or out of date;

(4) intelligence must be contextualised: individuals who prompt concerns and security intelligence around radicalisation must have this information contextualised and embedded within other sources of information. This contextualised understanding should include:

- accounts from persons with personal or close knowledge of the offender that can provide context and understanding of him/her, for example, a chaplain or a prison officer;
- actuarial data: about the individual and the offence;

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[20] Global CounterTerrorism Forum, VPrison Management Recommendations to Counter and Address Prison Radicalization'.

- <u>dynamic factors</u>: such as employment, housing, mental health, family support, etc.; changes in these factors in particular may triggers increased risk, or mitigating circumstances that reduce risk;
- <u>clinical factors</u>: professional judgement and experience, using personal and professional experience to assess the information collected through interviews and file reading;
- <u>information from partners in a multi-agency framework,</u> such as from social workers, the police, and intelligence services, about an individual.

Some Member States (e.g. Sweden) have a dedicated prison intelligence organisation. An often-heard complaint from prison directors is the lack of sharing between prisons and intelligence services. Having a dedicated prison intelligence organisation can allow for information sharing protocols that make it easier for general intelligence services to inform prisons about offenders who might have started a process of radicalisation.

Did you know?

Radicalisation and religious behaviour: for religiously inspired extremism, it is very important not to confuse people who might have (re)discovered their faith with people who have developed radical views. Most people who convert or revert, e.g. to Islam, during imprisonment are doing so for peaceful individual motives or to bond with a group of other prisoners. Prejudices around links between religion and extremism remain very present and may hamper accurate risk assessment. Staff diversity and awareness training helps to avoid confusion between the two.

Several formal risk assessment tools are currently used in a number of Member States to assess the risk believed to be associated with people suspected or convicted of violent extremism ([21]). Risk assessment for radicalisation, however, is currently in its infancy. An accurate assessment must consider the range of motivations and circumstances that contribute to radicalisation, which will differ between offenders and may include existential needs for belonging, ideological commitments, financial incentive, or glorification of violence ([22]). As they have a focus on violent extremism, these risk assessments are designed to be implemented next to general risk assessments and other instruments used to assess the overall risks and needs of offenders.

Assessments are limited in value if they are not carried out frequently. They must be treated as a continuous activity aligned with professional judgements. Risk assessment tools can be used for a variety of reasons, including assessing the needs of the offender and informing appropriate placement, programmes and support.

([21]) These include the Vera 2 instrument, the REM (Risk Assessment Extremism for Managing), and the ERG22+ (Extremism Risk Guidance). See D. Elaine Pressman and John Flockton, 'Violent Extremist Risk Assessment: Issues and Applications of Teh Vera-2 in High-Security Correctional Setting', in *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Managment, Radicalisation and Reform*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2014). RAN P&P Visit Penitentiary Institute, Vught 26 November 2015. Monica Lloyd and Chris Dean, 'The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders', *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management* 2, no. 1 (2015).
([22]) United Nations, 'Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons', p. 42.

Did you know?

Radicalising influences: determining whether someone is attempting to influence another person into adopting violent extremist behaviours is a major challenge within today's context of concerns. Influencing others assumes intention to coerce someone into violence and assumes that someone is willing to adopt a violent position and behaviour. Risk management practices must be mindful to separate risks from individuals coercing others to adopt extremist attitudes from other forms of social interactions. Peer groups in prisons may provide opportunities for prosocial mentorship. Risk management practice must also be mindful of vulnerable individuals who may be subject to bullying and coercion.

Risk assessment tools should not be used as predictive tools to gauge an individual's future threat or behaviour. The use of these tools could have several harmful effects, including labelling individuals as 'extremists', contributing to alienation, and potentially decreasing the legitimacy (fairness) of the prison ([23]). This is why it is crucial to thoroughly and repeatedly assess each individual. paying attention to their personal, social and environmental circumstances ([24]). An emphasis on risk assessment and detection should not come at the expense of supporting offenders by providing for safety, personal development, or opportunities for family contact.

In order to recognise positive and negative change, it is important that assessments are repeated at regular intervals or at times of change. This is crucial for documenting and understanding reductions in risk level that a particular offender may show as his/her disengagement process evolves, and for decision-making transparency with regard to, for example, programmes and placement.

Did you know?

Charismatic Leadership: the level of social prestige enjoyed by prisoners can be determined by a range of factors. Research has shown that prisoner status arises from what is imported into the prison (crime hierarchies) and what is considered valuable within a prison context for lessening the pains associated with imprisonment (e.g. social bonds). Leadership among prisoners must be understood within the wider social, material, and moral climates of prisons. Recent research found evidence of prisoner hierarchies emerging in a tense prison environment with poor staff-prisoner relationships, and of the leader bringing balance, stability and order to the wing ([25]).

