

FAMILY SUPPORT PACKAGE

(Task 4.4)

Tool objectives:

Interviews with families

One of the tools that will be developed under Pericles is the Family Support Package. This tool will serve as a useful instrument to support, inform and advise families who suspect or know of a relative in the process of radicalisation or that has already been radicalised.

Overview of approach to development/methodology:

To better understand what the challenges are families are facing, we interviewed families throughout Europe. This process is still ongoing. We present here some first impressions from the interviews.

Families report that:

- > **the theme of radicalisation was and remains somehow taboo within families;**
- > **they were not familiar with the radicalisation process and its signs;**
- > **they were not expecting that their children would radicalise;**
- > **The families say that they were not able to recognise the signs of radicalisation; and**
- > **there was lack of knowledge around the topic.**

In the beginning, there was no help available, and families did not know where to go and discuss that their child was showing different behaviour. Families were not aware which organisation to contact and ask for help and they were **hesitating whether to involve police**. In fact, it was only the media who was listening to families.

When families turned to the police they also didn't know how to deal with someone who was willing to

travel to conflict zones, even police were not familiar with the issue of radicalisation and didn't know how to handle it. In the beginning, families had to protect themselves because they were being **treated as suspects**. Families were interrogated frequently but **were not provided with information despite the fact that the intelligence service did have some useful information**. They knew for example that the houses of their children were used for recruitment. Facts the families were not aware of.

About the **children who are still in the conflict zones**, families have the feeling that someone is **watching / controlling their children while communicating with them**. And they have the feeling that their children are being instructed while communicating with their parents. **Until 2016 it was still possible to bring back these children**, but governments did not cooperate.

From the interviews a strong impression exists that **families felt very left alone** when they worried about

their children, and when they discovered that they were planning to travel to a conflict zone. Often too late, and with **law enforcement not helping them to stop them and prevent them from leaving the country**. In the earlier stages families subsequently learned that the police had information about their children that they were not aware of. And that the families themselves were only used to get information.

Next steps:

In the current situation were many children are still in the conflict zone, and returning is very difficult, they again feel left alone by law enforcement and governments. The interviews will continue to get the full picture, but it is already clear that **there is a lot to be done in supporting these families**.