([23]) Alison Liebling and Ryan J. Williams, 'The New Subversive Geranium: Some Notes on the Management of Additional Troubles in Maximum Security Prisons', *British Journal of Sociology* (in press).
([24]) United Nations, 'Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons', p. 42.
([25]) Alison Liebling et al., 'Locating Trust in a Climate of Fear: Religion, Moral Status, Prisoner Leadership, and Risk in Maximum Security Prisons — Key Findings from an Innovative Study', (Prisons Research Centre, Institute of Criminology: University of Cambridge, 2015).

Key recommendations

- Monitoring and intelligence sharing tools for radicalisation and recruitment are needed to assess the risk and threat level of VEOs (to themselves, other offenders, staff and the public); organising this within the prison system may enhance cooperation with police and general intelligence services;
- Specialized risk assessment tools are needed for violent extremists; information should be collected from multiple sources and care must be taken to reduce assessor bias;
- Specialised risk assessment tools should complement other risk and needs assessment tools and approaches;
- Risk assessments must be completed regularly so that changes to risk levels are clear; the assessments must take account of the personal, social and environmental circumstances of the offender;
- Risk assessment protocols need to be appropriate for the complexity / size of the process / population, resource level and staff capabilities within a Member State;
- With regard to rehabilitation, risk assessment should include an assessment of needs — both general as well as those specific to dealing with an extremist mind-set (e.g. more contact with family, development of religious understanding, more contact with other prisoners or staff members who can positively influence the VEO).

## *Prison regime choices: concentration, dispersal or a combination*

EU Member States currently use one of three regime types to manage VEOs and individuals considered either at risk of radicalisation or of influencing others [26].Not all VEOs are located in high-security prisons (some do not have high Security prisons), and some Member States have dedicated prisons for VEOs charged with or convicted of terrorist crimes (e.g. Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain). Policy and practice are shifting rapidly in this area, with countries exploring different regime choices (England and Wales, for instance, are considering moving from a dispersal model to a special unit, while France experimented with special units in 2016). This section explores differences between prison regimes following the concentration, dispersal or combination models, and the challenges and benefits of each. Figure 1 details part of the decision-making process involved in these regime choices.

Containment Model: VEOs and people suspected of radicalisation are placed in separate units — sometimes these smaller units follow a similar regime, sometimes they have unique regimes that help staff manage specific risks and behaviours (see considerations for special units). Containment models may 'concentrate' VEOs and suspects together or they may serve as special units for different types of individuals with problematic behaviour (that is, not just VEOs). The containment model is, initially, an opportunity for VEOs entering the prison system, but it is also an option for individuals not convicted for VE offences if their behaviour is linked to radicalisation (see 'entrance criteria', p.13).

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[26] Roy D. King and Sandra L. Resodihardjo, 'To Max or Not to Max', *Punishment & Society* 12, no. 1 (2010).

Figure 1. Decision-making flow chart for three models of imprisoning VEOs and radicalised offenders
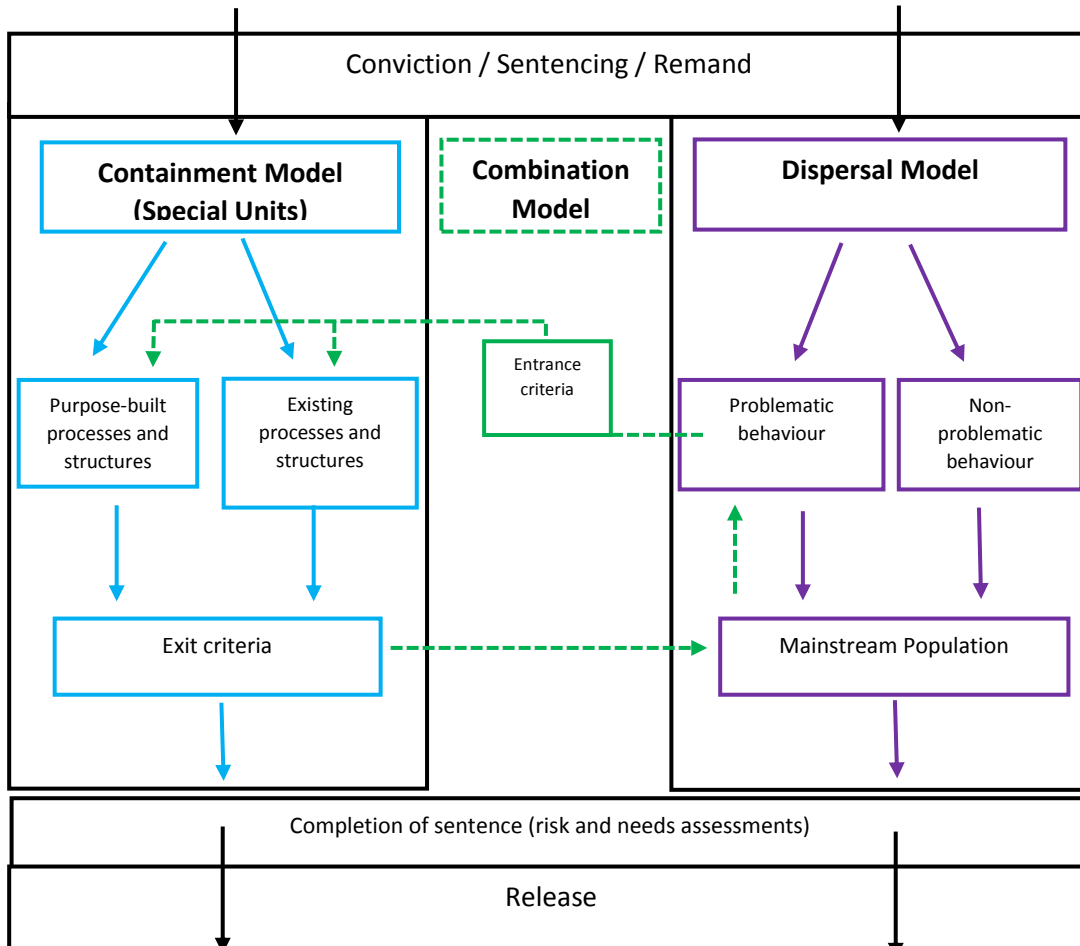
Did you know?
'Entrance criteria' for special units: the criteria must be met to enter special units. The criteria should consider: the basis on which decisions are made on moving an individual to a special unit; the exact criteria used; the ways in which problematic behaviours associated with radicalisation are similar to or different from other problematic behaviours found in a prison environment; the transparency of decisions; whether they are subject to legal challenge; and whether the decisions align with human rights.

Advantages: containment allows the close monitoring of behaviours and interactions. Through training, staff can become highly specialised in working with this population and interventions can be focused on their needs. VEOs are separated from the mainstream population and this avoids shifts in the power hierarchy and the exertion of any influence from VEOs on violent extremism. The containment model also ensures that VEOs and those considered at risk of radicalising others do not directly recruit or influence others in the mainstream population. In addition, to the public it is a very 'visible' way in which to deal with VEOs.

Disadvantages: placing VEOs together may strengthen social bonds and contribute to a culture of opposition between prisoners and staff, undermining staff efforts to build relationships and trust. These social dynamics may further entrench an oppositional mindset between 'us' and 'them' and reinforce views that the state is against individuals. Grouping by similar religious or ethnic group may also reinforce views held inside prison and within society more generally about the unfair treatment of particular religious or ethnic groups, legitimising grievances. The units could be a source of stigma and status (see 'special units' below), subverting their aims by damaging offenders' self-image or making the units desirable placements; in both cases, undermining rehabilitation efforts. The approach treats all extremist offenders as equal in degree and severity of risk, despite a range of activities included under the heading of 'VE offences', including those related to fundraising, travel, and violence. The cost of purpose-built facilities and regimes are high, and there is little research to determine how well such units are working. (Early) experiences of special units, for example in the Netherlands and France, show the difficulty of finding good staff. When incidents occur (e.g. staff are wounded), positions in special wings become much less attractive. As the range of terrorist offences is growing, so is the diversity of risk and needs of offenders (male / female, different offences, different ideological backgrounds) within the special wing. Upholding a single security regime that works despite these differences has proved difficult.

Did you know?

The challenge of 'special units': locating VEOs and persons considered at risk of radicalising others in special units raises issues around stigmatisation and status. Special units risk entrenching risk-labels assigned to these individuals, hindering rehabilitation opportunities. They can also contribute to group bonding among prisoners and undermine rehabilitation efforts. Special units can serve as a source of status, as being sent to a special unit marks a prisoner off as distinct from other prisoners and could be seen as a marker of prestige. The case for using special units rather than the existing processes and structures for managing problematic behaviour must be clearly articulated in each context.

Dispersal Model: VEOs and people suspected of radicalisation are placed among the mainstream prison population and fall under the same general regime. Under this approach, there is an effort to normalise VEOs within the mainstream population — although security regimes may differ for these offenders. Problematic behaviour among VEOs and mainstream prisoners whose behaviour relates to radicalisation can be managed through existing procedures. Problematic prisoners may warrant special placement in line with prison procedures.

Advantages: as prisoners are placed among mainstream populations, they are not subject to the same sources of stigma or marginalisation that follow from placement on a special unit. Similarly, the issues around the status derived from being placed on a special unit do not arise. There may be opportunities for VEOs to change their attitudes and behaviour through interactions with the mainstream prisoner population. The financial costs of this approach are likely to be lower compared to special units.

Disadvantages: no specialized staff are employed, and General staff may not be trained to fully understand either the population or markers of risk. Risks around extremism are more difficult to identify among mainstream prisoners as these risks are part of a host of other social dynamics and risks to order and control. There are also concerns that dispersing VEOs throughout the general population will heighten the potential for radicalisation among others, and will provide opportunities for crime cultures to intermix.

Did you know?

'Exit criteria' from special units: there should be clear criteria for moving people out of special units. Key considerations include: If special units are used for problematic prisoners and VEOs, what considerations are given for offenders to move out of these units? Is an 'exit criteria' specified, or are special units used for the duration of offenders' sentences? Opportunities should be provided for prisoners to modify their behaviour and to have these changes recognised.

Combination Model: People suspected or convicted for violent extremist acts are placed either in a separate or ordinary regime, depending on risk assessment and the behaviour of the individual prisoner.

Advantages: A combination model provides flexibility and adaptability to the risks and needs of individuals.

Disadvantages: The criteria and risk assessment tools for determining appropriate placement are imprecise (see Risk assessment and support). A combination model is costly as staff training and specialist resources are needed.

Table 2. Summary of Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Regime Choice

Regime choice	Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages
Containment	-Close monitoring -Limited effect on mainstream population -Focused interventions -Specialised staff -Reassuring to public safety	-New and stronger bonds forged among prisoners -Eroded trust between staff and prisoners -Entrenched oppositional mindset - Perceptions of unfairness reinforced -Labelling effects, stigmatisation -Status associated with being on a special unit -All VEOs assumed to be of equal risk -Difficulties finding staff -High financial cost
Dispersal	-Less stigmatisation and marginalisation -No status derived from placement on special unit -Opportunities for positive influence from others	-Generalist staff, training costs -Difficult to ensure high quality of intelligence -Challenges in knowing prisoners and dynamic security -VEOs may exert influence over others -VEOs may be influenced by criminal gangs
Combination	-Tailor-made response to individual needs/risks	-Selection criteria /risk assessment is imprecise

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Key recommendations

- Prison regime choices should be guided by the aim to normalise VEOs whilst minimising the risks to the VEOs themselves, other prisoners, staff and the general public.
- The pros and cons of different models of prison regime available for managing the risks around radicalisation must be carefully considered and weighed against the individual needs of offenders. For prisoners demonstrating concerning behaviour linked to radicalisation, special units may be necessary but their use must be guided by clear entrance and exit criteria, and they must operate within the legal frameworks of the country concerned.
- Differentiation within special units is important for tailoring security and rehabilitation efforts to different levels of risks and needs in relation to the level of the offence, gender and ideological background.
- Regardless of regime choice, prisons must be equipped with a means of assessing the most appropriate placement for prisoners, and have suitable staff training provisions (generalist or specialist).

Rehabilitation interventions

Using existing structures and processes for individualized sentence plans: There are few rehabilitation interventions in place in prisons specifically for VEOs and those suspected of radicalisation. Issues around radicalisation are usually addressed through existing structures and processes, and these are individualised for each offender as part of his or her sentence plan ([27]). Behaviour is addressed through psychological interventions, chaplaincy activities, education and employment, and good relationships between staff and prisoners. Taking a broad and holistic approach recognises that desistance from VE is a multifaceted and often unique journey. Vocational training whilst in prison is significant in preparing offenders for release and desistance. Offenders with shorter sentences present fewer opportunities for intervention in prison.

Specialist psychological interventions: There are only few examples of specialist interventions targeting VEOs directly ([28]). Those that do exist are psychologically driven and are conducted one-on-one or in small group settings. The need for specialist interventions depends on the particularities of each individual. Experience suggests that individual interventions might be harder to finance. During group interventions, participants are often less 'honest', especially regarding their own situation and views. The potential disruption of group dynamics (e.g. charismatic radical 'leaders' who challenge the facilitator) must also be taken into account.

Theological education and pastoral support: Chaplaincy provisions can help with religious education and support. Chaplains not only provide religious education, but in the case of violent Islamist ideology, can also challenge particular views and provide opportunities for detainees to think about issues in a different way. However, opportunities for participating in chaplaincy activities vary across EU Member States according to resources, the demographics of each prison, and the State's position on religion. Specialist theological interventions, including dialogue sessions, as found in Muslim majority states, are rare among EU Member States. Care and guidance at times overlap with deradicalisation and preventive aims, for example when providing alternative theological perspectives, but security should not be a chaplain's primary focus. If chaplains are involved in disengagement / deradicalisation efforts, they should be experienced and trained to do so. The fact that they are religiously educated does not suffice for specialist interventions with VEOs.

([27]) United Nations, 'Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons', p. 42.
([28]) Christopher Dean, 'The Healthy Identity Invervention: The UK's Development of a Psychologically Informed Intervention to Address Extremist Offending', in *Prisons, Terrorism and Extremism: Critical Issues in Managment, Radicalisation and Reform*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2014).

Did you know?

Religion in prison and the State ([29]): the existence of chaplaincy departments for VEOs and individuals potentially concerned by radicalisation differs across EU Member States. France, for instance, does not formally recognise Muslim chaplains as part of the prison system, whereas in England and Wales chaplains are formally employed by the State and are increasingly involved in risk assessment ([30]), although this has not been without controversy as it can erode the trust of prisoners ([31]). It is important that chaplains are respected by prisoners and that their role is clearly separate from security so that they can maintain prisoners' trust and provide both pastoral and spiritual care, and guidance.

Social Support: Providing opportunities for offenders to maintain close ties with networks of family and friends is crucial to bridging the transition from prison to release. Research on desistance among criminals in general, and among VEOs specifically in relation to deradicalisation and dis-engagement, supports the importance of social ties in these processes. Interventions such as mentor projects can also be used to provide social support and help build trust-based relationships, for example with staff, community members and NGO professionals. It is important to assess whether the family and social circle are partners in a disengagement process and as opposed to stimulators of the extremist mindset. If the latter is true, social support should be provided through other channels (in line with legal and human rights regulations).

Key recommendations

- Rehabilitation interventions should be supported by both risk and needs assessments, while sentence plans for VEOs must include tailor-made intervention plans. These can be based on existing structures if in place, but may also include specialist interventions.
- Psychological interventions can take place in a one-to-one or group setting. Although more expensive, one-on-one interventions should take priority over group interventions because of the potential negative impact on group dynamics in the latter.
- Providing religious and spiritual support is key and may have a disengaging effect on VEOs with religiously motivated ideologies. However, if chaplains are intentionally involved in disengagement / deradicalisation efforts, they should be experienced and trained in this area. Their credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the offender and wider community should be considered.
- Social support is important for disengagement and for eventual release. Working with family and friends as partners in a disengagement process is effective if the social circle was not a factor in the radicalisation process in the first place. Other avenues of social support (e.g. mentor programmes or community involvement) must also be considered.

([29]) Ryan J. Williams and Alison Liebling, 'Faith Provision, Institutional Power and Meaning among Muslim Prisoners in Two English High Security Prisons', in *Religion in Prison*, ed. Kent Kerley (Praeger, in press).
([30]) James Beckford, Daniele Joy, and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Muslims in Prison: Challenges and Change in Britain and France* (Basingstoke, England & New York: Palgrae MacMillan, 2005).
([31]) Sophie Gilliat-Ray, Stephen Pattison, and Mansur Ali, *Understanding Muslim Chaplaincy* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013).

Staff training and support

As European society in general has become more diverse and complex, so too have prisoner societies. Sensitivity and understanding of cultural and religious norms, values and expressions has become increasingly important for good staff-offender relationships. It is not necessary for all staff members to be experts on specific ideologies or religions. It is, however, necessary that correctional officers have some background knowledge of the religious and cultural backgrounds of the people they are working with. Prejudice, uncertainty and fear of offenders can lead to over-reporting and negative interactions with prisoners and can contribute to marginalisation and create an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust.

General training: A certain level of staff professionalism is necessary if training on the specific topic of radicalisation is to be effective. More specialised training of all frontline prison and probation staff should include understanding the circumstances that can lead to violent extremism (see Risk assessment and support, page 9). All frontline prison and probation staff should be trained to recognise processes of radicalisation. We emphasise that this approach should not look for 'signs' of radicalisation, as these are frequently subject to false positives and misunderstanding. Rather, what is needed is knowledge of the individual offender and an understanding the role of unsafe prison environments (see 'healthy prison environments', p.6), including a lack of support resources and avenues for the pursuit of personal development and hope. Staff must be mindful of hostility between staff and prisoners, as well as among prisoners, and must pursue their work with VEOs and others at risk of radicalisation whilst exercising respect, fairness and empathy.

Specialist Training: Staff working directly with convicted terrorists need a specific skill set and not all staff members will be suitable. Training will typically cover a range of professional practices, including: understanding pathways to violent extremism, recognising radicalization warning signs and features of positive regimes, carrying out intelligence assessment, following ethical standards, interpersonal skills, stress management, and religious and cultural diversity ([32]).

Specialist staff can usually be divided into two categories: regular officers who work on a specialised wing or unit (e.g. a terrorist wing) and those who collate information from other experts (these can be social workers, psychologists, etc.). These specialist staff will carry out assessments and manage interventions/programmes. Support is needed for these specialist staff, who are often engaged in a struggle for the 'moral high ground' and need to build trust with offenders.

A sensible approach would be to offer general-awareness training to all staff, and specialist training to staff working directly with incarcerated terrorists. Staff members should be supported in managing their anxiety and being confident about their decisions, both those based on results from the assessment tool and on their professional insights. A support structure should be put in place involving colleagues, psychologists and prison management. A training and support unit at the national level should be established to update and disseminate training course material and offer support to staff and governors. A national-level training

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([32]) United Nations, 'Handbook on the Management of Violent Extremist Prisoners and the Prevention of Radicalization to Violence in Prisons', p. 30.

and support unit should also connect with other Member States to share best practice models and training materials.

Key recommendations

- Staff training must include the topic of diversity to improve understanding prisoners of different cultural and religious backgrounds as so to enable staff to understand which behaviours and practices are potentially linked to radicalisation, and which are not.
- Staff should be trained to understand radicalisation and as well as individual, social and environmental reasons for prisoners' behaviour. Looking for 'signs' of radicalisation should be done within the broader context of recognising prisoners' vulnerable points and needs for support. Staff need to understand the process and not just look for 'signs'.
- Generalist training should be made available for all, and specialist training is needed for different staff roles and in proportion to the prisoner population considered at risk.
- A national training and support unit for prison staff can help with the dissemination of training material, development of better training practices, and levels of psychological support offered to staff. It can also strengthen cooperation at local, national and international levels and facilitate the sharing of best practices and training material.

Probation context

Services responsible for offenders in post-release contexts bear an increasing burden as they seek to manage risks related to violent extremism while ensuring that offenders are supported and reintegrated post-release. With the definition of terrorist-related offences having broadened while sentences have become shorter (less than four years,with some serving as little as two weeks), there may be very little opportunity to rehabilitate offenders in prison. The diversity of offenders, who include youngsters and an increasing number of women convicted for terrorism-related offences, requires consideration and unique approaches. In this new context, multi-agency cooperation is necessary between prisons, probation (or equivalent), police and community service providers to ensure that information is shared and that offenders and ex-offenders are provided with the necessary interventions and support structures. Multi-agency cooperation and planning for release must begin well in advance of the release date, preferably at least six months earlier, to ensure that information exchange is enabled and continuous, and that support services are in place.

Releasing and reintegrating VEOs: general good practice

Reintegration aims to prevent violent behaviour and enable inclusion and participation in society. A sense of belonging and acceptance makes commitment to violence less sustainable. Radical ideas are not dangerous in themselves, even though they may remain a risk factor for violent behaviour in some circumstances. There is limited research on VEOs post-release, and little is known about what helps resettlement. However, as a matter of good practice:

Resettlement plans: Plans should be included in the working agenda for the offender as early in the sentence as possible. Risks and needs assessments are a key tool to design effective reintegration programmes. Probation services (or national equivalent) should cooperate on this assessment during the

final stage of the prison sentence. Such multi-agency cooperation can provide guidance on how best to shape the reintegration process.

Transition management: Transitional periods are those points in time when the risk of recidivism is high, and when it is important to have plans in place prior to full sentence being served. These plans should incorporate ways to deal with a problematic home or personal life, and make use of human and social capital in order to reduce the likelihood of new offences.

Individualized risk and needs assessments: Understanding the individual and responding to their unique circumstances and challenges is important, as is facilitating the desistance and / or deradicalisation process by recognising a potential to contribute to society. Multi-disciplinary teams are recommended to evaluate offenders' individual needs and risks.

Capacity building: Planning for the end of support and building capacity for an individual to rely on others and to cope, including social and organisational support (see below), is critical.

Trust: Trust is central to effective probation work, and often the process of matching extremist offenders with probation officers is carried out with the building of trust in mind. Probation officers who share a cultural or religious background with the offender may help to foster trust.

Social and organisational support — co-producing desistance with others: Theories of desistance — those that seek to understand how individuals cease or desist from crime — suggest that desistance is co-produced with others. These 'others' would include correctional officers and additional persons in social networks. Representatives of other collaborating organisations, including community organisations that help with job-seeking or religious or spiritual guidance, and social services, should serve to meet social support needs and decrease sources of risk. Friends, family members and other significant others and meaningful relationships are crucial for desistance trajectories and for reinforcing a positive view of non-violent behaviour as well as a positive identity. People who are assumed to have some authority over the offender, such as religious leaders, teachers, or people who formerly held the same beliefs and attitudes but have desisted from violent behaviour and could now serve as mentors, may also be a positive influence.

Did you know?

Promoting human good: the 'Good Lives Models' (GLM) is a strengths-based and positive approach to desistance and rehabilitation. It recognises that reducing criminological needs is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition, for effective interventions. The GLM takes a constructive and broader account of human good — 'experiences, activities, states of affairs that are strongly associated with the well-being and higher levels of personal satisfaction and social function' ([33]). This broader account of the person that includes their hopes, goals and sense of purpose, is crucial to facilitating desistance processes for offenders convicted of terrorism-related offences.

Positive relationships are crucial to supporting desistance and / or de-radicalisation processes and these should be facilitated through relationships. The aim of these relationships should be to:

([33]) Tony Ward and Shadd Maruna, *Rehabilitation* (Taylor & Francis, 2007). p. 21.

- provide support as any criminogenic needs (those needs that directly relate to the likelihood of someone committing a crime, e.g. lack of certain skills) are identified through appropriate assessment tools;
- offer support as the problems that offenders themselves define as central to their situation and as potential reasons for violent behaviour;
- help offenders recognise and realise their potential strengths, capabilities, skills etc. and channel them appropriately;
- offer suggestions and opportunities for participating in the community, such as through cultural or sports groups;
- support the offender in realistically defining a 'good life' and finding ways of practically attaining that vision;
- stimulate a redefinition of an offender's identity through positive feedback that supports hope, belonging and reintegration.

Key recommendations

- Offenders must have continuity of support from prison to release, especially in view of the shorter sentences that terrorist-related crimes now incur, and because it is the transition periods that pose the highest risk for recidivism.
- Multi-agency cooperation is crucial to ensuring a fluid transition from prison to the community and to maximising opportunities for offenders to have their needs accurately assessed and met. This cooperation should be part of post-release planning and involve a multi-disciplinary team.

(Specialist) Interventions

Interventions, support structures and risk management practices may be specially designed for VEOs or they may be more generalist in approach, for example, by ensuring vocational opportunities and facilitating family support ([34]). Whether a specialist approach is taken will depend on the needs of the offender. Some Member States (e.g. France, the Netherlands, UK) have voluntary programmes, making a range of possible interventions possible:

- **Offenders must have continuity of support** from prison to release. The first few weeks for offenders after release are the point at which ex-offenders are most vulnerable. Adjustment can be difficult for both ex-offenders and his or her family. One way to ensure this continuity is to provide a mentoring or facilitator arrangement with offenders pre- and post-release. He or she should work with the individual throughout the sentence and should remain a point of contact and support after release.
- **Providing for the material and social support needs of VEOs:** Structured cooperation with service-providers like housing agencies, employment agencies, educational institutions, health care providers and family services are crucial to providing ex-offenders with opportunities for reintegration and rebuilding lives post-release. This must be built into resettlement plans prior to release, along with any social needs. Building and supporting relationships, developing positive social bonding,

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([34]) Radicalisation Awareness Network, 'Ex Post Paper Ran Exit' ed. RAN P&P (Amsterdam2016).

supporting and stimulating personal strengths and skills, encouraging hope, and offering guidance in religious and spiritual matters are also important for reintegration into society and for an offence-free lifestyle. The exact forms of support will depend on the internal and external needs of the offender. Because of the stigma attached to terrorist offences, providing this kind of support might prove more difficult for VEOs (see 'Barriers to reintegration', p.23).

- **Interventions in cooperation with the offender's social network.** Desistance research has shown the importance of strong social ties in the encouraging offenders to adopt a crime-free lifestyle. Involving an ex-offender's social network, especially the family ([35]) in interventions provides crucial support for desistance processes. This may include involving family members in professionals' decision-making about the ex-offender, giving them tasks or responsibilities to help the ex-offender, and providing training that prepares them to deal with their loved one when the intervention stops. Those within an offender's social network who are a negative influence should not be involved, but care should be taken when identifying such negative influences. Promising practices in this area may be inspired by the 'social net of benefits' approach used with juvenile offenders on remand or close to release, who have their networks of significant others organised around them in support. Everyone signs a contract that is agreed upon by the offender. The binding contract places responsibility with the offender's network and this serves as a social safety net. Austria is experimenting with this.

- **Theological interventions and support from religious communities.** Such specialist interventions may be offered in prison and post-release. Religious communities, including volunteers and imams, play an important role in supporting offenders post-release, while a lack of social and spiritual support can increase vulnerability post-release. Offenders may benefit from general religious counselling or from tailored religious and theological interventions. Specialist interventions may be underpinned by either a theological approach where the aim is to counter specific ideological beliefs, or may take a cognitive-behavioural approach. Practitioners should seek to use these community resources as part of a network of support that is available to aid the ex-offender in his or her desistance and reintegration journey. As with mentoring schemes and working with family members, appropriate risk assessments should be carried out for individuals involved.

- **Mentoring programmes.** Some EU Member States (Denmark, UK) have a mentoring system in place for radicalised individuals who want to leave violent extremism ([36]) . These mentors, who serve as role models and guides within society, can be trained volunteers. Some might be 'formers', with a past as a violent extremist and experience of leaving the scene ([37]). They are familiar with the situation in which the person finds him or herself, can offer guidance on pathways out of extremism and showcase alternative lifestyles. Other mentors may come from religious or community organisations and may support the offender in any number of ways, including day-to-day help (e.g. in completing job applications). Vetting mentors to make sure there are no hidden agendas and having a good matching process between mentor and offender are key to success.

- **Mental health services.** Increasingly, data and experience support some sort of connection between radicalised offenders (and radicalised individuals in general) and mental health issues.

([35]) Basia Spalek, 'Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation and Counter-Radicalisation in Relation to Families: Key Challenges for Research, Policy and Practice', *Security Journal* 29, no. 1 (2016).
([36]) Basia Spalek and Lynn Davies, 'Mentoring in Relation to Violent Extremism: A Study of Role, Purpose, and Outcomes', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 35, no. 5 (2012).
([37]) Global Counterterrorism Forum, 'Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders'.

Mental health services and assessments are needed in prison and post-release to ensure that the individual receives the support needed.

Key recommendations

- A range of specialist and generalist approaches should be available for supporting VEOs post-release, such as material and social support schemes, family and friends support initiatives, religious counselling, dialogue sessions, mentoring programmes and cooperation with mental health services.
- Initiatives should cater to the individual needs of the offender and include attention to material, economic, social, spiritual and religious needs.

Barriers to reintegration

Research has long recognised that an offender faces significant difficulties in becoming a 'requalified citizen' once released from prison, and that these difficulties take many forms, including economic, relational and emotional. Individuals convicted of terrorist offences face additional barriers. There are unique sources of stigma associated with terrorist offences, and in some contexts this negative label may be appropriated and serve as a badge of status in marginalised communities.

Stigmatisation: The stigmatised offender will experience challenges in terms of accessing social support and opportunities to reintegrate, including access to employment or education. At all points, professionals working with VEOs must recognise their potential to become reintegrated into society, and must provide support as they seek to achieve this goal. Upholding prejudices towards the offender can entrench barriers and reinforce oppositional and radicalised identities.

Trust: It is crucial that professionals work towards building and maintaining trust with the ex-offender and with wider segments of the public. Distrust of communities or community organisations can reinforce perceptions of unfairness among community members. Member States' probation services (or equivalent) can benefit from building strong relationships of trust with community organisations. This ensures that multiple sectors of society maximise the opportunities for offenders post-release.

Release conditions: Conditions can be quite strict for these offenders, and go beyond those set for other types of offenders. This may hamper reintegration if, for example, offenders are easily recalled to prison for their breach. Practitioners however may also use these conditions, and the more frequent contact they imply, as an opportunity to work with offenders and respond to their needs.

Staff Training

Probation work with VEOs has a marked effect on probation workers above and beyond ordinary probation work. The social and political climate in relation to extremism heightens stress levels for those working with offenders, while policies can change quickly and may be guided by political considerations rather than what is known to be best for the offender. There is a low risk acceptance with VEOs, meaning that the consequences of making mistakes with this group will be heavily scrutinized by political leadership and the general public. This can restrict the professional judgement of probation officers. The officers can find their work under intensive political scrutiny, and balancing social and political pressures with what may be best for the offender's needs for reintegration represents a fine balance. This is not expected to change for the foreseeable future.

Specialised training is needed for probation workers to accurately assess the needs of offenders (see 'staff training and support', p.18). Ideology may or may not be the main driver for the offender, and specialist training and experience is needed to understand and assess when ideology should be taken into account, and when other ways of addressing offender behaviour should be explored. Probation workers are also in need of support through debriefings, stress management training, and through co-worker and management support.

Key recommendations

- Offenders convicted of terrorism-related offences face unique challenges in re-entry into the community because of stricter conditions, stigmatisation and trust issues. These must be planned for prior to release and addressed alongside material needs (employment, education, housing);
- Staff face extraordinary pressure in working with this category of offender and require access to training and support in order to perform their role effectively.

Working paper conclusions

The challenges ahead for prison and probation practitioners working with VEOs are both growing and shifting. As increasing numbers of individuals are being held in prison for terrorism-related offences, there is a growing need to respond appropriately to the risks and needs of these offenders and to prepare them for release into society.

Further challenges stem from a shifting political context and insecurity from terrorism threats, so it will be of critical importance to understand and maintain best practices. Member States will need to allocate limited resources in a way that contributes to general improvements in the overall prison climate as well as more specialist interventions for monitoring and managing risks and contributing to rehabilitation and resettlement of VEOs. These decisions will be informed by the number of individuals presenting a risk and the type of radicalisation under consideration (including religious inspired, far right, left wing, or separatist).

Practitioners across Member States are growing in confidence and competence in this area. There is recognition that investing in high-quality day-to-day interactions between staff and prisoners — dynamic security — is a positive step towards minimising the risks of radicalisation. There is also a move towards normalising VEOs, although not all countries are faced with the same degree of risk, and some are unable to normalise some VEOs due to the risks that they present to the prisoner population and/or the public. Specialised risk assessments and interventions are now being piloted and used in a dynamic way to evaluate the needs and risks of offenders. The best practices in this area are individualised and responsive to the needs of the offender.

Further precision is however needed. Practices are constantly changing across EU Member States which has made identifying countries using particular practices very difficult. The reasoning behind decisions that lead to particular policies and practices being adopted needs to be more transparent and fed into a broader knowledge base of best practices.

Moreover, the evidence base remains thin. Decision-making is rarely evidence-based. Research needs to be embedded into practice early on. A research foundation is needed to understand the contexts in which radicalisation seems to flourish (and where its risks are diminished), and what helps offenders to reintegrate into society. Risk assessments must be subject to robust empirical evaluation and compared with other types of risk management practices to determine what methods and approaches are most effective. Staff training also needs to be evaluated, with attention paid to whether it improves staff-prisoner relationships alongside the ability to manage risks related to radicalisation. Information on evidence-based practices could be facilitated in the future through research partnerships.

For 2017 the RAN P&P Working Group will have to prioritise these many challenges and address them through the knowledge and experience of prison and probation practitioners. The focus for the year will be on:

- Dealing with increasing numbers of VEOs, especially returnees. What are the implications of this for regime choices and intervention programmes? The growing numbers also mean there will be more experience and practice to share, which will make it possible to sharpen the recommendations presented in this paper.
- The role of probation, also in light of shorter sentences and alternative sentencing.
- The role of religion in day-to-day work with VEOs, but also in specialised exit programmes.

This paper will be updated at the end of 2017 to include new insights from research and practice.

Annex

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